Immigration Costs Reimbursement Policy

Summary

This policy outlines the support which may be provided through reimbursement of visa related costs to University of Bristol main salaried staff who need UK Government permission to live and work in the UK. It specifies various visa types and details the conditions for reimbursement, exclusions and time limits on claims.

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1. Updates to this policy

1.1. This policy has been updated to align to the new University of Bristol policy template. All claims submitted after publication of an update are subject to it.

1.2. Procedural information has been separated from policy and can now be found in Appendix 1.

2. Introduction

2.1. This policy provides support for new and existing international main salaried staff who need permission from the UK Government to take up employment with the University of Bristol in relation to some costs associated with such permission.

2.2. Where external funding allows for reimbursement of costs outside the scope of this policy, the reimbursement must be claimed outside the process relevant to the policy and approved by the grant budget holder.

3. Scope

3.1. This application of this policy is discretionary, and the University reserves the right to amend or withdraw it at any point.

3.2. This policy complements the University's staff recruitment and selection processes and policies and runs alongside the University of Bristol's Relocation Expenses Policy but is administered separately.

4. Definitions

4.1. **British National (Overseas) visa (BNO)**: The BNO visa allows Hong Kong residents with British National (Overseas) status and their families to live, work, and study in the UK.

4.2. **His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC)**: The UK's tax, payments, and customs authority responsible for collecting taxes, administering benefits, and ensuring compliance with tax laws.

4.3. **Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR)**: An immigration status granting a person the right to live, work, and study in the UK indefinitely without any time limit on their stay.

4.4. **Pay as You Earn (PAYE)**: A system in the UK where employers deduct income tax and National Insurance contributions from employees' wages before paying them.

4.5. **UK ECCTIS:** The UK regulated body that provides information, advice, and opinion on academic, vocational, and professional qualifications and skills from around the world. It manages UK ENIC, the UK's designated agency for recognising and comparing international qualifications and skills.

4.6. **UK ECCTIS Fees**: UK ECCTIS charges fees for assessing the equivalence of international qualifications and English language proficiency for visa applications.

5. Responsibilities

5.1. **HR Immigration Staff**: Advise and support staff with immigration-related queries and ensure compliance with visa regulations.

5.2. **Line Managers**: Ensure team members are aware of the policy and support staff in the visa application process.

5.3. **Senior Managers**: Oversee the implementation of the policy within the department and ensure adherence.

5.4. **Main salaried staff**: Submit visa reimbursement claims within the specified time limits and provide necessary documentation.

5.5. **Finance Department**: Process reimbursement claims and ensure compliance with HMRC regulations.

6. Reimbursement conditions

6.1. Any claims for reimbursement of visa (or other immigration) expenses incurred from within the UK (including new applications) are subject to HMRC Income Tax and National Insurance rules if claimed by a UK tax resident. These claims must be

processed through the PAYE/salary payments system, and the necessary deductions will be made from the claimant's monthly pay.

7. Eligibility

7.1. New or existing main salaried staff members of the University who are applying for visa types as described in Table 1 are eligible to apply for reimbursement.

Table 1: Eligible visa types

Visa type
Global Talent visa (endorsement and visa) – new and extension
Skilled Worker visa – new, switching, extension, change of employment
Graduate visa
Spousal/Family/Dependents visa – new and extension
Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK
BNO visa
Citizenship application fee which includes the citizenship **public** ceremony fee for the administration of a citizenship oath and pledge at the ceremony.

7.2. Details of current visa information and application fees are available on GOV.UK.

8. What can be reimbursed

8.1. The reimbursement of visa expenses covers the cost of a standard application by post or online. Claims for such reimbursement must follow the process outlined in Appendix 1 of this policy; it should not be reimbursed using a University purchasing card nor through a grant budget code.

9. What cannot be reimbursed

9.1. Please note that this policy does not cover the additional following costs, where they arise:

a. Family members not employed by the University
b. Premium/Priority Service
c. Biometric chargeable appointments
d. Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)

e. Life in the UK Test
f. UK ECCTIS Fees (formerly NARIC)
g. Nationality checking service
h. Travel costs for appointments related to visa applications
i. Citizenship private ceremony fee
j. Postage

9.2. **Important note on costs not reimbursable under this policy:** If a position is grant-funded, it may be possible to have some of these costs reimbursed outside of this policy. The grant holder should verify whether the grant covers any additional visa-related fees. If covered, these fees must be claimed using the grant budget code and the account category 'taxable expense item (income taxable)'. These reimbursements will be subject to the relevant rules relating to tax and national insurance. Payroll will process deductions in arrears and notify you accordingly.

10. Time limits on making a claim

10.1. Claims must be made within 6 months of an eligible application being approved, in certain very limited circumstances there may be discretionary extensions to this claim period. If you resign prior to making a visa reimbursement claim you will not be eligible.

Appendix 1: Immigration Costs Reimbursement Process

1. How and when should I make a claim?

1.1. The UK tax authority classifies the reimbursement of visa/settlement fees as earnings, so you will need to be on the University's payroll for us to reimburse you.

1.2. Once the University of Bristol have successfully completed the 'right to work' check and verified you can work in the UK, you can submit your expenses claim through the relevant process on MyERP. You must reflect the original cost in pounds sterling and use no exchange rate conversions.

1.3. Payment of any expense claim will not be made until after you have been granted your visa and (if relevant) you have started your employment.

1.4. Your claim for reimbursement of a new visa related to your right to work in the UK as a non-UK tax resident (typically incurred from ***outside of the UK)*** will not be subject to Income Tax and National Insurance and will be paid via expenses into your bank account once approved via the MyERP expense system.

1.5. Any claims for reimbursement of a new visa (or other immigration) expenses related to your right to work in the UK, incurred from ***inside the UK*** are subject to income tax and national insurance deductions and must be processed through the PAYE/salary payments system after you have made your claim through MyERP. You will receive your reimbursement minus the deductions in the next available pay run, providing you have made your claim via the MyERP expense system by the 8th of the month. Otherwise, it will be paid the following month.

1.6. You should make your claim within 6 months of your application being approved if eligible. A guide to this is detailed below in section 2 and you will need to provide receipts to have the claim approved.

2. Using MyERP to claim back your Visa costs

2.1. If you applied for your visa to work in the UK from ***outside of the UK,*** please follow the guidance to submit your claim following the Claim Expenses instructions on the MyERP support site.

2.2. If you applied for your visa to work in the UK from ***inside the UK***, please follow the guidance to submit your claim following the Claim Expense instructions on the MyERP support site.

2.3. You will need to include electronic copies of your receipts. Scan or photograph them in PDF or image format (e.g. .PNG, .JPG).

2.4. Please note your claim must be submitted separately to your relocation costs.