



Working during your studies

The information provided in this guide is correct at the time of publication (January 2022) however it is subject to change without notice.

Your permission to work in the UK is determined by the type of visa that you have. Most international students hold Student (formerly Tier 4) visas which allow a student to work, with limits on the number of hours per week and restrictions on the type of work permitted.

Students who hold visitor visas or short-term study visas are not allowed to work in the UK at all.

Permission to work

Students studying a course at **degree level or above** are usually permitted to work up to 20 hours per week in term-time and full-time in vacation periods if they hold a Student visa.

Students studying a course **below degree level** are usually permitted to work up to 10 hours per week in term-time and full-time in vacation periods if they hold a Student visa.

University of Nottingham vacation term dates can be found on our [key dates webpage](#).

Student visa holders cannot:

- engage in business activity or self-employment (see further guidance below)
- work as a professional entertainer or sports person
- pursue a career through a permanent full-time vacancy
- work as a doctor or dentist in training, unless you are on the appropriate Foundation Programme sponsored by Health Education England

If you have the following wording on your visa, you are not allowed to work at all in the UK:

“No work or recourse to public funds”

Keeping record of your working hours

It is very important that you abide by the conditions of your visa. Working more than your permitted weekly hours is a serious offence and may jeopardise your stay in the UK.

It is your responsibility to keep detailed records of how many hours you work each day to ensure you are not working more than your maximum number of hours per week, and this



is particularly important if you work irregular hours or have more than one employer. A week is defined as a period of 7 days starting on a Monday and ending on a Sunday.

Work that you cannot do

Given that students on a Student visa cannot engage in business activity or be self-employed, it is important to be aware of some types of employment and activity you need to avoid, or should be careful about engaging in.

- The current UKVI position on 'gig economy' jobs like Uber and Deliveroo is that they are considered self-employment so someone with Student leave cannot be employed this way. You should avoid taking any employment on a 'self-employed', 'consultancy', 'contractor' or 'freelance' basis, as this is likely to be seen as self-employment by UKVI, even if you are working for a company.
- The UK government definition of 'self-employment' includes selling goods and services for profit, including online and through apps. See www.gov.uk/working-for-yourself for more information.

This list is not exhaustive, and you will find further information and some useful examples on the UKCISA website: www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Tier-4-work

Work that counts towards your 10 or 20 hours weekly maximum

Any work you do when you are physically in the UK counts towards your weekly 10 or 20 hour maximum, even if this is for an employer based outside the UK and you are working remotely. This is because the work restriction has no specific exception for work undertaken remotely for an employer who is outside the UK.

The Student visa rules distinguish between volunteering, which **does not** count towards your weekly maximum hours, and voluntary work, which **does** count towards your weekly maximum hours.

Students who are volunteering do not have a contract, they must not be a substitute for an employee and they must not be doing 'unpaid work', i.e. receiving payment in kind (although they are sometimes reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses). Volunteers usually help a charity or voluntary or public-sector organisation.

By contrast, voluntary workers will usually have contractual obligations to perform the work, for example, to attend at particular times and carry out specific tasks. The worker might be remunerated 'in kind'. This kind of work, even if unpaid, counts towards your working hours.



Starting a business

Although self-employment and business activities are not permitted on a Student visa, the guidance for **Start-up** and **Innovator** endorsing bodies states that Students are allowed to carry out preliminary activities such as writing business plans or negotiating contracts, with a view to deciding whether to start a business under a different immigration route such as Start-up, Innovator or the Graduate Visa.

Please see our guide to '**Working after Graduation**' for information on the Graduate Visa, which was introduced in the summer of 2021.

Income

Many international students in the UK find part-time or vacation work. It is a good way of meeting new people, practising English and gaining useful transferable skills. However, you must not rely on finding a job to form a substantial part of your income. According to the Immigration Rules, you should have access to sufficient funds to accommodate and maintain yourself in the UK without needing to work. It can be quite difficult to find suitable part-time employment to fit in with your university timetable. A job may make a significant contribution to your expenses, but it must not be your only source of income.

Working during vacation periods

It is important to be aware of what counts as vacation periods for your specific course, to avoid inadvertently working more than permitted.

Undergraduate students

Undergraduate students can consider that their vacation period falls in line with the university vacation periods. You can check the University vacation dates here: www.nottingham.ac.uk/about/keydates

Postgraduate students

Taught Masters

Students following a **taught Masters** course should note that the summer months between June and September are **not** considered as vacation time, but you can work full-time during the Christmas and Easter vacation periods as long as it does not interfere with your course requirements.

Please see the 'Graduation' section of this guide for information on working once your course is complete at the end of September.



PhD / research students

Students following a **PhD programme or other research course** wishing to work part-time up to 20 hours per week should be aware of University regulations which stipulate that full-time research students can only take paid employment with the permission of their School and in accordance with any scholarship requirements and immigration rules. The School must assure itself that such work will not interfere with the student's programme of study.

Unlike the course structure for taught programmes, the study period for research students does not follow a term-time/vacation pattern, and postgraduate research students have a year-round study commitment. Therefore the University cannot employ for postgraduate research students in full-time roles at any point during their studies, and we would discourage postgraduate research students working more than 20 hours per week in any off-campus role as well.

