Coronavirus (COVID-19) factsheet: visa customers outside of the UK
Monday 8 June 2020

Guidance on immigration provisions made by the Home Office for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Key lines

- The Home Office has published guidance on GOV.UK on immigration provisions for individuals affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus (COVID-19).

Visa customers outside of the UK:

- There will be changes at the border because of coronavirus (COVID-19). Check what individual’s need to do before they travel.

- Some UK Visa Application Centres (VACs) are resuming services where local restrictions allow. Services will reopen in phases. For updates to the status of VACs in your country check with:
  - TLS contact if you’re in Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East
  - VFS global for all other countries

- Ongoing global restrictions mean some UKVI services will remain closed. Where services are resuming, existing customers will be contacted.

- Visa customers outside of the UK who are affected by travel restrictions associated with coronavirus should visit the Coronavirus (COVID-19): advice for UK visa applicants and temporary UK residents GOV.UK page for the latest information and guidance.

Getting documents

- As VACs reopen, we will prioritise returning customer passports. If the VAC where an individual applied is still closed, we will not be able to return their passport.

- We will reopen more VACs where local restrictions allow, and social distancing can be maintained.

Service standards

- The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all UKVI services, and public health restrictions are still in place in most countries. Whilst our aim is to assess applications within our normal service standards, there may be delays as the operation restarts and we evaluate the operating environment.
British nationals abroad who need to apply for a passport

- Her Majesty’s Passport Office is accepting online passport applications.
- If an individual are advised that they must book an appointment at their nearest VAC to submit their passport application, they should check if it’s open.
- If an individual’s country’s VAC is still closed, they won’t be able to apply for a British passport until it re-opens.
- If an individual urgently need to travel to the UK, they should contact the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to discuss their options. Individuals can also check the latest travel advice from the FCO.

Compelling and compassionate circumstances

- Where there are compelling or compassionate circumstances it may be appropriate to issue a visa waiver to those unable to apply for a visa, or authority to carry for those applicants with an issued but uncollected visa due to the disruption. Individuals should contact the British embassy, high commission or consulate of the country they are in if they think they fall into this category.

English Testing Centres

- Some English Testing Centres are also resuming services. Visit the International English Language Testing System (IELTS)’s website, the Pearson Test of English website or the LanguageCert website or contact the customers test centre for more information on where we are reopening and how they can book their Secure English Language Test.

Applicants for a Global Talent, Start up or Innovator visa

- If an individual’s endorsement from an endorsing body has expired because they have not been able to travel to the UK, they may still be eligible for a visa.
- They should make their application as planned and we will consider all applications on a case by case basis.

If an individual’s 30-day visa to work, study or join family has expired

- If an individual’s 30 day visa to travel to the UK for work, study or to join family has expired, or is about to expire, individuals can request a replacement visa with revised validity dates free of charge until the end of this year.
To make a request, individuals should contact the Coronavirus Immigration Team and include their name, nationality, date of birth and their GWF reference number with ‘REPLACEMENT 30 DAY VISA’ in the subject line. If they have already contacted the team about this, please let the team know in the email.

Individuals will be contacted when our VACs reopen to arrange for a replacement visa to be endorsed in their passport.

Individuals will not be penalised for being unable collect their BRP while coronavirus measures are in place.

This process will be in place until the end of 2020.

Additional Information

What guidance does Home Office have for those who have a valid visa but haven’t travelled to the UK yet?

Applicants who hold a valid visa should check initially with their own government websites to ensure that they are up to date on latest travel restrictions from their current locations. There will be changes at the border because of coronavirus (COVID-19). Individual’s must check what they need to do before they travel.

How does Home Office plan to return passports to applicants in regions where there are still VAC closures?

As VACs reopen, we will prioritise returning customer passports. If the VAC where an individual applied is still closed, we will not be able to return their passport. We will reopen more VACs where local restrictions allow, and social distancing can be maintained.

If an individual has applied for a visa from overseas but would now like to withdraw their application, how do they do this?

If the customer wishes to withdraw their application before their biometric appointment and is overseas, they can do this in the same place as their application was made, on Access UK or Visas4UK.

Any customer who is overseas and wishes to withdraw an application after their biometrics have been taken should visit Cancel your visa, immigration or citizenship application

Why are you opening VACs now?

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on all UKVI services. Until now, the worldwide restrictions meant UKVI could not operate safely or effectively. Globally, we are beginning to see the lifting of certain restrictions and recognise customers are keen to complete their applications where they are able. Therefore, UKVI is starting to re-open, in a phased manner, some of its locations and services,
where the local environment supports it. This will be managed carefully and kept under constant review.

**Why are you opening up applications from overseas when you have just introduced/are just about to introduce self-isolation requirements? Isn’t this increasing the risk of a second spike?**

UKVI and its commercial partners will only operate where government guidelines allow and in line with social distancing rules. Customers seeking to travel to the UK should [check what they need to do before they travel](#)