



## Start-up and Innovator visas: Guidance for endorsing bodies

### Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance

Due to travel restrictions because of the coronavirus pandemic, some individuals may be unable to arrange visa appointments or travel to the UK. Due to the economic impacts, some individuals may experience difficulties fulfilling their business plans and maintaining contact with their endorsing bodies.

#### **1. Individuals who have not yet been endorsed**

Endorsing bodies may still issue endorsements, but we ask you to have frank discussions with applicants. If they are outside the UK, you should ask them whether they are able to make a visa application and to travel. You should also consider with all applicants whether they are likely to be able to start developing their business in the UK under the current situation. If not, you should consider delaying your endorsement of them until a later date.

#### **2. Individuals who have been endorsed but have not yet applied for a visa**

Endorsement letters are valid for 3 months. If an individual is unable to make a visa application within this timeframe, you will need to issue them with a new endorsement (using a new secure reference number) before they can apply. You should have a discussion with them (as set out above) before you do so.

#### **3. Individuals who have applied for a visa but are unable to travel**

Individuals should refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) immigration guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for the latest information.

#### **4. Individuals who are due to have a checkpoint with their endorsing body**

Endorsing bodies must maintain contact checkpoints with the individuals they have endorsed. It is not necessary for these to be face-to-face and we encourage endorsing bodies to arrange checkpoints via telephone or videoconference.

It is important for applicants to know that they continue to have the support of their endorsing bodies. You can make allowances for the current situation when considering their progress against their business plans, and, where possible, discuss future contingencies.

You **must** notify us if an applicant misses a checkpoint without your authorisation.

#### **5. Individuals who need to apply to extend their stay**

You should continue to issue endorsements as normal to individuals who are in the UK, whose visas are expiring, and who wish to apply to switch into the Start-up or Innovator categories, or to extend their stay in the Innovator category.

For those applying to switch from Start-up to Innovator or extend their Innovator visa – you can make allowances for the current situation when considering their progress against their business plans, and, where possible, discuss future contingencies.

Individuals should refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) immigration guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for the latest information.

## **6. Individuals whose leave under Start-up has been detrimentally impacted by COVID-19**

Where an individual with permission in the Start-up route has been unable to develop their business as planned due to the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), provision has been put in place to allow them to exceptionally extend their leave beyond the normal maximum period of 2 years.

Applicants will only be able to benefit once from these provisions. Endorsing bodies must be satisfied that individuals have made reasonable progress against their business plans, taking the impact of the pandemic into account.

You must consider any applications for endorsement under these provisions in the same manner that you usually consider applications, ensuring that you indicate this as an application for additional leave by providing all relevant information as required in the [endorsement letter templates](#).

## **We have paused new applications to become an endorsing body.**

In the recent Plan for Growth announcement, made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 23 March 2021, the Government committed to reviewing the Innovator route in order to improve the immigration offer for innovative scale-ups and entrepreneurs. We are pausing the recruitment of further endorsing bodies until the findings of this review are known. This will ensure that any organisation seeking to become involved with the route will do so aware of any resulting changes to the role.

Existing endorsing bodies can continue to operate in line with this guidance.

**HEIs that already hold Start-up endorsing body status may continue to request Innovator endorsing body status.**



Home Office

# Start-up and Innovator visas: Guidance for endorsing bodies

Version 6/2021

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# 1. Introduction

The Start-up and Innovator visa categories are for non-EEA nationals wishing to set up a business in the UK. To qualify for a visa in either category, applicants must first obtain an endorsement from an approved endorsing body. Endorsement does not guarantee a visa will be issued, but shows the applicants and their business, has the support of leading business organisations or higher education providers.

This guidance provides you with support in your role as an endorsing body within the Start-up and/or Innovator visa categories. Endorsement is based on the principle that it is you, rather than the Home Office, who are best placed to assess and identify innovative business ideas and talent.

In this document, 'we', 'us' and 'our' refer to the Home Office. 'You' and 'your' refer to endorsing bodies. 'Visa' refers to any type of entry clearance or leave to remain.

## Start-up

The **Start-up** category is for early-stage, but high potential, entrepreneurs who are starting a business in the UK for the first time. They may have already begun setting up their business, but it should not yet have commenced trading. The only exceptions to this are if the applicant has already been granted leave under the Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) categories, or on the doctorate extension scheme.

Applicants do not need any funds to invest in their business at this stage.

It offers a one-off, 2-year visa, during which applicants will spend the majority of their time developing their businesses but can also take on other work outside of their businesses, to support themselves.

Successful applicants can bring their family members (spouses/partners and children under 18) to the UK. At the end of 2 years, they can switch into the Innovator category (see below) to extend their stay and develop their businesses in the UK.

## Innovator

The **Innovator** category is for more experienced businesspeople seeking to establish a business in the UK.

Applicants will usually need a minimum £50,000 funding available to invest in their business (This **does not** have to come from their endorsing body, although some endorsing bodies may choose to offer this funding).

Innovators must work entirely on developing their business ventures and may **not** take on other employment outside their business. This includes anything which effectively amounts to employment, such as using their own business to hire out their labour to another employer.

Successful Innovators are granted leave for 3 years at a time and can bring their family members to the UK. After 3 years, Innovators can apply to extend their stay for a further 3 years or to settle permanently in the UK. Each of these 3 stages (initial application, extension, settlement) requires endorsement from an endorsing body.

## **Coronavirus (Covid-19) guidance**

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### **Individuals who have not yet been endorsed**

Endorsing bodies may still issue endorsements, but we ask you to have frank discussions with applicants. If they are outside the UK, you should ask them whether they are able to make a visa application and to travel. You should also consider with all applicants whether they are likely to be able to start developing their business in the UK under the current situation. If not, you should consider delaying your endorsement of them until a later date.

### **Individuals who have been endorsed but have not yet applied for a visa**

Endorsement letters are valid for 3 months. If an individual is unable to make a visa application within this timeframe, you will need to issue them with a new endorsement (using a new secure reference number) before they can apply. You should have a discussion with them (as set out above) before you do so.

### **Individuals who have applied for a visa but are unable to travel**

Individuals should refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) immigration guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for the latest information.

### **Individuals who are due to have a checkpoint with their endorsing body**

Endorsing bodies must maintain contact checkpoints with the individuals they have endorsed. It is not necessary for these to be face-to-face and we encourage endorsing bodies to arrange checkpoints via telephone or videoconference.

It is important for applicants to know that they continue to have the support of their endorsing bodies. You can make allowances for the current situation when considering their progress against their business plans, and, where possible, discuss future contingencies.

