



# Detailed Instructions for Obtaining the UK Tier 4 Student Prior Entry Clearance (visa)

(Updated May 22 2013)

**It is *very important* that you read these instructions carefully and refer to them as you complete your visa application. Failure to follow the instructions could delay the processing of your visa application and/or cause your application to be denied.**

First, some background information before you begin:

- All students planning to do an **internship** or **service learning** during their study abroad program in London **MUST** apply for a Tier 4 Sponsor Student Prior Entry Clearance visa. Only citizens of the UK or EU who will be traveling on a UK or EU passport are exempt.
- These instructions were developed based upon the assumption of **US citizenship**. Some of the details may vary, depending upon your country of citizenship. If you are **NOT** a US Citizen, please contact your CAPA Program Manager immediately. You may also need to contact the British Consulate directly for additional assistance and information with your application.
- If you will **NOT** be doing an internship or service learning during your study abroad experience, and you are a US citizen, then you are **NOT** required to apply for a Tier 4 Prior Entry Clearance Student Visa.
- You **MUST** obtain your prior entry clearance visa before you depart for the UK. Please do not start the application process until you have received your unique Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies number (**CAS Number**). Once you have received this CAS number, please complete the online application and secure your biometrics appointment immediately!
- There is a fee associated with applying for Prior Entry Clearance. That fee is currently £298 GBP. This fee is subject to change without prior notice. The actual amount in USD will fluctuate based on the current exchange rate. To check today's rate, visit [www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)
- As of May 2013 the UK Consulate no longer charges postage fees as part of the visa process. Instead students are required to send in return shipping labels as a part of their UK visa application when submitted to the consulate.
- We are happy to take your questions, but please check the last page of this document to see if your question is one of our most **frequently asked questions**.

## Overview of the Visa Process:

There are essentially three distinct steps in the visa application process and they must be completed in this order:

1. Complete the online visa form and pay the visa fee.
2. Attend your assigned Biometrics appointment in person at your local Department of Homeland Security office. (They will collect a digital scan of your fingerprints and take a digital photo of you at this appointment.)
3. Ship your passport and supporting visa documents to your designated UK Consulate office for processing.

Details on these steps as well as a list of the required supporting documents are shown below.

In order to allow adequate time for the visa to be processed, **you should begin this process as soon as you receive your CAS number from Samford at approximately 60 days prior to departure** – do not begin the application before receiving your CAS number.

### **Step 1. Online Visa Application**

The application for the Prior Entry Clearance Visa begins online. You will be asked a number of questions during the online application process. Please note that this is a very detailed application and may take you a considerable amount of time to complete. You will need your passport information readily available in order to complete the application.

Be sure that your Internet connection is secure and properly functioning before you begin. You must also be at a computer with the ability to print. You will also be required to pay the visa fee with a credit or debit card in order to fully submit your application.

Once you have completed the online application and paid, you **MUST** print out a copy and you will be prompted to do so. You will also receive an e-mail confirming that your application has been submitted. Be sure to save this email as you will need to refer back to it!

### **Step-by-step instructions for completing the online application:**

1. Go to <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/ApplyNow.aspx> and read through the information that appears on the “**New Visa Application – Before You Start**” page. Remember that you will need to have the following readily available: a credit or debit card, your passport, your CAS letter. Check the box at the bottom stating that you have read the information, and click on “**Continue.**”

**\*\*Good to know!\*\***



You can save your Visa application on any page where you see this image.

