

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

International students undertaking a UHI research degree by distance mode

Coming to the UK for a short period to undertake activities related to your research project

The UHI Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees state that students enrolled as distance mode would normally be expected to spend a minimum of 6 months (PhD) or 2 months (MRes) on-campus across the course of their registration. The length and timing of these visits are to be agreed with the supervisory team and may be scheduled to coincide with key assessment points, i.e., progress review or viva – although it is not a regulatory requirement that these are undertaken face-to-face.

The [Standard Visitor](#) visa should be obtained for the purposes of studying in the UK. Please note - you may also see references to a Short-term study visa, but this is only for the purposes of studying English language courses, so please be careful to not apply for it by mistake.

You can study in the UK on a Standard Visitor visa, as long as your academic activity fits into one of the following categories:

- studying a course at an accredited institution (meaning one or more consecutive or concurrent programmes of study that will be completed within the validity period of the visitor permission)
- completing a period of research
- completing research tuition (for example, to learning about research)
- completing one or more elective courses linked to their overseas study, where they are studying medicine, veterinary medicine and science, or dentistry as their principal course of study equivalent to at least degree level study in the UK
- completing a study-abroad programme in the UK as part of an overseas course, where the programme is less than 6 months in length
- sitting an entrance exam
- re-sitting an examination or retaking a module
- taking an oral (viva) examination for part of a PhD qualification at a UK institution
- students on distance learning programmes who spend the majority of their course studying overseas and are coming to the UK for short periods of time for certain activities, such as induction weeks, intensive face-to-face learning, one-to-one progress checks or to sit exams or assessments.

Please familiarise yourself with other eligibility criteria (e.g., finances) on [this government webpage](#) before applying for this visa. Students from most nationalities must apply for their Standard Visitor visa before travelling to the UK, although some nationalities – including EU/EEA nationals - are eligible to apply at the UK port of entry. To check whether you need to apply in advance, please use [this online tool](#).

When applying for a Standard Visitor visa you will need to obtain a visa support letter to submit with your application – please contact the University's Graduate School Office –

gradresearch@uhi.ac.uk and be sure to give plenty of notice for you to receive the letter. Students eligible to receive the Standard Visitor visa at the UK border should bring the support letter with them as they may get asked about the purpose of their visit to the UK.

You can only apply for a Standard Visitor visa up to three months before the date of your travel to the UK. You should not pay for accommodation or travel until you get your visa. Your passport should be valid for the whole of your stay in the UK and have at least one blank page.

It should be noted that your application may be refused if you continuously apply for visitor visas and it is evidence that you spend more time in the UK than in your home country, or if you plan to be in the UK to study for periods of longer than 6 months. Approval of standard visitor visa applications is always at the discretion of UKVI.

Travelling via the Common Travel Area (CTA)

If you are coming to the UK to study for a short period of time and have not secured your Standard Visitor visa before travelling, we do not advise that you arrive via the Common Travel Area (CTA), i.e., Republic of Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man.

You will not go through UK immigration, and it is likely that you will not have a valid visa to study. More information is available [here](#).

We would always recommend that all students apply for their Standard Visitor visa from their home country before travelling to the UK, to avoid any unnecessary problems.

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) requires all international students (apart from exempt nationalities) who are subject to UK immigration control and are intending to study or research at postgraduate level in certain sensitive subjects to apply for obtain an ATAS certificate.

There are certain nationalities that are exempt from the ATAS requirement – [find out if you need an ATAS certificate – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#) for up-to-date information.

Your offer letter includes the CAH3 code associated with your research, so you can [check yourself to see if you require ATAS](#).

If you do need to obtain ATAS, although Standard Visitor visa applicants may not be required to supply ATAS for their visa application, the University *will* require you to obtain ATAS *before* you undertake any research during your visit to the UK and will ask you to show it on arrival at your Academic Partner. **Therefore, you should obtain ATAS before you apply for the Standard Visitor visa.**

Please be aware that an ATAS certificate can take some time to process, so it is essential that you start planning for your visit well ahead of time. You may require a project description for your ATAS application, please contact your Director of Studies to obtain the required project summary.

When you arrive at your Academic Partner

The University must be able to verify that all students have the correct immigration permission before allowing them to commence their period of research. Therefore, it will be important that, as soon as you arrive, you arrange to meet with the local admissions

department at your Academic Partner so they can undertake necessary checks. If you are unsure who this is, please speak with your Director of Studies.

Students associated with UHI Executive Office should contact admissions@uhi.ac.uk to arrange their checking appointment. Areas associated with UHI Executive Office include Health (Division of Biomedical Sciences, Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Division of Rural Health and Wellbeing), the Centre for History and the Language Sciences Institute.

Under the terms of the Standard Visitor visa route, you are not permitted to do any type of work, either paid or unpaid, nor undertake a work placement or work experience. You cannot extend your stay, nor can you apply for any other visa routes from within the UK.

It is also essential that you leave the UK before the date your visa expires. You must adhere to this to avoid any problems while you are in the UK or should you wish to make a future visa application.

If you have any questions, in the first instance please contact gradresearch@uhi.ac.uk

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