How to apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme

Guide for Students

Standard process

This cycle applies to the standard application process. However, your specific situation may be different. For this reason, please make sure to read all of this document.

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What is it?

The scheme is designed to give students who have a Tier 4 (General) Student visa and have almost finished their UK PhD (or other doctorate qualification) an extra 12 months of Tier 4 immigration permission after their studies, to apply for jobs and work in the UK.

Basically, it's a 12 month extension of your tier 4 visa, but you don't study and you can work without restriction.

Who can apply?

Doctoral students, with current Tier 4 immigration permission

Where can I apply?

You can **only** apply in the UK

When do I apply?

You must apply:

You can only apply in the 60 days immediately before your course end date. It is often very difficult to know this exact date in advance, and in most cases we will not be able to set this date until you have had your viva. At this point, it should become clear how much more time is required before your doctorate will be awarded.

You will need to apply for a CAS to make a Doctorate Extension Scheme application. The CAS cannot be issued until you are within 60 days of the end date of your course, and it cannot be issued after your doctorate has been awarded

There might be a problem if your current Tier 4 visa expires more than 60 days before your course end date, as then you would not have a valid visa to make a DES application. If this happens, you would need to make a new Tier 4 application before you apply for the DES. If you are concerned about this, please contact us.

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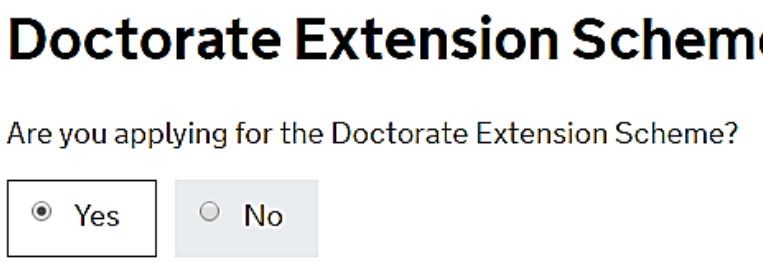
What is my award date?

The expected end date is not the date you submit your thesis, it is the date you are awarded your PhD. It is defined by the UKVI as:

"the date the PhD is expected to be formally confirmed, by the sponsor, as completed to the standard required for the award of a PhD".

How do I apply?

A DES application is pretty much exactly the same as a Tier 4 (General) Student visa application. The information in your CAS will be different, but you will complete the same application form online and then either send your documents to the UKVI (standard and priority service) or take them in person to the UKVI service centre (premium service). The application form differs from the usual Tier 4 application, as in the course details section when you choose NQF8 as the level of qualification, you will be asked:



The University cannot assign you a CAS after your doctorate has been awarded, so you are likely to have just one opportunity to apply under the DES. It is therefore very important that you ensure your application is completed correctly and your documents meet the requirements. You cannot correct any mistakes after you have applied.

How much does it cost?

	Standard postal	Priority service	Premium service
Time	8 weeks	10 days	Same day of appointment
Cost of application	£457	£907	£1047
Immigration Health Surcharge	£150	£150	£150
Cost of biometrics	£19.20	£19.20	No cost

How much money do I need?

When you make your online DES application, you must show that you have held maintenance funds of £2,030 for 28 consecutive days. To show your funds you can use:

- A bank statement in your own name or your parent's name
- A bank letter in your own name or your parent's name
- A letter confirming an educational loan
- A letter confirming you have an official financial sponsor

If you are using a bank statement, the UKVI will look at the 28 days before the closing balance of a bank statement to check that the funds have been maintained. This date must be before you submit your online application, but not more than 31 days before.

If you have an official financial sponsor that will continue to sponsor you after your studies have finished, you can use a letter from them which confirms their sponsorship.

If you have been financially sponsored for all your fees and living costs by a government or international scholarship in the 12 months before making your DES application, you must provide a letter from them that states they give their the unconditional consent to you making a DES application.

Immigration Health Surcharge

As part of your DES application, you will normally need to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge

Unfortunately, the UKVI's system for calculating the Immigration Health Surcharge isn't able to distinguish between a DES application and a standard Tier 4 application. This means that you are likely to be under or overcharged for your Immigration Health Surcharge, which could delay your application.

