



ESSEX STARTUPS

VISA ENDORSEMENT

GENERAL INFORMATION AND FREQUENTLY
ASKED QUESTIONS (2020-2021)

DISCLAIMER:

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, University of Essex reserves the full right to withdraw the visa application process at any time. If you have any questions about the application procedure that was not covered in this document, please contact startups@essex.ac.uk.

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APPLICATION TIMELINE

■ Stage 0 - Before the Application

Check the University of Essex and Home Office websites for eligibility requirements.

■ Stage 1 - Pre-Qualifying Stage

You need to fill in an expression of interest form & pre-qualifying questions (done via CareerHub)

- Timeline: Open now

■ Stage 2 - Application Stage

Workshop to learn about BMC (compulsory attendance):

- Held on Wednesday 16 June 2021, 1-3pm

Submit your application form (CareerHub Form) incl. your video pitch and BMC by

- Deadline: 11:59pm on Monday 2 August 2021

Assessment by a review panel with live Q&A (via video call):

- Held on Tuesday 21 September 2021

■ Stage 3 - Immigration & Endorsement Stage

After successful completion of other stages, our International Visa Team will carry out immigration eligibility checks. If passed, you will receive a letter of endorsement from the University of Essex.

- At this stage you should make your application to the Home Office.

■ Stage 4 - Engagement & Monitoring Stage

After receiving the endorsement, you will be required to work closely with the Essex Startups on your start-up journey. Among other points of contact, you will be required to carry out regular **progress reporting**. This will be done at least once every six months.

- Timeline: During the two year period of your visa

START-UP VISA FAQ – BEFORE THE APPLICATION

■ Who can apply for the Start-up Visa endorsement?

The University of Essex Start-up Visa scheme is for our current final year students and recent Essex graduates (within the last 2 years of graduation) only. Places are limited and endorsements are not guaranteed.

■ When can I apply for the Start-up Visa endorsement?

The scheme usually opens for applications in the summer term around April/May. Individual deadlines may vary, and are announced with each opening round.

■ Am I eligible to apply for the Start-up Visa endorsement?

You must be a current final year student or a recent graduate (maximum of up to 2-3 years after graduation).

You must be able to meet all the Home Office requirements for the Start-up Visa scheme and be in a position to make a valid immigration application.

In addition to the general immigration requirements, your business idea will need to meet certain criteria as well. These are dictated by the Home Office. Your business will need to meet the criteria of being innovative, scalable and viable. All of which you will need to showcase within your endorsement application to us.

For more information:

Home Office Website: <https://www.gov.uk/start-up-visa>

University of Essex: https://www1.essex.ac.uk/immigration/apply_for_a_visa/start-up-scheme.aspx

START-UP VISA FAQ – BEFORE THE APPLICATION

■ Can I register, or start my business, before I receive my endorsement?

No. Registering the business, or engaging in any trades, will instantly disqualify you from the Start-up Visa scheme.

Please note: If you are currently residing in the UK under a different visa, most likely a Tier 4 Visa with which you have studied in the UK, you are **NOT** allowed to engage in any business activity under this visa. Hence, you are in direct violation of your Tier 4 Visa if you register a business in the UK or engage in any trading activities.

If you have any questions on this, please contact the International Team of the University of Essex – international@essex.ac.uk

■ Can any business idea be granted Visa endorsement?

Not every type of business or idea is eligible for endorsement. As part of the application requirements, you will need to demonstrate that your idea is innovative, viable and scalable – these are criteria dictated by the Home Office. Failing to demonstrate even one of these three aspects will lead to rejection of your application.

START-UP VISA FAQ – BEFORE THE APPLICATION

■ What are the three criteria dictated by the Home Office? And what do these mean?

Innovation: This can be an innovative product or service, but equally this could also mean innovation within your business structure or your processes. This criteria is subjective, however, within your application we will ask you to define this based on your business idea and showcase to us what innovation will mean to you in your business.

Scalability: This is quite straightforward. Show us within your application that your business is scalable, meaning it can be multiplied on a national or global level. And it is not a freelance business.

Viability: Demonstrate to us that your business is financially viable. As part of that you may also take into account your personal finances whilst you are trying to build this businesses. How are you staying viable and supporting yourself and how can you make your business viable.

■ Is there a limit to the number of people the university can endorse for the Start-up Visa?

The application process is highly competitive and limited in spaces. Endorsements are not guaranteed.

■ Is there anything I can do (in addition to meeting the basic criteria) to support my application?

While we can never guarantee the approval of your application, you can do a lot to help your own application. Aside from meeting the base criteria, attending Essex Startups workshops, advice sessions and working closely with the team will work in favour of your application.

■ Can I get help with my application?

The Essex Startups team is more than happy to answer questions you have and work with you in advance of the application process on your Business Model Canvas or any other questions you might have. Working closely with us will positively reflect on your application.

START-UP VISA FAQ – PRE-QUALIFYING STAGE – APPLICATION STAGE

Pre-Qualifying stage FAQ

■ What is an Expression of Interest?

In up to 100 words, explain why you are interested in this Start-Up Visa.

Application stage FAQ

■ Will I need to submit a full Business Plan?

No, a business plan is not needed. Once you have made it successfully through the Pre-Qualifying stage, we will ask you to fill out the application form. As part of that we also ask you to submit a three minute video pitch alongside your completed Business Model Canvas. These are the only three items that are needed and that we accept.

■ What is a Business Model Canvas (BMC) and where can I get the template?

Business Model Canvas is a strategic management and [lean startup](#) template with nine building blocks for developing new or documenting existing business models. It is a visual chart with elements describing a firm's value proposition, infrastructure, customers, and finances. It assists firms in aligning their activities by illustrating potential trade-offs.

You can either contact the Essex Startups team via startups@essex.ac.uk or you can request a copy of the BMC via <https://www.strategyzer.com/canvas>

This canvas needs to be used in your application.

START-UP VISA FAQ – APPLICATION STAGE

■ What is a video pitch?

As part of your application we will ask you to produce a short video pitch, no more than three minutes in length, giving an introduction to your business/idea, and explaining what the three criteria of **innovation, scalability and viability** mean to you in your business.

Please upload this video to Vimeo (just setup a free account), set the privacy settings to “Only people with a password” and provide the link to the video and password where required inside this application form on CareerHub.

■ What is the Live Pitch and Q&A?

Once you have submitted your application alongside your three minute video pitch and your completed Business Model Canvas (BMC), we will invite you to attend the Review Panel Day. We will allocate time slots for you via Zoom video conference calling.

This will give you a chance to very briefly (no longer than 3-5 minutes) pitch your business idea to us and then answer any questions we might have. In total the session with each applicant should not take longer than 15 minutes.

START-UP VISA FAQ – IMMIGRATION AND ENDORSEMENT STAGE

■ How long do the Eligibility checks take?

Eligibility checks are processed as quickly as possible but we cannot give an exact timeframe due to constraints of the Home Office. To understand processing times, please contact them directly or contact the International Services Team at the University of Essex international@essex.ac.uk.

■ If my application is successful, how long does it take to receive my endorsement letter from the University?

If your application is successful, the University will issue your letter of endorsement as quickly as possible. We cannot give a specific timeline due to the current impact of COVID-19 on processing times.

START-UP VISA FAQ – ENGAGEMENT AND MONITORING STAGE

■ What are my responsibilities as an Essex Startups Endorsee?

You must not start your business until your Start-up visa has been granted. Additionally, you need to:

- Stay in regular contact with our Essex Startups team, as agreed. Regular 1:1 meetings, attend workshops and show progress on a regular basis.
- Ensure that you maintain your immigration status and do not breach the conditions of your leave.
- Spend the majority of your time developing your business, but can also take on other work to support yourself.

You must tell us if you:

- Switch to another visa type.
- Permanently leave the UK.
- Start working on a new business venture.

Failing to comply with any of these terms may jeopardise your endorsement.

■ Can I change my business idea once I have successfully received endorsement and have received the approved Visa by the Home Office?

Generally no. The endorsement is only issued on the business venture with which you have applied for as it needs to meet all three criteria of being innovative, viable and scalable. Hence, if you are considering switching your idea completely to a new area and market, we will need to assess this on a case by case basis.

If we feel your new idea is not meeting the criteria, this might jeopardize your endorsement and your visa. Please come talk to the Essex Startups team and discuss your options.

START-UP VISA FAQ – ENGAGEMENT AND MONITORING STAGE

■ Is the 2-year stay in the UK 100% guaranteed once I have an endorsement & the approved Visa from the Home Office?

We reserve the right to withdraw any endorsements from the University of Essex if we feel the Endorsee does not meet their responsibilities.

You must:

- Not start your business until your Start-up visa has been granted.
- Stay in regular contact with our Essex Startups Team, as agreed. Regular 1:1 meetings, attend workshops and show progress on a regular basis.
- Ensure that you maintain your immigration status and do not breach the conditions of your leave.
- Spend the majority of your time developing your business but can also take on other work to support yourself.
- Tell us if you switch to another visa type.
- Tell us if you permanently leave the UK.
- Tell us if you start working on a new business venture.

All of the above will jeopardise your current endorsement.

Equally, should the Home Office/UK government change any of their regulations/criteria/legislation, and these affect any current Endorsees, the Essex Startups team and the International Team will inform and work with you accordingly.

■ What happens if I can't attend the Business Model Canvas (BMC) Workshop as part of the application stage? Will this hinder my application submission?

As the workshop is part of your application process, you must attend the session. If you are unable to attend the workshop, please inform the Essex Startups Team before you submit your Pre-Qualifying Questionnaire or as soon as possible before the date of the workshop.

Contact startups@essex.ac.uk if you are unable to participate and we will provide further information.