Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme

Information for Research Degree Students

Frequently asked questions

Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) was introduced by the Home Office in April 2013, with a view to enabling students who are due to complete a doctorate degree to remain in the UK for an additional 12 months, so that they are able to seek skilled work. Birkbeck will support applications under this scheme, provided certain conditions have been met.

Individuals’ immigration permission will continue to be under Tier 4 of the Points Based System. Birkbeck, therefore, retains responsibility for monitoring DES participants while they are in the UK.

Students who fail to respond to communication from Birkbeck, in accordance with our attendance monitoring responsibilities, risk being reported to the Home Office.

If you have any further queries after reading the following FAQs, please contact International Student Administration (ISA).

International Student Administration, Birkbeck University of London WC1E 7HX
isa@bbk.ac.uk +44 (0)70 380 3023
Frequently asked questions

Is the DES the same as the Post Study Work visa?

➤ No. the Post Study Work visa scheme was withdrawn in April 2012. This is a new scheme.

Do I need a job offer in order to apply for the DES?

➤ No, you do not need a job offer.

When can I apply for this scheme?

➤ There is a set period during which DES applications need to be made. You must apply:
  • before your current Tier 4 visa expires,
  • from the UK, and
  • no more than 60 days before your official award date.

The date the award is conferred is defined as the day when both the PhD Examiners’ report form and two copies of the corrected thesis (one hard bound and one soft bound) have been received by the Research Student Unit within Registry. A delay in submission of any of these will mean that the award of the PhD will be delayed. It is therefore essential that these documents are submitted in a timely fashion.

Please note that ISA cannot influence the speed of decision making by the PhD Examiners, nor the date the final award is conferred.

“The above requirements mean that research degree students whose Tier 4 Student visa expires before their PhD award is conferred will be ineligible to apply for the scheme.”

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Can I apply for this visa from overseas?

► No, you need to make the application from the UK, within the time period specified above. We advise anyone making a visa application within the UK not to make travel plans until their passport has been returned from the Home Office.

Can I apply for this visa after the award of PhD?

► No, applications need to be made before the award is conferred, but no more than 60 days before.

Can I extend my Tier 4 Student visa if it is about to expire, in order to enable me to apply for this visa?

► If you are academically required to continue your registration as a full-time student, you may be supported for a further Tier 4 Student visa for the required period. For this, please follow the standard Tier 4 Student visa extension process by submitting a completed CAS request form.

What do I need in order to apply?

► Early preparation is important. Once you know your viva date, you should contact ISA in order to establish whether you might be eligible to make an application. It is part of conditions that DES applications are submitted through the College. Therefore, you will need to liaise with Birkbeck’s visa advisor regarding your application well in advance.

Please note that if ISA has reason to believe that a successful outcome is unlikely, your application will not be supported.
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Provided ISA is satisfied that a successful outcome to your DES is likely, you will need to:

- submit a completed DES CAS request form
- provide evidence of your maintenance funds as set out in the guidance, i.e. £2,530 in your bank account for a minimum of 28 consecutive days prior to your visa application date

ISA will only be able to arrange a CAS after the PhD examiners inform the Research Student Unit within Registry that you have successfully passed your PhD without further correction.

When will my 12 months start?

- It will start from the date we expect you to have your award conferred.

Can I start working as soon as I am granted with DES visa?

- No. The new work conditions will only apply to you once you successfully complete your course, i.e. once you have received a formal confirmation that you have been awarded with your PhD.

If I am granted with DES visa, what am I expect to do while in the UK?

- The DES has been set up to enable graduate researchers to stay in the UK to look for skilled work, or to set up as an entrepreneur. Birkbeck will make contact with you twice, at least, during your 12 months’ period to confirm where you are, and what you have been doing. If Birkbeck has reason to believe you are not fulfilling the conditions of your leave (for example, we have reason to believe you are no longer based in the UK), we are obliged to report this to the Home Office.
Frequently asked questions

Are there restrictions on the type of work I do?

➤ There are very few restrictions. You cannot work as a dentist or doctor in training, and you cannot work as a sportsperson (including as a coach). There are no restrictions on the number of hours you work.

Can I extend my stay in the UK once my 12 months under DES is finished?

➤ You will not be able to extend under this scheme, as the maximum time allowed under this scheme is 12 months. However, you may be eligible to switch into other immigration routes (e.g. Tier 1 or Tier 2 General), but Birkbeck will not be able to provide advice on this other than basic guidance.