

FACTSHEET: UK EXPANSION WORKER

**SMITH
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Immigration Practice

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

The UK Expansion Worker visa forms part of the UK's Global Business Mobility (GBM) immigration route for overseas businesses who need to temporarily send workers to the UK for a specific purpose that cannot be done by a settled worker.

A UK Expansion Worker visa allows you to come to the UK to set up a branch of an overseas business that has not started trading in the UK yet. You must already work for the overseas business as either a senior manager or specialist employee. From 11 April 2022, this visa has replaced the Sole Representative route.

This guide outlines who is eligible for a UK Expansion Worker visa and how to apply.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for a UK Expansion Worker visa, you must:

- Have a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) from your employer.
- Have worked for your employer outside the UK.
- Do a job that's on the list of [eligible occupations](#).
- Be paid at least at least £42,400 per year or the 'going rate' for your job - whichever is higher.

You must have worked for your employer outside the UK for at least 12 months unless you are either:

- Earning over £73,900
- A Japanese national working for a Japanese company that is expanding to the UK.

HOW LONG YOU CAN STAY

You can stay in the UK with a UK Expansion Worker visa for whichever is shorter of:

- The time given on your certificate of sponsorship plus 14 days
- 12 months after the start date of the job on your certificate of sponsorship.

If you want to stay longer in the UK, you can extend your visa by 12 months. The maximum time you can stay in the UK on a UK Expansion Worker visa is 2 years.

If you've spent time in the UK on this or another visa, you might not be able to stay on a UK Expansion Worker visa for as long. You can only stay in the UK for a maximum of 5 years in any 6 year period if you've spent time on any of the GBM routes, including the predecessor ICT routes.

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

With a UK Expansion Worker visa, you can:

- Work for your sponsor in the job described in your CoS
- Study
- Bring dependant family members with you, if they are eligible
- Do voluntary work
- Travel abroad and return to the UK.

You cannot:

- Access public funds
- Change jobs, unless you are eligible and you update your visa
- Have a second job
- Apply to settle permanently in the UK.

If your application is successful, you will receive a full list of what you can and cannot do with a UK Expansion Worker visa.



HOW TO APPLY

You must apply online for a UK Expansion Worker visa. How you apply depends on whether you are:

- [Outside the UK](#) and are coming to the UK
- Inside the UK and you want to [extend your current visa](#)
- Inside the UK and you want to [switch to this visa from another visa type](#).

As part of your application, you will need to prove your identity and provide your supporting documents. To do this, you will need to do one of the following:

- Attend an appointment at a Visa Application Centre (VAC) if you're outside the UK
- Attend an appointment at a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) service point if you're inside the UK
- Use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app to scan your identity document, if you are eligible.

HOW MUCH IT COSTS

When you apply for a UK Expansion Worker visa, you will need to have enough money to:

- Pay the visa application fee – It costs £259 to apply.
- Pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) – The IHS is currently £624 per year, or £470 per year for under 18s.
- Support yourself in the UK – You will usually need to show that you have at least £1,270 in your bank account (unless you're exempt).

Note: The visa application fee and the IHS must also be paid for any accompanying dependants.

PROCESSING TIMES

You can apply for a UK Expansion Worker visa up to 3 months before the day you are due to start work in the UK (this date is listed on your CoS). Once you've applied online, proved your identity and provided your documents, you'll usually get a decision on your visa within 3 weeks if you're outside the UK, or 8 weeks if you're inside the UK.

IMPORTANT NOTES FOR SPONSORS

For sponsor licencing fee purposes, the UK Expansion Worker route is classified as a 'Temporary Worker' route. This means that organisations applying for a licence to sponsor UK Expansion Workers on or after 11 April 2022 will pay the standard fee for a Temporary Worker sponsor licence, regardless of their size or charitable status. CoS assigned to workers on this route will be charged the standard Temporary Worker CoS fee (£21). Unlike the Senior or Specialist Worker route, sponsors are **not required** to pay the Immigration Skills Charge (ISC) for UK Expansion Workers.

The Home Office expects those businesses using the UK Expansion Worker route to establish a UK trading presence within 2 years. If you fail to do so, you will no longer be permitted to sponsor any new workers on this route, your existing sponsored workers will not be permitted to extend their stay (even if they would otherwise be eligible), and you may lose your sponsor licence.

Please contact Smith Stone Walters for more information on this route.

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