Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme

Have you got a brilliant idea for a new business based in the UK?

If so, you may be eligible to enter the University of Warwick Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme which will give you a chance of remaining in the UK on a Tier 1 visa for a further two years.

The Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme

The University of Warwick is part of a scheme, run in conjunction with the Home Office, which aims to identify, nurture and develop graduate entrepreneurs with a genuine, credible and innovative business idea who wish to stay in the United Kingdom to develop their new venture. The scheme is limited to a maximum of 20 graduates per year.

Who can apply?

Any student, who currently has a Tier 4 student visa and who will be completing their studies at Warwick, with a recognised degree at either undergraduate or postgraduate level is eligible.

You must have a valid Tier 4 visa or have last been granted a Tier 4 visa (if applying from overseas) in order to be eligible to apply under the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme.

Please note if you have not yet completed your degree programme at the time of your application for endorsement under this scheme and you are successful with this application then the endorsement will be conditional on successful completion of your degree programme. Foundation degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas are not acceptable qualifications for this scheme.

How do I apply?

Stage 1 – Register your interest. If you are interested in the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme you should contact the Enterprise Team at enterprise@warwick.ac.uk to register your interest and arrange an appointment for an initial discussion.

Stage 2 – Initial discussion – This meeting will be used to check your details, your eligibility for the scheme and your business proposal and will usually last for about an hour.

Stage 3 – Making an application – After your initial discussion, you will be asked to submit a business plan for consideration. Your business plan should be no more than 10 pages in length (using a font no smaller than Arial 10), with a maximum of two appendices. The judges will be looking for a genuine, credible and innovative business proposition. Details of the judging criteria will be sent out to applicants.
After you have submitted your business plan, the University will check your eligibility, review your application and decide whether you should be invited to present your business idea to a University selection panel.

**Stage 4 – Presenting your business idea** — If your initial application is successful, you will be invited to present your business idea to a University judging panel. The panel will be made up of senior staff from across the University’s academic and non-academic departments along with independent judges.

If you have already left the UK at the time of the panel, it may be possible to make your presentation via video conferencing facilities (subject to availability). You are welcome to attend in person but should be aware that it would be risky to try to re-enter the UK using your Tier 4 visa if you have completed your course as you will no longer meet the conditions of this visa. You must have a valid Tier 4 visa or have last been granted a Tier 4 visa (if applying from overseas) in order to be eligible to apply under the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme.

The panel will make a decision whether to:

- Endorse your application and issue you with an endorsement letter;
- Decline your application; or,
- Defer your application pending submission of further information.

**What happens if I’m successful?**

You will receive a written decision shortly after the panel has met and if you are successful an endorsement letter will be sent to you at your registered address in the UK once you have agreed to the University’s terms and conditions and the Immigration Service has checked you meet the financial requirements for the scheme.

For applications made on or after 1st July 2014 – you must evidence that you have personal savings of at least £945, if applying from within the UK, or £1890, if applying from overseas. It is not possible to use relatives or friends bank statements to evidence this money. All funds must be in your own name.

Before the Immigration Service will issue you with the letter of endorsement, you are required to scan and email evidence of your finances to immigrationservice@warwick.ac.uk for checking. You will need to submit this endorsement letter/document to the Home Office as part of the information required with your visa application. You should apply to the Home Office at least one month before your current visa is due to expire to allow time for your application to be processed and checked.

If you are applying from within the UK, then your visa application must be submitted before your current Tier 4 Student visa expires and it is your responsibility to start thinking about this as early as possible as the whole process (from the date you apply to the date you obtain your letter of endorsement) can take as long as three months and you must have held the required funds for 90 days at the time you make your application.
You are advised to read the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme policy guidance extremely carefully before making your application. You can access this at [http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier1/graduate-entrepreneur/](http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier1/graduate-entrepreneur/). This guidance explains the format required for each supporting document which must be submitted with your application.

