

Start-Up Visa Scheme at the University of South Wales

1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020

1. Start-Up Visa

The Start-Up Visa route is for graduates who are from outside the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland who do not have a job offer from an employer, but instead have a business idea that meets the UKVI's innovation, viability and scalability criteria that they wish to put into practice in the UK after graduating.

For the purpose of the Immigration Rules, 'business Venture' means an enterprise as a sole trader, partnership or company registered in the UK.

Places are limited and will be subject to an application and competitive selection process through the University of South Wales (USW).

If you are successful in being endorsed by USW and meet all the Start-Up Visa requirements (including maintenance), you can apply to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for a 2 Year visa under this scheme which will allow you to stay in the UK to develop your business idea.

Please note that you are not eligible if you have spent time in the UK under a previous post study work scheme, for example, Tier 1 (Post Study Work).

2. How to qualify to the University's Endorsement Selection Scheme

To qualify for this scheme at the University you must meet **ALL** of the following requirements:

2.1 To be considered you must be:

a) a current student of the University of South Wales who has studied at the Pontypridd, Cardiff, Newport Campus or at the RWCMD, and who is going to be awarded a degree or PhD in the next two months OR

b) a graduate of the University of South Wales who studied at the Pontypridd, Cardiff, Newport Campus or at the RWCMD, and has been awarded a degree or PhD within the last 12 months.

Regrettably, the University will not be able to endorse Start-Up Visa applications from individuals that have studied at partner institutions, graduated from other institutions or that have not been awarded a qualification at NQF6 or above.

2.2 Have maintained a good standing with the University, with no disciplinary, attendance or other problems surfacing in relation to your time at the University and that there is no history or outstanding debts owed to the University.

2.3. Have a Tier 4 student visa or student visa with a minimum of 3 months leave remaining. This is recommended, as it will allow enough time for:

- the application to the University's scheme and selection process,
- the relevant checks prior to the issuance of the endorsement letter
- the submission of your visa application.

2.4 Be in the UK at the time that you apply to University's scheme unless there are exceptional, compelling and provable circumstances. The University will normally only take into consideration applicants from within the UK. However, if you are selected by the University you will be allowed to apply for your visa either in the UK or overseas.

2.5 Your Business venture idea meets the UKVI criteria

2.5.1 Innovation Requirement for Start-up Visa

For the start-up visa, the **innovation** requirement means that the applicant has a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage.

2.5.2 Viability Requirement for Start-up Visa

For the start-up visa, the **viability** requirement means that applicant has, or is actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business.

2.5.3 Scalability Requirement for Start-up Visa

For the start-up visa, the scalability requirement means that there is evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national markets.

Please note that if you are awarded an endorsement by the university, you must be prepared to apply to the UKVI within 1 month of receipt of the endorsement.

2.6 Have sufficient financial and other resources to develop your idea.

2.7 Demonstrate a clear commitment to spend the majority of your time working on developing your business idea.

2.8 Comply with the application and monitoring process for USW endorsement.

2.9 At the time of applying for your Visa with UKVI you must meet ALL the maintenance requirements (£945 held in your bank account for a consecutive 90 day period if applying for your visa from within the UK or £1,890 if applying for your visa from outside the UK).

2.10 Demonstrate the ability to pay for the Immigration Health Surcharge (£300 per year of visa granted).

2.11 Demonstrate the ability to pay your own and your dependants' visa fee (£493 in the UK or £363 outside the UK. Dependants: £493 per person if applying from the UK or £363 per person for applications outside the UK).

2.12 Demonstrate the ability to meet all UKVI's financial requirements for any dependants applying with you (£630 for each dependant). You must have proof you have the money, and that it's been in your bank account or your dependant's bank account for at least 90 days before they apply for their visa.

2.13 Obtain unconditional consent in writing if you were previously sponsored by a government or international scholarship agency.

2.14 You are expected to locate the business and live within the South Wales area during the whole duration of your visa.

The University of South Wales will consider endorsement of places under the Start-Up scheme for graduates who demonstrate that they meet ALL the eligibility criteria. Successful students will be supported and monitored by USW during their endorsement period.

USW will consider issuing a maximum of two Start-Up Visa endorsements per business idea where an exceptional business idea exists and both applicants are equally required for the business to meet the criteria in 2.5 of this document.

3. How to apply to the University of South Wales' endorsement scheme

To apply for Start-Up Visa from UKVI, you need a letter of endorsement from the University of South Wales. To apply for this letter, you must pass an Endorsement Selection Scheme run by the University. The University will use this selection process to identify eligible graduates with Innovative, Viable and Scalable business ideas.

There are three stages to the selection scheme:

STAGE 1 – Start-Up Visa Assessment Form

STAGE 2 - A written business plan application and video pitch

STAGE 3 - An interview panel (this must be completed in person in the UK, unless there are genuine, compelling, and provable reasons as to why this is not possible. The University may, at its discretion, agree to a remote interview using Skype or similar if satisfied that the reasons are genuine)

3.1 Application Process and Selection

3.1.1 STAGE 1 – Start-Up Visa Assessment form.

[The Start-Up Visa Assessment form can be completed here.](#) Once completed this form and accompanying documents must be sent to IISA for approval international.advice@southwales.ac.uk within the Stage 1 application window which is approximately 1 month. Once IISA confirm that you are eligible to proceed you may progress to Stage 2.

3.1.2 STAGE 2 – Completion of the business plan and video pitch

1. **The written business plan.** The template (which includes guidance) [can be downloaded here](#) and business plan pack [can be downloaded here](#). Applicants are encouraged to seek advice from the Student Enterprise Team before starting their business plan and to gain feedback as they develop their application. To book an appointment, please email enterprise@southwales.ac.uk
2. **The video pitch.** A 2-3 minute video, pitching your business to the panel (this does not have to be hi tech – it is fine to use your smart phone). You should upload your video to a hosting service such as YouTube or Vimeo. Have a look at crowd sourced funding websites (e.g. <http://www.kickstarter.com>) for ideas to inspire your video.

Please submit your business plan application, with links and access to any passwords to your video pitch by email to enterprise@southwales.ac.uk. You will then receive notification of the outcome of your application within 7 working days of receipt.

The written and video pitch applications will be assessed by the USW Start-Up Visa Selection Panel. The Panel is comprised of two USW staff (Assistant Pro Vice Chancellor, Enterprise and the Director of Research and Business Engagement) and an external business advisor.

Each application will be assessed against selection and scoring criteria; where 0 = No evidence given; 1 = some but insufficient evidence given; 2 = sufficient evidence given; 3 = Excellent evidence given.

Scoring criteria

1. **The pitch** (0-3 marks)

Is it compelling, well organised, and contains relevant information to complement the business plan. Gives panel confidence in the applicants ability to deliver the plan and business idea?

2. **Business Idea** (0-3 marks)

Is the business genuine and innovative? An original business plan that meets new or existing market needs?

3. **Competitive position** (0-3 marks)
Have competitors been described and analysed effectively; is there a genuine USP /clear competitive advantage for the business?
4. **Market knowledge and strategy** (0-3 marks)
Have the size and characteristics of the market been described effectively and backed up with evidence?
5. **Product or service feasibility** (0-3 marks)
Has the business idea been validated or interest received by an independent expert, investor or someone who could be a potential customer? (please see IISA webpages for permissible activity on a current Tier 4 student visa). Does the application provide a convincing story of how the product/ service will work and how the business could diversify into new areas? If securing a patent is key to the idea, the candidate should have checked patentability with a qualified attorney. Additionally the candidate should check freedom to operate – are there other patents that their product/service would infringe?
6. **Financial model** (0-3 marks)
Is there potential for the business to be profitable and scalable? Are the financial figures supported by market data provided, e.g. is the market big enough to sustain the financial projections? Can financial progress be made within the 2 year (maximum) term of the visa permission (e.g. via raising investment from a third party or generating revenue from sales)?
7. **Entrepreneurial skills** (0-3 marks)
Does the applicant (and their team if relevant) demonstrate and evidence the relevant skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness needed to set up the business, and have they identified strategies to address any skills gaps?
8. **UK impact** (0-3 marks)
Will the business have a lasting, positive impact in the UK? Is there evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national markets.

