



UK Visas  
& Immigration

# Visa information for the UK

**A guide for UK Business Event Managers**

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# 1. Visa Information for the UK

Participants of business related events or conferences in the UK are advised to find out if they require a visa to enter the UK, and if required, to apply as soon as possible. Our service standards for processing standard non-settlement visas are 15 working days from when we receive an application (including biometric information) to when we send our decision to the applicant. UK hosts of events should ensure that invitation letters are sent to their participants at least eight weeks before the event to allow them to apply for a UK visa. All supporting documents should be submitted at the time of applying, in line with the visa application process.

**Please note: this guide is for managers of events where delegates may require visit visas. If your delegates will be receiving any payment for work in the UK, unless activities are included under paid permitted activities as a visitor [www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa](http://www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa), your delegate will need to consider an alternative visa route. Our visa self-assessment will allow you/your delegates to identify alternative options: [www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa](http://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa).**

## Advice for those who need visas to travel to the UK

### Does my delegate need a UK visa?

This depends on the nationality of the person travelling.

If your delegate is a national of the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), Switzerland or a national who does not require a visa to visit the UK, they do not need to apply for a visit visa to participate in UK hosted events. They can apply for entry on arrival in the UK to a Border Force officer. If you are not sure if your delegate requires a visa for the UK, please check on our website at: [www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa](http://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa).

### Can my delegates use a Schengen Visa to enter the UK?

No. The UK is not a member of the Schengen Travel area. This means that if an individual holds a Schengen visa this will not allow entry into the UK. Also, a UK visa will not permit entry to the Schengen Travel area. If you are spending time within the Schengen area en-route to the UK or on the return journey from the UK, you will need to ensure that all individuals have the appropriate visa.

### What type of visa does my delegate need to apply for?

Our visa self-assessment tool can be found on our website at: [www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa](http://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa).

All visitor visa applications are considered under the visitor Immigration Rules:

[www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor-rules](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor-rules). For further details see the gov.uk section on the standard visitor visa ([www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/overview](http://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/overview)).

Your delegate may be able to apply for a standard visitor visa, if, as above, *they are not receiving payment for their activities*. Details of permitted payments in the UK under a standard visitor visa can be found under paragraph V4.7 of the visitor rules.

Your delegate may also be able to apply for a permitted paid engagements visitor visa if they are undertaking a short paid engagement of no more than 1 month and have been invited to the UK by an organisation such as an arts or broadcasting organisation. See the Immigration Rules for visitors and [www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa](http://www.gov.uk/permitted-paid-engagement-visa) for more information.

Under the [Visitor Rules](#), visitors on a standard visitor visa to the UK are permitted to undertake the following general business activities:

5 A visitor may:

- (a) attend meetings, conferences, seminars, interviews;
- (b) give a one-off or short series of talks and speeches provided these are not organised as commercial events and will not make a profit for the organiser;
- (c) negotiate and sign deals and contracts;

- (d) attend trade fairs, for promotional work only, provided the visitor is not directly selling;
- (e) carry out site visits and inspections;
- (f) gather information for their employment overseas;
- (g) be briefed on the requirements of a UK based customer, provided any work for the customer is done outside of the UK.

Check Appendix 3 of the [Visitor Rules \(www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor-rules\)](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-v-visitor-rules) to find the full list of permitted activities for a visitor.

A visa national under 18 years old at the time of their travel to the UK will be considered as a child and can apply for a standard visitor visa, subject to additional evidence requirements detailed here: [www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/if-youre-under-18](http://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa/if-youre-under-18).

### What is required to apply for a visa to the UK?

- Your delegate must **apply and pay online** for the visa using the link at: [www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa](http://www.gov.uk/apply-uk-visa).
- Your delegate will be asked to book a biometric appointment with one of our visa application centres at the end of the online application and pay the visa application fee.
- On the day of your appointment your delegate must go in person to the chosen visa application centre with their passport, printed application form and any other supporting documents. They will also be required to give their biometrics: digital photograph and fingerprints.

To find details of the nearest visa application centre use this link: [www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre](http://www.gov.uk/find-a-visa-application-centre). Read our guidance carefully and encourage your delegates to apply for visas as early as possible. Applications can be made up to three months in advance of the planned date of travel.