**What happens if I’m unsuccessful?**

The decision of the University judging panel is final and there is no appeal mechanism. Where an application is declined you will receive feedback on that decision via email. We can also arrange for a follow-up meeting on request, in order to answer any questions relating to the feedback provided and to provide guidance on possible next steps and further opportunities.

**Frequently Asked Questions**

*Am I eligible to apply?*

- All applicants must be non-EEA national students at the University of Warwick and should be completing their studies at Warwick, at either undergraduate or postgraduate level or have completed their studies at Warwick. If you are applying in the UK, you must hold a current Tier 4 visa. If you are applying from overseas, the last UK visa you should have been granted is a Tier 4 visa.
- Please note if you have not yet completed your degree programme at the time of your application for endorsement under this scheme and you are successful with this application then the endorsement will be conditional on successful completion of your degree programme.
- Foundation degrees, postgraduate certificates and diplomas are not acceptable qualifications for this scheme.
- Switching into the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category will only be permitted where the applicant has or has last been granted leave as a:
  - Tier 4 Migrant;
  - Student;
  - Student nurse;
  - Student re-sitting an examination;
  - Student writing up a thesis;
  - Postgraduate doctor or dentist; or
  - Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Migrant.
- Applicants must not have been previously granted entry clearance, leave to enter or leave to remain as a Tier 1 (Post Study Work) migrant, a participant in the Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme, or a participant in the International Graduates Scheme (or its predecessor, the Science and Engineering Graduate Scheme).
- The Home Office will allow the University to endorse a Tier 1 visa application for up to 20 graduates who can demonstrate that they have a ‘genuine, credible and innovative’ business idea. As there are only 20 endorsements available, the University will be running a competitive process. The judges will select up to 20 graduates who submit a plan for a viable business and can demonstrate that the business idea meets the Home Office’s requirements.
You are advised to read the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme policy guidance extremely carefully before making your application. You can access this at http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/working/tier1/graduate-entrepreneur/. This guidance explains the format required for each supporting document which must be submitted with your application.

How will the judges assess my business plan?

- The judging panel includes senior members of staff from both academic and non-academic departments with the University who have business expertise (particularly in supporting new business) and an independent judge.
- They will be looking for a genuine, credible and innovative business proposition.
- The panel reserves the right to disqualify any entrant if it has reasonable grounds to believe that the entrant has breached any of the rules.
- The panel will assess applications in the four following categories:
  - General:
    - Is the business idea innovative in the sense that it offers unique consumer benefits and fulfils market demands?
    - Expresses a concise executive plan which clearly highlights the business strategy and product/service advantages
    - Clearly defines the idea, aims and objectives of the business
    - Highlights features and benefits of product/service
  - Target audience and market research:
    - Defines the market/market audience providing relevant and accurate information on market trends
    - Highlights the need/gap in the market
    - Quantify the market and identify the target segment providing relevant and accurate information on market trends
    - Identifies main competitors
    - Highlights the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats based on market research
  - Price, sales and risks:
    - Identifies and explains pricing strategy aimed at target audience
    - Details information relating to pricing of product/service
    - Clearly defines how the product will be/has been taken from concept to market
    - Offers a strategy for marketing and sales relevant to intended target audience
    - Outlines both current and future risks and identifies how these risks are factored into the business
  - Financial information:
    - Illustrates a cash flow/profit and loss forecast clearly stating any assumptions made
    - Clarifies any capital expenditure
    - Estimates potential profit
    - Outlines strategy for future growth
Are the market and financial projections realistic and reasonable?

What does ‘business’ mean?

- The Home Office define a ‘business’ as:
  - Sole trader;
  - Partnership; or
  - Company registered in the UK.
- Further information on setting-up a business in the UK is available at www.gov.uk/browse/business/setting-up

Will the University keep my idea secret?

- The University and its employees will treat your IP with all the care as if it was their own.
- University employees are bound to confidentiality by their employment contract and anyone involved in the selection process who is not an employee will sign a non-disclosure agreement.

Does it matter where my business is based?

- Yes, your business must be based in the UK in order to qualify under Home Office rules. The University’s Enterprise Development Officer will need to meet with you on a regular basis to assess the development of the business. They may also make site visits.
- The University will charge commercial rates for the use of its premises and facilities.
- You cannot use the University of Warwick as the company address.

Who will fund my salary?

- It is normal for all newly formed companies to have very little funding at their inception. Thus the company founders have to fund themselves until an investor can be found.
- The University, as a charity, cannot provide financial support to commercial entities in which it has no equity. Where it does hold equity, any support is limited to start-up funding and would be insufficient to pay a salary.
- You will not be able to claim most benefits paid by the UK Government.
- You need to be able to fund yourself to live in the UK for one year in the first instance and up to two years if your business is developing successfully. During that time, you must spend the majority of your working time on developing your business venture in the United Kingdom and maintain contact at regular intervals for progress meetings with the University Enterprise Development Officer.
- For applications made on or after 1st July 2014 – you must evidence that you have personal savings of at least £945 if applying from within the UK or £1890 if applying from overseas. It is not possible to use relatives or friends bank statements to evidence this money. All funds must be in your own name. Before the Immigration Service will issue you with the letter of endorsement, you are required to scan and email evidence of your finances to immigrationservice@warwick.ac.uk for checking.
**Can I work while on the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme?**

- If you apply in the UK, you can work under the terms of your student leave while your application is with the Home Office. If your course has finished and you have completed all academic requirements, this period will be regarded as your holiday so you can work full-time, but you must not be self-employed, work as a doctor or dentist in training, take a permanent job or work as a professional sportsperson or entertainer. When your visa is granted, you can start to set up your business.
- If you are granted a visa, it will be for a period of 12 months. There is the possibility to apply to extend this leave for another 12 months if you still meet the requirements of the scheme.
- The number of hours a week that you can work on an employed basis is unrestricted. You are not allowed to work as a doctor or dentist in training or as a professional sportsperson (including work as a sports coach). However, the University would expect that you are spending the majority of your time developing your business in the UK and not taking paid employment. If the University deems you to not be spending enough time working on your business, which is the reason your visa was granted, it may invalidate its endorsement of you, which would invalidate your visa.
- The Tier 4 work conditions were changed on 13 December 2012 but there remains some uncertainty about the point at which you are allowed to start your business and work on a self-employed basis. UKCSISA has sought clarification from the Home Office on this point. Until further notice, we would advise students that in the period between completion of their course and awaiting the outcome of the Tier 1 application, their normal Tier 4 working restrictions continue to apply until they have obtained their Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur permission from the Home Office. This means full-time work is permitted, but not self-employment.

**When will I know the panel’s decision?**

- You will receive a written decision shortly after the panel has met and if you are successful an endorsement letter will be sent to you at your registered address in the UK once you have agreed to the University’s terms and conditions and the Immigration Service is satisfied you meet the financial requirements of the scheme.

**What happens after the first year on the scheme?**

- The endorsement to remain in the UK will initially be for one year. After the first year, the progress of your business will be assessed by the University panel. If they are happy that the business is developing successfully, they can endorse an application for a Tier 1 visa for the second year of the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme.

**Is there any help available?**

- As part of the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) scheme, the University will try and provide additional support for you during the first year (or two) of your new business.
• You will keep in regular contact with Richard Groves, (UG/PGT Enterprise and Research Development Officer, Student Careers and Skills), to include a minimum of one progress review meeting every three months.

• For visa advice about applying for a Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur from within the UK, please contact the Immigration Service in the International Office at immigrationservice@warwick.ac.uk

• In certain circumstances your business plan proposal may be subject to the University’s Regulation 28 (www.warwick.ac.uk/services/gov/calendar/section2/regulations/patenting)

The University of Warwick cannot accept any responsibility for any damage, loss, injury or disappointment suffered by any student or graduate applying for the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme or as a result of accepting the letter of endorsement to accompany your application for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme visa. The University of Warwick reserves the right to withdraw its endorsements or offers of endorsement in relation to the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme.