

INVITING OVERSEAS ACADEMIC COLLEAGUES TO VISIT LEEDS BECKETT – VISA CONSIDERATIONS

Introduction

Academic colleagues from overseas universities may visit Leeds Beckett for their own research purposes, to provide guest lectures and other collaborative activities. Individuals who hold a British or Irish passport may work in the UK without restriction. It is important to be aware that where Leeds Beckett invites a someone who does not hold a British or Irish passport to visit the University, we are facilitating their entry to the UK. At the point of arranging the visit, and prior to issuing the invitation, the School must be satisfied that the planned activities are compliant with the Home Office's visitor visa regulations (or an alternative appropriate visa is in place).

This short guide (including flowchart) summarises relevant Home Office rules around visitor immigration categories to assist Schools with the visa requirements linked to inviting international academics to Leeds Beckett. If the activities are being undertaken from overseas (and the individual is not travelling to the UK), then no visa is required. Any intended research activity must also adhere to Leeds Beckett health and safety regulations and have appropriate ethical approval.

If the individual is an overseas student (e.g. a PhD student wishing to visit Leeds Beckett to undertake research in the UK), please see www.gov.uk/standard-visitor/visit-to-study and seek advice from the Student Immigration Advice and Compliance team (SIAC@leedsbeckett.ac.uk).

If it is proposed to award the individual a visiting academic title of Visiting Professor or Visiting Fellow, please also refer to the [Guidance on Emeritus and Visiting Academic Titles](#).

Visitor Visa and Electronic Travel Authorisation

All visitors to the UK, except British and Irish nationals, need a visa, visitor visa or Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). Individuals can check whether they need a visitor visa or an ETA using the [Home Office Check if you need a UK visa webpage](#).

There are three main types of activity permitted for overseas academic colleagues when visiting Leeds Beckett. All require a letter of invitation from the School in advance of the visit. This letter must correctly reflect the activities which will be undertaken and we must ensure that these are compliant with the visa route selected. Otherwise we are at risk of breaching Home Office immigration and prevention of illegal working rules.

You are strongly advised to use the template letter provided in Appendix 1 to support individuals entering the UK under the standard visitor visa (either business visit or academic visit) or through Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).

Visa Type (and link to more information)	Maximum length of visit	Main Relevant Permitted Activities	Action required prior to visit
Standard Visitor - Business Visit	6 months	Attend meetings, conferences, seminars and interviews; Give a one-off or short series of talks (provided these are not commercial events and will not	Letter of invitation from the School (see Appendix 1). Depending on the individual's nationality, they will either need to apply for

Visa Type (and link to more information)	Maximum length of visit	Main Relevant Permitted Activities	Action required prior to visit
		make profit for the organiser) – see also permitted paid engagement below; Gather information for their employment overseas.	a Visitor visa or Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) in advance of travel to the UK. Refer to https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa
Standard Visitor - Academic Visit	12 months	Collaborate, gather information and facts, or conduct research, either for a specific project which directly relates to their employment overseas, or independently (the individual must be <u>employed</u> by an academic institution overseas and on sabbatical to visit the UK) For visits of 6-12 months, individuals must be highly qualified within their field of expertise (and normally hold a PhD).	Letter of invitation from the School (see Appendix 1). For visits of 6 months or less, it depends on the individual's nationality whether they need to apply for a Visitor visa or Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) in advance of travel to the UK. Refer to https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa .All academic visits lasting longer than 6 months require a Standard Visitor visa in advance of travel to the UK.
Standard Visitor - Permitted Paid Engagement (PPE)	6 months (paid activity must take place during the first month in the UK)	The individual must be <u>employed</u> by an academic institution overseas. They can be paid to deliver a lecture (or series of lectures) in their subject area, or to be an examiner. The engagement must specifically relate to their profession/field of expertise. The individual can come to the UK under a standard visitor visa for up to 6 months, but the paid engagement must take place during the first month in the UK. Payment will be made via the Visiting Lecturer or External Claims form .	Letter of invitation from the School (to be written with support and advice from HR Services). Depending on the individual's nationality, they will need to apply for a Visitor visa or Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) in advance of travel to the UK. Refer to https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa They <u>should</u> get a stamp from a Border Force Officer on entry to the UK (and not use the ePassport gates). If their passport is not stamped on arrival in the UK, then a boarding pass/travel ticket can be used to demonstrate arrival date in the UK.

