

FACTSHEET: HIGH POTENTIAL INDIVIDUAL

**SMITH
STONE
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Immigration Practice

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

A High Potential Individual (HPI) visa gives you permission to stay in the UK for at least 2 years. To apply, you must have been awarded a qualification by an eligible university in the last 5 years.

The route is unsponsored, meaning you do not need to have a job offer in order to apply. Once in the UK, you will be able to work, or look for work, at any skill level.

This guide outlines who is eligible for a High Potential Individual visa and how to apply.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To qualify for a HPI visa, you must have been awarded a qualification by an eligible university in the last 5 years. Your qualification must be at the same level as:

- A UK bachelor's degree
- A UK postgraduate degree
- A UK PhD or doctorate.

You must apply to Ecctis (formerly UK NARIC) to [check your qualification is valid and at the right level](#).

You must also be able to speak, read, write and understand English. You'll usually need to [prove your knowledge of English](#) when you apply.

You **cannot** apply for a HPI visa if you have already been given a Graduate visa or if you have already come to the UK as a Doctorate Extension Scheme student.

ELIGIBLE UNIVERSITIES

Eligible institutions are listed in the Home Office's [Global Universities List](#). The awarding institution must appear on the list in respect of the date when the applicant graduated with their degree.

UK universities are not eligible. If you're already in the UK on a Student visa you may be able to apply for a Graduate visa.

HOW LONG YOU CAN STAY

A HPI visa usually lasts for 2 years. If you have a PhD or other doctoral qualification, it will last for 3 years.

You cannot extend your HPI visa once it expires. However, if you want to stay in the UK longer, you may be able to switch to another visa type such as a Skilled Worker visa, if you meet the requirements.

PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

With a HPI visa, you can:

- Work in most jobs
- Look for work
- Be self-employed
- Bring dependant family members with you, if they are eligible.
- Do voluntary work.
- Travel abroad and return to the UK.

You cannot:

- Apply for most benefits (public funds) or the State Pension.
- Work as a professional sportsperson
- Extend this visa
- Apply to settle permanently in the UK.



HOW TO APPLY

You must apply online for a HPI 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 [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 HPI visa, you will need to have enough money to:

- Pay the visa application fee – It costs £715 to apply from outside or inside the UK.
- Pay for Ecctis to check your qualification is valid – It costs £210 if you're applying from outside the UK, or £252 if you're applying from the UK.
- 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

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.

STUDYING WITH A HIGH POTENTIAL INDIVIDUAL VISA

You can only study with an HPI visa if your chosen course is not eligible for a Student visa.

If your chosen course is eligible for a Student visa, you must apply under that route instead.

You may need an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate if you're studying or researching sensitive topics.

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

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