Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme FAQs

(Updated in June 2019)

The Doctorate Extension Scheme allows Tier 4 Higher Education Institution Sponsors to sponsor existing PhD students to stay in the UK for an additional 12 months after they have successfully completed their PhD course. This is to allow the student to gain further experience in their chosen field, seek skilled work, or develop plans to set up as an entrepreneur.

Can I apply for this visa?

If you have almost finished studying for a PhD qualification or for an equivalent doctorate qualification e.g. DPsych then you may be eligible to apply for this scheme.

What do I need from the University to apply for this visa?

In order to apply, the University must assign a Tier 4 confirmation of acceptance for studies (CAS) for you. A CAS can only be assigned when you are within 60 days of the expected end date of your course. A CAS cannot be assigned after the doctorate has been awarded.

How do I know what the expected end date of my course is?

The UKVI define the "expected end date" as

"the date the PhD is expected to be formally confirmed, by the sponsor, as completed to the standard required for the award of a PhD".

You may need to meet with your supervisor to discuss your expected end date in more detail.

If your current Tier 4 visa is due to expire before the expected end date (as calculated above) then you should seek advice from the International Student Advice team (visaadvice@city.ac.uk).

When can I apply for this visa?

You can apply under the Doctorate Extension Scheme as soon as you have been assigned a CAS. You have to apply before the expected course end date as stated on the CAS. Students will apply in the same way as making a Tier 4 (General) application. Students are not required to hold an ATAS clearance certificate in order to apply for DES.
You must also apply before your current immigration permission expires.

**What other requirements do I need to meet?**

You must also meet the financial requirements of Tier 4 DES i.e. they you must have held a minimum balance of £2530 (£1265 per month X 2 months) in your personal bank account for a consecutive 28 day period before the date you apply.

If you have been financially supported by a government or international scholarship agency during your studies, or within 12 months of making this application if the sponsorship has now stopped, you will need the unconditional written consent of your financial sponsor to your application under this scheme. The Tier 4 policy guidance states that this requirement applies to students if the sponsorship you had received covers all your tuition fees and living costs.

**Work under the doctorate extension scheme**

If your application is successful, you will be granted Tier 4 immigration permission for a period of 12 months from the expected course end date on the CAS.

City must report to the Home Office within 10 days of the student being awarded. You will receive an email to confirm this. Students must abide by the conditions of their Tier 4 visa until they have been awarded their doctorate (e.g. work no more than 20 hours). Once the student is awarded they will no longer be restricted by the Tier 4 General visa work conditions.

You can then start work full-time or commence self-employment after you have submitted your application for a Tier 4 extension under the Scheme provided that you have received confirmation of the award of your PhD from the University (this can be before or after the expected course end date on the CAS).

**Obligation on the University**

If you do not successfully complete your PhD or are awarded a lower level qualification or exit award, we are required to inform the Home Office of this and your DES visa will be curtailed if it has already been decided.

**Am I required to have contact with the University during my time under this scheme?**

Doctoral Graduates are not required to stay in London and can move anywhere in the UK. However, City in sponsoring your application is obliged to ensure that we are in contact with you on at least two occasions during this 12-month period. This can be a meeting in person or using Skype, telephone contact or by email.

If you miss a scheduled contact without providing an explanation, we are obliged to report this to the Home Office. The Home Office can take action to cut short your Tier 4 visa in this instance.

You also need to tell us:
• If you change your contact details (phone number, address and personal e-mail)
• if you leave the UK and do not intend to return before your Doctorate Extension Scheme visa permission expires or
• if you apply and are granted immigration permission under a different category.

For additional guidance and help with the application process please contact the International Advice Team in the Student Centre.