



UK Visas  
& Immigration

## **Sites and Teaching Partnerships**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

## 1) Sites and teaching partnerships- general principles

### Q1. What has changed?

A. The provisions for listing sites, exceptional arrangements and teaching partnerships on Tier 4 licences changed on 04 March 2015, when new requirements were introduced.

### Q2. Why has the guidance changed?

A. Education providers have a wide range of corporate structures and collaborative arrangements for delivering education in partnership with others. These are permitted under Tier 4 but they must not distort or dilute the relationship between a sponsor and a student that underpins the effective functioning of the Tier 4 system.

In order to ensure that the Tier 4 sponsorship system works effectively where there are collaborative arrangements, the relationship between institutions must be open and transparent so that the sponsorship of Tier 4 students can be monitored effectively. This will also ensure that students receive the appropriate conditions of stay, as laid out in the Immigration Rules.

We apply the following general principles to all arrangements to ensure that sponsors take their responsibilities seriously, and can fulfil their duties:

- an institution which teaches Tier 4 students must take responsibility for sponsoring them
- an institution or an umbrella organisation may not hold more than one Tier 4 licence

The requirements set out in the guidance published on 4 March give effect to these principles. Special provisions have been made for some specific exceptional arrangements where an embedded college or joint venture is an autonomous institution with close links to a single HEI.

### Q3. What are the new requirements?

A. The requirements differ for different types of sponsor. Other than institutions with exceptional arrangements, all institutions must fall under one of the following categories. These sponsors should hold a single licence listing all the sites that they wish to use to teach Tier 4 students, and cannot hold multiple Tier 4 licences unless the exemption for independent schools applies:

- Higher Education Institution (HEI)
- Publicly funded college
- Private provider
- Independent school
- Overseas HEI

The 'Sites and teaching partnerships' section of [Document 1](#) of the Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors sets out the specific requirements for each type of sponsor.

### Q4. What is the exemption for independent schools?

A. An independent school that is linked by common ownership or control to a private provider or one or more independent schools may be grouped with them under a single Tier 4 licence. Alternatively, an independent school may hold a separate Tier 4 licence.

**Q5. What is an 'exceptional arrangement'?**

A. Under the new provisions we will exceptionally allow certain arrangements which may be used to teach Tier 4 students, i.e. where an embedded college or joint venture is an autonomous institution with close links to a single HEI. The requirements vary depending on the type of arrangement. The following exceptional arrangements are specified in table 2 of the 'Sites and teaching partnerships' section of [Document 1](#) of the Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors:

- Embedded college offering pathway courses
- Embedded college offering integrated programmes
- Embedded college set up as a joint venture
- Short term joint venture arrangement

These exceptional arrangements will not be regarded as compliant until UKVI has considered and granted them either as part of an application for a Tier 4 licence or an application for the arrangements to be added on a Tier 4 licence. The application must be supported by the relevant partner HEI and include supporting documentation showing that the exceptional arrangement meets the specific requirements set out in table 2 of the guidance.

**Q6. How should an embedded college offering pathway courses be recorded on a sponsor licence?**

A - An embedded college offering pathway courses which meets the definition in Table 2 may hold its own Tier 4 licence. If so, it must not be listed on either the HEI or the private provider's licence and any students wishing to study at the embedded college must be sponsored by it on its own licence.

Alternatively, it can be listed as a site on the private provider's Tier 4 licence but not as a site or otherwise on the HEI's Tier 4 licence. (Please note the Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors was amended to clarify this point on 22 April 2015).

**Q7. Who is accountable for non-compliance with the new rules if there is a partnership arrangement between more than one Tier 4 sponsor?**

A. Where there is considered to be non-compliance relating to a partnership arrangement between more than one Tier 4 sponsor, then we will take action against the sponsor that is responsible for the non-compliance.

**Q8. Do we have to report collaborations as partnerships? And do we have to add them to our licence at the time of the agreement or only when students are placed?**

A. Sponsors must list any teaching partnership under which they would like to teach Tier 4 students to their licence. It is good practice to list them as soon as the arrangement is agreed. At a minimum, the partnership must be listed on a Tier 4 licence before it is used to teach Tier 4 students.

**Q9. If our existing partnerships have previously been approved by UKVI do we have to comply with the changes?**

A. Yes. The policy in relation to how sites and partnerships may be used to teach Tier 4 students and listed on licences changed on 4 March. Sponsors must ensure they comply with the new policy.

