

UK visa sponsorship for employers

1. Overview

You'll usually need a sponsor licence to employ someone to work for you from outside the UK. This includes citizens of the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland who arrived in the UK after 31 December 2020.

This includes unpaid work, like running a charity.

You will not need a licence to sponsor certain groups, for example:

- Irish citizens
- those with settled or pre-settled status under the [EU Settlement Scheme \(/settled-status-eu-citizens-families\)](#)
- those with indefinite leave to remain in the UK

[Read more about who does not need sponsorship \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible-version#who-needs\)](#).

Sponsoring someone does not guarantee that they'll get a visa to work for you in the UK.

How to get a sponsor licence

- 1 [Check your business is eligible \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/eligibility\)](#).
- 2 [Check if your job is suitable for sponsorship \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/job-suitability\)](#).
- 3 Choose the [type of licence \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/types-of-licence\)](#) you want to apply for - this will depend on what type of worker you want to sponsor.

- 4 Decide [who will manage sponsorship \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/sponsorship-management-roles\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/sponsorship-management-roles) within your business.
- 5 [Apply online \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/apply-for-your-licence\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/apply-for-your-licence) and pay the fee.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) may visit your business to check it's suitable.

After you apply

You'll be given a [licence rating \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-licence-rating\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-licence-rating) if your application is successful.

You'll be able to issue [certificates of sponsorship \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/certificates-of-sponsorship\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/certificates-of-sponsorship) if you have jobs that are suitable for sponsorship.

Your licence usually stays valid for as long as you continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

If you have a licence to sponsor Scale-up Workers or UK Expansion Workers, it will be valid for 4 years. You will not be able to apply for another licence to sponsor these types of workers.

You may lose your licence if you do not meet [your responsibilities as a sponsor \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities).

2. Eligibility

To get a licence as an employer, you cannot have any unspent criminal convictions for [immigration offences \(/government/publications/immigration-offences-and-sponsorship-appendix-b\)](/government/publications/immigration-offences-and-sponsorship-appendix-b) or [certain other crimes \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#annexL4\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#annexL4), such as fraud or money laundering.

You also cannot have had a sponsor licence revoked either:

- in the last 12 months
- in the last 24 months, if you've had your licence revoked more than once

You'll need appropriate systems in place to [monitor sponsored workers \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities) and [people to manage](#)



[sponsorship \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/sponsorship-management-roles\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/sponsorship-management-roles) in your business.

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) will review your application form and [supporting documents \(/government/publications/supporting-documents-for-sponsor-applications-appendix-a\)](/government/publications/supporting-documents-for-sponsor-applications-appendix-a). They may visit your business to make sure you're trustworthy and capable of carrying out your duties.

3. Job suitability

You can sponsor a worker if the job they're going to do:

- complies with the UK minimum wage and working time regulations - the worker's visa may be refused and you may lose your sponsor licence if it does not
- meets the other criteria needed for their visa

Read [section S4 of the 'general information' guidance for sponsoring a worker to find out more about complying with the minimum wage and working time regulations \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible#Migrants_salary\)](#).

Read more about job suitability, if you're sponsoring:

- [a skilled worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker)
- [a health or care worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker-accessible-version#sk13health-and-care-visa\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-sponsor-a-skilled-worker-accessible-version#sk13health-and-care-visa)
- [a worker on any type of 'Global Business Mobility' visa \(/government/publications/sponsor-a-global-business-mobility-worker\)](/government/publications/sponsor-a-global-business-mobility-worker) (senior or specialist worker, graduate trainee, secondment worker, UK expansion worker or service supplier)
- [a scale-up worker \(/government/publications/sponsor-a-scale-up-worker\)](/government/publications/sponsor-a-scale-up-worker)
- [a worker on a government authorised exchange \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-government-authorised-exchange-worker\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-government-authorised-exchange-worker)
- [a seasonal worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-seasonal-worker\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-seasonal-worker)
- [a worker on an International Sportsperson visa \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker)
- [a worker on an international agreement \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-an-international-](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-an-international-)



[agreement-worker\)](#)

- [a creative worker \(/government/publications/worker-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-creative-worker\)](#)
- [a charity worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-charity-worker\)](#)
- [a minister of religion or religious worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-minister-of-religion-or-religious-worker\)](#)

Additional requirements for religious workers

You'll usually have to advertise any job you offer to someone with a Religious Worker visa. You do not need to do this if it's a non-essential position or involves living within a religious order (such as a monk or nun).