To avoid this, we recommend that **you do not** input the end date on your CAS into the Immigration Health Surcharge part of the application form. Instead, give an expected end date 7 months after the start date on your CAS. This way the system will calculate the correct amount of £150. The UKVI are aware of this issue and giving a different end date shouldn't cause problems for your application.

ATAS

If you require an ATAS for your course, and it is still valid then you do not need to get a new one for your DES application.

However, if your course end date is extended by more than 3 months then you will need to apply for a new one. Also, if your course details change, or you change institutions you will need a new ATAS.

If you have to apply for one, your ATAS application should be processed quickly as you will have already completed your research. Make sure that you state on your ATAS application that you will be applying under DES and that your research has been completed. You should provide details of the research you have already completed. You need to obtain ATAS clearance before:

- your current immigration permission expires and
- your doctorate is formally confirmed as awarded and

- the "expected end date" on your CAS, if you have already been assigned a CAS.

When can I start working?

The Immigration Rules say that if you applied for your Tier 4 student visa on or after 6 April 2013, and have now applied under the DES, you can start working without restriction as soon as your award is confirmed, even while you're waiting for a decision to your DES application.

What kind of work can I do?

If your application is successful, once you have been awarded your PhD (this can be before or after the expected end date on your CAS) you will have 12 months to work (almost) without restriction. The only restrictions are, you cannot work as:

- a doctor or dentist in training,
- as a professional sportsperson
- as a sports coach.

You are allowed to work full time, work at any level, with any salary, be self-employed or run a business. If you plan to set up a business, you might also want to check if you meet the requirements of the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Working-after-studies#layer-3796

Can I have dependants?

The following family members can join you or stay with you in the UK:

- spouse or civil partner
- unmarried partner or same sex partner who is not a civil partner
- children aged under 18 if they are outside the UK
- children of any age if they are applying in the UK and they are not leading an independent life. A child aged 18 or older must already have leave as your dependant.

If they are applying inside the UK, they can switch to be your DES dependant if they have any type of immigration permission **except** a visitor visa (and a few other more obscure categories: as a person taking the PLAB test, as a participant on a clinical attachment or as a dental observer or as a prospective student's dependant, on temporary admission or temporary release). A child aged 18 or older can apply as your dependant only if the child is already in the UK with immigration permission as your dependant and is not leading an independent life.

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The funds requirement for each family member is £1,360. The money must have been held for 28 days before the date of the application and must follow all the same rules as a Tier 4 (General) application.

What links do I have with the University while I'm working?

You are not required to stay in or around Staffordshire and you can move anywhere in the UK. However, the University is obliged to contact you on at least two occasions during your 12-month period. This can be a meeting in person, on the phone, over skype or by email.

If you will not be able to make an appointment that we have arranged with you, you must let us know to reschedule. If you miss a scheduled contact without providing an explanation, the University is obliged to report this to the UKVI. The UKVI may then curtail (cut short) your visa if you do not comply with this requirement. You should also let the University know if you leave the UK and do not intend to return before your DES visa expires, or if you are granted a new visa under a different category.

What happens if I complete later than expected?

Once your CAS has been issued, if you find out that your course end date will be later than the end date on your CAS, you can still apply under the DES as long as you do so:

- in the 60 days before your end date
- before the end date on the CAS
- before your current Tier 4 leave expires.

The University is required to notify the UKVI of your actual award date, and you will not be able to work without restriction until your award is confirmed. You cannot make an extension under the DES, which means you will not be able to spend the entire 12 months working without restriction. If there is a long delay before your award is confirmed, you might instead consider applying under Tier 4 as a student, and afterwards making a DES application. You should contact us as early as possible to check if the University is able to issue a new CAS.

What happens if I'm not awarded my doctorate?

The University is required to let the UKVI know if you fail your course, do not complete it or if you are awarded a lower qualification. If you've already been granted a DES visa, the UKVI will curtail this (cut it short). If you've submitted your DES application, it will be refused. Instead you might choose to withdraw your application first, rather than waiting for a refusal. If you are concerned this might happen to you, then please get in touch.

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