***Prepare your application and supporting documents carefully.*** Submitting only an invitation letter in support of an application may not give the Entry Clearance Officer all the necessary information to be satisfied that your delegate qualifies for entry. To support their application, your delegate should gather evidence of their circumstances, employment, ability to meet the costs of the trip and details of where they will be staying and why they are visiting the UK.

A guide to supporting documents for a visa application can be found via this link:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/visitor-visa-guide-to-supporting-documents](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/visitor-visa-guide-to-supporting-documents)

If you are issuing an official letter of invitation to attend an event in the UK, we would recommend that your delegates include the original letter with their supporting documents.

[Read our operational guidance](#) for more information about our criteria for assessing Standard Visitor visa applications.

### What is “biometric information”?

Biometric information consists of fingerprint scanning and a full-face digital photograph. Visa applicants must provide their biometric information **each time** they apply for a UK visa.

### Enquiries

You should be able to find the information you need about visit visas on our website ([www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa](http://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor-visa)) but if you need to contact us, our contact details are [here on GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-outside-uk\)](#).

## 2. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### How do my delegates apply for a visa?

Applications for visit visas are made online <https://visas-immigration.service.gov.uk/product/uk-visit-visa>

### Can my delegates apply in their own language?

The application form has been translated into a range of languages, however all answers must be in English. Supporting documents must also be in English or accompanied by a translation.

### Where should my delegate apply?

An application can be made from any country where we have a Visa Application Centre (VAC). The online form will ask which country an applicant is applying in, this then gives a list of available Visa Application Centres. Further details about our visa application centres are available [here](#)

### When should my delegates apply?

Applications can be made up to three months in advance of the intended date of travel to the UK.

### How long with my delegates applications take?

We aim to process visit applications within **15 working days from submitting biometrics**, but we recommend that applications are made as early as possible allowing at least four weeks. In many locations, for an additional fee, delegates may be able to use our Priority and Super Priority visa service.

### Can delegates do anything in advance to make the application process quicker?

Yes. When an application is started your delegate will be asked to supply an email address and create a password, they will then be emailed a link to return to the application at a later point. This means the form can be started more than three months before the planned date of travel.

### What is Priority and Super Priority Service

Priority service takes 5 working days, this service is available in over 200 locations.

Super Priority service takes 24 hours, this service is available in around 20 locations.

Both services are charged at an additional fee. Some applications may take longer if they are complex, please check the [visa application centres](#) website for any additional eligibility criteria.

**Important note:** Priority service does not imply or guarantee in any way that a delegate will be successful in their visa application. All visa applicants must meet the requirements of the UK immigration rules.

### My delegate travels a lot and cannot be without their passport, are there any services that could help?

We offer a Keep My Passport service in over 40 locations, this allows the applicant to keep their passport while the application is being considered. If the visa is granted they will need to provide their passport to the VAC for the vignette to be printed. This service comes at an additional cost.

### Are there any other services available for the convenience of my delegates?

Yes, we offer a wide range of services for customer convenience, popular services include peak time and weekend VAC appointments, SMS updates, photocopying, premium lounges and even the ability to submit biometrics in the comfort of your own home or office. These are known as 'user pay' or 'added value' services, please see the website of the VAC your delegate wishes to attend to find out which services are available in their location.

### Why aren't all services available in all locations?

Not all customers want all services, to provide the best value for both our customers and the UK tax payer, our additional services are provided where there is a demand for them.

### Is it possible for someone else to collect my delegates passport and documents on their behalf?

Passports must be collected by the applicant or a nominated representative. You can check if a visa application centre offers a courier service, which may be a more convenient way for passports and documents to be returned, this is an additional service for which the fee will vary upon location.

**Can a delegate apply for a visa in one country and collect it in another?**

No, however a small number of VAC's do offer an out of country courier service at an additional cost, please check the VAC website to see if this service is available.

**What travel date should be stated on the application form?**

A visa will usually be valid for six months and for multiple entries. On the application your delegates should be specific in stating planned dates of travel to and from the UK. Delegates cannot arrive in the UK earlier than the start date on your visa. If your delegate tries to travel before this date, the airline may not let them board their flight, or they may be refused entry on arrival in the UK. It is not usually possible to make changes to the validity dates of a visa, after it has been printed. If plans change, your delegate may need to make a new visa application.