You must keep records of when you do not have to advertise the job. You need to prove that there is not a suitable person to take the role, who does not require sponsorship.

There are [rules you must follow about how to advertise jobs for religious workers \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-minister-of-religion-or-religious-worker/worker-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-minister-of-religion-or-religious-worker-accessible-version#MRW6\)](#).

Additional requirements for creative workers

Creative jobs done by someone on a Creative Worker visa include:

- ballet dancers and other dancers
- film and TV performers
- theatre and opera performers
- film and TV workers
- models

For creative jobs, you must comply with the creative workers code of practice (if it exists for that occupation). [Read section CRW4 of the guidance for sponsoring a creative worker \(/government/publications/worker-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-creative-worker/worker-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-creative-worker-accessible#Creative Worker codes\)](#).

If there is no code of practice for that occupation, both of the following must apply:

- the role is in the creative industries and listed in any of the tables in [Appendix Skilled Occupations \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-skilled-occupations\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-skilled-occupations)
- the worker can make a unique contribution to creative life in the UK, for example they're an internationally famous artist

If you are sponsoring a creative worker under 16

You may need to [get a child performance licence \(/child-employment/performance-licences-for-children\)](/child-employment/performance-licences-for-children) if the worker is taking part in:

- films, plays, concerts or other public performances that the audience pays to see, or that take place on licensed premises
- paid modelling assignments



You must make sure that the person running the event applies at least 21 days before the event.

Additional requirements for workers on an International Sportsperson visa

For sporting jobs that will be done by someone on the International Sportsperson visa, you must get an [endorsement letter from the relevant governing body \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker-accessible-version#SPT4\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-sponsor-a-sportsperson-or-sporting-worker-accessible-version#SPT4).

Sponsoring under-18s

You can only sponsor a foreign worker under 18 on:

- an International Sportsperson visa - they must be 16 or over
- a Creative Worker visa - there's no minimum age
- a Government Authorised Exchange visa - there's no minimum age

You cannot sponsor a foreign worker under 18 on any other visa.

Read more about [your responsibilities if you sponsor a worker under 18](#)

<https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities>.

4. Types of licence

The licence you need depends on whether the workers you want to fill your jobs are:

- 'Workers' - for skilled or long-term employment
- 'Temporary workers' - for specific types of temporary employment

You can apply for a licence covering one or both types of worker.

Worker licence

A 'Worker' licence will let you sponsor people in different types of skilled employment. The skilled work can be for a short time, long-term or permanent depending on the worker's visa.



The licence is split into:

- Skilled Worker - the role must meet the [job suitability requirements \(/skilled-worker-visa/your-job\)](https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa/your-job)
- Senior or Specialist Worker visa (Global Business Mobility) - for multinational companies which need to transfer established employees to the UK, previously the Intra-company Transfer visa
- Minister of Religion - for people coming to work for a religious organisation
- International Sportsperson - for elite sportspeople and coaches who will be based in the UK

Temporary Worker licence

A 'Temporary Worker' licence will let you sponsor people on a temporary basis, including for volunteering and job-shadowing. You can only get a Temporary Worker licence for specific types of employment and visas.

The licence is split into:

- Scale-up Worker - for people coming to work for a fast-growing UK business
- Creative Worker - to work in the creative industry, for example as an entertainer or artist (up to 2 years)
- Charity Worker - for unpaid workers at a charity (up to 1 year)

- Religious Worker - for those working in a religious order or organisation (2 years)
- Government Authorised Exchange - work experience (1 year), research projects or training, for example practical medical or scientific training (2 years) to enable a short-term exchange of knowledge
- International Agreement - where the worker is coming to do a job which is covered by international law, for example employees of overseas governments
- Graduate Trainee (Global Business Mobility) - for workers transferring to their employer's UK branch as part of a graduate training programme
- Service Supplier (Global Business Mobility) - for workers with a contract to provide services for a UK company (6 or 12 months)
- UK Expansion Worker (Global Business Mobility) - for workers sent to the UK to set up a new branch or subsidiary of an overseas business
- Secondment Worker (Global Business Mobility) - for workers transferring from overseas to work for a different UK business as part of a high-value contract
- Seasonal Worker – allows people to come to the UK and work in horticulture (for example, picking fruit and vegetables) for up to 6 months, or poultry from 18 October to 31 December each year



If you're sponsoring a scale-up worker

[Your sponsorship responsibilities \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities\)](#) as a sponsor for a scale-up worker will end 6 months after they get permission to come to or stay in the UK.