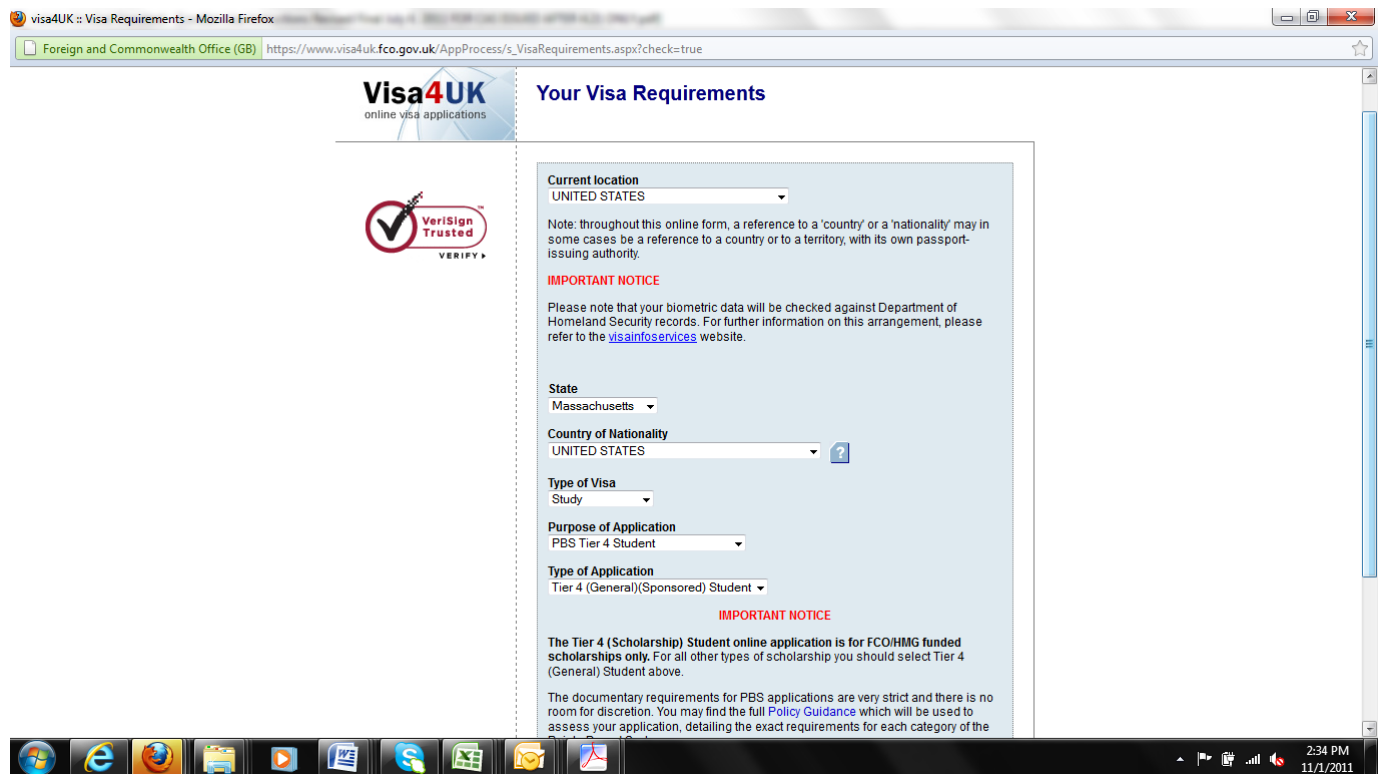
2. “**Application Security**”: Fill in the correct answers and then click “**Next.**”

3. **“Your Visa Requirements”**: Fill in the correct answers from the drop down menus provided. You will need to choose your state of permanent residence, which will determine where you will send the supporting documents once your online application has been submitted.  
For “type of visa” select **STUDY**  
For “purpose of application” select **PBS Tier 4 Student**  
For “type of application” choose **Tier 4 (General)(Sponsored) Student**.

