

# GMS Flash Alert

## Immigration

2026-072 | 19 March 2026

## United Kingdom – Home Office Issues Key Changes to Immigration Rules

The United Kingdom Home Office published a Statement of Changes to the Immigration Rules on 5 March 2026, introducing several measures aligned with the government's 2025 Restoring Control Over the Immigration System white paper. These changes affect multiple immigration categories, including the Skilled Worker, Visitor, and Student visa routes, with implementation dates spanning 2026 to 2027.<sup>1</sup>

### WHY THIS MATTERS

These developments carry important implications for employers, mobile employees, and global mobility programmes. The increased English language requirement for settlement from March 2027 may require additional preparation time and training support for affected individuals. The new “Visa Brake” introduces restrictions that may influence recruitment strategies involving certain nationalities and could affect workforce planning. Updates to visit visa requirements, the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme, and refugee protection rules may similarly affect travel planning and business continuity. Employers may need to review internal processes to adapt to these changes and maintain compliance.

### Key Highlights

- **Skilled Worker pay periods:** From 8 April 2026, sponsors are required to pay Skilled Workers the full required salary in every pay period (within permitted flexibilities), allowing UKVI to identify and address any underpayment earlier through corrective or compliance action.<sup>2</sup>
- **English language requirement for settlement:** From 26 March 2027, the English language requirement for settlement will rise from B1 to B2 across many visa categories, including the Skilled Worker category.<sup>3</sup>
- **Visa Brake:** From 26 March 2026, a new “Visa Brake” means that all Skilled Worker visa applications from Afghan nationals and Student visa applications from nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan made from outside of the UK will be refused (even where a CoS/CAS had already been issued). Individuals applying from within the UK are not affected. This measure is to be kept under review.<sup>4</sup>

- **Visit visa requirements:** Nationals of Nicaragua and St Lucia must now apply for a Visit visa in advance of their trip to the UK and can no longer use the Electronic Travel Authorisation system.<sup>5</sup>
- **Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme:** From 8 April 2026, changes to the Ukraine Permission Extension Scheme mean that eligible individuals (including first-time applicants) can obtain an additional 24 months' permission and apply up to 90 days before their current leave expires (previously 28 days). Any remaining existing permission will be added to the new grant so applying early is not expected to reduce their total stay.<sup>6</sup>
- **Refugee and humanitarian protection:** A new, more basic and temporary "core protection" regime will reduce refugee permission from 5 years to 30 months.<sup>7</sup>
- **Global Talent:** The Global Talent visa is being expanded to include a new pathway for top design professionals, simplified criteria for academic and research roles agreed with the National Academies, and a fast-track route for eligible PhD level research and innovation roles at approved organisations.<sup>8</sup>
- **Grounds for refusal:** From 26 March 2026, UK immigration rules will mandate refusal or cancellation of permission to enter or stay for anyone convicted in the UK and given a suspended sentence of 12 months or more.<sup>9</sup>

## KPMG LLP (U.K.) INSIGHTS

To effectively manage the implications of these changes for your workforce, business continuity, and compliance, KPMG in the UK suggests focusing on:

- **Enhance compliance frameworks:** Strengthen or review your internal controls around sponsorship and payroll. Ensure strict adherence to the new requirement to evidence full salary payment in every pay period to avoid UKVI corrective or compliance action. Review your existing compliance with reporting any reductions in pay.
- **Assess workforce impact and adapt recruitment strategies:** Proactively identify and monitor impacted individuals in the current pipeline or existing employees and adjust recruitment strategies and business plans to minimize effect on the business and for the individuals, if needed.
- **Update policies and communicate clearly:** Review and, where required, update your policies in view of the changes. Consider communication plans to disseminate these updates to HR teams, line managers, and impacted staff, as appropriate, paying particular attention to new settlement language requirements and Ukraine scheme timelines.
- **Proactive planning and support:** Consider submitting applications earlier for settlement when possible prior to the higher level language requirement coming into force in March 2027 and also consider what additional support (e.g., language training) may be required for individuals applying after March 2027.

If individuals and/or their programme managers have any questions or concerns about the scope of the policy update, its application and potential impacts, and appropriate next steps, they should consult with their qualified immigration professional or a member of the Immigration team with KPMG in the United Kingdom (see the Contacts section).

## ENDNOTES:

1 GOV.UK, "[Statement of changes in immigration rules](#)," published on 5 March 2026.

2 GOV.UK, "[Explanatory memorandum to the statement of changes in the Immigration Rules: HC 1691, 5 March 2026](#)," published on 6 March 2026.

- 3 GOV.UK, "[Higher standard of English now required to settle in the UK](#)," published on 5 March 2026.
- 4 GOV.UK, "[Visa brake: changes to the UK visa system](#)," published on 5 March 2026.
- 5 GOV.UK, "[Immigration Rules - Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Visa national list - Guidance](#)," updated on 5 March 2026.
- 6 GOV.UK, "[Applying to the Ukraine Permission Extension scheme](#)," updated on 5 March 2026.
- 7 GOV.UK, "[Refugee protection to be reviewed every 30 months](#)," published on 2 March 2026.
- 8 GOV.UK, "[Explanatory memorandum to the statement of changes in the Immigration Rules: HC 1691, 5 March 2026](#)," published on 6 March 2026.
- 9 GOV.UK, "[Foreign criminals excluded from UK under strict new rules](#)," published on 5 March 2026.

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## Contacts

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:



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*\* Please note the KPMG International member firm in the United States does not provide immigration or labour law services. However, KPMG Law LLP in Canada can assist clients with U.S. immigration matters.*

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

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