You **must** notify us if an applicant misses a checkpoint without your authorisation.

### **Individuals who need to apply to extend their stay**

You should continue to issue endorsements as normal to individuals who are in the UK, whose visas are expiring, and who wish to apply to switch into the Start-up or Innovator categories, or to extend their stay in the Innovator category.

For those applying to switch from Start-up to Innovator or extend their Innovator visa – you can make allowances for the current situation when considering their progress against their business plans, and, where possible, discuss future contingencies.

Individuals should refer to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) immigration guidance on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) for the latest information.

### **Individuals whose leave under Start-up has been detrimentally impacted by COVID-19**

Where an individual with permission in the Start-up route has been unable to develop their business as planned due to the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), provision has been put in place to allow them to exceptionally extend their leave beyond the normal maximum period of 2 years.

Applicants will only be able to benefit once from these provisions. Endorsing bodies must be satisfied that individuals have made reasonable progress against their business plans, taking the impact of the pandemic into account.

You must consider any applications for endorsement under these provisions in the same manner that you usually consider applications, ensuring that you indicate this as an application for additional leave by providing all relevant information as required in the [endorsement letter templates](#).

## **The role of endorsing bodies**

As an endorsing body, we ask you to:

- **Issue endorsements** based on the criteria in this guidance. You will have your own measures of what makes a good business idea, and the freedom to apply these criteria as you think best. Your endorsement will be in the form of an endorsing letter (a suggested template for which can be found in **Annex A** of this guidance), which the applicant will use to support their visa application. You must also share a copy of the endorsement letter with the Home Office (sent to either [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk), depending on the type of endorsement. This is so the Home Office can easily assess whether or not an applicant is legitimate.
- **Stay in contact** with the business founders you endorse at checkpoints after 6, 12 and (in the Innovator category) 24 months, and let us know if you are not satisfied with their progress.



- **Let us know** if you have any reason to believe someone you have endorsed is working in breach of their visa conditions, although we will not ask you to police this actively.
- In the Innovator category, **issue further endorsements** for extension and settlement applications. In most cases, we expect innovators will be endorsed at these stages by the same body that endorsed their original application, but they may also be endorsed by a different body – for example, if the original endorsing body is no longer taking part in the category.

## The role of the Home Office

We do **not** ask you to:

- **Make any immigration decisions.** Your role in endorsing applicants is to assess applicants' business ideas and their viability. An endorsement is not a visa. Once someone has received an endorsing letter, they must use it to make an application to the Home Office. We will carry out our usual checks against the individual and other requirements of the category such as English language ability (B2 – upper intermediate level) and funds to support themselves and family accompanying them where they have not already been in the UK for 12 months or more (£285 for their partner, £315 for the first child and £200 for each additional).
- **Police the immigration system.** While we ask you to let us know if someone you have endorsed is no longer pursuing their business ideas or is missing a checkpoint, we do not expect you to monitor them continually. We will make the final decision whether to curtail a visa if an individual is not pursuing their business ideas. We will not hold it against you if an individual is working in breach of their visa conditions.
- **Be subject to the same rules and compliance activity** that we ask of sponsoring employers in other categories, such as the Skilled Worker route. If you hold a licence under any other part of the immigration system, it will not be affected in any way by your activities as an endorsing body.

## Who can be endorsed?

The Start-up and Innovator categories are for people setting up a **new** business in the UK which is innovative, viable and scalable, with the ultimate aim that the business has the potential to become fully integrated and a contributing part of the UK economy. Applicants can be:

- Working on their own as a sole founder, or working together as part of an entrepreneurial team – but each member of the entrepreneurial team who wants to be endorsed must be able to individually meet the requirements of the routes,
- Presenting a new business idea – the business may or may not already exist, but the applicant must be the original founder or an instrumental member of

the founding team. The business may have already be registered, in the interest of protecting Intellectual Property for example, and may be in receipt of research grants, but the applicant(s) **must have joined before it has fully started trading.**

- Presenting an idea in any sector – there are no restrictions (for example, relating to property development, as under the previous Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) category), providing you are satisfied the idea is sufficiently innovative, viable and scalable,
- Developing other businesses as well as their main idea – any business pursued outside their endorsement does not need to be monitored by you, however you should ensure that you are happy that their pursuit of said businesses will not negatively impact their ability to progress their endorsed business.

The categories are **not** for people who are:

- establishing a business which is not innovative, viable and scalable
- joining an already trading business – the Skilled Worker route may be more appropriate
- seeking to invest in a business where they are not an instrumental member of the founding team – the Tier 1 (Investor) category may be more appropriate

**Please note:** Neither Start-up nor Innovator is designed to facilitate *investment* into a pre-existing business - applicants should be *key/founding members* of the business. This can include where the business has reached a research and development stage and the applicant is significantly contributing/facilitating the establishment of the business as a commercial enterprise. In scenarios such as this you should explain clearly in your endorsing letter *how* the applicant is fulfilling this role.

## Endorsing international students

If you endorse international students who are on Student visas, you will need to bear in mind that they have visa conditions that restrict them from engaging in business activity whilst they are studying in the UK. You will need to consider the limitations on how far they will have been able to develop their businesses when you assess their applications.

Students **can** do the following, as this is not considered to be engaging in business activity:

- Carrying out preliminary activities such as writing business plans or negotiating contracts
- Incurring pre-trading costs with a view to deciding whether to start their businesses

Students **cannot** do the following, as this is considered to be engaging in business activity:

- Registering with HM Revenue & Customs as self-employed
- Working for companies in which they are controlling shareholders
- Working for companies in statutory roles, such as a director
- Trading or establishing a trading presence (including test marketing)

The point at which Students can start undertaking business activity depends on when they were last granted permission:

- Students who had their last visa granted **before 1 October 2019** may only engage in business activities once their Start-up visas have been granted.
- Students who had their last visa granted **on or after 1 October 2019** may engage in business activities once they have applied to the Home Office for their Start-up visa, providing their endorsing body is a Higher Education provider with a track record of compliance.

In either case listed above, students will not have been able to be self-employed or engage in business activity when they apply to you for endorsement. (students cannot apply for Innovator visas, unless they do so from outside the UK.)

You should not, however, assume that an international student is on a Student visa. Other visa categories also allow individuals to study in the UK. If in doubt, you should ask the student to confirm their visa status to you.

