What is an ETA?

- Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) is required by eligible passengers visiting the UK who do not currently need a visa for short stays and do not have a valid UK immigration status prior to travelling.
- An ETA is a digital permission to travel to the UK
- An ETA is required from 25 February 2026 for all visitors to the UK who do not need a visa, including students on an exchange programme.
- An ETA is not a visa, but travellers cannot board transport to the UK without either an ETA or a valid UK visa.
- British and Irish citizens, those with current UK immigration status, and UK Visa holders are exempt from needing an ETA.
- **Students studying on programmes of longer than 6 months require a Student Visa, not an ETA.**
- **Please refer to the online UK Government guidance on ETAs: https://www.gov.uk/eta**

Who Needs an ETA?

- Visiting students attending short courses of up to 6 months (e.g., exchange students or pre-sessional English language students), visiting research students or students returning post-visa for re-sits.
- Students must be from a country that qualifies for visa-free travel: **https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa**
- ETAs are valid for two years or until your passport expires — multiple entries allowed.
- ETAs allow a stay in the UK of up to 6 months for study, tourism, business, or medical visits.
- An ETA permits travel to the UK for short-term study. It does not permit study of longer than 6 months or employment/paid work in the UK.
- **You can check if you need an ETA here: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-when-you-can-get-an-electronic-travel-authorisation-eta**

How to Apply

1. **Use the same passport** for the ETA application as you will use to travel to the UK – the ETA links directly to your passport.
2. **To apply, you will require**
   - A valid passport
   - Credit/debit card to pay the £16 fee
   - Digital passport-style photo
3. **Apply** via:
   - The UK ETA App (mobile scanning features)
   - The app is the easiest way to apply, but you can apply online if necessary

Digital support with applications is available via an ETA webchat. The webchat is operated by UK Government officials Mon- Fri, 9am -5pm (UK time) and via webform outside these hours.

Supporting Students
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4. **Wait** for an email with a 16-digit ETA reference (usually within 48 hours; if not received after 3 working days contact UKVI.

5. **Travel**: present your passport at check-in and border control — a printed ETA is not required.

Further Information & Support

- **UK Government guidance:** https://www.gov.uk/eta
- 'What is an ETA?' video on YouTube - 'How to apply for an ETA' video on YouTube
- Guide to using the UK ETA app
- **Standard Visitor Visa UK Government Guidance**: https://www.gov.uk/standard-visitor/visit-to-study
- **UKCISA information on Visitor Visas:** https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student-advice/visas-and-immigration/visitors/

For visa advice and immigration support, please contact the GSA Student Welfare Service:
E-mail: welfare@gsa.ac.uk   Request an appointment: here

Student Support Services on the student intranet