

Business related events and conferences in the UK - visa requirements

UK Visas and Immigration has circulated a guidance document on visa requirements for those attending business events and conferences in the UK.

Who needs a visa?

Anyone from the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland won't need a visa. Nationals of certain other 'non-visa' countries such as the USA, Australia and Brazil can request a visa on arrival in the UK. All other nationalities must apply before travelling. If you're not sure, check <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>.

What type of visa do they need?

It depends how long they're staying and what they'll be doing while they're in the UK. If they're just coming to attend your conference, it's likely they'll need a Standard Visitor Visa (Business route).

NOTE: The full guidance doesn't specify the business route, but that's the correct route to take. A normal route Standard Visitor Visa (ie a tourist visa) shouldn't be used.

General business activities may include:

- a) attending meetings, conferences, seminars, interviews
- b) giving a one-off or short series of talks and speeches (at non-commercial events which won't make a profit for the organiser)
- c) negotiating and signing deals and contracts
- d) attending trade fairs for promotional work only, provided the visitor is not directly selling
- e) carrying out site visits and inspections
- f) being briefed on requirements of a UK based customer, provided work for the customer is done outside the UK

If they're receiving payment for any work, they might need a Permitted Paid Engagement visa. Check the UKVI self-assessment tool (see link above) if you're not sure.

What do they need to do?

After making sure they know what visa to apply for, they'll need to apply online then book and attend an appointment at a Visa Application Centre (VAC), taking their passport, printed application form and any other supporting documents (including your invitation letter), to give their biometric details (photo and fingerprints).

How long does it take?

The guidance suggests 15 working days from receipt of all information (including biometric data) to decision. However, they recommend invitation letters should be sent **at least 8 weeks before an event** to be sure. Visa applications can be made up to 3 months in advance of the planned date of travel.

What information do I need to include in the invitation letter?

There's guidance and an example letter on pages 6 and 7 of the document, but essentially:

- full name, as it appears in the passport
- date of birth
- nationality
- passport number
- details, dates and location of the event
- dates of arrival in, and departure from, the UK
- details of costs that will be covered by the host e.g. flights, accommodation, transportation etc
- contact details in case UKVI staff need to verify the authenticity of the letter.

They also recommend that each delegate be given a unique reference number.

This document is a summary of the [full guidance](#) – please speak to your local HR hub for further guidance.