

Visa update webinar: trends, risks and best practice – Q&A

This document includes Q&As from our visa update webinar. All information is accurate as of Wednesday 11 February 2026.

Reporting

1. How do we report cancellations to UKVI? For example, if we have sent an invitation to them and then they cancel the course, are we responsible for reporting?

No, as there is currently no formal mechanism for reporting this.

2. For Short-term study Visas, is there a specific attendance percentage requirement where the school needs to contact UKVI?

No, there is no reporting mechanism. You should apply your school attendance policy.

ETAs

3. If someone on an ETA is studying for close to 6 months and leaves the country and receives a new passport stamp on re-entry to the UK - would we be able to extend their course again or is it not recommended? It's tricky because the successive visits part is grey.

If the student has left the UK and has been allowed to re-enter on a new visa, you can extend their course.

4. If a person travels with an ETA and stays in the UK for 6 months, how soon can they re-enter British territory?

There is nothing stopping them from re-entering the very next day. They may be questioned by Border Force Officers. If the officers are satisfied about the answers provided, the visitor will be allowed to enter.

5. 6 months to stay for ETA is considered per year for example stayed from July to December 2026. Can the person come back in January 2027 for another 6 months?

Potentially, yes - the rules do not specify a gap that needs to be observed. There is a risk of being questioned by Border Force officers however on arrival and not be allowed to re-enter if the officers are not satisfied with the student's intentions.

UKVI

6. Do UKVI need to go through some form of GDPR before we provide them with student information? How do we know if the call is a legitimate call?

UKVI most likely only need confirmation that you are expecting the student.

7. They are often calling from a somewhat random number and asking for private details, so it's a bit awkward. Is there any chance of a protocol being agreed or added to the AUK website?

As mentioned during the webinar, UKVI staff will use information they obtain independently to contact centres. Staff should be aware that they may receive random calls and random emails. These emails end up in the spam/ junk folders very frequently. Please check there regularly.

The risks of being questioned will be lower if there are a few weeks departure and re-entry.

8. You mentioned that if a relative is sponsoring the student to provide clear evidence of the relationship. We recently had a battle getting a CAS (from a pathway) based on an uncle being the legal guardian of an 18 year old student. His father had died when he was about 10 and his uncle was his legal guardian and was sponsoring his studies, just like a father would. The guardianship was proven with court documents and signed affidavits. We were told UKVI would not accept this as he was over 18. But other 18 years old are sponsored by parents so surely this would be allowed as the uncle was taking the place of the father. Who is correct in this scenario?

Generally, UKVI would accept the court documents as evidence. I can understand the pathway provider being unwilling to accept this as a refusal can lead to a loss of the sponsor licence.

Additional questions

9. You seemed to say that we should state the student's language level on the Letter of Acceptance - how can we know their level at that point? We normally test level on first day of the course.

As part of the process of accepting the student's booking you can have an interview which helps you gauge their level of English. You can ask for previous level tests. It

does not have to be accurate but merely gives an indication in support of their credibility as a student.

10. Do we know how long the waiting time for visa appointments is in Turkish? I'm told it could be months, is that the case?

The number of free appointments is limited which can affect how quickly students get an appointment.

11. Why are our English language students - who come as short-term educational visitors - being treated in the same way as immigration cases? Our students are not migrants, but guests. Shouldn't the ELT sector have its own dedicated visa route, rather than being scattered across generic immigration categories?

The ELT sector already has a dedicated 11-month visa exclusively for our sector, while those wishing to stay for no more than six months use the standard visit visa, which treats language students as ordinary visitors with the flexibility to study, or not study, and to change institutions. English UK will continue to argue for the viability and utility of the 11-month STSV.

English UK would like to see more flexibility in this route - essentially the ability for learners to switch organisations during their programme if they wish to - but as a sector, we need to acknowledge that there has been some abuse as the government highlight in the May 2025 immigration white paper and, as a result, any reform is on hold for now. The best way to counter these concerns is for the sector to 'get our house in order': try to ensure that only genuine students are recruited and that refusal rates under this route are minimised.

12. We have a Turkish student with her son at Exeter Uni. She has a 6-mth SVV vignette which has an expiry in 2035. Is that likely to be an error?

This is most likely a long-term visa holder that was issued in 2025 for 10 years. The applicant would have paid around £900 for this visa. They won't have to make another visa application until 2035.

13. How many weeks are minors under 18, who are in the UK without their parents, allowed to stay in order to study summer programmes and longer courses?

This is not an immigration issue. This relates to the private fostering regulations which apply to under 16 living away from their parents for 28 days or more.

14. If I stay in the UK with standard visa, when is the next time that I can enter?

You can re-enter the UK any time. It is better to allow a gap to avoid giving the impression you are effectively living in the UK.

15. Has anyone else experienced problems with the payment system for the visa during a student visa application?

This has not been reported previously.

16. What is the procedure to file a Pre-Action Protocol Application? Can applicant file themselves?

The form just needs to be completed and emailed to the address given on the form. The applicant can complete the form themselves.

17. Do students need a private insurance or they can use NHS services?

Students who come for up to six months should have travel and health insurance. Students who apply for a short-term study visa should get travel insurance, but they will be able to access NHS services as they pay the Immigration Health Surcharge.

18. If a student has a visa for more than a year, can a tourism visa help with registering for English courses, whether long-term or short-term?

If a student already has a visa, they can use it to enter the UK to study a course of up to six months. They should not enrol on a course longer than six months.

19. If a student attends one year at a secondary school in the UK and applies for a student visa, can they leave and re-enter the UK as many times as they want? For example, if they want to go back home during the Christmas holidays.

Generally, all visas allow students to leave and re-enter the UK multiple times while it is valid.