After that, a scale-up worker can do any of the following until their visa expires:

- continue working for you without getting a new certificate of sponsorship
- change jobs without getting a new sponsor

5. Sponsorship management roles

You need to appoint people (known as 'key personnel') within your business to manage the sponsorship process when you apply for a licence.

The main tool they'll use is the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\) \(/sponsor-management-system\)](#).

The roles are:

- authorising officer – a senior and competent person responsible for the actions of staff and representatives who use the SMS

- key contact – your main point of contact with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)
- level 1 user – responsible for all day-to-day management of your licence using the SMS

These roles can be filled by the same person or different people.

You can also appoint an optional level 2 user once you have your licence. This is an SMS user with more restricted access than a level 1 user, for example they cannot withdraw a certificate of sponsorship.

Suitability checks

You and your staff will be checked to make sure you're suitable for these roles. You may not get your licence if anyone involved in sponsorship has:



- an [unspent criminal conviction \(/tell-employer-or-college-about-criminal-record/check-your-conviction-caution\)](#) for an [offence listed in the guidance for sponsors \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#annexL4\)](#)
- been fined by UKVI in the past 12 months
- been reported to UKVI
- broken the law
- been 'key personnel' at a sponsor that had its licence refused in the last 6 months
- failed to pay VAT or other excise duty

You may also not get your licence if anyone involved in sponsorship has been 'key personnel' at a sponsor when they had their licence revoked either:

- in the last 12 months
- in the last 24 months, if they've been 'key personnel' for more than one licence that has been revoked

At least one level 1 user must be:

- an employee, a partner or a director in the sponsor organisation
- a 'settled worker' - check who counts as a settled worker in [section S1 of the guidance for sponsoring a worker \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible#Who needs to\)](#)

You and your allocated staff must also:

- be based in the UK most of the time
- not be a contractor or consultant contracted for a specific project
- not be subject to a bankruptcy restriction order or undertaking, or a debt relief restriction order or undertaking
- not have a history of non-compliance with sponsor requirements

Your allocated staff must usually be paid members of staff, or [office holders \(/employment-status/office-holder\)](/employment-status/office-holder).

If you're applying for a UK Expansion Worker sponsor licence, you can appoint an overseas worker as authorising officer if you do not have suitable staff based in the UK to do this role.



Read the full guidance on [appointing 'key personnel' \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#L4\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#L4).

HR contractors and agency staff

You can have additional level 1 or level 2 users who are employed by third-party organisations that provide you with HR services.

A temporary member of staff supplied by an agency can be a level 2 user.

UK-based legal representatives

You can appoint a UK-based legal representative as a key contact when you apply. Your representative must be qualified to give immigration advice or services.

Once your licence is granted, you can also appoint them as a level 1 or level 2 user.

6. Apply for your licence

You need to apply online for your licence.

Once you've finished the online application, you need to send in:

- the submission sheet at the end of the application
- your [supporting documents \(/government/publications/supporting-documents-for-sponsor-applications-appendix-a\)](/government/publications/supporting-documents-for-sponsor-applications-appendix-a), if you're asked to

Any affidavits or statutory declarations you send must be witnessed by a qualified, independent person - for example, a solicitor, Notary Public, Justice of the Peace, Commissioner for Oaths, or (in Scotland only) a Councillor.

Apply now

How to send the documents

You can scan or take pictures of your submission sheet and supporting documents. Send them to the email address given on the submission sheet. Make sure your files:

- are in PDF, JPEG or PNG format
- have descriptive titles, with 25 or fewer characters
- are high enough quality to be read

If your documents are not in English or Welsh, you must include a certified translation - there's more information in [the supporting evidence guidance for sponsors \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#Sending-your-documents\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-1-apply-for-a-licence-accessible-version#Sending-your-documents).

If you cannot scan and send the documents by email, contact UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) using the contact details on the submission sheet.

Licence fees

You need to pay a fee when you apply. The fee depends on the [type of licence you're applying for \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/types-of-licence\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/types-of-licence) and what type of organisation you are.

! You must pay the licence fee yourself. Your licence may be revoked if you ask the sponsored worker to pay the fee or any costs linked to your application.

Type of licence	Fee for small or charitable sponsors	Fee for medium or large sponsors
Worker	£574	£1,579

Type of licence	Fee for small or charitable sponsors	Fee for medium or large sponsors
Temporary Worker	£574	£574
Worker and Temporary Worker	£574	£ 1,579
Add a Worker licence to an existing Temporary Worker licence	No fee	£1,005
Add a Temporary Worker licence to an existing Worker licence	No fee	No fee



How to tell if you're a small or charitable sponsor

You're usually a small sponsor if at least 2 of the following apply:

- your annual turnover is £15 million or less
- your total assets are worth £7.5 million or less
- you have 50 employees or fewer

You're a charitable sponsor if you're:

- [a registered charity in England or Wales \(/government/organisations/charity-commission/\)](/government/organisations/charity-commission/)
- [a registered charity in Scotland \(https://www.oscr.org.uk/\)](https://www.oscr.org.uk/)
- [a registered charity in Northern Ireland \(https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/\)](https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/) - if you're not on the register, you must provide proof of your charitable status for tax purposes from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- [an excepted charity \(/government/publications/excepted-charities/\)](/government/publications/excepted-charities/)
- [an exempt charity \(/government/publications/exempt-charities-cc23/\)](/government/publications/exempt-charities-cc23/)
- an ecclesiastical corporation established for charitable purposes

If you're not sure which category your business fits into, contact the Business Helpdesk:

Business Helpdesk
businesshelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk

How long it takes to get a decision

Most applications are dealt with in less than 8 weeks. UKVI may need to visit your business.

You may be able to pay an extra £750 to get a decision within 10 working days. This service is limited to a small number of applications every working day. Faster decisions are allocated in the order that requests arrive (first come, first served).

You'll be told how to ask for a faster decision after you apply.

Applications refused because of a mistake



You can apply to [request a review of your application \(/government/publications/tiers-2-and-5-pre-licence-error-correction-form\)](#) if you think it was refused because:

- the caseworker processing your application made a mistake
- your supporting documents were not considered

You cannot apply just because you disagree with the decision.

Help and advice

Sponsors can get advice from the sponsorship, employer and education helpline:

Sponsorship, employer and education helpline
Telephone: 0300 123 4699
Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm
[Find out about call charges \(/call-charges\)](#)

UK businesses and Tier 1 (Investors) can get help from the Business Helpdesk:

Business Helpdesk
businesshelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk

7. Your licence rating

You'll get an A-rated licence if your application is approved.

A-rating - full sponsor licence

An A-rated licence lets you start assigning certificates of sponsorship.

Your business will be listed in the [register of sponsors \(/government/publications/register-of-licensed-sponsors-workers\)](https://government/publications/register-of-licensed-sponsors-workers).

If you're applying to sponsor a UK Expansion Worker

You'll get a 'provisional' rating instead of an A-rating if your authorising officer is based outside the UK.

You'll only be able to assign one certificate of sponsorship, which must be assigned to the authorising officer so they can enter the UK.

Once they've got their visa, you can upgrade your licence to an A-rating and request additional certificates of sponsorship using the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\) \(/sponsor-management-system\)](https://sponsor-management-system).



Downgrading to B-rating

Your A-rated licence may be downgraded to a B-rating at a later stage if you do not continue to meet your [sponsor responsibilities \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities\)](https://uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/your-responsibilities).

If this happens, you will not be able to issue new certificates of sponsorship until you've made improvements and upgraded back to an A-rating.

You'll still be able to issue certificates to workers you already employ who want to extend their permission to stay.

Upgrade to an A-rating

You need to follow an 'action plan' provided by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to upgrade your licence.

You have to pay £1,579 for an action plan.

You must pay the fee within 10 working days of the date UKVI tells you about the downgrade. If you do not, you'll lose your licence.

At the end of the action plan

You'll be upgraded to an A-rating if you complete all the steps and there's nothing else you need to improve.

You'll lose your licence if you do not complete all the steps.

If you need to make other improvements, you'll be given another B-rating and will have to follow a new action plan. You'll have to pay the fee again.

If you get a second B-rating

You can only have 2 B-ratings while your licence is valid. You'll lose your licence if you still need to make improvements after your second action plan.



How to reapply

You cannot appeal if your licence is revoked, but you can reapply. You have to wait at least 12 months before reapplying.

You need to start a [new application \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/apply-for-your-licence\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/apply-for-your-licence) when you reapply.

8. Check whether your worker needs an ATAS certificate

Before you assign a certificate of sponsorship to your worker, you may need to check whether the worker needs an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate.

Who needs to do this

You'll need to do this if you're sponsoring a worker on any of the following:

- a Skilled Worker visa
- a Senior or Specialist Worker visa (Global Business Mobility)
- a Graduate Trainee visa (Global Business Mobility)
- a UK Expansion Worker visa (Global Business Mobility)
- a Service Supplier visa (Global Business Mobility)
- a Secondment Worker visa (Global Business Mobility)
- a Scale-up Worker visa
- a Government Authorised Exchange visa

- an International Agreement visa

If you're sponsoring a worker on any other visa, you do not need to do anything.

What you need to do

If you do need to check, you must follow these steps.

- 1 Check if the worker needs an ATAS certificate.
- 2 Answer the question on the certificate of sponsorship, confirming whether or not the worker needs an ATAS certificate. If they do not need an ATAS certificate, you may need to give a brief explanation of why.
- 3 If the worker does need an ATAS certificate, you must tell them that they need to get one and include it in their visa application.



Check if the worker needs an ATAS certificate

The worker will need an ATAS certificate if all of the following are true:

- you have a Student sponsor licence
- you're sponsoring the worker in a [relevant occupation code](#) ([/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible-version#Occupation-codes](#))
- the worker will be carrying out research at PhD level or above in a 'relevant subject' - check the [relevant subject areas list in the worker sponsor guidance](#) ([/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible-version#Subject-areas](#))
- the worker's nationality is not exempt from needing an ATAS certificate - check the [exempt nationalities list in the worker sponsor guidance](#) ([/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible-version#Exempt-nationalities](#))

If your worker does not need an ATAS certificate because they will not be doing research at PhD level or above in a relevant subject but all of the other points apply, you'll need to add an explanation note.

You can either:

- add a note to the 'job description' field on your certificate of sponsorship
- add a sponsor note after you have assigned your certificate of sponsorship

Example explanation note

The worker does not need an ATAS certificate because the role does not involve research at PhD level or above.



If the worker needs an ATAS certificate

You must:

- tell the worker that they need to get an ATAS certificate and include it in their visa application
- make and keep a copy of the ATAS certificate, once it has been issued

You do not need to add an explanation or a sponsor note if your worker does need an ATAS certificate.

Tell the worker that they need an ATAS certificate

Tell the worker that they must [apply for an ATAS certificate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-how-to-apply-for-an-atas-certificate) ([/guidance/guidance-on-how-to-apply-for-an-atas-certificate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-how-to-apply-for-an-atas-certificate)) and include it in their visa application.



If the worker does not include their ATAS certificate, their visa application will be refused and you may lose your sponsor licences.

ATAS certificate applications for workers can take at least 2 weeks to be processed (3 weeks between April and September).

Make and keep a copy of the ATAS certificate

When the worker has received their ATAS certificate, you must keep a copy of either:

- the certificate
- the electronic approval notice the worker received from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO)

9. Certificates of sponsorship

You must assign a certificate of sponsorship to each foreign worker you employ. This is an electronic record, not a physical document. Each certificate has its own number which a worker can use to apply for a visa.

When you assign the certificate to a worker, they must use it to apply for their visa within 3 months. They must not apply for their visa more than 3 months before the start date of the job listed on the certificate.



You may need to [check if your worker needs an Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\) certificate \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/check-whether-your-worker-needs-an-atas-certificate\)](https://www.gov.uk/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/check-whether-your-worker-needs-an-atas-certificate) before you assign a certificate of sponsorship.

Defined certificates

These are for people applying on a Skilled Worker visa from outside the UK.

You must apply for defined certificates for these workers through the sponsorship management system (SMS). You'll get access to the SMS when you get your licence.

When you get the certificate

Applications are usually approved within one working day. It may take longer if UKVI need to carry out further checks on the information in your application.

Defined certificates will appear in your SMS account once they have been approved. You can then assign them to a worker.

Undefined certificates

These are for Skilled Workers applying from inside the UK, and applicants on all other visas.

When you apply for your licence you'll be asked to estimate how many undefined certificates you'll need for [Workers and Temporary Workers \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/types-of-licence\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/types-of-licence) in the first year.

If you're sponsoring a UK Expansion Worker

If your licence has a provisional rating, you'll only be able to assign one certificate of sponsorship. This must be assigned to the authorising officer so they can enter the UK.

Once they've got their visa, you can upgrade your licence to an A-rating and request up to 9 additional certificates of sponsorship using the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\) \(/sponsor-management-system\)](/sponsor-management-system).

Certificate costs



You'll need to pay a fee when you assign a certificate to a worker. How much a certificate will cost depends on the type of sponsor licence you have.

You must pay the certificate of sponsorship fee yourself if you're sponsoring a:

- Skilled Worker
- person on any of the Global Business Mobility routes
- Minister of Religion
- International Sportsperson
- Scale-up Worker
- Seasonal Worker

⚠ Your licence may be revoked if you ask the sponsored worker to pay the fee or any costs linked to your application.

Type of licence	Cost per certificate
Worker (except workers on the International Sportsperson visa)	£525
Temporary Worker	£55
International Sportsperson - where the certificate of sponsorship is assigned for more than 12 months	£525

Type of licence	Cost per certificate
International Sportsperson - where the certificate of sponsorship is assigned for 12 months or less	£55

If you assign a certificate of sponsorship to a worker on a Skilled Worker or Senior or Specialist Worker visa, you might also need to pay the [immigration skills charge \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/immigration-skills-charge\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/immigration-skills-charge).

10. Immigration skills charge

You might have to pay an additional charge when you assign a certificate of sponsorship to someone applying for a Skilled Worker or Senior or Specialist Worker visa. This is called the 'immigration skills charge'.

You must pay the immigration skills charge if they're applying for a visa from:

- outside the UK to work in the UK for 6 months or more
- inside the UK for any length of time

When you do not need to pay

You will not have to pay the charge if you're sponsoring someone with one of the following occupation codes:

- chemical scientists (2111)
- biological scientists (2112)
- biochemists and biomedical scientists (2113)
- physical scientists (2114)
- social and humanities scientists (2115)
- natural and social science professionals not elsewhere classified (2119)
- research and development managers (2161)
- other researchers, unspecified discipline (2162)
- higher education teaching professionals (2311)

You also might not have to pay the charge if you're sponsoring a worker who was assigned a certificate before 6 April 2017 - there's more information in the [immigration skills charge guidance for sponsors \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-2-sponsor-a-worker/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-)



[part-2-sponsor-a-worker-general-information-accessible-version#When-you-dont-have-to-pay](#)).

You will not need to pay the charge for any of the worker's dependants, for example their partner or child.

If you're sponsoring someone to switch to a work visa from a visa that allows them to study

You will not have to pay the charge if they switch to either a Skilled Worker or Senior or Specialist Worker visa and then extend their stay on the new visa.

If you're sponsoring someone on the Global Business Mobility Senior or Specialist Worker route



You will not have to pay the charge if all of the following apply to the worker you're sponsoring:

- they were assigned a certificate of sponsorship on or after 1 January 2023
- they are a national of an EU country or hold a Latvian non-citizen's passport
- they normally work in the EU for your EU business but have been temporarily transferred to work in the UK
- the end date of the temporary transfer, as specified on the certificate of sponsorship, is no more than 36 months after the start date

If the person you're sponsoring changes jobs

If you've assigned a certificate of sponsorship to someone in your organisation who then moves to a new job in your organisation, you'll need to assign them a new certificate. They will use this to apply for a new visa.

