

NOTES ON VISA APPLICATIONS FOR OVERSEAS LINKS PARTNERS

Websites and sources of information

1. The UK Border Agency is now run by the Home Office. Their official visa services website is at: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk in which the application process is explained and frequently asked questions answered.
2. Latest news can also be found at: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk
3. The most recently updated application advice (Guidance – Visitors - INF 2) from the UK Border Agency can be found here: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/infs/inf2visitors#9244241
4. It is also worth looking at your Embassy or High Commission website to check on any local application procedure.
5. In some countries, for example South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, a commercial partner (VFS), deals with much of the documentation and may also carry out interviews. Their website is: www.vfs-uk-za.com. Through this website you can access the necessary forms.
6. Biometric data collection for visa applicants is now becoming universal. This may mean attending for finger printing and digital photography. Details of the procedure and benefits can be found at: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/biometricvisa

Some general notes

1. Starting the process **in good time** is essential. There is no points system (unlike work visa applications) but the information required is extensive and has to be provided in detail.
2. Ideally three months before the visit, the UK Border Agency should be informed by the UK link partner of the names, passport numbers and dates of travel of the overseas link visitors.
3. Visa applications **must be completed in full** and supporting documentation provided. If not, the application will be refused. However the guidance notes provided are comprehensive and helpful.
4. It is important that the information given to the Embassy or High Commission is consistent amongst link participants as differences may create doubts.
5. The lack of documents relating to accommodation may be a problem if the UK sponsor has not made clear details such as the accommodation address and source of funding.
5. Common reasons for refusal include:
 - lack of evidence of employment
 - lack of evidence of personal financial circumstances ie income, savings or assets
 - lack of evidence of ties to the home country ie family or employment

The Border Agency want to know that individuals have a strong incentive to return home.

6. Don't be tempted to give false information or forgeries! Prosecution is likely if discovered.

Supporting documentation

Supporting documentation must include:

- a) A formal invitation, on headed notepaper, from the UK host (ideally the trust CEO or chairman) which should include the names and passport numbers of the visitors, the dates of travel, the purpose of the visit, a statement that full costs will be covered and accommodation provided. A letter of support from the VISION 2020 Links Programme can also be provided.
- b) A letter of support from the visitors' own health institution (senior manager or dean) stating length of service and permission to undertake the visit.
- c) A current medical/professional certificate of registration, if applicable
- d) Evidence that the applicant still holds a salaried post in their own country and if possible evidence that they will return home after the trip (ie evidence of children at school, dependent relatives, business responsibilities etc). The same applies for all grades – nurse or Dean!
- e) A letter from the applicant's employer stating that they are aware of the visit and fully expecting the applicant to return to work