Tier 4 FAQs for Students

The Tier 4 visa application is asking me about the Biometric Residency Permit (BRP) and indicating that I must choose an address to pick the card up. What is this about?

Currently the application system does not distinguish between students who are there for less than six months (or one semester) and students who are there for more than six months (more than one semester). As 99% of students only study for one semester, the consulate has given us work-around instructions.

Students need to put in the UK postal code (SW7 4JU) for our program under the BRP section of the application, even though the consulate is basically going to ignore this. Since a BRP is only needed for students who will be in the UK 6 months or more, its fine if you say you would pick up a BRP (all students have to do this to get through this section).

Students still have to have schedule a regular biometrics appointment, so please make sure one is booked before payment. You will be able to schedule a regular biometrics appointment in the US once you have gotten through the BRP section

What is a biometric appointment and how can I schedule one?

 It is an appointment in which an office approved by the UK government takes your electronic fingerprints and photograph and stores it a database. The biometric information is then made available to the UK government. In the United States the appointment takes place at an USCIS Application Support Center. The consulate will check this information when processing the Tier 4 visa application.

You arrange an appointment through your online visa application. It can be found in part two of the four part application process after the questionnaire. Please see visa instructions for further detail.

What is a CAS number and where can I get it?

CAS stands for confirmation of acceptance for studies. The CAS number is generated through the London Personal Page after you have submitted a copy of your passport. The number can be found on your London Personal Page.

I made a mistake on my application and printed it out. The system won't let me fix it online. What can I do to fix the mistake?

If you have accidentally entered incorrect information on your online application, such as wrong birthdate, citizenship, or arrival date; you should cross out the information on their printed application

and write in the correct information. Additionally, you should include a brief but formal memo the New York consulate indicating the change on your Tier 4 visa application.

I am incredibly busy with coursework and extra circular activities. Can someone else fill out my visa application?

No. Students need to fill out the application themselves. You are responsible for the information and will need to know what was entered into the system, especially at the port-of-entry into the UK. Parents may assist you if you have questions but we then would suggest doing it together. Or you can contact your Program Manager with any inquiries regarding the visa.

What do I need to bring to my biometric appointment?

- Your actual passport, signed.
- Biometrics Confirmation Form
- 2nd form of government issued photo ID (driver's license is fine)
- Printed Tier-4 visa application

What is a passport-style ID photo? Can I take and print the picture myself?

The passport photo must be printed on photo paper, not regular paper, so we recommend getting it done by a store that does passport photos, such as CVS, the Post Office or other location. Please see the photo instructions on the checklist. We find the most problems and visa processing delays when students take their own picture.

I'm confused about the return envelope. How do I provide a pre-paid shipping label and envelope in my full application package?

Since you can only submit your full application by mail, the consulate needs to be able to mail your passport and visa back to you when it's issued. You must provide two things to help them do this – a sturdy envelope (letter size, cardboard recommended) and a pre-paid shipping label through VSF Global.

VSF Global uses UPS. So once you have purchased and printed your pre-paid shipping through VFS Global, you can go into UPS store and request a mailing envelope. Please do not use a PO Box as your return address.

NOTE FedEx and USPS are no longer accepted for return shipping by the consulate. Do NOT use FedEx or USPS – your application will be delayed if you do.

Do I have to send my actual passport to the UK consulate when submitting my full Tier 4 General Student Visa?

Yes, the Tier 4 General Student Visa is a sticker that is attached to a page in the passport after the visa application has been approved.

How long does it take to get my visa and passport back from the consulate?

The typical processing time is between 14 – 21 business days, from receipt at the consulate.

I need my passport back in a few days, how can I expedite it?

You will need to follow the visa expediting instructions provided on the Accepted Students section of our website. Expediting takes 6-10 business days plus shipping time to and from the consulate – plan your travel accordingly. There is also an additional cost of $225.00. Keep in mind that late arrivals in London are not permitted. If your timeline is especially tight, you may want to pay extra to make sure your return package can be delivered on a Saturday (particularly for UPS).

How can I reach the consulate with any questions or concerns I may have about my application?

You cannot reach the visa processing office by phone or email – they do not release their contact information to the public as it would severely slow down their ability to process visas. We suggest starting with your program manager for any questions you might have. Depending on the severity of the situation, your program manager can contact the consulate on your behalf. Remember to read through this entire FAQ! Many of your questions may be answered right here.