## How will applicants choose an endorsing body?

Lists of endorsing bodies in each category are published on the Start-up and Innovator sections of the gov.uk website and are updated regularly. These lists can include a link to your website and a short biography to provide potential applicants with an overview of your activities as an endorsing body. Please let us know if you wish to make any changes to your link / text, and we will include them in our next update.

The Home Office provides general guidance to potential applicants about the Start-up and Innovator categories but will not advise them how to choose a particular endorsing body. It is up to you as endorsing bodies to decide how you wish to market your involvement in the categories and what types of business ideas you wish to endorse. If you would like us to review any marketing material you create to check that it accurately reflects the Immigration Rules, please let us know, but we cannot create this material for you.

You may decide whether to accept open applications or only to issue endorsements to business founders you are already working with through your existing activities. If you choose to accept open applications, we recommend that you set out clearly any parameters you wish to apply on the types of business you will endorse, so that you do not receive unsuitable applications.

You may wish to respond to every application that you receive, however due to the high-volume of applications and enquiries you will receive, we would remind you that you are under no obligation from the Home Office to do so.

## 2. Becoming an endorsing body

The lists of endorsing bodies are not fixed. Organisations can be invited to, or can request to, become an endorsing body at any time.

### Who can be an endorsing body?

Endorsing bodies include leading incubators, accelerators, government agencies and business development organisations. The main requirement is that you must have a proven track record of supporting UK entrepreneurs, including settled workers (We may waive this requirement if you can show a connection to another body which has its own track record.).

This means you provide funding, mentoring or other forms of support to help entrepreneurs get their businesses up and running. You must have a record of supporting UK entrepreneurs with innovative ideas, who are looking to grow their business. This record should not only be associated with immigration – for example, we will not accept a track record which only relates to linking UK entrepreneurs with overseas partners/investors who are seeking visas.

We do not accept requests from organisations who only provide professional services to businesses, for example accountancy, as we do not consider that such organisations would have the capability to assess a business case effectively to ensure it is sufficiently innovative, viable and scalable.

We will not accept requests to become an endorsing body from organisations which do not also support British citizen entrepreneurs, and which have been set up purely to facilitate immigration. Partnerships with immigration firms are not under any circumstances acceptable and there must be no evidence of conflict of interest with any other external organisation. You must not use your status as an endorsing body to promote any immigration services to applicants. Failure to adhere to this will result in the removal of your organisation's status as an endorsing body.

We will consider whether your becoming an endorsing body would conflict with the purpose of the Start-up or Innovator categories, or with our wider immigration policy. We will also refuse any requests if your organisation or its key personnel have any connection, past or present, with abuse of the immigration system, criminality or other actions or behaviour which we consider to be non-conducive to the public good.

We must be satisfied that your organisation's funding/business model is able to operate within the restrictions on charging, as set out in the ['What can an endorsing body charge for?'](#) section. Endorsing bodies are not permitted, under any circumstances, to provide a 'guaranteed endorsement' for a monetary value.

You must be supported to become an endorsing body by a UK or devolved Government department, which can vouch for your suitability. This department must be satisfied that the outcomes of your business objectives are clearly linked, and will contribute, to their own public policy objectives.

The department must be either a core department led by a UK or devolved government minister (or a regionally-devolved authority led by a directly-elected mayor, such as the Greater London Authority), not an agency or other public body. In most cases, you will already have a working relationship with this department. We have included a template in Annex B that **must** be used by the relevant Government department when supporting your application.

Higher education providers that also hold student sponsor licenses can also become endorsing bodies. You must have established processes for identifying, nurturing and developing entrepreneurs among your undergraduate and postgraduate population. Such providers do not need specific support from a government department to become an endorsing body, but you must be a higher education provider with a track record of compliance (as defined in the Immigration Rules).

All endorsing bodies will have a responsibility to monitor those whom they endorse. The Home Office must be satisfied that your organisation has in place measures to monitor the operation of those you are endorsing and can assess delivery against the objectives as set out in their business plan.

## What can an endorsing body charge for?

Please note that immigration fees are strictly regulated by law. There are limitations as to what you can charge applicants:

You **can** charge applicants for:

- Any services that you also provide to settled workers (such as office space or mentoring). These **can** include services which applicants must purchase to be considered for endorsement (such as membership of your programme). In all cases, the charges must be the same for applicants as for settled workers. (For example, if you charge £500 for settled workers to join your programme, you cannot charge endorsement applicants more than £500 to join your programme.)
- Any additional services that are **not** available to settled workers, providing it is **not** mandatory for applicants to purchase them to be endorsed or to maintain or renew their endorsements. (For example, you may provide a bespoke mentoring package to help applicants plan their business to meet the endorsement criteria for settlement. You could charge for this package, **providing it was not mandatory for your applicants to accept it.**)

You **must not** charge applicants for:

- Considering or issuing an endorsement, monitoring applicants in line with Home Office requirements, or any other services directly related to obtaining or maintaining their immigration status.

- Any mandatory requirements to be endorsed or to maintain or renew an endorsement, if those charges do not apply equally to settled workers (such as membership of your programme – see above).

If you intend to take an equity stake in an applicant's business, you must approach this in the same way as you would when taking an equity stake in the business of a settled worker (who you are not endorsing).

When you apply to become an endorsing body, you must set out how your funding / business model can operate within these restrictions. If, at any time, you are unsure about whether any charges you are applying or you wish to introduce are acceptable within these guidelines, you should contact us.

Failure to adhere to the funding restrictions will result in the removal of your organisation's status as an endorsing body.

## How to become an endorsing body

You may be actively invited to become an endorsing body. This may happen if a UK or devolved government department has recommended your organisation to us. If this happens, we will already have agreed that you meet the requirements above.

Alternatively, you may wish to ask us to consider adding your organisation as an endorsing body. **You must secure the support of a UK or devolved department (see above) before contacting us, unless you are a Higher Education Provider.**

You should approach your usual contact in the department for their support. Please note, the Home Office itself does not support endorsing bodies. Your support will need to come from a department whose published policy objectives would be supported by your work as an endorsing body.

If you have a relationship with an agency or other public body, while they cannot support your application themselves, they may be able to help you contact a suitable government department through an existing relationship of their own.

If you do not already have an existing relationship, you will need to explain to the relevant department why they should support you as an endorsing body. You should set out your record in supporting UK entrepreneurs and how your becoming an endorsing body will help that department meet its published policy objectives.

You should choose the department whose objectives your activities most closely match, rather than approaching multiple departments. Departments are unlikely to support unsolicited requests without these details. They may also wish to discuss your plans with you directly.

