

Course change guide for Tier 4 students

What is a course change?

This guide should be read in conjunction with the LSBU Changing Courses Procedure which can be found here: <https://my.lsbu.ac.uk/my/applicant/Current-Applicants/Regulations>

From a Tier 4 perspective, a 'course change' is when you are currently studying a course which you have not yet completed and you decide that you want to transfer to another course. Adding a placement to a course which would extend the overall length of the course is also considered to be a 'course change'. If you have completed a course and wish to start a new course then this is not considered to be a course change.

Your Tier 4 General visa is issued to study a particular course within a specific timeframe. The Home Office has regulations which describe if you are permitted to change courses taking into account whether you are academically suitable for the course and whether your Tier 4 visa will allow it.

The procedure has been developed in line with the latest Tier 4 Policy Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student>

Guidance review

This guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with the Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules which are subject to change by the Home Office. The current version of this policy supersedes any previous versions.

Date: 24/07/2018

If the new course you want to change to is at the same degree level and you can complete it before your current Tier 4 visa expires

▪ **If the new course is shorter:**

Example: RQF Level 6 BA Business Studies (with sandwich year) to RQF Level 6 BA Business Studies

You are permitted to change to the new course:

- LSBU will report to the Home Office that you have changed courses; you will receive notification from the Compliance team when the report is made.

Please note, we will inform the Home Office once you have completed your course and your visa will be subject to curtailment.

▪ **If the new course is the same length:**

Example: RQF Level 7 MSc Applied Accounting to RQF Level 7 MSc Accounting and Finance

If you have not previously been granted a Tier 4 or pre-Tier 4 student visa before starting the current course, you are permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office if:

- You get LSBU academic approval

LSBU will inform the Home Office of the change in circumstances.

If you have previously been granted a Tier 4 or pre-Tier 4 student visa before starting your current course, you are permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office if:

- You get LSBU academic approval, and
- The new course is related to the previous course you were granted leave as a Tier 4 (General) Student, meaning that it is either connected to the previous course, part of the same subject group, or involves deeper specialisation, or
- the previous course and the new course in combination support your genuine career aspirations

If the new course you want to change to is at the same degree level and you cannot complete it before your current Tier 4 visa expires

Example, RQF Level 7 MSc International Marketing to RQF Level 7 MSc International Marketing (with placement)

If you applied for your Tier 4 visa before 6th April 2016:

- You **are** permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office, but you must:
 - Meet the Home Office academic progress rules (i.e. course related to previous or the two courses combined support genuine career aspirations) and,
 - Check with the Immigration and Advice team whether you can make the visa application in the UK.

If you applied for your visa on or after 6th April 2016:

- You **are not** permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office because your new course end date is after your visa expiry date. You must:
 - Meet the Home Office academic progress rules (i.e. course related to previous or the two courses combined support genuine career aspiration), and
 - Get permission from the Home Office by making a new visa application, you should aim to make the application or have your visa granted before starting the work placement.
 - Please check with the Immigration and Advice team if you can extend your visa inside the UK

If the new course you want to change to is at a higher level degree level and you cannot complete it before your current Tier 4 visa expires

Example, RQF Level 5 HND Business Studies to RQF Level 6 BA (Hons) Business Studies

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa before 6th April 2016:

- You are permitted to change to your new course, and
- When you need further time in the UK to complete your course, you will need to make this application either from inside or outside of the UK but you can do so at any time before the visa expiry date. You should not return home during a period of study or during a period that will affect your studies. You should apply for a new visa during a vacation period.

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa on or after 6th April 2016:

- You will need to first get permission from the Home Office (apply for a visa) before you start your new course. You will need to make this application either from inside or outside of UK **and** you must do so before you can change course. You should not return home during a period of study or during a period that will affect your studies. You should apply for a new visa during a vacation period.

