

# Immigration Routes for Academic Visitors

---

While an individual may be known as a visiting academic on site, they may be considered to be a temporary worker depending on their immigration route. It is important to ensure that each academic visitor holds the correct immigration status before their arrival and that adequate immigration checks are carried out to ensure the University does not breach UKVI rules and immigration legislation.

## 1. Temporary Worker - Government Authorised Exchange (GAE)

This is a temporary worker category, where individuals may work in a variety of temporary roles within the University. A visiting academic would fall under the Temporary Worker (GAE) category if they are required to carry out research in the UK for an OU research programme and they are involved in specific scientific, academic, medical or government research projects.

Where an individual has been assessed for and sponsored under Temporary Worker (GAE), then they must be treated as a worker by the University and the relevant right to work checks must be carried out prior to the start of their assignment. An individual sponsored under this route can stay in the UK for up to two years.

The sponsored Temporary Worker (GAE) may be funded by their host, their overseas employer, or an independent UK or non-UK funding body. The researcher cannot be self-funded and must be in receipt of funding in line with, or above, the National Minimum Wage. The sponsored Temporary Worker (GAE) does not have to be employed overseas to be eligible for sponsorship under this scheme, and if necessary, it is permitted for the host to issue an employment contract to the researcher, provided the activity does not amount to a genuine vacancy. The work or activities undertaken must never amount to what the Home Office terms 'a genuine vacancy'. In accordance with the Home Office rules, the role must be over and above the organisation's normal staffing requirements, and one which would not be automatically refilled once the post holder leaves.

## 2. Standard Visitor visa – Academic visitor

This is a sub-group of the Standard Visitor visa category. The individual will need to provide evidence that they are highly qualified in their field of expertise and are currently working in that field at an academic institution overseas.

An academic visitor under the Standard Visitor visa category may apply for entry clearance to the UK for up to 12 months. Any family members may obtain Standard Visitor visas to accompany them and will be granted leave to remain in the UK in line with the main applicant.

In order to qualify under this route, the individual would need to:

- be highly qualified within their own field of expertise;
- be currently working in that field at an academic institution or institution of higher education overseas;
- take part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts (including doctors);

- carry out research for their own purposes, if they are on sabbatical leave from their home institution;
- take part in research, teaching or clinical practice if they are an eminent senior doctor or dentist, provided this does not amount to filling a permanent teaching post.

An academic entering under the Standard Visitor route cannot claim public funds and cannot work. The academic must not receive payment from the OU for any of the activities undertaken in the UK, except for reasonable expenses to cover the cost of their travel and subsistence. The only exception is if they meet the requirements for, and have obtained, entry clearance under the Permitted Paid Engagements Visitor category.

### 3. Permitted paid engagements

The following are permitted paid engagements:

- An academic, who is highly qualified within their field of expertise, may examine students and/or participate in or chair selection panels, if they have been invited by a UK Higher Education Institution or a UK-based research or arts organisation as part of that institution or organisation's quality assurance processes.
- An expert may give lectures in their subject area, if they have been invited by a UK Higher Education Institution or a UK based research or arts organisation, provided this does not amount to filling a teaching position for the host organisation.
- A professional artist, entertainer, musician or sports person may carry out an activity directly relating to their profession, if they have been invited by a creative (arts or entertainment) or sports organisation, agent or broadcaster based in the UK.

### 4. Requirements for all visiting academics

If an overseas academic wishes to visit the University under the Standard Visitor visa category, the University must obtain evidence to ensure they have the correct immigration permission to be on site.

For visitors who require a visa to enter the UK, a copy of their passport ID page and the Visitor visa must be obtained via an online check by the People Services Resourcing Team.

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) applies to international researchers who intend to undertake research at postgraduate level in certain sensitive subjects, where an individual's knowledge could be used to develop military technology, weapons of mass destruction or the means of delivering weapons. An application is made to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for an ATAS certificate. The ATAS requirement should be considered for all visiting academics. The ATAS clearance certificate must be provided to the People Services Resourcing Team as part of the visa check.

Please note: ATAS does not apply to EU/EEA nationals and certain non-EU/EEA nationals (Australia, Canada, Iceland, Japan, Liechtenstein, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, USA).

### 5. Useful references

[Visiting Academic Policy](#)

[Overseas Academic Visitor Policy](#)

[Immigration Document Checks for Visiting Academics](#)

[Visiting Academic Nomination Form](#)

[Visiting Student Nomination Form](#) (Graduate School Network)

[Right to Work Procedures](#)

[ATAS Summary Statement of Research Template](#)