European Visitors

Whilst European nationals visiting for less than 6 months do not need a visitor visa, they are still restricted to the visitor activities (as listed in the above table). All visitors who do not need a visa, except British and Irish citizens, will need an [Electronic Travel Authorisation \(ETA\)](#) – a digital permission to travel to the UK. This includes European visitors.

When to seek advice from Human Resources

If you have any questions regarding academic visitors and letters of invitation, advice may be sought from [Julia Gaskin](#) (HR Policy Adviser) on a case by case basis.

Please get in touch in advance of visits where any of the following apply:

- The planned activities do not fall within the permitted activities (as provided in the above table), or if the individual is not employed by an overseas university. There may be a different immigration route which is more appropriate;
- The visit is for over 6 months;
- it is intended to pay the individual;
- During their time in the UK, the individual will be undertaking research in an academic subject which requires an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate, and the individual is not exempt from the ATAS requirement due to their nationality (nationals of EU countries, Australia and USA are exempt). Academic subjects which require an ATAS certificate include computer science and engineering – a full list is available on [Home Office webpages](#).

Where advice is needed, please seek this at the point of arranging the visit (minimum of 3 months in advance of planned visit date, wherever possible), to allow time for exploration of the most appropriate visa type, drafting of associated documentation and time for the individual to apply for and receive the visa or ETA in advance of travel.

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Summary of action required when inviting an international academic to visit Leeds Beckett

Prior to agreeing a visit by an overseas academic (and ideally at least 3 months in advance of the planned visit date), review the permitted activities for visitor visas as provided in the table.



Prepare a letter of invitation (using the template in Appendix 1). All letters of invitation for visits of over 6 months, where payment will be made to the individual, or an ATAS certificate is required should be sent to [Julia Gaskin](#), HR Policy Adviser, for review prior to issue.



Provide the letter of invitation to the individual. Depending on their nationality, the individual will either apply for a visitor visa or an ETA in advance of travel.



On their first day at Leeds Beckett, check and copy the individual's passport AND **Visitor visa** - use their 'S' share code to check their immigration status* OR **ETA** - request evidence of ETA. If the passport has not been stamped with the arrival date in the UK, then a copy of their boarding pass/travel ticket should also be retained. These copies must be held securely for the duration of the visit. Where Associate access to Leeds Beckett systems is required, contact HR Services team.



If payment is being made, copy passport and visa/ETA documentation should be submitted to Payroll with the claim form. Otherwise, at the end of the visit, shred local copies of passport and ETA/visa information.

* From February 2026, the Home Office have replaced visitor visa stickers in passports with an eVisa. To undertake a check of the visitor visa, ask the individual to generate an 'S' share code via this gov.uk website <https://www.gov.uk/evisa/view-evisa-get-share-code-prove-immigration-status> . You then need to use this share code on the Home Office [Check someone's immigration status](#) webpage. Retain a copy of the result from this webpage securely for the duration of the visit (or submit to payroll if payment is being made).

Appendix 1 - Suggested Template Letter of Invitation to support a Visitor visa application (or to support entry to the UK under Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA))

The letter of invitation must not refer to 'work', as paid or unpaid employment is not permitted under a visitor visa or Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) – although paid activities such as guest lectures are permitted (see above table for more information and criteria). If the visit relates to research, then the main purpose must be research – collaborating, gathering information and facts, or conducting research which directly relates to their employment overseas.

Dear

I invite you to visit Leeds Beckett University for the period [DATE] to [DATE]. The main purpose of the visit is

to use your sabbatical leave from [INSERT NAME OF OVERSEAS UNIVERSITY] to carry out research linked to your employment overseas.

OR

to take part in a seminar/short series of lectures [INSERT DETAILS]. These are not commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser.

(delete as appropriate)

Information about Visitor visas and Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) is available on <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>, including information on how to apply and activities which are permitted during your visit and those which are not.

[include this section where no payment from LBU will be made] As a visitor to Leeds Beckett University, you will be required to present your passport and [visa share code](#)/immigration stamp/evidence of ETA (as applicable) on your first day with us. A copy will be taken and retained for the duration of your visit, after which, the copies will be destroyed.

[include this section where one off payment from LBU for guest lecture] As a visitor to Leeds Beckett University, you will be required to present your passport and [visa share code](#)/immigration stamp/evidence of ETA on your first day with us. A copy will be taken and retained in Human Resources in accordance with our [Colleague Privacy notice](#).

Include any further information as required – e.g. contact person within the School, more information about the planned research or other activities.