

GATEWAY EDUCONNECT

UK Graduate Route 2026-27

A simple student and parent guide to the 2-year versus 18-month rule, application timing, budget checks and career planning.

2 years before 2027	18 months from 2027	3 years for doctoral graduates
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The important date is the date you submit your Graduate visa application - not simply the date you start your course. Students planning upcoming UK intakes should map the likely course completion date before making assumptions about post-study time.

Use this guide to: understand the latest rule, identify the checks you must complete, discuss the budget with your family, and prepare better questions before paying any fee.

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1. What exactly is changing?

The UK Graduate visa remains available, but the duration for most bachelor’s and master’s graduates changes from 1 January 2027.

Application timing	Typical Graduate visa duration	Who this applies to
On or before 31 Dec 2026	2 years	Eligible bachelor’s, master’s and other relevant qualifications
On or after 1 Jan 2027	18 months	Eligible bachelor’s, master’s and other relevant qualifications
Any qualifying application	3 years	PhD or other doctoral qualification graduates

The key lesson

A student joining a course in 2026 may complete the course and apply for the Graduate visa in 2027. Therefore, do not assume that a 2026 intake automatically gives a 2-year Graduate visa.

The Graduate visa starts from the date the application is approved. It cannot be extended, although an eligible graduate may later switch to another route, such as the Skilled Worker route, if the requirements are met.

2. Who can apply and when?

Apply only after course completion is reported

Your education provider must tell the Home Office that you have successfully completed the course. You do not need to wait for a graduation ceremony if the provider has reported completion.

Apply before your Student visa expires

The Graduate visa application must be submitted online while you are still in the UK and before your Student visa or Tier 4 permission expires.

Build your personal timeline

Step	What to confirm	Why it matters
1. Course start	Exact programme start date	Helps plan the complete study timeline
2. Course end	Expected academic completion date	Completion may be later than teaching end date
3. Provider report	When the university is likely to report successful completion	You can apply only after this step
4. Student visa expiry	The expiry date shown on your immigration permission	The Graduate application must be before expiry
5. Graduate application date	Likely date of online submission	Determines whether 2 years or 18 months applies

Do not rely on verbal assumptions

Ask the university for the official course dates and confirm the likely completion-report process. Immigration outcomes depend on the rules in force and your individual eligibility at the time of application.

3. UK budget and career checks

Student visa application fee

The UK Student visa fee for an application made outside the UK is currently £558. Other costs, including the immigration health surcharge, may also apply.

Financial requirement

For a Student visa, the current living-fund requirement is £1,529 per month in London or £1,171 per month outside London, for up to 9 months, plus unpaid course fees shown on the CAS.

Questions students and parents should answer

- What is the full tuition fee after scholarship, deposit and any compulsory charges?
- What is the realistic living budget for the chosen city, not only the visa minimum?
- Does the course connect clearly with the student's previous education or career plan?
- Which employers recruit for this subject, and which roles may qualify for sponsorship?
- Can the family manage the budget without depending completely on part-time work?
- What is the repayment pressure if an education loan is required?

Parent planning rule

Treat part-time work as support, not as the main source for tuition and living costs. Build the plan using confirmed family funds, scholarship, approved loan and realistic living expenses.

4. A practical decision checklist

Check	Good sign	Warning sign
Course fit	Course supports a clear academic or career progression	Course selected only because admission appears easy
Budget	Complete funding plan is documented	Plan depends on uncertain part-time income
Timeline	Course completion and visa expiry are understood	Student assumes every 2026 intake receives 2 years
Career plan	Target roles and employer demand are researched	Decision based only on rankings or friends
University checks	Official course page, fees and dates are saved	Student relies only on social media claims

Your next 7 actions

- Shortlist courses based on profile, budget and career goal.
- Confirm official start date, end date and expected completion-report process.
- Calculate tuition, visa, health surcharge, accommodation and emergency funds.
- Check current Graduate route and Skilled Worker information on GOV.UK.
- Prepare documents and funding evidence early.
- Discuss risk, repayment and backup options with parents.
- Take a profile review before paying multiple application fees.

5. Final student and parent checklist

Before you pay an application fee or make a final country decision, complete these checks:

- Official course dates have been checked.
- The likely Graduate visa application date has been mapped.
- The full budget is affordable without depending fully on student work.
- The course has a clear academic and career connection.
- University, visa and work-route facts have been checked from official pages.
- A backup plan exists if the job search takes longer than expected.

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Important

This guide is for general education planning. It is not a visa decision, legal advice, financial advice, admission guarantee, scholarship guarantee or job guarantee. Rules, fees and eligibility can change. Always verify the official page and the university page before submitting or paying.

Official sources used

Graduate visa overview: <https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/overview>

Graduate route immigration rules: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-graduate>

Student visa fee and overview: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/overview>

Student visa money requirement: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/money>