

University of Essex

Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Scheme

1. Overview

- 1.1. This paper outlines the University's policy and practice in relation to the Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur Scheme and provides information to staff and to students and to graduates endorsed under the Scheme.
- 1.2. The Tier 1 Graduate Entrepreneur Scheme (hereinafter referred to as 'the Scheme') represents a route for students who have *developed a genuine and credible business idea(s) and entrepreneurial skills* to remain in the UK after their studies in order to pursue those ideas. Leave to remain is granted initially for 12 months and could possibly be extended for a further 12 months.
- 1.3. The University requests an allocation each year from the Home Office, which sets the limit for the number of graduates the University may endorse under the Scheme. For all endorsed graduates, the University is required to endorse them as described under 1.2 above and to undertake regular monitoring of engagement, reporting to the Home Office should the individual no longer be effectively engaged with their entrepreneurial activity.
- 1.4. The scheme is operated jointly by the Employability & Careers Centre and the International Services team.
- 1.5. Following completion of the relevant declarations by the University and the graduate, this document serves as the agreement between the University and the individual being endorsed under the Scheme.
- 1.6. In line with Home Office rules, endorsement for The Scheme will not commence until the graduate's award has been conferred.

2. Employability & Careers Centre (E&CC) responsibilities

- 2.1. The E&CC considers requests from current or recently graduated University of Essex students for the Scheme and is required to satisfy itself on behalf of the University that they meet the description as set out under 1.2 above. In addition, the process to confirm eligibility includes consideration as to whether a student is likely to engage in the scheme based upon engagement to date with their academic studies and demonstrable track record of engagement with entrepreneurial activity above and beyond their degree during their time at the University of Essex.
- 2.2. In order to enable adequate time to process applications and ensure effective arrangements are in place, individuals wishing to apply for endorsement are normally required to submit a completed application by 30th June in their final academic year of study for endorsement the following academic year, although this deadline may be flexible at the University's discretion where circumstances require it and where the timeliness of the process are not negatively affected. The application should be made in writing and should include a personal statement, documentary evidence, including references where appropriate, and a copy of a completed business plan. An electronic copy should be submitted to the Employability and Careers Centre, Colchester Campus. Any supporting documentation provided in

hard copy must be submitted in person or via the University's internal mail system to the Employability and Careers Centre, Colchester Campus.

- 2.3. Prior to shortlisting of applications, the International Services Team will be asked to confirm that: applicants hold a valid Tier 4 (General) visa; that applicants can meet the funding requirement for the visa application; and whether the applicant would be entitled to apply for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa from within the UK if successful.
- 2.4. Submitted applications are reviewed by an appropriate panel as determined by the University, who will invite shortlisted candidates to present their business idea.
- 2.5. A list of shortlisted candidates will be provided to the International Services team, who will undertake the necessary immigration and academic history checks before completion of the process (see section 3 below).
- 2.6. The Employability and Careers Centre will retain full details of the individual's application and written justification for an individual who is being recommended for endorsement. On completion of the process these will be held by the International Services team on the individual's file.
- 2.7. Individuals endorsed under the Scheme will be provided with access to all facilities of the Start-up Hub.
- 2.8. The University determines a link-role to work with the graduate entrepreneur in support of their business development as a 'critical friend' but also to ensure the University and the graduate entrepreneur meet their immigration obligations. Successful candidates will be provided with the name and contact details of their link person once endorsement for the scheme has been confirmed.

3. International Services Team responsibilities

- 3.1. An academic progress and immigration history check will be carried out to confirm eligibility for the scheme.
- 3.2. Where the University agrees to endorse an individual for the Scheme, a Letter of Endorsement will be produced in line with Home Office requirements and will be provided to the student for submission as part of the visa application.
- 3.3. Any documentation required from the individual wishing to be endorsed that does not relate directly to the business proposal (e.g. confirmation from a financial sponsor that there are no concerns about the individual remaining in the UK after their studies) will be submitted to the International Services team.
- 3.4. A file will be kept containing the following:
 - Relevant application documentation
 - A copy of the Letter of Endorsement
 - Copies of the passport and T1 (GE) visa of the endorsed individual
 - Documentation relevant to ongoing monitoring and contact during the period of endorsement
- 3.5. The decisions in relation to shortlisting and award of endorsement are final; individuals who feel there has been an error in the consideration of their information should write within 10 days of receiving notification of the outcome to the Academic

Registrar (acadreg@essex.ac.uk), who will consider the facts of the case and determine the final outcome.

- 3.6. The International Services Team will ensure that information relating to The Scheme is accurate and updated in a timely manner to reflect any changes to The Scheme.

4. Student/endorsed individual responsibilities

- 4.1. Students wishing to apply must demonstrate the following:

- 4.1.1. That they have been fully and effectively engaged with their studies to date, achieving a successful outcome at the level intended at application and within the standard period of time (i.e. three years for an undergraduate degree). They should be free from disciplinary incident that is either academic or non-academic and have paid their fees in full to the University over a timescale that was agreed and with no outstanding debt for any reason.
- 4.1.2. That they have engaged in developing their skills throughout the period of their course (including a preceding course where a postgraduate taught programme follows within two years of an undergraduate programme)
- 4.1.3. That they have a business idea that is both genuine and credible; with levels of effective research and a clear business plan outlining how they will develop that idea.
- 4.1.4. That they have read and understood the Home Office guidance on applying for a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur): <https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-graduate-entrepreneur-visa>, particularly the financial requirements and the restrictions of the types of business that can be undertaken.
- 4.1.5. That they meet the funding requirements for the visa and produce clear financial plans for their business (including their own costs). Evidence that the required funds are available in an appropriate bank account must be provided with the application.
- 4.1.6. Where a student has been financially sponsored by a third party (e.g. a sponsor agency or government) at any point during their studies, they must show evidence that they have the sponsor's unconditional consent to remain in the UK to set up the business.
- 4.1.7. That they will develop their business idea with the support of the business team in the E&CC and/or other individuals as nominated by the University from time to time.
- 4.1.8. They shall live and work within 25 miles of the Colchester, Southend or Loughton campus however with the agreement in writing of the REO link role live/work elsewhere.
- 4.1.9. That they will attend regular meetings with support colleagues, the frequency of these is to be agreed as part of the endorsement process and should be specified in the declaration.
- 4.1.10. They should conduct themselves well throughout the period of endorsement, seeking that endorsement in good faith, and any breach of reasonable standards of behaviour (including being charged for a criminal offence) and any failure to adhere to the requirements outlined may result in the endorsement being withdrawn.

- 4.1.11. They should remain engaged with their business development and demonstrate progress commensurate with the purpose of the endorsement. Failure to do so could result in endorsement being withdrawn.
 - 4.1.12. They should ensure they keep the University fully up to date with their active contact details, support the University in its obligations (and avoid impacting negatively on those obligations) and keep the University full informed in any changes related to their leave to remain or personal circumstances.
- 4.2. All graduates endorsed for the scheme are required to:
- 4.2.1. Maintain up to date contact details with the link-role and provide evidence of those details upon request.
 - 4.2.2. Present their documentation in relation to their visa upon request to the link-role or member of the University staff and provide information in relation to any change of status as soon as practically possible (at least within 10 days).
 - 4.2.3. Advise the University link-role of any intention to leave the UK at any point and for any reason.
- 4.3. It is the individual graduate's responsibility to adhere to all aspects and terms of their visa and the terms associated with their endorsement by the University; this includes pro-actively supporting the University in adhering to its relevant obligations. Individuals should take external legal advice to fully understand aspects and requirements of the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa where they deem it necessary. The relevant Government website provides some information on Tier 1 visa requirements: <https://www.gov.uk/tier-1-graduate-entrepreneur-visa/overview>

5. Withdrawal of Endorsement

- 5.1. Should concerns be raised relating to an endorsed graduate's performance or credibility whilst on The Scheme the concerns will be laid out in writing by the Employability & Careers Centre and the International Services Team. The case will be presented to the Academic Registrar who may decide that endorsement for the graduate should be withdrawn.
- 5.2. Where a decision is made to withdraw endorsement the graduate will be notified in writing.
- 5.3. Should withdrawal of endorsement be uncontested, or where an appeal is unsuccessful, the Home Office will be notified in accordance with the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Sponsor Guidance.
- 5.4. Where the University has determined to withdraw endorsement for any reason, the graduate may appeal to the Registrar and Secretary within 5 days of that withdrawal being communicated in writing. The grounds for appeal are either (a) evidence of substantive administrative error or (b) facts that were not known at the time the withdrawal decision was taken, which could have had a material impact on the decision to withdraw the endorsement.