If the new course you want to change to is at a higher level degree level and you can complete it before your current Tier 4 visa expires

Example: RQF Level 6 BA Business Studies to RQF Level 7 Level 7 MSc International Marketing

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa before 6th April 2016, you are permitted to change to the new course:

- LSBU will report to the Home Office that you have changed courses; you will receive notification from the Compliance team when the report is made.

Please note, we will inform the Home Office once you have completed your course and your visa will be subject to curtailment.

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa on or after 6th April 2016:

- If you have not previously been granted a Tier 4 or pre-Tier 4 student visa before starting the current course, you **are** permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office if:
 - You get LSBU academic approval
LSBU will inform the Home Office of the change in circumstances.
- If you have previously been granted a Tier 4 or pre-Tier 4 student visa before starting your current course, you **are** permitted to change course without first getting permission from the Home Office if:
 - You get LSBU academic approval, and
 - The new course is related to the previous course you were granted leave as a Tier 4 (General) Student, meaning that it is either connected to the previous course, part of the same subject group, or involves deeper specialisation, or
 - the previous course and the new course in combination support your genuine career aspirations

Please note, we will inform the Home Office once you have completed your course and your visa will be subject to curtailment.

If the new course you want to change to is at a lower degree level

Example, RQF Level 7 MEng Petroleum Engineering to RQF Level 6 BEng Petroleum Engineering

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa before 6th April 2016, and you can complete the new course within the time remaining on your Tier 4 visa, you can change to the new course without getting permission from the Home Office. If you cannot complete the new course before your visa expires, you will need to make your visa application from **outside of the UK** but you can do so at any point before your visa expires.

If you applied for your current Tier 4 visa on or after 6th April 2016, you will need permission from the Home Office before starting the new course (make a Tier 4 visa application). You are required to make this visa application from **outside of the UK**.

***Important* Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)**

If you are changing course and your new course requires an ATAS clearance certificate, you will need to apply for this and be granted a certificate before you will be permitted to switch course. This applies even if you already have a certificate for your old course. Please send us a copy of your new ATAS certificate as soon as you receive it. There is more guidance in our How to Guide 'Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)': <https://my.lsbu.ac.uk/my/applicant/Current-Applicants/International-students/How-to-Guides>

Immigration and International Student Advice team

You should contact our Immigration and International Student Advice team if you require any advice about changing course: <http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/international/visas-and-immigration/advice-team>

Here is the action you must take to ensure that you are able to change course – all course changes must be authorised by the Immigration and International Student Advice team:

Changing course once you have been granted a Tier 4 visa but before you enrol

Academic	You will need to check with our International Admissions team to see if you are eligible to take the new course: international.admissions@lsbu.ac.uk
Immigration	We will check that your Tier 4 visa allows you to change course in line with the information above. You will also need to complete a new personal statement or undertake another interview so that we can confirm that you meet point 4 of the regulations given above.

Changing course after you have enrolled

Academic	You will need to check with the School in which your new course is based to ensure that you are eligible for the new course. You will need to follow the course change process which can be found here: https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/policies-regulations-procedures . Please note, this is only an application to change course and you should not start attending new classes as the change will need to be authorised by the Immigration and International Student Advice team. You will be informed if your application is successful.
Immigration	We will check that your Tier 4 visa allows you to change course in line with the information above. You will also need to complete a new personal statement or undertake another interview so that we can confirm that you meet point 4 of the regulations given above.

Adding a work placement to your course

Adding a work placement is considered to be a change of course and so the rules given above on changing course will apply.

Academic	You will need to check with your School to ensure that you are able to undertake a placement as part of your course. You will need to follow the course change process which can be found here: https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/policies-regulations-procedures . Please note, this is only an application to change course and you should not start attending new classes as the change will need to be authorised by the Immigration and International Student Advice team. You will be informed if your application is successful.
Immigration	We will check that your Tier 4 visa allows you to change course in line with the information above. We will also need to ensure that you have completed all the requirements for your work placement before you are permitted to start your work placement.