

Start-Up Visa Guidelines for Applicants 2021-2022

LSBU Endorsement for the Start-Up Visa

This Home Office scheme is open to **non-EEA** graduates who have genuine, credible, innovative and scalable business ideas to put into practice in the UK. The University is a Start-Up Visa authorised endorsing body which means we can issue endorsements to enable students to apply for the Start-Up Visa.

Eligibility

To apply for endorsement you must:

- Be a current LSBU undergraduate or postgraduate student approaching graduation or have graduated from an LSBU undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme within the last two years.
- Have an idea for a business with potential to add value to the UK economy, rather than a routine business that will compete with other traders.
- Proof of £945 in your bank account for 90 days prior to application.
- Be at least 18 years old.

Notes on eligibility:

- Endorsement cannot be given for business ideas that engage in property management or property development
- You can apply from abroad, and without holding a current UK visa
- You need to have been awarded your degree from LSBU within the last two years, or to be approaching the end of your current course of study, to apply for endorsement
- You cannot apply as a team: each business partner has to apply individually
- You cannot apply if you have established a business in the UK before
- You cannot apply if you have had 2 years' leave in the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur or Start-Up) category
- The decision of the LSBU panel is final: there is no appeals process
- You can apply again, anytime within two years of the award date of your degree
- You will not be eligible to apply for endorsement with LSBU if you are studying a full-time course at another institution, you must be near the completion of the course to start the process

Steps to apply for endorsement from London South Bank University

1. Continue reading these guidelines for applicants.
2. Complete an Immigration Checklist: please email tier4compliance@lsbu.ac.uk to obtain a copy. **You must request, complete and return the Checklist at least 10 working days before the Application Deadline.**
3. If your Immigration Checklist is approved, you will be notified and can contact the Student Enterprise Team to have an initial one to one discussion about your business idea (this will either be over the phone or in person).
4. From this discussion, you will be advised of the process for applying for endorsement – this will include the upcoming deadlines for submitting an Application Form.
5. Applications are shortlisted following the deadline for applications. To be shortlisted, you must meet at least 5 of the 7 criteria for endorsement – including Criteria 3 which all applications must meet to be shortlisted. At least two panel members must agree to you being shortlisted. If your application is shortlisted, we will invite you to pitch to a panel (presentations can also take place via MS Teams or Zoom, if you are applying for endorsement from outside of the UK). Following this you will be informed whether you have been successful in securing endorsement.
6. We can then issue you with an endorsement. You can then apply to UKVI for your visa. Once you have secured your visa, you will be required to meet with the Student Enterprise team to agree milestones for progressing your idea and developing your business. Whilst you are endorsed, you will need to attend workshops, six weekly 1-2-1 reviews and use the hot-desking space at least 3 days a week in the Clarence Centre to develop your business.

Application deadlines for 2021-2022 are as follows:

You should complete the Application Form and submit it by one of the deadlines below:

- **Monday 22nd November 2021, 9:00am (UK time)**
- **Monday 14th March 2022, 9:00am (UK time)**
- **Monday 1st August 2022, 9:00am (UK time)**

If your application is shortlisted, you will be contacted within 10 working days of the deadline with an invitation to pitch to a panel (this can also be via MS Teams or Zoom, if you are applying from outside of the UK).

You will be notified of the panel's decision within 5 working days of the pitch. The panel's decision is final – there is no appeals process.

Criteria for endorsement

To secure endorsement from LSBU, you have to demonstrate that you meet LSBU's criteria for endorsement. The criteria are:

1. An original idea for a business that meets new or existing market needs with potential to add value to the UK economy. Rather than a routine business that will compete with other traders
2. Demonstration of credibility and viability of the idea
3. Evidence of the potential for the business to scale
4. The entrepreneurial skills and commitment to develop that business
5. A strong reason for the business to be based in the UK
6. Financial resources to develop the idea
7. The commitment to spending the majority of your working time on developing the idea and the business (at least 3 days per week)

You must demonstrate how you meet all of the criteria above through the application form and during your pitch. You need to present this in a clear and concise way at all stages of the application process.

More detailed information on each of the criteria is given below.

