

PBS VISA CHANGES - NEW RESTRICTIONS TO TIER 4

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) has announced changes to the Immigration Rules affecting students. The first changes will come into force on 3 March 2010 and all Tier 4 visa applications submitted on or after this date will be subject to the new restrictions. The main changes are:

- Students studying courses below degree level will only be permitted to work 10 hours per week (instead of 20 hours).
- Students who are studying courses of six months or less will no longer be entitled to bring their dependants with them to the UK.
- The dependants of students studying courses below degree level will be banned from working, unless they qualify to work in their own right (for example under Tier 1 or Tier 2).

The minimum level of English language course that may be studied under Tier 4 has changed from A2 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference. (B2 is the equivalent to the University of Cambridge First Certificate level) This means that students planning to come on a student visa must have B1 Level (PET – IELTS 4.5) when applying.

Students who are below B1 level will still be able to join our courses on a student visitor visa (6 months). The college is planning on providing six months courses to enable students to come under this category. Please visit our website on www.glan.hafren.ac.uk/interantional for up to date information.

There will be exemptions for students sponsored by overseas governments and for students on pre-sessional English language courses which prepare them for full degree courses.

Highly Trusted Sponsors: on 6 April 2010 a new category of "Highly Trusted Sponsor" will be introduced. Publicly funded institutions such as Cardiff College International will be treated as a Highly Trusted Sponsor.

Privately funded institutions will need to apply to the UKBA to obtain Highly Trusted status. From 6 April 2010, Tier 4 students will require a Highly Trusted Sponsor in order to undertake courses at NVQ Level 3 (or equivalent) or courses with work placements below degree level.

English language testing: language students currently demonstrate their proficiency in English by taking a test with an approved provider. The Government is reviewing the criteria for approved providers and expects to introduce new testing arrangements "by early summer". Once the new arrangements are in force students coming to study any subject below degree level (not just English) will be required to undertake an approved English language test.

Fees from 6 April 2010: the fee for overseas Tier 4 visas is increasing from £145 to £199. The fee for UK based Tier 4 postal visas stays at £357, but a new fee of £80 per dependant will be applied.

For more details please see www.ukcisa.org.uk and www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk