

Boost for UK science with unlimited visa offer to world's brightest and best

- Top scientists and researchers to be given fast tracked entry to the UK
- No cap on who can benefit
- £300m made available for research into advanced mathematics

A new, fast-track visa scheme to attract the world's top scientists, researchers and mathematicians will open on 20 February.

This follows a commitment by the Prime Minister last summer to put science, research and innovation on the top of the Government's agenda.

The bespoke Global Talent route will have no cap on the number of people able to come to the UK, demonstrating the Government's commitment to supporting top talent.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, said:

The UK has a proud history of scientific discovery, but to lead the field and face the challenges of the future we need to continue to invest in talent and cutting edge research.

That is why as we leave the EU I want to send a message that the UK is open to the most talented minds in the world, and stand ready to support them to turn their ideas into reality.

The Global Talent route replaces the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route and for the first time UK Research and Innovation will endorse applicants from the scientific and research community. The route will:

- Provide for a brand new fast-track scheme, managed by UKRI which will enable UK-based research projects that have received recognised prestigious grants and awards, including from the European Space Agency and the Japan Science and Technology Agency, to recruit top global talent, benefitting higher education institutions, research institutes and eligible public sector research establishments. This will enable an individual to be fast-tracked to the visa application stage.
- Double the number of eligible fellowships, such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the European Research Council and Human Frontier Science, which also enable individuals to be fast tracked.
- Continue to ensure dependents have full access to the labour market.
- Preserve the route's flexibility by not requiring an individual to hold an offer of employment before arriving or tying them to one specific job.

- Provide an accelerated path to settlement for all scientists and researchers who are endorsed on the route.
- Provide for an exemption from our absences rules for researchers, and their dependants, where they are required overseas for work-related purposes, ensuring they are not penalised when they apply for settlement.

The changes are part of the initial phase wider reforms to enable those with world class skills in science and research to come to the UK as soon as possible.

The Home Secretary, Priti Patel, said:

The UK is a world leader in science, with research and innovation that changes lives being undertaken every day in this country.

To keep the UK at the forefront of innovation, we are taking decisive action to maximise the number of individuals using the Global Talent route including world-class scientists and top researchers who can benefit from fast-tracked entry into the UK.

The reforms to the Global Talent route coincide with ambitious government investment of up to £300 million to fund experimental and imaginative mathematical sciences research by the very best global talent over the next five years.

With around £60 million funding available per year, the investment will double funding for new PhDs, as well as boost the number of maths fellowships and research projects – increasing the pool of trained mathematicians in the UK and providing more freedom for researchers to develop new ideas.

This funding will make sure the UK remains at the cutting-edge of maths research, underpinning real-world technological developments, from smoother traffic flow, crime prevention, safer air travel, and smarter phone technology to the use of Artificial Intelligence and creating greener energy systems.

Business and Energy Secretary Andrea Leadsom said:

Leaving the EU gives us new freedom to strengthen research and build the foundations for the new industries of tomorrow.

By attracting more leading international scientists and providing major investment in mathematics, we can make the UK a global science superpower and level up our country.

The funding forms part of the Government's ambitions to considerably boost R&D spending and establish the UK as a global science superpower, changing the way people live, work and travel.

To ensure the UK is the best place in the world for research and development, the Government is launching a major review of research bureaucracy and methods, including unnecessary paperwork, arduous funding applications and research selection processes. This will free up and support the best researchers to focus on groundbreaking, ambitious and meaningful research that goes on to cure diseases or improve our transport networks.

UKRI is already taking steps to reduce bureaucracy, and in the coming weeks the Government will be consulting world-leading scientists, researchers, academics and industry figures on what more can be done. As part of this, UKRI will simplify the process to apply for funding, removing the unnecessary requirement to precisely forecast the long-term benefits of projects with unpredictable results.

An ambitious Place Strategy for UK R&D will also be published in the summer to ensure funding builds on strengths of the regions. In addition, this year the government will examine how the UK's catapult centres can strengthen R&D capacity in local areas, improving productivity and contributing to greater prosperity across the UK.

UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, Professor Sir Mark Walport, said:

Today's announcements further underline the importance of research and innovation to the future success of the UK and the government's continued commitment and investment.

Working with the government, UK Research and Innovation is ensuring that the UK remains a globally leading environment for research and innovation.

Our ambition is clear, to create a stronger research and innovation environment that is focussed on supporting talented people and realising the full potential of their work.

Professor Julia Buckingham, President of Universities UK and Vice-Chancellor of Brunel University London, said:

We share the Prime Minister's vision to position the UK as a magnet for global science and research talent. The Global Talent visa is a positive step towards this for UK universities. The visa route will help to ensure that universities can attract the brightest scientists and researchers to the UK with minimal barriers.

Universities are globally connected and this announcement signals that the UK remains open to talent from around the world. Our universities carry out life-changing research and our knowledge base, economy, and wider society will benefit from the international staff we can attract through this visa route.

The Government continues to work closely with the scientific community in developing its proposals and to ensure the UK immigration system attracts the sharpest minds and scientific talent.

The Immigration Rules to bring the visa changes into effect will be made on the 30 January 2020 and come into effect on the 20 February.