- 1. An original idea for a business that meets new or existing market needs with potential to add value to the UK economy, rather than a routine business that will compete with other traders**

Your business idea should bring something different to the UK economy – this could be a new innovation or a fresh approach to an existing problem. It should add to the UK market, rather than compete with businesses that already exist in the UK. Working as a consultant, for example, is unlikely to meet the requirements.

You must be able to explain your idea clearly: what will your product or service be and how will it/they be delivered? Who will your customers be and how will you reach them? Where will you sell your product or service (e.g. online, in shops)? How will you secure a competitive advantage?

2. Demonstration of credibility and viability of the idea

You must also be able to demonstrate the credibility of your idea - it must be more than an idea. You must demonstrate that you've tested and validated the key assumptions and critical success factors of your business idea. This will allow you to demonstrate the commercial viability of your idea – what makes you think that your business has the ability to survive and secure a position in the market?

3. Evidence of the potential for the business to scale

You must evidence structured planning for your idea and how it has the potential for job creation and growth into national markets. You must be able to demonstrate how you intend to scale your business so you can create jobs in the future. This could be directly employing people and/or regularly using freelancers. How will you create the conditions in your business to grow into new markets in the UK? What are some examples of these new markets?

4. The entrepreneurial skills and commitment to develop that business

Do you have, or are you actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business? You must evidence that you have the skills and commitment to develop your proposed idea. Provide evidence of relevant studies/work experience that you have that make you the right person to execute the idea. You should also demonstrate why you want to be an entrepreneur. How do you plan to improve your business skills, if you are endorsed?

5. A strong reason for the business to be based in the UK

You must provide a clear and convincing argument for why your business needs to be launched in the UK and not elsewhere. For example, is your customer base here or do you need to work with a specialist supplier? Do you have existing networks that are essential to the success of your business?

6. Financial resources to develop the idea

How will you make money and sustain your business? Where will you sell and in what quantity? Will that make enough money? How much money do you need to start up and where will you source this money from?

7. The commitment to spending the majority of your working time on developing the business and the idea (at least 3 days per week)

You must demonstrate that you will spend a minimum of 3 days per week on developing the business and the idea.

What are the panel looking for?

Successful applications tend to demonstrate:

- Initial testing of the market
- Some market research to prove that there is a demand for the proposed product/service
- A clear understanding of customer segments
- Good networks and connections with potential partners/clients/customers
- Finances that make sense: clearly presented, well thought-out and realistic for a new business
- An interesting product or service that will bring something new to the market
- A clear passion and drive to make the idea happen
- Evidence that they can support themselves financially throughout the year
- Evidence that the idea has the potential to create jobs and grow into a successful scalable business

We receive a large number of requests for endorsement, but many of these are not successful. The reasons for this include:

- Applications exceed the word count
- No strong reason why the business needs to be run from the UK
- Proposed business idea is a routine business – no evidence of how it will bring something new to the UK economy
- No evidence of potential to scale (job creation and growth into national markets)
- No market research to demonstrate need for proposed business
- Applicant does not demonstrate that they have the experience, skills and knowledge to execute the idea
- No clear business model
- Not enough detail on competitors, similar products or market potential
- Unclear and unrealistic finances
- Pitch exceeds time limit
- Business already registered

If you are successful:

LSBU will provide you with a letter of endorsement for your application to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). Once you have secured your visa, you will be required to sign an Agreement with LSBU to confirm you understand your obligations whilst LSBU is endorsing you for the Start-Up Visa.

LSBU will support you during the 24 months of the visa to develop your idea into a successful business. You will work with LSBU's Student Enterprise Team to agree a programme of support to help you develop, build and grow your business. You will agree milestones for progressing your idea and developing your business. Whilst you are endorsed, you will need to attend workshops, six weekly 1-2-1 reviews and use the hot-desking space at the Clarence Centre to develop your business. You will need to achieve your milestones in a credible manner and spend the majority of your time working on your business.

If your business is not progressing adequately, LSBU will withdraw its endorsement.

Questions

Please contact the Student Enterprise Team on studententerprise@lsbu.ac.uk with questions about the application process. We cannot check over applications before they are submitted.

Please ensure that you've carefully read the guidance before you contact the team – we will respond to your enquiry as soon as we are able to do so.

October 2021