**Q10. If a private institution would like an HEI to deliver its degree, will the HEI or the private provider issue the CAS and name the partner on their licence?**

A. The institution that wishes to teach the Tier 4 student must issue the CAS.

**Q11. Do we have to name another institution as a partner if they are teaching modules on our behalf?**

A. Yes.

**Q12. What should a sponsor do if it has a partnership arrangement with an embedded college?**

A. Table 2 of the new policy guidance makes special provision for 'exceptional arrangements' such as embedded colleges offering pathway courses. HEIs should discuss the new policy with the private provider partner to determine which category they fall into.

**Q13. Can a teaching partnership fit the definitions in both Table 2 and Table 3 of the guidance?**

A. No. Table 2 contains exceptional arrangements involving embedded colleges and joint ventures.

## **2. Completing the Tier 4 Sites and Teaching Partnerships Form**

### ***Preparing to complete the form***

**Q14. What will happen if I do not complete the form?**

A. If you do not complete the form and return it by the specified deadline we may set your CAS allocation to zero until you have demonstrated that you are compliant with the new sites and teaching partnerships guidance.

**Q15. I do not have any sites or teaching partnerships. Do I still need to complete the form?**

A. Yes. You need to complete the form to confirm your current arrangements. If you operate from a single site and do not have any teaching partnerships, the form will take you less than 5 minutes to complete.

**Q16. Where can I find details of the sites and teaching partnerships we currently have approved against our licence?**

A. Unfortunately, you cannot view the sites and teaching partnerships you currently have approved on SMS. You must list all of your sites and teaching partnerships on the form, whether they have previously been approved or not. If you are unsure whether the site or teaching partnership has previously been approved, please select 'No' on the form when you are asked if it is currently included on your licence.

**Q17. How long will it take me to complete the form?**

A. This will depend on how many sites and teaching partnerships you have. If you do not have any sites and teaching partnerships, the form can be completed in less than 5 minutes. If you have sites and/or teaching partnerships, the form will take approximately 30 minutes to complete but this will depend on the number you have. To reduce the time taken to complete the form, you should have all relevant information to hand before you start to complete it.

**Q18. What information will I be asked to provide on the form?**

A. You will need to provide the names and addresses of all the sites, exceptional arrangements and teaching partnerships you would like to list on your licence, and the courses you offer at these locations and under these arrangements. If any of the sites, exceptional arrangements or teaching partnerships you would like to list on your licence have their own sponsor licence, you will need to provide the sponsor licence number. If you are a private provider, you will need to provide information about other institutions you are linked to by common ownership or control, and any changes you would like to make to your sponsor licence structure in order to comply with the guidance for sponsors.

**Q19. How do I find a partner's sponsor licence number?**

A. You will have to ask your partner for their sponsor licence number in order to include it on the form.

**Q20. Can I see a hard copy of the form?**

A. No. The questions you are asked depend on the type of sponsor you are and the answers you give to preceding questions.

**Q21. Can I save a copy of the completed form for my records?**

A. Yes. After you have completed the declaration you will be given the option to print the form. Please note that this option is only available for 10 seconds. At this point, you can also save a copy of the form for your records.

**Q22. My Authorising Officer is not available to complete the form. Can it be completed by the Key Contact or a Level 1 User?**

A. If you are a premium sponsor then you can contact your Licence Manager to discuss this. If you are not a premium sponsor, you should email us at the Tier 4 Educators' Helpdesk providing the reasons why your Authorising Officer is unable to complete the form. We will consider such cases on an individual basis and tell you what you should do next.

**Q23. How long will the form be available for completion?**

A. The form will be available for completion from 22 April until 22 May 2015.

**Q24. I won't be able to submit the completed form by the required deadline. What do I do?**

A. If you are a premium sponsor then you can contact your Licence Manager to discuss this. If you are not a premium sponsor, you should email us at the Tier 4 Educators' Helpdesk providing the reasons why you are unable to submit the completed form by the required deadline. We will consider such cases on an individual basis and tell you what you should do next. If there are acceptable reasons we will consider granting a short extension.

**Q25. Who do I talk to if I have questions about completing the form?**

A. If you are a premium sponsor then you should talk to your Licence Manager. If you are a non-premium sponsor you should call the sponsor helpline.

**Q26. What is the definition of a site?**

A. Any location which is part of your institution, where you teach Tier 4 students, including teaching hospitals is a site.

**Q27. You have previously approved a branch on my licence. How do I include this on the form?**

A. You now need to include this on the form either as a site, exceptional arrangement or a teaching partnership.

**Q28. Can I use the form to add a new site or teaching partnership to my licence?**

A. No. If you want to add a new site or teaching partnership to your licence which you haven't previously told us about, you must do this through SMS and also include these details on the form. You should also include on the form any other requests to add a new site or teaching partnership that you submitted to us before completing the form and that is still under consideration.