You only need to do this if the new job has a different occupation code.

You must pay the immigration skills charge for the full length of their visa. If the new certificate of sponsorship allows the worker more time on their visa, you'll need to pay for this extra time.

You do not need to pay the additional immigration skills charge if the new certificate of sponsorship does not extend the time on your sponsored worker's visa.

Example

A worker has a 2 year visa and you pay the immigration skills charge for that period. The worker gets a new job in your organisation and you assign them a new certificate of sponsorship that extends their visa by 6 months.

You would need to pay an additional immigration skills charge to cover the extra 6 months.

How to pay

You pay the immigration skills charge when you assign a certificate of sponsorship to the worker.



! You must pay the immigration skills charge yourself. Your licence may be revoked if you ask the sponsored worker to pay the fee or any costs linked to your application.

How much it costs

The amount you need to pay is based on:

- the size of your organisation
- how long the worker will work for you, using the start and end dates on their sponsorship certificate

Period	Small or charitable sponsors	Medium or large sponsors
First 12 months	£364	£1,000
Each additional 6 months	£182	£500

How to tell if you're a small or charitable sponsor

You're usually a small sponsor if at least 2 of the following apply:

- your annual turnover is £15 million or less

- your total assets are worth £7.5 million or less
- you have 50 employees or fewer

You're a charitable sponsor if you're:

- [a registered charity in England or Wales \(/government/organisations/charity-commission/\)](/government/organisations/charity-commission/)
- [a registered charity in Scotland \(https://www.oscr.org.uk/\)](https://www.oscr.org.uk/)
- [a registered charity in Northern Ireland \(https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/\)](https://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/) - if you're not on the register, you must provide proof of your charitable status for tax purposes from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- [an excepted charity \(/government/publications/excepted-charities/\)](/government/publications/excepted-charities/)
- [an exempt charity \(/government/publications/exempt-charities-cc23/\)](/government/publications/exempt-charities-cc23/)
- an ecclesiastical corporation established for charitable purposes



If you're not sure which category your business fits into contact the Business Helpdesk:

Business Helpdesk
businesshelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk

How much to pay based on how long the worker will work for you

If the worker will be in the UK for longer than 6 months but less than a year, you must pay for at least 12 months.

You must pay the full charge in one go.

The longest you can sponsor a worker for is 5 years, so the most you'll have to pay is:

- £1,820 (5 x £364) if you're a small or charitable sponsor
- £5,000 (5 x £1,000) if you're a medium or large sponsor

UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) will contact you if you do not pay the charge or pay the wrong amount. You'll have 10 working days to pay the charge - the worker's visa application will be refused if you do not.

Refunds

You'll get a full refund if the worker's visa application is:

- refused or withdrawn
- successful, but they do not come to work for you

You'll get a partial refund if the worker:

- gets less time on their visa than you sponsored them for
- starts working for you but then changes to another sponsor
- leaves their job before the end date on their certificate of sponsorship

You'll also get a partial refund if you paid the medium or large sponsor fee when assigning the certificate, but had already notified UKVI that you're now a small or charitable sponsor.

How long it takes



You usually get a refund within 90 days of:

- telling UKVI that the worker did not come to work for you
- the expiration date on the worker's certificate of sponsorship, if they did not use it to apply for a visa
- the date the worker's visa application is refused or withdrawn
- the date you assigned the certificate of sponsorship, if you had already notified UKVI that you became a small or charitable sponsor

If the worker's visa application is refused, they can ask for the decision to be reviewed. This is known as an ['administrative review' \(/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review\)](#).

If they do not ask for an administrative review, you'll get a refund within 90 days of the deadline for applying for one.

You'll get a refund within 90 days of the administrative review being dismissed if the worker applied for one and were unsuccessful.

[Contact UKVI \(/contact-ukvi/sponsors-employers-and-education\)](#) if your refund is not paid within 90 days.

11. Your responsibilities

You must:

- check that your foreign workers have the necessary skills, qualifications or professional accreditations to do their jobs, and keep copies of documents showing this

- only assign certificates of sponsorship to workers when the job is [suitable for sponsorship \(/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/job-suitability\)](/uk-visa-sponsorship-employers/job-suitability)
- tell UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) if your sponsored workers are not complying with the conditions of their visa
- comply with UK employment law for jobs you're offering
- meet any specific requirements for workers under 18, scale-up workers or offshore workers

Your licence may be downgraded, suspended or withdrawn if you do not fulfil these responsibilities.

