



Home Office

## Start-up Scheme Guidance Notes

### **Are you an international student with a brilliant business idea for a new business based in the UK?**

If so, you may be eligible to apply for the University of Warwick Start-up Scheme which will give you the opportunity to remain in the UK on a Start-up Visa for two years.

#### **The Start-up Scheme**

The University of Warwick is part of a scheme, run in conjunction with the Home Office to identify, nurture and develop graduate entrepreneurs who have a viable, scalable and innovative business idea they wish to develop in the United Kingdom. The scheme is limited to a maximum of 20 graduates per year and is only open to either international graduates or current international students of the University of Warwick.

#### **Who can apply?**

##### You can apply if:

1. You have a Tier 4 visa sponsored by the University of Warwick
2. You are a Non-EEA national who graduated from the University of Warwick
3. You have been or are going to be awarded a University of Warwick degree (Bachelors, Masters or PhD)
4. You have a viable, scalable and innovative business idea

##### You cannot apply if:

- You have already been granted more than one year of Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur immigration permission
- You only hold a University of Warwick Foundation degree, postgraduate certificate or diploma.
- You have not graduated from the University of Warwick.
- A person applying for permission to stay must be in the UK under the Start-up visa and must not have, or have last been granted, permission:
  - (a) as a Visitor; (b) as a Short-term Student; (c) as a Parent of a Child Student;
  - (d) as a Seasonal Worker; (e) as a domestic worker in a private household;
  - (f) outside the Immigration Rules.

**\*Please note if you have not yet completed your degree programme when you apply for endorsement under this scheme and your application is successful - then the endorsement will be conditional on successful completion of your degree programme.**

### **How do I apply?**

Every year there are two intake rounds – one in April and one in September. Those who meet the eligibility criteria above are invited to apply for Start-up endorsement by following the procedures listed below:


**Stage 1 - Register your interest.** If you are interested in the Start-up Scheme, register your interest here: [https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross\\_fac/enterprise/graduates/tier1/registerinterest](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/enterprise/graduates/tier1/registerinterest)

**Stage 2 - Initial Meeting.** If you would like to discuss your business idea before applying for the Scheme, you can book an initial 30-minute meeting with the Graduate Enterprise Officer. You will need to complete a short questionnaire before your meeting request for a telephone or in person consultation is approved. The initial meeting will be used to discuss your business idea and ask you to provide details that will enable us to consider your eligibility.

**Stage 3 - Apply for the Start-up Scheme.** Apply to the Start-up Scheme by submitting your business plan and video pitch before the specified deadline. Please note we will only accept submissions using our business plan template. If you have already created your own business plan, you will need to translate your plan from its current form into our template - then you can be sure you have included everything we need to know in order to review your business idea.

**Stage 4 - Shortlist Applications.** The Panel will review all applications and shortlist the strongest business applications to progress to the Pitch to Panel session.

**Stage 5 - Pitch to Panel.** Should your application for endorsement be shortlisted, you will be expected to **pitch your business to the University of Warwick Start-up Panel**. The panel will be made up of senior staff from across the University's academic and non-academic departments along with independent entrepreneurs. Where you are part of a team, all members of the group applying for endorsement must be present at the Pitch to Panel interview.



The Panel will assess your application based on your business being viable, scalable and innovative, and determine whether they have confidence in you and the approach you outline.

**Stage 6 – Application outcome.** There will be three possible outcomes from the Pitch to Panel interview:

- 1) You will gain endorsement
- 2) You will be required to provide further evidence requested by the panel
- 3) You will not gain endorsement from the University, and you will have no right to appeal.

**Stage 7 - If your application for the Start-up Scheme is successful, Warwick Enterprise will issue your Start-up endorsement letter once you have met the financial requirements.**

***\*LATE APPLICATIONS: The Warwick Enterprise Team is unable to accept late applications. If you miss the deadline you will need to submit an application to the next application round.***

## What happens if I successfully pitch my business idea?

1. You will receive a written decision via email 2 weeks after the panel has met. This email contains a link to a **Start-up Consent form**. Both of which need to be completed before Immigration Services are able to produce the endorsement letter.
2. **You must meet the financial requirement:** Show evidence that you have personal savings for a consecutive 28-day period of £1,270 if applying from within the UK. An additional £285 for a dependant partner, £315 for a first child, £200 for each subsequent child.

If applying from overseas, you must show evidence that you have personal savings for a consecutive 28-day period of at least £1,270. Bear in mind, that it is not possible to use relatives or a friend's bank statements to evidence this money. All funds must be in your own name. This 28-day period for the finances to be in your account can delay you obtaining your visa; this is why we recommend that you maintain the funds in your account from the date you submit your business plan and video pitch (Stage 3).

3. The endorsement letter will be sent to you via email once you have agreed to the University's terms and conditions and you meet the financial requirements to submit a successful application for a Start-Up Visa.
4. You should apply to the Home Office at least one month before your current visa is due to expire, to allow time for your application to be processed and checked.

If you are applying from within the UK, then your visa application must be submitted before your current Tier 4 Student visa expires and it is your responsibility to start thinking about this as early as possible as the whole process (from the date you apply to the date you obtain your letter of endorsement) can take as long as two months.

**\*If you are offered an endorsement letter under the scheme, the endorsement will be valid for 3 months from the date specified on the endorsement letter.**

**If your visa application is successful with the Home Office. The visa will be valid for 2 years.**

### **Key responsibilities of a Graduate Entrepreneur:**

1. You must spend the majority of your working time developing your business idea.
2. You must stay in regular contact with the University, and meetings will take place every two months, with the Graduate Enterprise Officer from the Warwick Enterprise Team, University of Warwick. The University reserves the right to withdraw the Visa sponsorship if the applicant has missed their regular contact.
3. You must comply with the UK government's Start-up regulations – including regular communication with the University.
4. Should you change (or plan to change) your business model from the one shared with the University at the point of application for endorsement, you must inform the University immediately.
5. Update the Warwick Enterprise Team and the International Student Office should you change your name, change contact details, obtain a new passport or switch into a different visa category.
6. Any business activity being undertaken must not be detrimental to the standards and reputation of the University of Warwick.

### **How long is the Start-up visa?**

If your visa application is successful with the Home Office. The Start-up visa will be valid for 2 years.

### **Useful links**

You are advised to read the full details of the Start-up Visa application in the Home Office website carefully before making your application.

**You can access this here:** <https://www.gov.uk/start-up-visa>

### **What happens if my application is unsuccessful?**

The decision of the University judging panel is final and there is no appeal mechanism. Where an application is declined you will receive feedback on that decision via email. We can also arrange for a follow-up meeting on request, in order to answer any questions relating to the feedback provided and to provide guidance on possible next steps and further opportunities. Unsuccessful applicants may apply for the next intake round.