



4 December 2020

Dear Accountable Officer,

The UK is approaching a landmark date as it readies itself to move beyond the transition period agreed with the EU following the UK's exit. This message is being sent to you on behalf of the Department for Education to confirm some of the upcoming changes this Government is making with regards to student visas and immigration. We also ask for your help in ensuring both current and prospective students are aware of these changes, along with any actions you and they may need to take in order to engage with the new system, particularly in light of the impact of COVID-19.

The UK has a world-leading higher education sector and will continue to welcome talented and high potential students to these shores. The Government remains committed to increasing the number of international Higher Education students in the UK to 600,000 by 2030, as set out in our International Education Strategy.

EU students in the UK by 31 December 2020

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals living in the UK by 31 December 2020

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals who are living in the UK by 31 December 2020, should apply to the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021. The deadline for applying is 30 June 2021. Students should still apply to the EUSS even if they do not intend to stay in the UK long-term. Successful applicants to the EUSS will be given the immigration status they need to continue studying in the UK beyond 30 June 2021 and will be eligible for public services such as healthcare. This includes EU, EEA and Swiss students who are currently living in the UK, who should be engaging fully with this process.

EU, EEA and Swiss students who were studying in the UK, but who have returned home during the pandemic and are continuing with their course online in their home country

EU, EEA and Swiss students who were studying in the UK, but who have returned home during the pandemic and are continuing with their course online in their home country (when they would otherwise be studying in the UK) are able to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme from outside the UK, so long as they are able to prove that they are still continuously resident in the UK. This means that they must not have been absent from the UK for more than six months in any 12-month period, except for a single absence of no more than 12 months for an important reason, for example due to studying outside the UK because of COVID-19. They will still be continuously resident in the UK for the purposes of the scheme. **[See point 5 in annex B].**

EU, EEA and Swiss students have commenced their course online in their home country due to COVID-19, and who otherwise would be studying in the UK

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals who have commenced their course online in their home country due to COVID-19, and who otherwise would be studying in the UK, will be eligible to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme as long as they arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020. Students unable to arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020 will be required to apply to the Student route under the points-based immigration system, to commence studying in the UK. **[See point 3 in annex B].**

The new points-based immigration system for students arriving after 1 January 2021

Following October's announcement, you will know that the new Student route has now been launched. This new route improves on the previous Tier 4 route, making it simpler and more streamlined, creating clearer pathways for students, and ensuring the UK remains competitive in a changing global education market.

All prospective international higher education students, including EU, EEA and Swiss nationals coming to the UK on or after 1 January 2021, will need to apply to the Student route.

Students must be issued a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) by their sponsor before making an application to the Student route.

How you can help

COVID-19 may have caused some disruption to your students' experience and plans. Many of your EU, EEA and Swiss students may be engaging with their course overseas rather than physically attending their higher education provider (HEP) as per their original intention. Therefore, in order to ensure all students are engaging with the process, no matter their situation, we have developed some targeted messaging, which we ask you share with students according to their current situation. **These targeted messages can be found in Annex B.** Further to this, we have included a short checklist for HEPs to consider whether all necessary changes have been made since the introduction of the new Student route on the 5 October 2020 **(at Annex A).**

The Government not only recognises, but also appreciates, the positive contribution that international students provide to the UK – socially, culturally and economically. In order to support those efforts, it is being made easier for international graduates to secure skilled jobs in the UK and contribute to the UK's economic growth with the new Graduate route. This will allow international students who have completed undergraduate and master's degrees in the UK to stay for two years and those who have completed a PhD to stay for three years to work in the UK at any skill level.

The Department for Education will continue to support the sector by liaising closely with providers. Please direct any questions you may have relating to the Student route or EU Settlement Scheme to your UKVI premium account manager or the [Educators Helpdesk](#).

ANNEX A: PROVIDER CHECKLIST

HEPs, since the introduction of the new Student route on the 5 October, check that you have:

1. Amended all references to Tier 4 (and replaced with references to the Student route) on your website and other recruitment material where appropriate.
2. Engaged with EU, EEA and Swiss students who have started / are starting their course this year (2020) and who will arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020 to encourage them to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme.
3. Engaged with EU, EEA and Swiss students who have been continuing with their course online (in their home countries) since the outbreak of the pandemic, to inform them about their options regarding EUSS / new Student route.
4. Encouraged EU, EEA and Swiss students who are due to travel to the UK and start studying from 1 January 2021, to apply to the Student route.

ANNEX B: SPECIFIC AUDIENCE MESSAGING

1. Non-EU, EEA and Swiss students

The UK's new and improved [Student route](#), which falls under the UK's new points-based immigration system, is now open for applications. The Student route improves on the previous Tier 4 route making for a more streamlined experience for international students. Visas that have been issued through the Tier 4 route are still valid and those eligible will still be able to apply for the Graduate Route when it opens in summer 2021.

2. EU, EEA and Swiss students applying this year, to travel to the UK and start their course in the UK from January 2021

You will need to apply for a student visa through the new points-based immigration system. You can apply up to 6 months in advance of your course starting. Further guidance for EU, EEA and Swiss students can be found [here](#).

3. EU, EEA and Swiss students who have started/are starting their course this year and who will arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020

If you arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020, apply to the EU Settlement Scheme by 30 June 2021 to continue living in the UK. More information on the EU Settlement Scheme can be found [here](#). If you have commenced your course online in your home country due to COVID-19, and you would otherwise be studying in the UK, you will be eligible to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme as long as you arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020. If you are unable to arrive in the UK by 31 December 2020, you will be required to apply to the Student route under the points-based immigration system, to commence studying in the UK. More information on the EU Settlement Scheme can be found [here](#). More information on the UK's new points-based immigration system can be found [here](#).

4. EU, EEA and Swiss students who have started/are starting their course this year but have deferred travel until next year

If you are unable to enter the UK by 31 December 2020 and will arrive in the UK from 1 January 2021, you will need to apply for a Student visa through the new points-based

immigration system before you travel to the UK. Further guidance for EU, EEA and Swiss students can be found [here](#).

5. EU, EEA and Swiss students who are currently studying a UK course, have left the UK temporarily, but have not applied to the EUSS and may not be in the UK by 31 December 2020

If you were studying in the UK and have returned home during the pandemic and are continuing with your course online in your home country (when you would otherwise be studying in the UK), you are able to apply to the EU Settlement Scheme from outside the UK, so long as you are able to prove that you are still continuously resident in the UK. This means that you must not have been absent from the UK for more than six months in any 12-month period, except for a single absence of no more than 12 months for an important reason, for example due to studying outside the UK because of COVID-19. You will still be continuously resident in the UK for the purposes of the scheme.