



# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration Edition

2019-144 | September 16, 2019

# United Kingdom - Re-introduction of Post-Study Work Visa for Graduates Planned

On 11 September 2019, the U.K. government announced<sup>1</sup> plans to re-introduce a two-year post-study work visa for international students completing an undergraduate level or above course in the United Kingdom. This announcement comes years after the government's decision in April 2012, to cancel the pre-existing post-study visa route for international students wanting to seek and take up employment after completing their studies.

## WHY THIS MATTERS

The announcement seeks to foster the appeal of the U.K. as an attractive place for international students, by making it easier to gain U.K. employment afterwards. This will be seen as a welcome change for those looking to apply to study in the U.K. from 2020/2021. The new "Graduate" visa will provide greater flexibility for the student, as well as make it easier for employers to on-board key talent immediately after candidates have finished their studies. It will not however benefit students finishing their degree courses this year who will remain subject to the current system.

## Background

The ability for international students to remain in the U.K. for work after completing their course of study became more challenging after April 2012 when the government revoked the Tier 1 Post Study Work (PSW) route.<sup>2</sup> The Tier 1 PSW visa permitted international students to apply to stay in the U.K. for up to two years following completion of their course to seek or take up employment. At the end of the two-year period, graduates who wanted to stay would typically seek sponsorship from their employer under the Tier 2 category. They were also exempt from the Resident Labour Market test, making the process simpler for employers.

Since the government cancelled the Tier 1 PSW route, many international graduates are left with only three to four months on their student visas to find a job and secure Tier 2 (General) visa sponsorship from an employer. This has made the prospect of finding a job whilst in the U.K. far more challenging, with many forced to leave the U.K. when their

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student visas expire. Once international graduates leave the U.K., they lose their “special status” as U.K. graduates, meaning they are subject to many of the same requirements as other overseas applicants, including the Resident Labour Market test and quota system for Tier 2 (General) visas. This in turn, makes it more complicated for U.K. sponsors to employ them.

## Details of Announcement

The main details of the announcement are as follows:

- The new Graduate visa route will be available to all international students who have successfully completed a course of study at an approved U.K. higher education provider, at undergraduate level or above.
- The visa will be introduced for international students looking to start their course of study in the U.K. for the 2020/2021 university intake.
- The visa will be issued for a period of two years, following which graduates will be able to switch into the Tier 2 (General) category, if their employment meets the relevant skills criteria and other minimum requirements.
- The new Graduate visa will be subject to additional safeguards compared to the Tier 1 PSW route, helping to ensure that only genuine and credible students can apply.
- Further details on the scheme are to be announced in due course.

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## KPMG LLP (U.K.) NOTE

The announcement is a positive step to helping ensure U.K. business can continue to access the best international talent. It will grant international students the opportunity to apply for their own independent right to work, lasting up to two years following course completion. This is an attractive prospect for employers looking to offer roles in their graduate programmes to international talent. After the two-year period, employers could choose to sponsor key talent they wish to retain in the business by sponsoring them for a Tier 2 visa, without the need to complete a Resident Labour Market test.

This should make onboarding processes for graduates less time-consuming and restrictive, whilst opening up more opportunities to recruit international talent without immediate sponsorship.

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## FOOTNOTES:

- 1 To view more details about the announcement, [click here](#)
- 2 For prior coverage see “United Kingdom – New Season Brings Fresh Changes to Immigration Rules,” in *Flash International Executive Alert* 2012-080 (12 April 2012), a publication of KPMG’s Global Mobility Services Practice. To obtain a copy of this article, please contact your local KPMG GMS or People Services representative.

## Contact us

For additional information or assistance, please contact your local GMS or People Services professional\* or one of the following professionals with the KPMG International member firm in the United Kingdom.

The KPMG Legal Services – Immigration Team has a wealth of experience in transactional, advisory, and compliance assurance services. We will be able to advise your business in relation to practical considerations in light of the above changes, as well as what this means for your long-term recruitment and compliance strategies.



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**The information contained in this newsletter was submitted by the KPMG International member firm in the United Kingdom.**

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