



Department for  
International Trade

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# The Global Entrepreneur Programme (GEP)





# Visas for Entrepreneurs and Founders



# Visa routes - Tier 1

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There had been some recent reforms to the two entrepreneur visa routes with Start Up visa and Innovators visa. From the 29<sup>th</sup> March the **Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur route** had been **replaced by the new Tier 1 Start-up visa** and the **Tier 1 Entrepreneur visa route closed and replaced by the Tier 1 Innovator route**.

- The **Start-up visa** is aimed at **early stage high potential entrepreneurs starting a business in the UK for the first time**. The route will expand on the old Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur model, but also allow start-up businesses rather than just graduates to enter the route.
- The **Innovator visa** is aimed at **entrepreneurs with a successful track record of running a business**, or those high potential entrepreneurs switching from the Start-up Visa.



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Start-up)

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Before you apply, you will need to have your business or business idea assessed by an approved body.

You must be endorsed by an authorised body that is either:

- a UK higher education institution
- a business organisation with a history of supporting UK entrepreneurs

You must be able to show that your business idea is:

- a new idea - you cannot join or invest in a business that is already trading
- viable, with potential for growth

The endorsing body will provide you with an endorsement letter, if your business is viable.

You must also:

- be at least 18 years old
- meet the English language requirement
- be able to prove that you have enough personal savings to support yourself while you're in the UK



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Start-up)

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## What do you need?

When you apply for your visa, you will need to provide an 'endorsement letter' from an authorised body.

You'll also need to provide:

- a current passport
- bank statements showing you've had at least £945 in savings in your bank account for 90 consecutive days before you apply
- your tuberculosis test results, if you're from a country where you have to take the test
- proof that you have knowledge of the English language

You'll need to have a blank page in your passport on which to put the visa.

You'll need to provide a certified translation of any documents that are not in English or Welsh.

You should also consider reading the full guidance on the Tier 1 (Start-Up) visa before you apply.



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Innovator)

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Before you apply, you will need to have your business or business idea assessed by an approved body.

For your business to be approved by the endorsing bodies, you must be able to show that your business idea is:

- a new idea - you cannot join or invest in a business that is already trading
- viable, with potential for growth

The endorsing body will provide you with an endorsement letter, if your business is viable.

You must also:

- be at least 18 years old
- meet the English language requirement
- be able to prove that you have enough personal savings to support yourself while you're in the UK
- You must have at least £50,000 in investment funds, if you want to set up a new business. You do not need funds if your business is already established and has been endorsed for an earlier visa such as the Start-up visa.



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Innovator)

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## What do you need?

When you apply for your visa, you will need to provide an 'endorsement letter' from an authorised body.

You'll also need to provide:

- a current passport
- bank statements showing you've had at least £945 in savings in your bank account for 90 consecutive days before you apply
- your tuberculosis test results, if you're from a country where you have to take the test
- proof that you have knowledge of the English language
- You must have at least £50,000 in investment funds, if you want to set up a new business. This can come from any source, but you do not need funds if your business is already established and has been endorsed for an earlier visa such as the Start-up visa.

You can form a team with other Innovator applicants, but you cannot share the same investment funds. Your team must have £50,000 for each Innovator applicant. For example, if you have 2 Innovator applicants, your team must have £100,000 to invest.

You'll need to have a blank page in your passport on which to put the visa.

You'll need to provide a certified translation of any documents that are not in English or Welsh.

You should also consider reading the [full guidance on the Tier 1 \(Innovator\) visa](#) before you apply.



# And for an extension?

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The applicant should apply for extensionist least three months before their visa expires. The applicant can apply to extension, if they:

- registered as a director or self-employed in the UK
- can prove you've been self-employed, a member of a partnership or working as a director of a business 3 months before you apply
- created at least two full time jobs that have existed for at least 12 months
- can continue to support yourself financially

You must also:

- a new 'endorsement letter' from an authorised body
- a business plan?
- be at least 18 years old
- meet the [English language requirement](#)
- be able to prove that you have enough personal savings to support yourself while you're in the UK
- You must have at least £50,000 in investment funds, if you want to set up a new business. You do not need funds if your business is already established and has been endorsed for an earlier visa such as the Start-up visa.
- Providing biometrics information and supporting documents.





# Alternative Route



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)

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Exceptional Talent visa is for the most exceptionally talented people, in the fields of science, humanities, engineering, digital technology and the arts, who wish to work in the UK. This route is open to those who are internationally recognised as world leaders in their field and also to those who show exceptional promise and are likely to become internationally recognised world leaders in their field.

There are 2,000 places available under this visa category between 6 April to 5 April of the following year.

This route is also two stages process and you need to:

- apply to the Home Office for endorsement as a leader or an emerging leader in your particular field
- apply for the visa

Most people apply for endorsement first, but you can complete both applications at the same time. However, if your endorsement is refused, your visa application will also be refused and you will not get any money back for either application.



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)

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## Stage One

- Stage one assesses your skills, abilities and achievements and enables the Designated Competent Bodies to decide whether you should be endorsed in order to progress your application.
- Stage one is submitted online. It can be submitted from wherever you are in the world but the supporting evidence must be sent to the UK for consideration. The form is available here: <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/tier-1-exceptional-talent-endorsement>.
- If you are granted an endorsement by a Designated Competent Body, you must then apply for Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) within three months.



# Visa routes - Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)

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## Stage Two

The applicant must apply for stage Two within three months of gaining their endorsement or their immigration application will be void and the applicant will have to re-apply for endorsement.

When you apply for your visa, you will need to provide the 'endorsement letter' from Designated Competent Bodies.

You'll also need to provide:

- a current passport
- bank statements showing you've had at least £945 in savings in your bank account for 90 consecutive days before you apply
- your tuberculosis test results, if you're from a country where you have to take the test
- proof that you have knowledge of the English language

You'll need to have a blank page in your passport on which to put the visa.

You'll need to provide a certified translation of any documents that are not in English or Welsh.



# What we can and what we can't do?

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Once the applicant has provided GEP DPA (Data Protection Act) form, we can do the following;

## Can do

- Notify the Home Office of imminent GEP Tier 1 application
- Monitor the progress of the visa application
- Early indication on the outcome of the application (sometimes)
- Provide guidance on other visa routes for company that are considering expanding/scaling

## Can't do

- Advised what is the best route for the applicant
- Fast Track applications
- Ask the Home Office to ignore/be flexible on certain rules

