Information for International (non EEA/Swiss) Students

What is the Start-up visa?

The Start-up category was introduced on 29 March 2019 and replaces the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category.

The Start-up Visa is for early-stage but high potential entrepreneurs who are starting a business in the UK for the first time. To qualify for a visa, applicants must first obtain an endorsement from an approved endorsing body. These include leading business organisations and higher education institutions.

Queen Mary University of London is an endorsing body. If your business idea is accepted, and QMUL agrees to endorse you, we will issue you with an endorsement letter which will be needed as part of your application for immigration permission under the Start-up category.

Who can apply for the Start-up visa?

You must meet all of the below requirements to be eligible for the Start-up category:

- You must have an endorsement letter from an endorsing body
- You must have held at least £945 in your bank account for at least 90 consecutive days before you apply
- You must meet the English language requirement. You will meet this requirement if you have completed a degree level course or above at QMUL. You will also meet this requirement if you have already proved your level of English to be B2 or above as part of an earlier successful application, e.g. for a Tier 4 application.

To apply for the Start-up Visa through QMUL, you will need to be a QMUL graduate.

Check the UK government website to see which documents you will need to provide with your application.

Note: you can only make an immigration application for the Start-up Visa in the UK if your most recent grant of immigration permission is as a Tier 4 (General) Student or if your most recent grant of immigration permission is as a Tier 2 (General) migrant and...
you are working at Queen Mary as a postdoctoral researcher. Otherwise, you will have
to return to your home country to make an application for entry clearance.

For full details of the requirements, read the Start-up Visa Policy Guidance document,
which is available from the UK government website.

**How long can I stay in the UK with the Start-up Visa?**

The Start-up Visa will be granted for two years. During this time, applicants will spend
the majority of their time developing their businesses but can also take on other work
outside of their businesses, to support themselves.

Successful applicants will be expected to progress into the main Innovator route after
2 years, if they wish to continue developing their businesses in the UK after that time.
At that stage, they will need to have secured at least £50,000 funding and a fresh
endorsement from an endorsing body in the Innovator route, who will also assess their
business ideas for innovation, viability and scalability.

**What is the Queen Mary Endorsement Scheme?**

To apply for the Start-up Visa, you need a Letter of Endorsement from Queen Mary,
University of London. To apply for this letter, you must pass an Endorsement Selection
Scheme run by Queen Mary. We will use this selection process to identify viable
business ideas. There are two parts to the selection scheme:

1. A written application
2. An interview panel

Queen Mary selects a maximum of ten applicants and we will only select applicants
with business ideas which are innovative, viable and that have potential to scale.

**When should I apply to the Queen Mary Endorsement Scheme?**

You should apply three months before the expiration of your current immigration
permission, and no more than four months before expiration. Unless you allow at least
3 months between deadline and the expiry of your current immigration permission,
unfortunately we cannot guarantee that we will be able to process your application to
the Endorsement Scheme before your visa expires.

You are allowed to apply for the Start-up visa from overseas, so if we cannot process
your application prior to the expiration of your visa, you can continue your application
from your home country.
Application Process and Selection

Application Form can be downloaded here: Start-up Visa Application Form [DOC 191KB]. Applications to QMUL Start-up visa permission endorsement will be assessed by Queen Mary’s Start-up visa Selection Panel. The Panel consists of three senior enterprise staff from the university.

If assessment results in the Panel requesting revisions to the candidate’s application, then only one revision opportunity will be given, and any additional evidence requested must be submitted to the Panel within a given period.

The Panel’s decision is final. However, if an applicant wishes to appeal on grounds of process, they may do so, within two weeks of receipt of this decision, by submitting their case in writing to the Head of Careers & Enterprise, Emily Huns – e.huns@qmul.ac.uk.

If a candidate is not granted endorsement, then s/he may choose to apply on one further occasion with a new business idea. Candidates may not re-apply with the same business idea.

Scoring criteria

The pitch (0-5 marks)
Is the pitch compelling and well organised, and is relevant information backed up with evidence?

Innovation and Solution (0-5 marks)
Does the applicant have a genuine, original business model that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage?

Market knowledge and marketing strategy (0-5 marks)
Have the size and characteristics of the market been described effectively and backed up with evidence?

Competition and competitive advantage (0-5 marks)
Have competitors been described and analysed effectively; is there a genuine USP for the business?

Product or service feasibility (0-5 marks)
Has the product or service been validated by an independent expert, investor or customer – for example, has a commitment to invest been received, or a contract from a customer? Does the application provide a convincing story of how the product/service will work and how the business could diversify into new areas? If securing a patent is key to the idea, the candidate should have checked patentability with a qualified lawyer.
Financial model (0-5 marks)
Is there potential for the business to be profitable and sustainable? Are the financial figures supported by market data provided, e.g. is the market big enough to sustain the financial projections? Can financial progress be made within the 2 year (maximum) term of the visa permission (e.g. via raising investment from a third party or generating revenue from sales)?