I received an error message when I tried to schedule my biometrics appointment and can't seem to get past it. What can I do?

This is a known issue. The best course of action is as follows (and may take more than one try):

1. Log out of your current application. Clear all browsing data and cookies (generally in the options or preferences menu of your internet browser). Close this browser.
2. Choose a new internet browser and clear all browsing data and cookies again. Use this new browser going forward.
3. Restart your computer.

4. Set up a completely new visa account with a different email address on the UKVI website. You'll be abandoning your old visa account altogether. You may want to create a new email address just for your visa.
5. Fill out the visa application all over again.

If you continue to experience the same error, please contact your program manager for assistance.

I just reviewed the checklist and I forgot to include something in my mailing to the consulate. How can I send them the missing document?

When a document is missing or incorrect, the consulate will typically email the applicant notifying them of the error and instructions on how to resolve it. These instructions are almost always time sensitive so remember to check your email account associated with your visa regularly. Do not send multiple packages to the consulate unless it's expressly requested by their office. Remember, it can take up to a week for the consulate to open your package, so you may not hear from them right away.

I applied for the wrong visa. How can I correct this?

If you have applied for a Tier 4 General *Sponsored* Student visa, please follow the instructions for fixing a general mistake listed above.

For all other visa categories, you need to completely apply for the correct visa and abandon your current application. If you have not done your biometrics you may qualify for a refund. If you have already had your biometric appointment, then you would no longer qualify for a refund. Please see the fund policy on the UKVI website. Please contact your program manager with any questions.

The visa fee is very expensive! Is there any way to waive the cost?

Unfortunately, no – the visa fee is set by the UK government and BU Study Abroad has no ability to change or waive it. We try to let students know early on to expect this cost and plan for it. If you have questions about financial aid, please see the [Finances and Financial Aid section](#) of our website. BU students can also contact the Office of Financial Assistance.

I am studying abroad the semester before I go to London. Can I apply for my Tier-4 Visa while I'm abroad?

Probably not. Most consulates will not let non-nationals apply in their country unless they have some sort of long-term permission to stay (like permanent residency, etc.), which studying abroad typically does not count as. This means that you'll need to plan to return to the United States or your home

country and apply for a visa there. That revised timeline may also mean that you must expedite your application.

I am an international student and will be traveling home for the summer. Can I apply for the Tier-4 Visa in my home country?

Very likely, yes. Keep in mind that the process for applying, documents needed, and processing time might be quite different than it is in the United States. You will need to plan ahead and apply early to ensure that you have your visa in time to depart for London.

Does this visa allow me to work for pay while in the UK? I typically have a job on campus.

No, it does not allow you to work for pay, this includes jobs like babysitting, etc. Essentially you are permitted a certain number of hours working without pay, and that is completely taken up by your internship. In addition, the schedule of the program and local competition for employment would make working extremely difficult if it were allowed.

That said, there are very limited employment opportunities (for pay) directly through the BU London office – Residence Assistants and Program Assistants. You can find applications for these positions on your London Personal Page.

I found a cheap flight to fly through Ireland on my way to the UK. Will this be ok?

We don't recommend this. Our understanding is that if you make a connecting flight through any Irish airport, you may not go through normal UK immigration and therefore your Tier 4 visa won't be verified, and you won't be compliant with your immigration status in the UK – causing you potentially severe complications once you arrive on site in London. You *can* connect through other airports in continental Europe if you would like. Only Ireland seems to cause issues.

I heard that I must leave the UK seven days after my program end but I want to travel around the UK and Europe. Can I extend my Tier 4 visa?

You cannot extend your Tier 4 visa as your program has ended. Most U.S. students will leave the UK within the seven day window and then return to the UK as a tourist after a few days. It is at the discretion of the immigration officer at the Port-of-Entry to allow you entry as a tourist. We recommend that you have an itinerary for your stay in the UK as well as a return ticket to show the immigration officer.

What documents should I have with me when I enter the UK to start the program?

We recommend the following four documents:

1) Your passport with the attached Tier 4 visa sticker
2) Your immigration letter that can be found on your London Personal Page
3) Directions to your residence hall, which can also be found on your London Personal Page
4) Your return ticket back to the United States or your home country if you are an international student