Working alongside your studies

Important information for Tier 4 visa holders
The main purpose of the Tier 4 visa route is for a student to come to the UK to study. Where the Tier 4 visa permits some work, the intention is that this should be to supplement income whilst studying. In most cases, the Home Office would expect the student to take a part-time role in an established business/organisation.

Work placements
A work placement is permitted provided that it is an integral and assessed part of the student’s main course (for example, a course which includes an intercalated year). Tier 4 visa holders should refer to the latest version of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance and the Immigration Rules for detailed guidance.

Prohibited activities
Tier 4 visa holders are strictly prohibited from undertaking the following types of employment, irrespective of the number of hours:

- Doctor in training (except on a recognised foundation programme);
- Professional sportsperson (including a sports coach);
- Entertainer;
- Self-employment or engagement in business activity.

Tier 4 visa holders must not fill a full-time, permanent vacancy (except on a recognised foundation programme as a doctor in training, or as a students' union sabbatical officer).

Many students are at risk of unknowingly being self-employed, or engaging in a business activity, so the University strongly advises that student read the full definitions in the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

The difference between ‘volunteering’ and ‘voluntary work’
Tier 4 (General) students and Tier 4 (Child) students can volunteer while they are studying. Voluntary work is distinct from volunteering. Hours of voluntary work (not volunteering) must be counted in the total number of hours permitted.

Factors to take into account when considering whether a particular activity constitutes voluntary work or volunteering are:

- Voluntary workers will usually have contractual obligations to perform the work (e.g. to attend at particular times and carry out specific tasks) with the employer being contractually required to provide the work – the contract does not have to be written;
- The worker is usually remunerated in kind;
- Volunteers do not have a contract, they must not be a substitute for an employee and they must not be doing unpaid work – for example, receiving payment in kind (although they are sometimes reimbursed for reasonable travel and subsistence expenses);
- Volunteers usually help a charity or voluntary or public sector organisation.
Hours of work

Students need to be aware that the Home Office define a week as **any given seven day period, not Monday to Sunday.** Therefore, students need to calculate the number of hours worked each ‘week’ on a rolling basis and pay close attention when working irregular hours from week to week. Students should not rely on their employers to calculate their hours of work for them and must pay close attention to the numbers of hours worked when holding more than one job.

Undergraduate students can work full time during official University vacation periods which can be found here [www.warwick.ac.uk/study/termdates](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/study/termdates).

Postgraduate Taught students must not work more than 20 hours at any time from the course start date to the course end date, even if academic work is completed earlier. If a period of extension is granted following an Exam Board a PGT student must return to working 20 hours per week. PGR students must always wait until their degree has been officially conferred before working full time.

Severe penalties for Tier 4 students who work in breach of their visa conditions

The penalties for illegal working can be severe for both ‘employer’ and ‘employee’ so Tier 4 sponsored students must ask themselves the following questions before starting any work, paid or unpaid/voluntary work, or undertaking any business activity in the UK:

- Does my Tier 4 visa permit work? If yes, what is the maximum number of hours I am permitted to work each week?
- Am I understanding a ‘week’ as a 7 day rolling period and am I keeping track of my hours of work correctly? Am I counting all of my hours of employment, paid or unpaid/voluntary?
- When can my restriction on work hours be lifted?
- Is the type of work activity I would like to do permitted?
- Could any of the activities that I am involved in be defined as ‘self-employment’ or a ‘business activity’?
“The immigration team has helped me with five visa applications during my 7-year time at Warwick. Their efforts have made my life hassle free when it comes to immigration matters. Thank you for everything you have done to support me!”

Yuefan Xiao, China
MA Globalisation & Development, PhD Politics & International Studies

For more information on working during your studies please refer to the Immigration Service website:

www.warwick.ac.uk/study/international/immigration/

IMPORTANT!

You should read the Immigration Rules and the Tier 4 Policy Guidance in order to gain the best understanding of all your work rights.

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