**Graduate Entrepreneur Tier 1 Visa Scheme**

The UKBA has introduced a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route for graduates who do not have a job offer from an employer, but instead have outstanding business ideas that they wish to put into practice. The University of Surrey has been allocated 10 such visas to endorse graduate entrepreneurs under this route. The scheme is open to those international students who are about to graduate and those who graduated within the previous twelve months.

Graduates granted leave to remain in this new category on the basis of the university’s endorsement will be able to work for their business and to do other work for up to 20 hours a week. (They will not be able to work as a doctor or a dentist in training or as a professional sportsperson or sports coach.)

**Procedure for applying for University Endorsement**

1. The Business Enterprise Graduate Scheme (BEGS) offers international students the opportunity to apply for University Endorsement of their business proposal which would lead to the granting of a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa for a period of 12 months in the first instance.

2. Submissions will be invited by 30 June each year. The business idea must be high quality, realistic, scalable and preferably protectable.

* “High quality” means well thought through with a high chance of success.
* “Realistic” means able to be implemented in a reasonable timescale with affordable and available resources.
* “Scalable” means able to grow to become a much larger business without the reliance on the founder or the founder’s knowledge. It should at least be scalable across the south east of England region.
* “Protectable” means that the idea, the intellectual property, can be patented or otherwise protected by trademarks, design rights or similar mechanisms. At least the idea should offer a significant barrier of entry to competitors.

3. Interested students must first complete an “Expression of Interest” form available on the RES website and must submit the completed form to the University’s Entrepreneur in Residence. This to be accompanied by a copy of their passport and visa to establish their current status.

4. Applicants must have the support of a relevant academic who agrees to provide mentoring and will be responsible for monitoring their progress during the period of their leave to remain.

5. The applicant is solely responsible for finding suitable financial support.

6. The scheme is **administered by the Entrepreneur-in-Residence (EIR), Nigel Biggs**, on behalf of the University. The panel reviewing the applications comprises a minimum of 3 members drawn from among (for example); The EIR (Nigel Biggs), a representative of the UniSGrist/BEGS Board, the IP Group, an academic with relevant knowledge and RES.

7. Expressions of interest will be reviewed by the panel drawing upon external expertise where appropriate. All applications will remain totally confidential to protect your Intellectual Property rights. All members of the panel will sign a blanket confidentiality agreement.

8. Leading applicants will be asked to develop a robust business plan for the scheme panel to determine the endorsement. A period of two months after notification will be allowed for this process. Some assistance may be available to help develop a business plan.

9. Endorsements will usually be announced within one month after the deadline. The University will provide a supporting letter to accompany the visa application. Advice will be available from colleagues in the International Student Office with regards to the Tier 1 visa application process. As there is no guarantee that the visa application will be successful, any unsuccessful student will have to withdraw from the scheme.

10. Successful applications will have been judged by the scheme panel to be of a high standard in terms of innovation, in terms of the likelihood of business success.

11. There is a maximum of ten endorsements in any one academic year. The scheme panel reserves the right to make no endorsements in any academic year if applications are considered not to be of acceptable quality.

**Monitoring of Graduates in receipt of a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa**

1. All graduates in receipt of university endorsement of a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa will be required to sign a contract with the university confirming that they will:
   1. spend the majority of their working time on developing their business venture
   2. maintain regular quarterly contact with their nominated Faculty mentor, producing a written report which must be signed off by the Faculty mentor
   3. advise their faculty mentor immediately if they cease to participate in the scheme
2. The quarterly written report will be submitted to the Entrepreneur in Residence (EIR) who will present it formally to the University’s GRIST Board, chaired by the University Commercial Director.
3. Following that meeting, the EIR will report on the progress of all graduates in receipt of the university endorsement/Tier 1(Graduate Entrepreneurship) visa to the Visa Compliance Officer in the Academic Registry who will report as appropriate to the UKBA.