Read the full guidance on [sponsor requirements and duties \(/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-3-sponsor-duties-and-compliance/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-3-sponsor-duties-and-compliance-accessible-version\)](/government/publications/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-3-sponsor-duties-and-compliance/workers-and-temporary-workers-guidance-for-sponsors-part-3-sponsor-duties-and-compliance-accessible-version) and [check workers have the right to work in the UK \(/check-job-applicant-right-to-work\)](/check-job-applicant-right-to-work).



Monitoring workers

You must have HR systems in place that let you:

- monitor your workers' immigration status
- keep copies of [relevant documents for each sponsored worker \(/government/publications/keep-records-for-sponsorship-appendix-d\)](/government/publications/keep-records-for-sponsorship-appendix-d), including evidence you've carried out the relevant [right to work checks \(/check-job-applicant-right-to-work\)](/check-job-applicant-right-to-work)
- track and record workers' attendance
- keep worker contact details up to date
- report to UKVI if there is a problem, for example if your worker stops coming to work

Changes to your business

You must report any significant changes in your own circumstances within 20 working days, for example if you:

- stop trading or become insolvent
- substantially change the nature of your business
- are involved in a merger or take-over
- make changes that affect your relationship with any overseas businesses that have sent workers to you

- make any changes to a contract covering secondment workers or service suppliers

You must also tell UKVI if you're changing your details, like your address or allocated roles.

If you're sponsoring a UK Expansion Worker and have a 'provisional' rating

You must tell UKVI when your authorising officer's visa is granted. You'll need to update their immigration status and address in the UK.

How to report changes

To register a change of circumstances use the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\)](/sponsor-management-system) (</sponsor-management-system>).



Requests can take up to 18 weeks. You can register a change within 5 working days instead if you use the priority service. It costs £350.

Sponsoring workers aged under 18

You must make sure that foreign workers under 18 have suitable care arrangements for their:

- travel to the UK
- arrival in the UK
- living arrangements in the UK

You must also get a letter from their parents giving consent to the care arrangements.

You must get a [Disclosure and Barring Service check](/disclosure-barring-service-check) (</disclosure-barring-service-check>) on any of your workers who need it.

You'll lose your licence if you do not do this.

Children under 16

You can only sponsor foreign workers under 16 if they're on either:

- a Creative Worker visa - they may also need a [performance licence](/child-employment/performance-licences-for-children) (</child-employment/performance-licences-for-children>)
- a Government Authorised Exchange visa

You also need to check:

- the [rules about how many hours children can work \(/child-employment\)](/child-employment)
- if the child needs an [employment permit \(/child-employment/local-council-rules-for-child-employment-permits\)](/child-employment/local-council-rules-for-child-employment-permits) from their local council

Sponsoring a scale-up worker

Your responsibilities as a sponsor for a scale-up worker start on the date you assign them a certificate of sponsorship. Your responsibilities end 6 calendar months after either:

- the 'valid from' date on your worker's visa - if they were outside the UK when they applied
- the date they are told they have permission to stay - if they were inside the UK when they applied



You must tell UKVI your worker's start date using the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\) \(/sponsor-management-system\)](/sponsor-management-system).

Example

A scale-up worker gets their permission to come to or stay in the UK on 1 February. Your sponsorship responsibilities for that worker will end 6 months later at 11:59pm on 1 August.

Sponsoring an offshore worker

You must tell UKVI when the worker you're sponsoring:

- first arrives in UK waters at the beginning of the job
- leaves UK waters at the end of the job

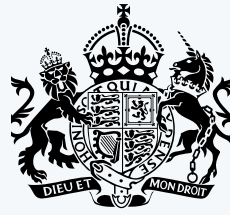
Tell UKVI using the [sponsorship management system \(SMS\) \(/sponsor-management-system\)](/sponsor-management-system).

You must not tell UKVI before they arrive or leave. You must do it up to 10 working days after the dates they arrive and leave.



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