Foundation Doctors Applying for Tier 4 Visas: 
Frequently Asked Questions

1. I am a citizen of a non-EEA country and I graduated from a medical school outside the UK. Can you act as my Tier 4 sponsor?
   No. We are only able to sponsor graduates from UK medical schools.

2. I am a citizen of a non-EEA country and recently graduated from a UK medical school. I plan to work flexibly on a part-time Foundation Programme. Can you act as my Tier 4 sponsor?
   No. In order to be sponsored by the UKFPO, you must work full time in a Foundation Programme, according to the conditions set out by the UK Border Agency.

3. Why am I being advised to apply for a Tier 4 as opposed to Tier 2 visa?
   You will only have to apply once and pay one fee for the Tier 4 Visa which will last for the duration of your Foundation Programme. If you were to apply for a Tier 2 Visa, you would need to re-apply and pay a fee every time you change employer. The employer must also agree to be your Tier 2 Visa sponsor and pay the relevant employer fees. This is not an attractive option for either you or employers, particularly with the changes being implemented by the coalition government to cap the number of Tier 2 visas issued.

4. What are the alternatives to applying for a Tier 4 Visa?
   You are welcome to apply for a visa under Tier 1 or Tier 2 if you qualify. However, the UKFPO can only act as your sponsor under Tier 4. Go to the UKBA website at www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk for information on other types of visa.

5. Can I commence my Foundation Programme using my current student visa if it is still valid?
   It depends on the kind of student visa you have:
   - **Old-style student visa issued prior to Tier 4.** You can start the Foundation Programme before receiving your new Tier 4 Visa, and without any authorisation from the UKBA.
   - **Tier 4 Visa granted before 5 October 2009.** You can start the Foundation Programme before getting your new Tier 4 Visa, provided you write to the UKBA at migrantreporting@ukba.gsi.gov.uk to inform them. The UKBA will write back to confirm you have permission. The UKBA have advised that you can start the Foundation Programme before they write back to confirm, but you do so at your own risk as they could refuse the permission.
   - **Tier 4 Visa granted on or after 5 October 2009.** You cannot start the Foundation Programme before your new Tier 4 Visa is approved. Due to the tight timescales we would urge those who fall into this category to book a face to face appointment with the UKBA as soon as possible after the 5 July. You will need your CAS number and the letter provided by the UKFPO which you will receive by 5 July 2010.

6. When should I apply for my new visa?
   You should apply for a Tier 4 Visa within six months of receiving your sponsorship letter from the UKFPO. You must apply for a Tier 4 Visa before your current student visa expires.
7. My current visa is due to run out. I have applied to the UKBA for a new visa but they have not got back to me yet. Can I still work?
You can work if you have an old-style student visa or a Tier 4 Visa granted before 5 October 2009 as long as the UKBA is in receipt of your application before the expiry date of your current visa. You are permitted to work until the UKBA inform you of the outcome of your Tier 4 Visa application in these circumstances.

8. Where can I acquire a Tier 4 Visa application form?
You can download an application form from the UK Borders Agency website. The web address is www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk. We advise that you read the form and accompanying guidance carefully. If you do not submit the required information and documentation, then your application will be refused.

9. Can the UKFPO help me complete my Tier 4 application form?
No. The UKFPO is not able to offer any help or guidance on completing your application form. Contact the UK Border Agency directly for advice. The web address is www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

10. Do I require a letter from my Foundation School Dean as well as a CAS/sponsor letter in order to obtain a Tier 4 Visa?
No. There is a section included in the sponsor letter from the UKFPO which satisfies this requirement. This has been agreed with the UKBA as an amendment to initial policy.

11. How are the 40 points required to obtain a Tier 4 Visa made up?
The sponsor letter from the UKFPO (which includes a CAS number) accounts for 30 points. You must pass the maintenance test to acquire the remaining 10 points. Go to the UKBA website for further information.

12. What is the maintenance test on UKBA’s Tier 4 application form for?
This is where you must prove that you have sufficient funds to support yourself during your stay in the UK. You must be able to prove that you have had £1200 pounds in your account on any of the 28 days leading up to your application. This figure rises to £1600 if you will be undertaking your Foundation Programme in London. Go to the UKBA website for further information and check the current rules.

13. Can the UKFPO act as my financial sponsor?
No. You must have the correct amount of money in your bank account for the duration required by the UKBA prior to applying. The UKBA will not waive this requirement and the UKFPO cannot be your financial sponsor.

14. How do I complete the maintenance section on my Tier 4 application form?
Please contact the UK Borders Agency for advice on how to complete the form. The UKFPO cannot offer advice or guidance.

15. What is a Biometric card and where do I get it?
A Biometric card (also known as an Identity Card for Foreign Nationals) will act as proof of your right to remain in the UK and will replace the passport stamp. You will receive your Biometric card once the UKBA approves your visa application. If you applied outside of the United Kingdom you will not be issued with a Biometric card. Instead you will receive an updated Entry Clearance Stamp in your passport. This will act as proof of your right to remain in the UK.

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16. **Why does my Biometric card state ‘restricted work during term time’?**
This relates to the nature of employment that you can accept as opposed to the amount of hours that you are able to work. This statement is intended as a flag to employers that you are only allowed to accept employment as a foundation doctor.

You would not, for example, be permitted to accept a part time bar job to augment your Foundation Programme salary. You are permitted to work full time on a recognised two-year Foundation Programme.

17. **Will my visa be automatically revoked if I incur ten absences from my Foundation Programme placement?**
The UK Border Agency will contact you to discuss your visa status and the conditions of your visa. It is their decision whether or not your visa will be revoked.

18. **Is maternity leave classed as an authorised absence?**
Yes. A period of maternity is classed as an authorised absence and your Tier 4 Visa will remain valid. Doctors who take maternity leave must apply for an extension to their visa, which will only be granted for one additional year. Therefore, in order to qualify for this extension, you must be in a position to complete your Foundation Programme within the maximum three year period.

19. **How do I apply for an extension to my Tier 4 visa?**
You will need to contact the UKFPO to issue you another sponsorship letter. Please send your request to tier4@foundationprogramme.nhs.uk

Once you have your new sponsorship letter (including a new CAS number), you must complete the UKBA extension application form which can be found on the UKBA website, along with information on the relevant fees.

20. **Where can I get further information on Tier 4 visas?**
The UK Border Agency website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk is the best place to go.