If the assessment results in the panel requesting revisions to the candidates application, then only one revision opportunity will be given, and any additional evidence requested must be submitted to the panel within 1 week. **The Panel's decision is final. Applicants are only allowed to apply once, which includes applications to the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneurship Visa.**

All panel members must be in agreement before a candidate may pass through each stage of the process. If your application is successful, at least one of the panel members will be responsible for monitoring your business.

3.1.3 STAGE 3 - The interview panel stage

If you pass the written application stage, you will be invited to a face to face panel interview (approximately two weeks after Stage 2) where your application and evidence will be further probed and any concerns explored.

The Student Enterprise team will notify you in writing of the outcome within one week of the presentation to the panel. Please note the panel's decision is final and there is no right of appeal.

What happens next?

1. If you are successful, the Immigration and International Student Advice (IISA) team will ask you to provide evidence that you meet the Start-Up Visa requirements;
2. If the IISA team confirms that you meet UK Visas and Immigration requirements, the team will contact the Compliance Unit to recommend your endorsement.
3. If the Compliance Unit agrees with your endorsement, you will be asked by the Student Enterprise team to complete and sign the Start-Up Visa Endorsement Agreement to confirm that you agree to the USW's terms and conditions for sponsorship under this scheme;
4. Once the Student Enterprise team receives the Start-Up Visa Agreement, the Compliance Unit will send your endorsement letter with your unique reference number to include with your Start-Up Visa application to IISA. This letter is valid for 1 month which means that you must apply for your visa within that time or before your current visa expires, whichever is sooner;
5. You must make your immigration application through the IISA team, who will assist you with the visa application process to include completion of the application form and checking and postage of required documents;
6. The IISA team will inform the Compliance Unit and the Student Enterprise team of the outcome of your visa application whether granted or refused;

The panels take place twice a year in June and November, so please plan your application in plenty of time to meet the deadlines published on the IISA webpages.

4. What next?

If the UK government grants you a Start-Up Visa immigration permission, USW is responsible for monitoring the progress of your business against the agreed key performance indicators for the two year period.

5. How will I be monitored as a holder of Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur)?

As a holder of Start-Up visa endorsed by USW, we are obliged to monitor the progress of your business.

The Student Enterprise Manager will arrange bi-monthly meetings with you to support you with your business during the 24 month endorsement period – **you will be required to attend all scheduled meetings** and complete a bi-monthly contact form which will review the progress made to date and set goals for the following two months;

At least two members of the USW Endorsement Selection Panel must pass you at each meeting. If your progress is found to be insufficient at one of the meetings, you will be allowed one further attempt.

At each meeting, the progress of your business will be measured using your key performance indicators. The panel will require proof of income, outgoings and tax payment. The panel will need to be able to see that the majority of your time in the UK is being spent on running your business.

Monitoring meetings will be held at one of the USW campuses or at the incubator/offices of the Start-Up Visa holder and scheduled on a bi-monthly basis.

The Student Enterprise team will inform the Compliance Unit of the outcome of these meetings.

Failure to attend the scheduled meetings as outlined within the Start-Up Visa requirements may result in USW withdrawing sponsorship and this would be reported to UK Visas and Immigration by the Head of Compliance of the University, in line with our licence responsibilities - this is likely to result in your visa being curtailed (cancelled).

If your business idea changes significantly during your period of sponsorship, this will be discussed with you to determine whether it is appropriate to continue to sponsor you under the Start-Up Visa.

6. Reporting

USW will immediately notify the Home Office that we are withdrawing our endorsement if:

- We are in any doubt over the progress of your business or your commitment to it
- If progress is deemed insufficient at a business progress meeting;
- We have evidence that you have broken your immigration conditions.

If we notify the Home Office that we are withdrawing our endorsement, it is likely that your immigration permission will be curtailed (shortened) and you will need to leave the UK. See the Start-Up Visa of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance document for more information:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/804993/Endorsing_body_guidance_05-19.pdf

7. Intellectual Property

Please note that protecting your Intellectual Property (IP) is your responsibility – but advice on how to do this is available from USW via the Student Enterprise Team.

8. Documents required for the Start-Up Visa application

To be granted a Tier 1 GE visa, you must score 95 points and provide the documents listed below in your application to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

Requirement	Evidence
Endorsement by a UK Higher Education Institution (USW)	Start Up endorsement letter issued by the University
UK Higher Education Institution (USW) has awarded a recognised Bachelor's degree or Master's degree or PhD	Start Up endorsement letter issued by the University/evidence of USW/RWCMD qualification
UK Higher Education Institution (USW) has assessed you & your business	Start Up endorsement letter issued by the University
English Language	
Knowledge of the English language	USW qualification
Maintenance	
To qualify for leave under the Start-Up Visa you must show you have enough money to support yourself and your dependants in line with UKVI requirements.	Original bank documents with the required funds maintained for a continuous 90 days

9. Work conditions under the Start-Up Visa

If you apply in the UK, you are allowed to work and be self-employed if:

- you have successfully completed your degree studies at the USW;
- you have been supported with an endorsement from the USW;
- you have made an application for a Start-Up visa before your Tier 4 visa ended;
- you have yet to receive a decision on your Start-Up visa application.

Other conditions

- You are allowed to have other employment but you must ensure that the main focus of your time is spent working on your business idea.
- You cannot work as a:
 - doctor or dentist in training, or
 - professional sports person (including sports coach).

10. USW's responsibilities under the Start-Up Visa Scheme

The University must:

- have an established process for identifying, nurturing and developing entrepreneurs amongst its undergraduate and post-graduate population;
- keep evidence of the selection process that resulted in you giving the above endorsement, and provide this to us if requested;
- maintain contact with those you endorse and monitor their progress at regular intervals (at least quarterly).

The University sponsors an eligible graduate under the Start-Up Scheme by issuing an endorsement letter, which is to be used for the visa application. In issuing the endorsement letter, the University is confirming the following to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI):

- the University is sponsoring the graduate under the Start-Up scheme for the duration of the time stated on the letter AND
- the University maintains contact with the graduate and monitor their progress AND
- the University expects the graduate to demonstrate a clear commitment to spend the majority of their time working on developing their business idea AND
- the graduate is aware of their responsibility to abide by the conditions of their Start-Up visa, including that they will leave the UK when their visa expires unless they have switched to a different visa category.

The University's reporting responsibilities to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) continue under the Start-Up Visa scheme. As such, the University is required to report the following:

- the graduate misses a scheduled contact without reasonable explanation and the University is subsequently unable to make contact with them;
- the graduate notifies the University that they are permanently leaving the UK;
- the graduate switches to a different immigration category;
- the University is withdrawing its endorsement as the graduate has failed or ceased to take any active steps to establish a business here;
- the University is aware that the graduate is breaching the conditions of their visa.

11. Student's responsibilities under the Start-Up Scheme

In participating under the Start-Up scheme, graduates must:

- agree to the University's Terms and Conditions of being sponsored under this scheme;
- maintain contact as determined and agreed with the Student Enterprise team;

- inform the USW's Compliance Unit of any significant changes to their circumstances, including a change in immigration category or if they no longer wish to participate in this scheme and leave the UK;
- keep within UK laws;
- only stay in the UK for the time their visa allows;
- have no recourse to public funds (graduates cannot claim most benefits paid by the state);
- register with the police, if applicable and in line with the Immigration Rules.

12. Useful contacts

If you have questions about making your immigration application and to apply for Stage 1 of the process, please submit a query to Immigration and International Student Advice (IISA):

- By email: international.advice@southwales.ac.uk
- By phone: +44 (0) 1443 482083

Web: <http://international.southwales.ac.uk/>

If you have questions about the USW Start-Up Scheme, please make an appointment with the Student Enterprise Team by emailing enterprise@southwales.ac.uk

More information on Start-Up visa, including Policy guidance and application form can be found on the UK Government website. <https://www.gov.uk/start-up-visa>

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