**Are there any other ways to make my journey easier?**

Nationals of some countries may be able to clear immigration control faster through our Registered Traveller Service. To be eligible delegates must have a visa or have visited the UK 4 times or more in the last 24 months.

For further information about the Registered Traveller Service, please visit our website:

[www.gov.uk/registered-traveller](http://www.gov.uk/registered-traveller).

**What can I do if my delegates visa is refused?**

A decision to refuse a visa is made only after careful consideration of all the facts by an Entry Clearance Officer, including the fact that the delegate is to attend or contribute to a specific event. If the application is refused, the refusal notice will provide details about the reasons for refusal. Your delegate is free to make a new application but it is strongly recommended that they read their refusal letter carefully and fully address all the reasons for the initial refusal.

**I am funding my delegates travel, do I need to provide additional information?**

In most cases, providing details of your sponsorship on the visa invitation letter should be sufficient. However, if you send funds directly to your delegate it would be prudent to provide evidence to support the payments you have made

**This guide is for me, are there any documents I can share with my delegates?**

Yes, the GREAT Campaign Asset Library provides a selection of documents which may be shared:

[GREAT Visit Visa](#)

Whilst we can point you to this material it is important that you read the Terms and Conditions as it is your responsibility to ensure you comply with any restrictions placed on the sharing of documents published.

### 3. Guidance on letters of invitation

**When preparing a letter of invitation, you may wish to consider the following factors:**

**How will the letter be sent to the recipient?**

- If you are sending the letter by email, use a non-editable PDF format.
- Always use official headed paper for your organisation including the relevant contact information.

**Where possible a letter should be sent to an individual and include:**

- full name - as it appears in the passport;
- date of birth;
- nationality; and
- passport number.

**The letter should also include:**

- details of the event;
- dates of the event;
- location of the event;
- dates of arrival and departure to and from the UK;
- details of costs that will be covered by the host e.g. flights, accommodation, transportation etc;
- contact details for UKVI staff to use to verify the authenticity of the letter.

The letter should be signed by the relevant competent authority.

**Notes on best practice**

The following recommendations are based on experience, not all will apply to your event.

Give each delegate a unique reference number – this enables quicker and easier verification in the event it is requested

#### 4. Example letter:

##### Example 1- letter to an individual

Helsinki, April 2015

Name  
Date of birth  
Nationality  
Passport number

Dear

##### **Invitation to the 2015 World Orienteering Championships IOF Clinic**

We take great pleasure in inviting you to participate in the 2015 World Orienteering Championships Development Clinic to be held in Inverness, Scotland.

We will provide the following:

- Accommodation and full board from Tuesday 28 July to Saturday 8 August
- All transportation during the WOC week
- World Championship registration and entry fees
- Clinic lectures and practical exercises on 29 and 30 July
- Assistance throughout your stay

You will be responsible for the travel costs to and from Inverness. For a better cohesion of the group, please understand that no late arrival or early departure will be accepted. Please see the attached sheet for a full programme.

We look forward to having the pleasure of welcoming you to Scotland.

This letter was signed by

President  
International Orienteering Federation  
and  
Chairman  
British Orienteering  
and  
Event Director  
WOC 2015



## 5. Sharing information with UKVI

During the lead up to your event there may be times when you need to provide us with further information, for example:

- If you raise an issue with us about an application;
- If a delegate has been refused and you think there may be an error;
- You wish to give us feedback about a particular part of the application process; or
- We ask you to provide information to assist with managing your event.

When you provide us with further information or raise an issue it is important that we can identify the application. You should provide us with the applicants:

- Name
- Date of Birth
- Nationality
- Passport Number
- Application number (If known – starts GWF)

Where providing information about more than one individual it is helpful if you provide this on a spreadsheet. Please do not use PDF or other formats which restrict our ability to copy and paste.

Please note we are unable to discuss the details of individual cases unless you provide us with a suitable release form, this must have a wet ink signature and be scanned and returned to us. Template can be provided on request.

## 6. UKVI visa application process flowchart

# Visa application process

