

## Tier 1 Exceptional Talent Visa Route

### Introduction

The points based system is the entry route for people who need a visa and wish to work in the UK. It is split into five tiers and the most common routes for researchers to use are Tiers 1 (Exceptional talent), 2 (General) and 5 (Government Authorised Exchange).

Points are awarded for different attributes (for example, your qualifications, age, previous earnings, English language skills, employment status and source of funds). You will need a certain number of points depending on the tier under which you apply.

If you are unsure whether you will require a UK visa to work in the UK please refer to the Home Office website found here <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

### Overview of Tier 1 Exceptional Talent Visa route

The Royal Society, British Academy or Royal Academy of Engineering have been appointed as a Designated Competent Body by the Home Office and will assess applications from researcher applying for Tier 1 visas.

The Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) visa route is available for exceptional people in the natural sciences, medical sciences, engineering, social sciences and humanities and the arts who wish to enter or remain in the UK. People may apply to enter the UK through this route if:

- They are demonstrated to be world leaders in their field (exceptional talent); or
- They have demonstrated the potential to become world leaders in their fields (exceptional promise).

### Research Councils and the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent Visa route

RCUK has been working with the Royal Society, the British Academy and the Royal Academy of Engineering the designated Competent Bodies to identify specific and peer-reviewed fellowships which would be eligible for endorsement under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent or Promise visa route.

The Research Councils (RCs) want to ensure that the individuals funded as fellows are equipped and supported to be adaptable and flexible in an increasingly complex, collaborative, interdisciplinary, mobile, global research environment.

Tier 1 Exceptional Talent, benefits:

- Greater flexibility in your employment compared to other UK immigration routes, meaning you can, for example, move organisation, location and/or job role. By contrast with , a Tier 2 visa you are 'tied to a UK sponsor'
- Greater flexibility in undertaking additional engagement, such as collaborations.

- The route is intended as a route to settlement, allowed absences from the UK are up to 180 days per year without losing the eligibility to qualify for settlement, with no restriction on the reason for absence (unlike Tier 2, where any absences from the UK must be for a purpose consistent with the person's employment or economic activity, including paid annual leave, or for serious or compelling reasons).

The following lists of Research Councils fellowship awards have been identified for consideration under the Tier 1 Exceptional Talent or Promise visa route:

Exceptional Talent	
EPSRC Established Fellow	ESRC Professorial Fellow

Exceptional Promise		
AHRC Leadership Fellows & Leadership Fellow – Early Career route	MRC Senior Clinical Fellow	MRC New Investigator Research Grant
BBSRC David Phillips Fellow	MRC Senior Non Clinical Fellow	NERC Independent Research Fellow
ESRC Future Research Leaders	MRC Clinical Scientist Fellow	STFC Ernest Rutherford Fellow
EPSRC Early Career Fellow	MRC Career Development Award	

### How Does Tier 1 Work if you have obtained one of the qualifying Research Council Fellowship?

RCUK has agreed an accelerated endorsement process with the Designated Competent Bodies, to take into account the peer review selection process that is undertaken by the Research Council for the above fellowships.

This means that a number of documents submitted in the fellowship application can be used in the application process for Tier 1 and the approved endorsement from the Designated Competent Body will be received much quicker.

Applications are made to the Home Office in a two stage process:

Stage 1 – Request endorsement: 2 applications forms to complete for the Home Office and Competent Body.

Stage 2 – Application for entry clearance/leave to remain.

Further information and support on completing the application forms can be given to successful fellows, please contact [fellowtier1info@rcuk.ac.uk](mailto:fellowtier1info@rcuk.ac.uk)