Entrepreneurial skills (0-5 marks)
Does the applicant have, or are they actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business?

Scalability (0-5 marks)
Is there evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national markets?

All panel members must be in agreement before a candidate may pass through each stage of the process. If your application is successful, two of the panel members will be responsible for monitoring your business.

How do I apply for Endorsement?

For the first stage, you are asked to supply:

1. A completed application form: Start-up Visa Application Form [DOC 191KB]

2. A 2-minute video pitching your business to the panel (this does not have to be hi tech – it is fine to use your smart phone). You should upload your video to a hosting service such as YouTube or Vimeo. Have a look at crowdfunding websites (e.g. [https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk](https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk)) for ideas to inspire your video.

Applicants are encouraged to seek advice from one of Queen Mary’s Enterprise Advisors before starting their application and then to gain feedback as they develop their application. To book an appointment, please call 020 7882 8533 and ask for an Enterprise Appointment.

Please submit your final written application and video submission by email to enterprise@qmul.ac.uk. We aim to provide notification of the outcome of your application within 15-20 working days of receipt.

The interview panel stage

If you pass the written application stage, you will be invited to a panel interview where your application and evidence will be further probed and any concerns explored.
If you pass both stages of selection, the panel will arrange for an endorsement letter to be sent to you for inclusion in your immigration application. You are responsible for making your immigration application. See the UK government website.

What next?

If the UK government grants you a Start-up Visa, Queen Mary is responsible for monitoring the progress of your business against the agreed key performance indicators over the two year period.

Note that, as a Queen Mary endorsed Start-up Visa permission holder, you will be automatically enrolled on the Qincubator Programme and will have access to Queen Mary's funding awards with a maximum value of £10,000.

How will I be monitored as a holder of a Start-up visa?

As a holder of a Start-up Visa endorsed by Queen Mary, we are obliged to monitor the progress of your business. Queen Mary will use a ‘Staged Gate Process’ to do this. At least two members of the Queen Mary Endorsement Selection Panel must pass you at each ‘Gate’. If you fail at a Gate, you will be allowed one further attempt.

At each Gate, the progress of your business will be measured using your key performance indicators. The panel will require proof of income, outgoings, tax payment. The panel will need to be able to see that the majority of your time in the UK is being spent on running your business.

Monitoring meetings will be held on the Queen Mary campus and scheduled as follows:

- Goal setting meeting – within 1 month of your immigration permission being granted
- Gate 1 meeting – 3 months after goal setting
- Gate 2 Meeting – 3 months after Gate 1
- Gate 3 Meeting – 6 months after Gate 2
- Gate 4 Meeting – 8 months after Gate 3
- Exit Meeting – within 1 month of your visa expiration date

You will be required to keep a blog charting the progress of your business and update this monthly.

Reporting

Queen Mary will immediately notify the Home Office that we are withdrawing our endorsement if:
we are in any doubt over the progress of your business or your commitment to it; or
you fail a Gate; or
we have evidence that you have broken your immigration conditions.

If we notify Home Office that we are withdrawing our endorsement, it is likely that your immigration permission will be curtailed (cut short). See UK government website for more information on our responsibilities as an endorsement body.

**Intellectual Property**

Please note that protecting your Intellectual Property (IP) is your responsibility – but advice on how to do this is available via the qLegal team. Also note that, if your business relies on intellectual property owned by Queen Mary, you may need to seek a licensing agreement.

**Who will fund my business?**

Queen Mary will not provide any funding for your business as part of the Endorsement Scheme. You will need to find the money to fund your business from elsewhere. Possible sources of funding might include:

- Your savings
- Funding Awards held at Queen Mary – listed on our funding page.
- Private investors or companies
- Crowd sourced funding websites (e.g. http://www.kickstarter.com)

We recommend you also join the Queen Mary Students’ Union Business and Enterprise Society which can provide further information about funding opportunities.

**Useful contacts**

If you have questions about the Queen Mary Endorsement Scheme, please make an Enterprise Appointment by calling the Careers Information Desk on 020 7882 8533 or dropping into the Careers Centre in WG3 Queens’ Building, Mile End Campus.

If you have questions about making your immigration application, please submit a query to the Advice and Counselling Service:

- In person: Ground Floor, Geography Building, Mile End Campus
- By phone: +44 (0)20 7882 8717
- Via the web: http://welfare.qmul.ac.uk/contact

*Start-up Visa Guidance, April 2019*