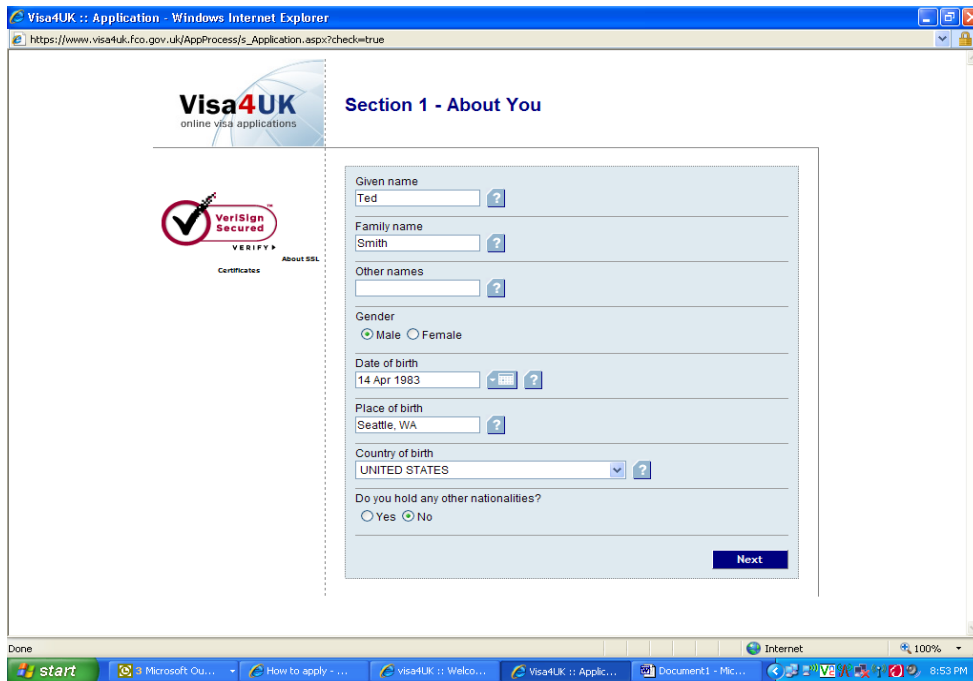
**\*\*Good to know!\*\***

Do not click on the “[self-assessment points calculator](#)” link, as we have already calculated the points that you will need to note and this link will only confuse you!

Click **“Next.”**



4. **“Section 1 – About You”** Fill in the required information. Keep in mind your given name is your first name and your family name is your last name. For your birth date, you should click on the calendar icon and choose your correct date of birth, as the format used on this application is somewhat unusual. If you hold more than one nationality and you check that you have more than one passport, you will be asked to explain on the next page. Once complete, click **“Next.”**



5. **“Section 1 – About You”**: Mark your marital status, click **“Next.”**
6. **“Section 2 – Passport Information”**:
  - Enter your passport number
  - The place of issue (If a specific place of issue is not listed, enter “United States”)
  - The issuing authority (listed under the date of issue on your passport)
  - The date of issue
  - The date of expiry
  - Check whether or not this is your first passport (If answer is No, you will have to enter former passport details on the next screen. If you do not have access to former passport details, you can enter “Not Known” or “I do not know”)
 Click **“Next.”**
7. **“Section 3 – Your Contact Details”**: Supply required information (note that you shouldn’t use anything but numbers in the phone number field – no dashes, parentheses, etc.), click **“Next.”**
8. **“Section 4 – Your Family”**: Answer the question do you have any children. Click **“Next.”**  
If yes, answer all supporting questions on the following pages.
9. **“Section 4 – Your Family”**: Answer whether or not children will be traveling with you. Click **“Next.”**
10. **“Section 4 – Your Family (Father)”**: Answer questions regarding your father’s name, birth date, country of birth, and nationality. Click **“Next.”**
11. **“Section 4 – Your Family (Mother)”**: Answer questions regarding your mother’s name, birth date, country of birth, and nationality. Click **“Next.”**
12. **“Section 5 – Immigration history”**: Answer all of the required questions, click **“Next.”**  
If the answer is yes to any of these questions on these screens, you will be prompted to provide further details on following screen.

13. **“Section 6 – Additional Information”** Answer accordingly. The date of travel to the UK should be the date your study abroad program begins.
14. **“Review your visa application”**: You are given the opportunity to review the answers you have provided in this application. Review them carefully, and then click **“Next”** if nothing needs to be changed.
15. **“Declaration”**: Read carefully, type your name in the signature box at the bottom, then click **“Next.”** Note that once you sign/enter your name here and click **“Next,”** you will be unable to make any other changes in the previous application sections.
16. **“Lodging your application”**: Choose “by mail.”

Continue to follow the instructions on the screen for the rest of the application.

**DON'T FORGET TO PRINT A COPY OF YOUR APPLICATION! Pay special attention to any notes that appear on the screen upon submission of your application as you may be required to log back into the system 24 hours later to print off your application.**

Once you complete your application, you will be prompted to make a biometrics appointment.

## **Step 2. Biometrics Appointment**

At the end of the online application, you will be automatically prompted to make a biometrics appointment. You will need to appear in person to submit your biometrics information (digital fingerprints and photo). The exact location of your appointment will be determined based on your zip code.

**Please visit**

[https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices.type&OfficeLocator.office\\_type=LO](https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwi/go?action=offices.type&OfficeLocator.office_type=LO)

**for information on the nearest area biometric collection center to you.**

When selecting your Biometrics appointment day and time, be sure to choose the earliest possible option that you can attend.

When you go to your appointment, you will need to bring the following:

1. Your Passport
2. Your biometrics appointment confirmation details that you have printed out. This will be stamped by an officer and given back to you.

**\*Please Note:** CAPA is unable to view the online application beyond the biometrics appointment, so we cannot provide you with the exact details of the next sections. However, if you have any questions, be sure to let us know. You can direct questions to your CAPA Program Manager in the Boston office at 1-800-793-0334. You should receive an email confirming the receipt of your online application and a list of documents you will be required to submit along with the printed application. The list should be similar to that which is on the sixth page of these instructions. The email will also contain instructions about where to send this documentation. You will need to send your documents to the UK Consulate that is assigned to your region, which is different from the location where you obtain your biometric testing.

## **Supporting Documents**

In addition to completing the online application and attending the biometrics appointment, you must also collect the following items to send to the UK Consulate as supporting documents for your application:

1. Print out of the online visa application
2. Passport (note: You must send in your actual passport and have at least 6 months validity from the date you will enter the UK)
3. **A completed Appendix 8 Tier 4 (General) Student Self Assessment Form which can be found at the following link:**
  - i. <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visas/vaf9-app81.pdf>
  - ii. See below for instructions on how to complete this form
4. One passport-sized photograph on a white background and glossy paper\*
5. An official transcript from the institution in which you are currently enrolled
6. Confirmation of completed biometrics appointment
7. A valid return shipping label (UPS, FedEx, USPS, etc.). The UK consulate will return your passport and visa to you using this return shipping label. This should be for the address at which you will be able to receive your passport and visa at any point in time (ie. preferably not a dorm or temporary housing). It is recommended that you opt for overnight shipping.
8. If you are an non-US citizen: evidence of your Immigration Status in the USA and permission to re-enter the USA after your trip

\*Must be an OFFICIAL passport sized photo. Please see link for more details on specifications:  
<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/flr/photoguidance0409.pdf>

**Please call CAPA if you have any questions regarding what materials are acceptable to include in your visa application. You MUST submit original documents! Be sure to make a photocopy of each of the documents before sending in the original copies.**

### **Required Document: PBS Tier 4 (General) Student Self- Assessment**

The **Appendix 8 PBS Tier 4 (General) Student Self Assessment Form** is a document that you will need to print and fill out in blue or black ink. These instructions will walk you through the form, step-by-step.

To download this form please visit:

<http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/applicationforms/visas/vaf9-app81.pdf>

**Please follow the instructions below VERY carefully when filling out this form:**

#### **Part 1 – About You**

- 1.1 Enter your first and middle (given) name as it appears on your passport
- 1.2 Enter your last (family) name as it appears on your passport

**Part 2 – Parent/Guardian details** (Not applicable to CAPA students as minimum age requirement is 18. Skip to Part 3. )

### **Part 3 – Sponsor Contact Details**

- 3.1 Samford University
- 3.2 Enter Sponsor License number = BJ8RMT79X
- 3.3 Samford University  
12 Ashburn Gardens  
Kensington  
London  
SW7 4DG

### **Part 4 – Course Details**

- 4.1 Write the course name as listed on your email/letter noting your CAS number
- 4.2 **Please write this exact phrase:** one term of a 4 year degree awarded by US university
- 4.3 Enter Start and End Date of your program – refer to your CAS letter/email for the exact dates
- 4.4 SAMFORD UNIVERSITY  
12 Ashburn Gardens  
Kensington  
London  
SW7 4DG
- 4.5 Answer “No”

### **Part 5 – Attributes**

- 5.1 Check the box to confirm you have received your CAS number
- 5.2 Enter your unique CAS number provided by Samford. Refer to your CAS letter/email for this exact information.
- 5.3 Check the box next to “**Studying**”
- 5.4 Check the box on the left to confirm that you have provided an official transcript as this applies to you
- 5.5 Check the **Yes** box and in the space provided and write this phrase “**progress on a continuing course of study.**”
- 5.6 Check “**National of a majority English speaking country**” and go to question 5.7  
**NOTE: If you are not a US citizen, please contact CAPA International Education as soon as possible for guidance on answering this question.**
- 5.7 Write “**The United States of America**” – Go to question 5.14
- 5.14 Check “**No**”. Go to Part 6.

### **Part 6 – Maintenance (Funds)**

- 6.1 Refer to your CAS letter/email—this amount should be Zero
- 6.2 Check **Yes- Paid to Overseas Higher Education Institution (Zero fee on CAS)**
- 6.3 Check the box beside **Shown in the CAS**
- 6.4 Check the box to confirm you have sufficient funds.
- 6.5 Check **NO**

- 6.6 Check the box next to ***Inside the Inner London Boroughs***
- 6.7 Refer to your CAS letter/email for this amount. (The figure will be equivalent to £1000 GBP multiplied by the number of months that your program spans – round half months up to full months. Example: If your program dates are Jan 15 – April 20, this would be 4 months or £4000 GBP. Then proceed to question 6.12)
- 6.12 Check the box next to **Yes – Paid to Overseas Higher Education Institution**. Then proceed to question 6.13.
- 6.13 Check the box next to **Shown in the CAS**
- 6.14 Check the box next to **No** and go to question 6.17
- 6.17 Check **No – No money due, no evidence needed** Go to Part 7

## Part 7 Summary Sheet

Write in “30 points” in the first box for points claimed for possession of a CAS

Write in “10 points” in the box for points claimed for maintenance funds and write “As shown in CAS” in the space for documents provided.

The total will be 40 points

Sign and Date in the space provided.

Remember to include this form, along with all of the other documents listed in these instructions under “supporting documents” when you send your completed application to the consulate.

## **Step 3. Send your Materials to the Consulate after Biometrics Scan is Complete**

After you have attended your biometrics appointment and gathered your supporting documents, the final step is sending everything to the UK Consulate for processing.

**What to send:** Your actual passport along with everything listed on page 6 of these instructions. It is a good idea to make photocopies of the documents that you are sending to keep for your own records.

**Where to send it:** You will send your passport and application materials to a UK Consulate in the United States, not to CAPA or to the UK. The exact mailing address of the consulate can be found in the confirmation email you received after submitting your online visa application. It will most likely be an address in New York City, but since this can change at any time it is very important that you locate this exact information in the email that was sent to you.

**How to send it:** We recommend that you **overnight** your passport and application materials to the consulate. It is crucial that you obtain a tracking number for your shipment as this will allow you to track the package online and confirm exactly when it has been delivered to the consulate. Both UPS and FedEx offer this service.



**After you send it:** Keep a close eye on your email for communication from the consulate. Once your visa has been issued, you will receive an email notification.

**Upon receipt of your passport containing your UK PBS Tier 4 (General) student visa**

When you receive your passport back from the consulate, you'll notice a sticker has been placed on one of the pages in your passport. This is your visa. You should check it immediately to ensure the following:

- Make sure it says you are a “general student,” and not a “student visitor” or “visitor”.
- Check its start date. **You cannot use the entry clearance to travel to the UK before this date.** This may be about a week prior to the actual start of your program.
- Check its expiration date. This may be about a week after the actual end date of your program.
- Check the number of hours you can work (it should say 20 hours)
- Check whether or not it says that you must register with the police on arrival in the UK. If it does, then make a note to contact the CAPA London Center staff to ask how you do that as soon as you arrive in the UK. You will be expected to register with the police within seven days of your arrival. Not all students are given conditions that require them to register with the police.

You will need to show your entry clearance sticker to an Immigration Officer when you land in the UK. You are unlikely to be asked many questions. However, it is sensible to have evidence that you meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules for students in your carry-on luggage so that you can produce it if necessary. Check your passport when the Immigration Officer gives it back to you so that you are aware if they have made any changes to your conditions (for example, by adding a requirement for you to register with the police).

You will also need to show your passport to a member of the CAPA team in London. They are required by law to keep a copy of your visa on file for the British immigration authorities. Please bring your passport with you to your on site orientation.

**Sample Prior Entry Clearance Visa Stamp:**



## **Finally, some reminders and frequently asked questions:**

**Remember:** If you do not follow these instructions and fill out the forms correctly and/or if you omit any of the supporting documents listed in these instructions, it is likely that your visa application will be denied. In this event, you will need to re-apply from the beginning and re-pay the visa fee in full. You will also need to schedule a new biometrics appointment. Please be sure that all of the supporting documents you provide are official and original and that you have answered any applicable questions thoroughly and with accuracy.

### **Our most frequently asked questions**

#### **How long will it take for my visa to be issued?**

The estimated processing times vary and can change at any time, but generally speaking it can take around 4 weeks for a UK visa to be issued once the passport and application has arrived at the consulate.

#### **How can I expedite my visa?**

If you have delayed in starting your visa application, you can expedite your visa for an additional fee. Currently this fee is \$150. Please contact CAPA if submitting your application to the consulate less than 40 days before the start of the program for specific instructions on expediting your visa. If you expedite your visa for the additional fee, your application will be processed in about 2 -4 business days.

#### **How will I get my passport and visa back?**

As of May, 2013 students are required to send in return shipping labels as part of the visa application that they submit to the UK consulate. These shipping labels will be used to return your passport and visa to you once completed. It is recommended that you opt for overnight shipping – please also be sure to use a permanent address rather than temporary housing like a dorm, in the event that you don't get your visa returned before shipping.

#### **Can someone else apply for my visa for me?**

We highly recommend that you apply for your own visa, since you are the person traveling on it and you have the best knowledge of your past and future travel plans. You are ultimately held responsible for all documents that are electronically signed with your name.

#### **Don't I need my address in the UK before starting this application?**

No. Any information, including addresses in the UK, are provided for you in the instructions above. You do not need to know your exact apartment or home address in the UK.

#### **The application won't accept my credit card. What do I do?**

We have found recently that some US banks and credit cards are rejecting the purchase of the UK visa due to it being an overseas purchase. Notify your bank or credit card that you will be making an overseas purchase so that they do not flag it as a suspicious purchase.

#### **What exactly do I need to mail to the consulate?**

This list is on page six of this document. You MUST mail everything in the same envelope. The mail room at the UK consulate does not function in a manner that would let multiple envelopes from you find each other. In addition, all documents must be the originals, including your actual passport.

#### **Do I really need an official transcript? Where do I get one?**

Yes, the UK consulate wants to see an official transcript on university transcript paper so they can see that you are officially a current student. Transcripts are easy to obtain; just contact your school's registrar or office that issues transcripts. You can take the transcript out of the sealed envelope.

**I live in New York City. Can I just drop off my application at the consulate?**

No, unfortunately the UK consulate did away with the in person processing option. You must mail your visa application.

**I will be traveling to the UK before the CAPA program. What dates should I put in my visa application?**

You must put the dates that correspond to the CAPA program, as those are the dates you will be a student in the UK. If you arrive earlier than your visa is issued for, you will be entering as a tourist and will need to leave the UK and reenter within the program dates specified on your Tier 4 visa. Contact CAPA if you are concerned about entering the UK as a tourist and how to activate your student visa.