**Q29. Can I use the form to tell you about an exceptional arrangement that I want to include on my licence?**

A. Yes. You can use the form to tell us about an exceptional arrangement that you want to include on your licence. We will contact if we need any further information about the exceptional arrangement. Please note that only the HEI who is supporting arrangement will be able to access and complete the relevant section of the form.

**Q30. Should we wait until the form has been assessed before we enter into any new teaching partnerships?**

A. You can enter into new partnerships as long as they meet the conditions set out in the Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors. Once you have entered into the agreement you must apply to add the new site, teaching partnership or exceptional arrangement through SMS and provide any supporting documentation as set out in the guidance.

***Completing and submitting the form***

**Q31. Do we include every location where we teach Tier 4 students, even if the location is part of a larger site?**

A. You should include all of the locations that you consider to be separate sites. For example, if you have more than one campus, these will be considered separate sites if they are in more than one town or city. You do not need to list individual buildings or addresses were you consider them to be part of the same site. HEIs must also list the address of teaching hospitals.

**Q32. We have over 10 locations where we teach Tier 4 students and the form will only accept 10 entries. How do we provide details of these locations?**

A. You can include up to 10 sites on the form. If you have more than 10 sites and you are a premium sponsor then you should contact your Licence Manager to discuss your case. If you are not a premium sponsor, you should email us at the Tier 4 Educators' Helpdesk and we will tell you how to notify us of your other sites.

**Q33. Do we have to include sites or teaching partnerships which we do not currently use to teach Tier 4 students?**

A. You should include all sites and teaching partnerships you currently use or intend to use.

**Q34. The form asks if the site is a separate institution and if so, what type of institution it is. What information should I provide here?**

A. You should specify whether the institution is an HEI, private provider, publicly funded institution, or independent school.

**Q35. Do both sponsors involved in a teaching partnership have to include these partnerships on the form?**

A. Yes. Where both partners are Tier 4 sponsors, the partnership must be included on each of the partner's forms regardless of which sponsor issues the CAS.

**Q36. Do we need to include details of where we are the awarding/validating body for qualifications taught by another institution?**

A. No. You do not need to include validation arrangements on the form.

**Q37. Do we need to include work placement locations on the form?**

A. No. You only need to include the main address of any site where teaching is undertaken, including teaching hospitals.

**Q38. Do we need to include overseas locations and teaching partnerships on the form?**

A. No. You do not need to include overseas locations or overseas teaching partnerships on the form.

**Q39. Do we include all hospitals and other NHS facilities used for non-work placement learning on the form?**

A. You will need to include the main address of the teaching hospital and other NHS facilities where non-work placement learning takes place.

**Q40. Does a collaborative research facility, such as a Doctoral Training Centre, Centre for Doctoral Training or a Doctoral Training Partnership need to be included on the form?**

A. Arrangements of this type do not need to be included on the form unless they are used for classroom-based teaching.

**Q41. If a PhD student is conducting research off-site, does the research location need to be included on the form as a site or teaching partnership?**

A. Arrangements of this type do not need to be included on the form unless they are used for classroom-based teaching.

**Q42. How do I include further details such as supporting documents with my form?**

A. You are not required to include any supporting documents with your form. We will contact you if we require any further information.

**Q43. What do I do if I realise I have omitted information or incorrectly completed the form after it has been submitted?**

A. If you realise this before the deadline for submission, you can complete and submit another form. If you realise this after the deadline for submission, you must e-mail the Tier 4 Educators' Helpdesk or contact your Licence Manager if you are a premium sponsor who will advise you on what action to take.

***Action after the form is submitted***

**Q44. How long will it take for you to consider the information on the form?**

A. We will consider the information as quickly as possible. We will write to you if there is any further information we require. If we do not require any further information, we will write to you by 31 August 2015 to confirm whether you need to take any further action.

**Q45. How will you contact me if you need any further information?**

A. We will contact your Authorising Officer by e-mail if we need any further information.

**Q46. If there is any further action I need to take how and when will you notify me of this?**

A. We will notify you of any further action you need to take in writing. We anticipate that in most cases, no further action will be required. Where further action is required, this will involve you applying to add a site, teaching partnership or exceptional arrangement that has not previously been approved by submitting a SMS request. In a small number of cases there may be some changes required to your licence structure and/or transfer of CAS allocation and we will work with you to achieve these.

**Q47. Will the information provided on the form be included on our licence details and can we view these details on SMS?**

A. We will update your licence details and confirm the sites, teaching partnerships and exceptional arrangements that we have approved and hold on file in writing. You can then use this as a reference when you report changes in the future. However, it is not possible to add this information to your licence details in a way that you can view on SMS.