The 20 hour limit continues to apply to PhD students during the thesis-pending period, when awaiting the visa and during any corrections period. This is because permission to work full-time on a Student visa only starts once the course has been **successfully completed**. Following approval of the final version of your thesis, you may work full-time on your Student visa for up to 4 months or until your visa expires, whichever is sooner.

Proving you are allowed to work

Employers will ask to see your passport and current visa to check that they can legally employ you. They should also ask for a Confirmation of Student Status Letter confirming term dates (for taught students) which you can request via the Online Store at store.nottingham.ac.uk (Product Catalogue> Official Documents and Letters> Letters)

If an employer asks for more information regarding permitted working hours than that shown by your visa, you can refer them to the following information:

The UK Council for International Student Affairs website at www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Tier-4-work

UK Visa and Immigration guidance for employers: <https://www.gov.uk/check-job-applicant-right-to-work>

Digital Status

If you haven't been issued with a Biometric Residence Permit or a visa in your passport, and your visa has been granted digitally, you can still prove your right to work. You can generate a digital 'sharecode' at the below link which you will share with your employer who can use it to verify your immigration status:

<https://www.gov.uk/prove-right-to-work>



Internships, work placements and industrial experience

An internship is a short period of paid work that an employer may offer a potential employee. Within the standard Student visa restriction on working, you are permitted to undertake an internship.

An undergraduate student could do this during the summer months or, like masters students, they can undertake an internship after completing their course in the period remaining on their visa.

Students in the UK on Student visas are able to undertake work placements if the placement is an assessed part of the course, the student remains registered with the University during the placement and the placement is no more than 50% of the course in the UK. If the student is on a foundation course and would like to take a work placement, they should contact the Visa and Immigration team for further advice. The School will have a responsibility to monitor the attendance of students on work placement.

Under the Immigration Rules, it is not possible for students wishing to take a year out to work to suspend their studies in order to do so. For international students on Student visas any change in your study pattern, such as a suspension, needs to be reported to UK Visas and Immigration. The student's visa would then be cancelled and they would be required to leave the UK.

Working while you are waiting for a decision on your visa application

If you have submitted an application for a visa extension in the UK you are allowed to continue to work under the conditions of your previous leave. However, if you receive a visa refusal, you should stop working immediately even if you plan to make a fresh visa application shortly. You should not resume working until you have successfully received immigration permission to remain in the UK (as long as your new visa allows work).

If after completing your course you make an application for leave under the Points-Based System, or the Graduate Visa before your Student visa expires, you will be permitted to work full-time, within the limits described previously, until your application is decided.

Graduation

During the period spent waiting for graduation, providing this is not more than four months, it is possible to work full-time as your registered studies have come to an end.

For an undergraduate student this might be the period in between June and October and for a Masters student this is usually the period between September and January*.



PhD students can work full-time for four months or until the end of their visa, whichever comes first, after submitting the final version of their thesis (after viva and corrections)

If you have a different length of time on your visa, please seek advice from the Visa and Immigration team about your working restrictions.

*Please note that some employers may require you to have received your degree results before permitting you to begin full-time work, in case you are required to do any resit assessments, which UKVI advise would put you back in term-time and subject to term-time working restrictions once more.

Student Dependants

Dependants will not be allowed to work in the UK if:

- the Student's visa is granted for less than 9 months, or
- the Student's visa is for a course below degree level, unless the student is a government sponsored student and the course of study is longer than six months.

In all other cases, dependants on Dependant visas should be able to work full-time while accompanying the student in the UK. The restrictions are that they cannot work as a professional entertainer or sports person, or as a Doctor or Dentist in Training.

Finding a job

The **Careers and Employability Service** at the University can help you to explore graduate careers, develop your employability skills, search for job vacancies and work experience placements, improve your job application and meet future employers. The service is free and is located in the Portland Building on D Floor and more information is available at www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers

Unitemps is the University's recruitment agency for part-time and temporary work on campus and in the local area and are located in the Portland Building on B Floor. For more information, please visit www.unitemps.co.uk/Nottingham-candidates

You can also look through employment agencies and online job portals. You can find some helpful links to these external sources on the Careers website at:

www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/students/work-experience/part-timework



National Insurance numbers

Everyone who works in the UK must pay National Insurance contributions to the government. This payment funds social services such as healthcare, state pensions and social security. You do not need to have a National Insurance number before starting work (although some employers may ask for this), but you must apply for one when you get a job.

For information on how to apply, please see www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number

Income tax and National Insurance

International students are subject to the same tax regulations as UK citizens. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC – the UK tax authorities) require employers to deduct tax and National Insurance (NI) contributions from your wages under the Pay As You Earn (PAYE) system.

When you start work your employer will complete a ‘starter checklist’ for you. This enables HMRC to give you a tax code so that you will not pay an emergency tax rate until you receive your National Insurance number.

For the tax year April 2021 to April 2022 the tax-free Personal Allowance is £12,570, which is the amount of income you do not have to pay tax on. For more information and to claim a tax refund (if eligible), visit www.gov.uk/income-tax-rates

If you earn less than this then you are exempt from paying National Insurance contributions but you will still need a National Insurance number.

Further help and support

If you have any questions about the content of this guidance, or for further help and advice please contact:

The Visa and Immigration Team:

Email: Immigration-support@nottingham.ac.uk

Phone: (+44) 115 8466125