If the government department agrees to support your organisation in becoming an endorsing body, they will need to confirm their support for your organisation with the Home Office. You will need to provide contact details for your supporting department alongside your request to become an endorsing body, details of which are set out below.

Once you have this support, you can write to us at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (as appropriate). We do not prescribe an application form, but your request should set out:

- how you currently support UK entrepreneurs to establish and develop their businesses, and how this will link to your activity as an endorsing body
- the name and contact details of the official at a UK or devolved government department who can confirm the department supports your request (not needed if you are a higher education provider with a track record of compliance)

The more details you are able to provide on these points, the sooner we will be able to consider and respond to your request to become an endorsing body.

When providing evidence of your track record, this should include details of businesses you have supported, confirmation of how you have supported them, and confirmation that you have supported businesses run by settled workers, not just businesses run by migrants. We will not accept lists of businesses without these details.

We ask you to confirm all of the following:

- 1) Which categories (Start-up, Innovator or both) you wish to become an endorsing body for
- 2) The number of endorsement places you are requesting for each category
- 3) That you are able to assess applicants' business ventures competently against the endorsement criteria set out in **chapter 3** of this guidance
- 4) That you agree to the monitoring and reporting responsibilities set out in **chapter 4** of this guidance
- 5) That your organisation is content for its name to be published on the gov.uk website in a list of endorsing bodies.
- 6) Contact details for us to get in touch with you.

We also ask you to provide the information you wish to be published on our list of endorsing bodies. This should include:

- A link to your website, which could be to either the home page or a dedicated Start-up/Innovator page(s).
- A short (maximum 50 words) description of you as an endorsing body, the services you offer to endorsees (for example: mentoring, office space, lab facilities, networking) and the types of business you support. This should be



written in the third person and can include further hyperlinks. You should be as specific as possible about what makes your offer different from other endorsing bodies (factually, not as a marketing pitch), as the purpose of the list is to help applicants choose the most suitable bodies for them.

- Separately from this description, details of:
  - the sectors that you cover (for example: fintech, biotech, engineering, creative, etc. or “all”)
  - the town(s) or city(ies) you are based in
  - which parts of the UK you will endorse businesses in (for example: Greater London, North-West England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, etc. or “all”)
  - when you will accept applications for endorsement (for example: in March and September each year, all year round)
  - any restrictions on who you will endorse (for example: only your alumni, only members of your programme, only businesses you are taking equity in, etc. or “no restrictions”)
  - any contact details you wish to include

If your request to become an endorsing body is approved, we will write back to you to confirm your inclusion in the category and your initial allocation of places.

If you are an existing higher education provider who is already an endorsing body under the start-up route and would like to also be endorsed under the innovator route we will only ask that you inform us if there are any changes to the existing description you have previously provided.

## Endorsement places

Endorsement places take the form of secure endorsement reference numbers which you must include in the endorsement letters you issue. This helps to safeguard the categories against fraudulent endorsement letters being issued.

Each secure endorsement reference number is unique to a particular endorsement of a particular individual. It cannot be reused. The endorsement remains valid for 3 months and the individual must use it to make an application for a Start-up or Innovator visa during this time. If their application is unsuccessful for any reason, they can re-apply using the same endorsement, providing the 3 months has not yet expired.

If, however, an individual fails to make a successful application within 3 months, the endorsement will no longer be valid. You cannot re-use the same secure reference number, either for a fresh endorsement for that individual or to endorse someone else.

Applicants will need a new secure reference number each time you endorse them. For example, if you re-endorse someone so they can apply to extend their stay after 3 years, and then again a year later so they can apply to settle in the UK, they will need a new secure reference number on each occasion. The same applies if you are a higher education provider endorsing a former graduate entrepreneur to extend their stay under Start-up – they will need a new Start-up endorsement reference rather than their old Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) reference.

## Requesting places

We will normally allocate 25 places to a new endorsing body, unless you ask for a different number. If, for any reason, your organisation would prefer to be issued with fewer endorsements, you should let us know and we will issue the preferred number of endorsements.

There is no overall maximum, but if you request more than 25 places, please provide a short explanation as to how you intend to use these places (for example, because you need more places to endorse extension applications for your existing cohort). If you do not give any reasons, we will not allocate more than 25 places. If you need further endorsements at a later date, you can request more.

You do not have to issue all your endorsements in a given year. Any leftover endorsements will not be carried over into your allocation for the following year.

We will allocate places on an annual cycle, beginning on 6 April each year. The reference numbers we give you can be included in endorsement letters you issue until 5 April of the following year.

We will write to you towards the end of the allocation year to ask if you wish to continue as an endorsing body in the following year and, if so, how many places you would like to be allocated for the new year.

There is no overall cap on the number of endorsement places. If you use all of the places you have been allocated for the current year, you can ask for more at any time by contacting us at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (as appropriate). Your request should include:

- the number of further endorsements you require (up to 25)
- a short explanation of why you need these extra places
- a short summary of the types of businesses you have endorsed using your current allocation

The Home Office may review the endorsements you have issued so far before increasing or renewing your allocation. We may contact you to ask for a sample of the business plans you have endorsed, your assessment of those plans and/or records of any checkpoints you have had since. As a result of the assessment of

your previous endorsements, we may wish to organise a meeting with you to discuss these further. This is part of our routine monitoring of the route. Endorsing bodies must not commit to providing an endorsement where they do not have the allocation.

Requests for places will normally be granted, but we reserve the right to turn down a request or allocate fewer places than you have requested. If we do this, we will explain our reasons to you and give you the opportunity to respond.

## Managing enquiries

Endorsing bodies need to be aware that they may receive a significant number of applications, including speculative ones and ones relating to businesses which are not suitable for endorsement.

Immigration advisors and prospective applicants should not contact you with queries about immigration rules or policies, but it is likely that they might do. We would not expect you to answer such queries. Please refer them to the published information on gov.uk and to our contact channels. Prospective applicants can find details of how to contact us at <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>, and immigration advisors can contact us [BusinessHelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:BusinessHelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk).

To mitigate and manage the increase in correspondence you may receive by becoming an endorsing body, we recommend you consider:

- including a line of text setting out who you will endorse in your organisation's entry on our published list of endorsing bodies
- setting out further information on your website, including your criteria for those you are willing to endorse
- setting up a separate e-mail inbox for queries relating to the route, to keep these separate from your other activities
- redirecting queries relating immigration rules or policy to the Home Office (We can provide some standard wording if required)

If you are in receipt of a high-volume of queries relating to a specific issue, or have any questions as a result of these queries, we would encourage you to contact ourselves at [Tier1Reforms@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Tier1Reforms@homeoffice.gov.uk) to allow ourselves to advise you.

## 3. Endorsing applicants

Your endorsement will take the form of a letter, including a secure endorsement reference number and the applicant's personal details, as well as confirmation that they meet the endorsement criteria. A suggested template for endorsement letters is set out in **Annex A** of this guidance.

### Team members

The applicants you endorse do not need to be the sole founder of their businesses and may be members of entrepreneurial teams. If other team members are also being endorsed under the Innovator category, this may affect some details of the endorsement criteria (see below for further details).

### Types of endorsement

There are 4 types of endorsement:

**1. Start-up:** You should consider this type of endorsement if the person you are endorsing wishes to apply in the Start-up category. They should be an early-stage entrepreneur and must **not** have previously:

- established a business in the UK that has commenced trading (see details of exemption to this below)
- had 2 years' leave in the Start-up and Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) categories

Applicants may have previously established a business that has commenced trading, if their last grant of leave was as in either the Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) categories or as on the doctorate extension scheme. In this scenario your endorsement letter must confirm that the applicant's business venture is genuine and credible.

**2. Innovator – new businesses:** You should consider this type of endorsement if the person you are endorsing wishes to apply in the Innovator category. In this category, they **can** have already established a trading business in the UK (whether that is the business they now wish to be endorsed for or a previous business). Applicants will need access to £50,000 funds to invest in their business. This may include funds already invested in the business. The person must either:

- have not previously had leave in the Innovator category; or
- be pursuing a different business venture from, the one that was assessed in their previous Innovator endorsement, or at a previous contact point with their endorsing body during that grant of leave

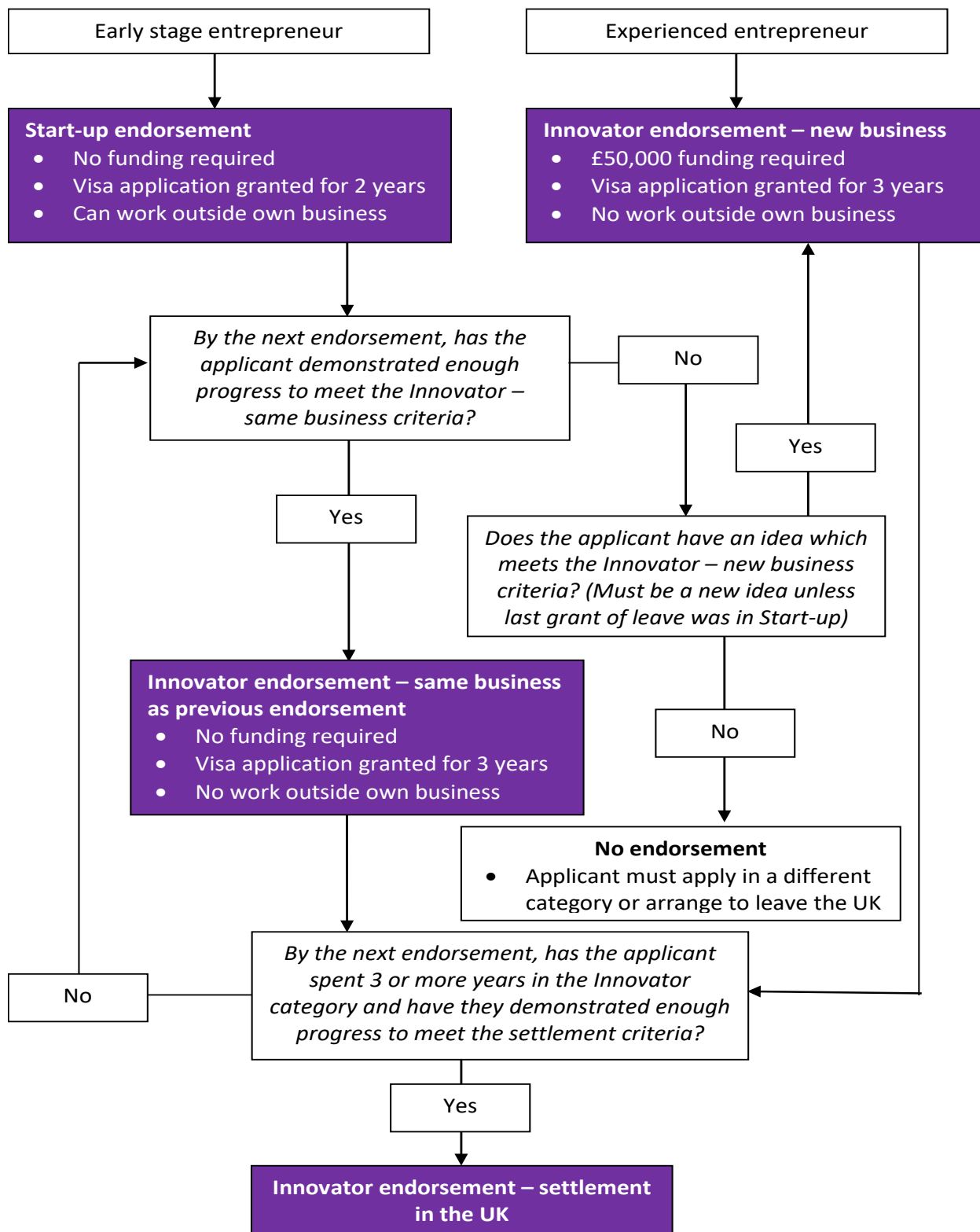
Applicants **can** receive this type of endorsement if they last had leave in the Start-up category and are still pursuing the same business venture as in their Start-up endorsement.

**3. Innovator – same business as previous endorsement:** You should consider this type of endorsement if the person you are endorsing has previously had leave in either the Start-up or Innovator categories and is still pursuing the same business venture that was assessed in their previous endorsement that led to that grant of leave, or at a contact point with their endorsing body during that grant of leave. They do not need to show they have £50,000 funds for this type of endorsement.

Please note that applicants who were previously endorsed in the Start-up category can be endorsed under either option 2 or 3, depending on which criteria they meet.

**4. Innovator – settlement in the UK:** You should consider this type of endorsement if the person you are endorsing has spent **at least 3 years** in the Innovator category and has achieved a level of business success which meets the endorsement criteria for settlement. Please note that time spent in the Start-up category does not count towards the 3 years.

The flow chart below sets out the possible pathways for an applicant to progress through the different types of endorsement over time:



## Endorsement criteria: Start-up

Your endorsement letter must confirm you have assessed the applicant's business proposal against the following 3 key criteria:

Innovation	Viability	Scalability
Does the applicant have a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage?	Is the applicant's business plan realistic and achievable based on the applicant's available resources? Does the applicant have, or is actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business?	Is there evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national markets?

You will have your own measures of what makes a good business idea and we encourage you to develop your own approach. Suggested questions you may wish to consider are:

Innovation	Viability	Scalability
Is the business offering something more than merely competing with similar local traders?	Is there evidence of market research?	Is the business likely to gain sufficient traction?
Is there a need for the business in the UK market that is not already being fulfilled?	Does the applicant have realistic, sustainable, product goals?	Is it a business with a potential for growth?
Is the idea bringing something new to the pre-existing UK/global business market? This should involve more than simply marketing existing products or services to the applicant's home country.	Is there a long-term plan for the business?	Would this business successfully scale to be a part of the national market?

### Transitional arrangement – Tier 1 Graduate entrepreneurs

Applicants who were in the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category before it closed may need to be endorsed for their second year in the Start-up category. If you are the same endorsing body as in their previous Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) application, you do not need to confirm that their business idea meets the criteria above. Instead, your endorsement must confirm that they

continue to have a **genuine and credible** business venture (as required under the previous category).

Your endorsement letter must also confirm that you are reasonably satisfied the applicant will spend the majority of their working time in the UK on developing their business ventures and that the applicant is relying on their own business plan. They must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.

## Endorsement criteria: Innovator – new businesses

The criteria for this type of endorsement are similar to those for Start-up, although we expect successful applicants to be assessed in line with their greater level of skills and experience. Your endorsement letter must confirm you have assessed the applicant’s business proposal against the following key criteria:

<b>Innovation</b>	<b>Viability</b>	<b>Scalability</b>
Does the applicant have a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage?	Is the applicant’s business plan realistic and achievable based on the applicant’s available resources? Does the applicant have, or is actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business?	Is there evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national <i>and international</i> markets?

The same suggested questions set out in the Start-up section above apply to Innovator endorsements. Your endorsement letter must also confirm that you are reasonably satisfied the applicant will spend their entire working time in the UK on developing their business ventures and that the applicant is relying on their own business plan. They must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.

Applicants relying on this type of endorsement must have £50,000 of available funds to invest in their business. You do not have to confirm that they have funding available in your endorsement letter but, if you do, the applicant will need to submit less evidence to us when they make their visa application. You can confirm:

- Any funding which you are providing yourselves
- Any funding which you have verified as being available to the applicant from other sources (including funds held by the applicant themselves)



- Any funding which you have verified as already having been invested in the applicant's business

You should only confirm funding from other sources where you have seen documentary evidence that this is available or has been invested in the applicant's business. We recommend that you keep copies of this evidence for the duration of the endorsement. We may ask to see it, and you may wish to refer to it for any future endorsement of that applicant.

If the business has another team member who also has, or is applying for, this type of endorsement, there must be £50,000 for each team member endorsed (for example, 2 endorsed team members require £100,000 funding).

We recognise that many new businesses fail and this is not necessarily any indication that an applicant did not have a strong business idea. There is no limit to the number of times an applicant can be endorsed for this type of application. However, each time, they will need to present a new business idea and show that they have £50,000 funding available. If you are aware that an applicant has tried and failed multiple times, we expect you to take this into account when considering whether their latest business idea is truly viable.

## **Endorsement criteria: Innovator – same business as previous endorsement**

For this type of endorsement to be given, your endorsement letter must confirm that you are satisfied the applicant has made significant progress in developing their business, as follows:

- The applicant has shown significant achievements, judged against the business plan assessed in their previous endorsement.
- The applicant's business is registered with Companies House and the applicant is listed as a director or member of that business.
- The business is active and trading.
- The business appears to be sustainable for at least the following 12 months, based on its assets and expected income, weighed against its current and planned expenses.
- The applicant has demonstrated an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business

Your endorsement letter must also confirm that you are reasonably satisfied the applicant will continue to spend their entire working time in the UK on developing their business ventures and that the applicant is relying on their own business plan.

They must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.

Applicants do **not** need to show evidence of business funding at this stage, **even if** they have progressed directly to this stage from a Start-up visa and have not previously had to show evidence of funding.

There is no limit to the number of times an applicant can be endorsed for this type of application, but you should expect to see further progress and achievements at each stage, not that the business has merely kept going in the same state as it was when the previous endorsement was given.

## Endorsement criteria: Innovator – settlement in the UK

For this type of endorsement to be given, your endorsement letter must confirm that you are satisfied the applicant has made significant progress in developing their business and has made quantifiable achievements. The progress achievements are the same as for endorsements under the “same business” criteria:

Progress	Achievements
<p><b>All</b> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has shown significant achievements, judged against the business plan assessed in their previous endorsement.</li> <li>• The applicant’s business is registered with Companies House and the applicant is listed as a director or member of that business.</li> <li>• The business is active and trading.</li> <li>• The business appears to be sustainable for at least the following 12 months, based on its assets and expected income, weighed against its current and planned expenses.</li> <li>• The applicant has demonstrated an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business</li> </ul>	<p><b>At least 2</b> of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least £50,000 has been invested into the business and actively spent furthering the business plan assessed in the applicant’s previous endorsement.</li> <li>• The number of the business’s customers has at least doubled within the most recent 3 years and is currently higher than the mean number of customers for other UK businesses offering comparable main products or services.</li> <li>• The business has engaged in significant research and development activity and has applied for intellectual property protection in the UK.</li> <li>• The business has generated a minimum annual gross revenue of £1 million in the last full year covered by its accounts.</li> <li>• The business is generating a minimum annual gross revenue of £500,000 in the last full year covered by its accounts, with at least £100,000 from exporting overseas.</li> <li>• The business has created the equivalent of at least 10 full-time jobs for <i>settled workers</i>.</li> <li>• The business has created the equivalent of at least 5 full-time jobs for <i>settled workers</i>, which have an average salary of at least £25,000 a year (gross pay, excluding any expenses).</li> </ul>

An applicant may qualify under any combination of 2 of the above criteria, even if they are similar. For example, an applicant will have met 2 criteria if their business has an annual revenue of £1 million, with at least £100,000 from exporting overseas.

An applicant cannot qualify by relying on the same criterion twice. For example, an applicant who has invested £100,000 (2 x £50,000) in their business venture will be considered to have met 1 criterion, not 2 criteria.

If the applicant is relying on the criteria for creating jobs:

- Each for the jobs must have existed for at least 12 months and comply with all relevant UK legislation, including (but not limited to) the National Minimum Wage Regulations in effect at the time and the Working Time Regulations 1998.
- Each of the jobs must involve an average of at least 30 hours of paid work per week. 2 or more-part time jobs that add up to 30 hours per week may be combined to represent the equivalent of a single full-time job, as long as each of the jobs has existed for at least 12 months. However, a single full-time job of more than 30 hours of work per week does not count as more than 1 full-time job.

Where we refer to jobs we mean posts filled, rather than employees. If a single job has been filled over 12 months by different employees at different times, this counts as the job having existed for at least 12 months.

If the business has other team members who are applying for, or have been granted, this type of endorsement, they cannot share the same means of meeting these criteria. For example, if 2 applicants are both relying on the requirement to have created 10 jobs, 20 jobs must have been created in total

## How to issue an endorsement

Before you endorse someone, they must give you their consent to allow you to:

- monitor their progress in establishing a business
- share their endorsement letter and other information relating to their business with the Home Office, where this is necessary for you to meet your responsibilities as an endorsing body

We recommend that you ask for this consent in writing and keep a copy for audit purposes

Your endorsement takes the form of an endorsement letter, which you can issue as a formal printed letter or electronically. A suggested template is included at **Annex A** of this guidance.

The endorsement letter must contain:

- (i) Your name as the endorsing body

- (ii) the endorsement reference number, which must be a previously unused reference number from your allocation of places
- (iii) the date of issue (we will only accept visa applications from letters dated within the last 3 months, so you may also wish to include a date of expiry)
- (iv) the applicant's name, date of birth, nationality and passport number
- (v) a short description of the applicant's business venture and the main products or services it provides (or will provide) to its customers
- (vii) confirmation that the applicant's business venture meets the endorsement criteria for the type of endorsement being given (see earlier sections)
- (viii) details of a named contact at your organisation who will verify the contents of the letter to us if requested

**When you issue an endorsement letter to an applicant, you must also send an electronic copy to us at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (depending on the type of endorsement). This is so we can easily verify that the letter is genuine without necessarily having to contact you each time. If you do not send us a copy, the applicant's visa application may be refused.**

## **What if an applicant challenges your decision not to endorse them?**

You should ensure your internal considerations and handling are transparent, fair and robust, and that your decisions are in line with this guidance. This should minimise the risk of any challenge to begin with. It is up to you to decide how best to handle a challenge to your endorsement decision. However, we recommend that you offer applicants the opportunity to ask for an internal review of your decision.

To follow best practice, a review should:

- Be led by a member of your organisation who was not directly involved in assessing the original endorsement application
- Consider whether the decision was reached in accordance with the criteria set out in this guidance, as well as any further policies or guidance for applicants that you publish yourselves as an endorsing body
- Consider the relevant facts of the application
- Not consider irrelevant information

Where an applicant is challenging a subjective aspect of the decision (for example, whether their business idea is sufficiently innovative), you do not need to remake

that decision entirely. You should check whether the subjective decision that was made was reasonable in light of your and our published policies and guidance.

If an applicant wishes to challenge the visa processes and procedures set out by the Home Office, rather than your own procedures, you should direct their complaint to us.

## 4. Monitoring and reporting

As well as considering and issuing endorsements, we ask endorsing bodies to take on a few light-touch monitoring and reporting duties.

### What are endorsing bodies' responsibilities?

We ask you to:

- **Stay in contact** with the business founders you endorse. You can choose to do this as closely as you like but, as a minimum, we ask you to make contact at checkpoints after 6, 12 and (in the Innovator category) 24 months. This is to check that they are still making progress with their business ideas.
- **Decide**, at these checkpoints, whether you are satisfied that applicants are continuing to work on their business ventures. They should have demonstrated reasonable progress with their original ideas. If they are no longer pursuing their original business ideas, they must be pursuing new business ideas that are also **innovative, viable** and **scalable**.
- **Withdraw your endorsement** if, at these checkpoints, an applicant has not demonstrated the above. You should also consider withdrawing your endorsement if an applicant misses a checkpoint without your authorisation.
- **Let us know** if you have any reason to believe someone you have endorsed is working in breach of their visa conditions, although we will not ask you to police this actively. We will then investigate appropriately.
- **Keep us informed** if the contact details we should use to get in touch with you change. This is important if we need to update you of any changes.

You should keep a record of key documents which you have used to make any endorsement decisions. These may include copies of:

- Applicants' business plans and your assessments of those plans
- Evidence of any funding which you have confirmed in your endorsements (such as letters from funding providers, bank statements, etc.)
- Records of what you have seen/discussed at checkpoints
- Where relevant, evidence that support the "same business" or "settlement" criteria (such as Companies House printouts, accounts or accounts summaries, evidence of PAYE submissions to HM Revenue & Customs for jobs created, etc.)

We will not normally ask to see these records, but we may do so if we have queries about a particular applicant or as part of our general monitoring of the categories.

Once an applicant achieves settlement in the UK or is no longer taking part in these categories for any other reason (such as leaving the UK or switching into a different

visa category), you no longer need to monitor them as an endorsing body. You should, however, keep records of the above for one year after your endorsement ends, unless the Home Office has already seen them.

## What happens if you withdraw your endorsement from an individual?

You should consider withdrawing an endorsement if:

- An applicant fails to stay in contact with you as requested.
- You discover that applicant has not been developing their business.
- An endorsed Innovator is working as an employee of another business they are not the director of, in breach of their visa conditions.
- An applicant's business has failed and they do not wish to start another business, or the business they intend to start is not, in your judgement, innovative viable and scalable.

In any of the above scenarios you must e-mail us within 10 working days at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (as appropriate). You must include the applicant's details and the reason why you are withdrawing your endorsement from them.

If you withdraw an endorsement before a visa application has been granted, that application will be refused.

In most cases, the application will have already been granted and the applicant will already have spent some time on their visa. Once an endorsement has been withdrawn, we will consider curtailing the visa. The final decision for this rests with us. It is an immigration decision that we do not ask endorsing bodies to take on.

We will take account of the particular reason for withdrawing the endorsement in deciding whether to do this with immediate effect, or to allow the individual to retain part of the remaining duration of their visa. If the individual has already passed their last checkpoint with you, and has not broken any of their visa conditions, we may decide not to curtail their visa.

## What are the consequences of non-compliance?

We appreciate that endorsing bodies cannot be responsible for everything the individuals they endorse do. If you notify us of any non-compliance by an individual, we will not hold this against you. Poor compliance by individuals in these categories will not affect your ability to hold any other immigration licenses you hold such as Skilled worker or Student Sponsor licenses.

We reserve the right, however, to take action if we see evidence of systemic non-compliance or deliberate immigration abuse by an endorsing body. If this happens, we will seek to work with you to resolve any issues or concerns. In the unlikely event that this does not resolve the concerns, we may restrict your endorsements or remove you from the lists of endorsing bodies for these categories.



## What if you no longer wish to be an endorsing body?

We do not wish to see endorsing bodies withdraw from the routes, and encourage you to discuss any concerns you may have or any further support you need, if you are considering no longer being an endorsing body. Your feedback will help us to improve the routes in future and address any difficulties you are facing.

However, if you do decide at any time that you no longer wish to be an endorsing body, you should contact us at [StartupRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartupRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk), and request to be removed from the published lists of endorsing bodies. We will then remove you from the lists the next time they are updated. We will cancel any endorsement reference numbers you have not yet used.

Ceasing to be an endorsing body entirely means withdrawing your endorsement from those individuals you have already endorsed. This may result in their visas being curtailed, as set out above.

We therefore ask that, wherever possible, you continue to act as an endorsing body for individuals you have already endorsed, while no longer accepting applications for new endorsements. We will maintain your details on a published list of legacy endorsing bodies for this purpose, so you should let us know if you decide not to do this. You should also publicise the fact that you will no longer accept new applications.

## 5. Further information

### Changes to the Start-up and Innovator visa categories

We keep all our immigration categories under review, and may make changes to the Start-up and Innovator categories from time-to-time. We will always contact all current endorsing bodies to let you know of any changes which affect you. Depending on the nature of the changes, we may consult you in advance, to draw on your expertise and offer you the opportunity to help shape the changes and make the route more reflective of your needs as endorsing bodies and those of the businesses you support.

### Contact details

We welcome your feedback on your experience as an endorsing body and any suggestions you may have for improvements to this guidance or the Start-up or Innovator categories more generally. We are also happy to answer any questions you have about the categories.

If you have any feedback or suggestions relating to any of the endorsement criteria, or anything else set out in this guidance, you can contact our policy team at [Tier1reforms@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:Tier1reforms@homeoffice.gov.uk).

If you have any practical queries, requests for endorsements or to be added or removed from the lists of endorsing bodies, you can contact the operational team for these categories at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (as appropriate).

**Please note that these e-mail addresses are for endorsing bodies (and potential endorsing bodies) only.** Other queries will not receive a reply. Individual applicants and immigration advisors should refer to the information and contact details on the gov.uk website:

- <https://www.gov.uk/start-up-visa>
- <https://www.gov.uk/innovator-visa>
- <https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi-inside-outside-uk>
- [BusinessHelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:BusinessHelpdesk@homeoffice.gov.uk) (for immigration advisors)

# Annex A: Endorsement letter templates

This template is provided as an example only. You do not have to use this format, providing your endorsement letters contain all of the necessary information. You are encouraged to include as much relevant information as possible, to assist caseworkers considering an application. Further details regarding an applicant's involvement in a business and how it is demonstrated they are a key/founding member, for example, would be beneficial.

**When you issue an endorsement letter, you must send an electronic copy to us at [StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) or [InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:InnovatorRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk) (depending on the type of endorsement). If you do not, it may lead to an applicant's visa application being refused.**

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Dear [*applicant's name*]

This letter confirms that you have been endorsed for a UK [*Start-up / Innovator*] visa application.

<b><u>Applicant's details</u></b>	
Name:	Nationality:
Date of birth:	Passport number:
<b><u>Endorsement details</u></b>	
<b>Endorsement reference number:</b>	
<b>Date of issue:</b>	<b>Date of expiry:</b>
<b>Name of endorsing body:</b>	
<b>Name of authorised person:</b>	
<b>Work address:</b>	
<b>E-mail:</b>	<b>Telephone:</b>

Further details of your endorsement are set out overleaf.

In applying for this endorsement, you consented for an electronic copy of this letter to be sent to the Home Office as part of your visa application process, and agreed to confirm its contents at their request.

**Please note that this endorsement letter does not confer any immigration status or right to work in the UK.** This letter is only valid for an application made to the Home Office within 3 months from the date of issue Details of how to apply can be found on the gov.uk website.

***[Signature of authorised person of the endorsing body]***

**Further details of endorsement:**

Applicant's name:

Names of any entrepreneurial team members who are also being endorsed:

Name of applicant's business:

Business sector:

Short description of the business and its main products or services:

Short description of the applicant's role in founding the business:

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**[COMPLETE / DELETE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS AS APPLICABLE]**

**Please note:** If an applicant is applying for leave under Start-up and has previously held leave as a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) with the **same** endorsing body that endorsed their previous leave, the “**Start-up** (Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa holders)” form should be used.

If the applicant is applying for leave under Start-up and has held leave as a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) with **a different** endorsing body that endorsed their previous leave, the “**Start-up**” form should be used.

Type of endorsement: **Start-up**

<b>Criteria (mandatory)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Innovation</b> – The applicant has a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage.		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		

<b>Viability</b> – The applicant’s business plan is realistic and achievable on the applicant’s available resources. The applicant has, or is actively developing, the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business described above.		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		
<b>Scalability</b> – There is evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national markets.		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied the applicant is either the sole founder of the business or an instrumental member of the founding team.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied the applicant is relying on their own business plan. The applicant must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied that the applicant will spend the majority of their working time in the UK developing their business venture as referenced in this letter.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied that the applicant <b>has not</b> previously established a business in the UK		
The applicant <b>has</b> previously established a business in the UK, under the Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) categories or on the doctorate extension scheme		
The applicant is applying for an additional 12 months leave, as a result of their business being negatively impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		

Type of endorsement: **Start-up** (Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) visa holders)

<b>Criteria (mandatory)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
The applicant <b>has</b> previously established a business in the UK under the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is the same endorsing body that provided endorsement that led to the applicant's last grant of leave under Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) category and is satisfied that the applicant's business venture is genuine and credible.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied the applicant is either the sole founder of the business or an instrumental member of the founding team.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied the applicant is relying on their own business plan. The applicant must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is satisfied that the applicant will spend the majority of their working time in the UK developing their business venture as referenced in this letter.		

Type of endorsement: **Innovator (new business)**

<b>Criteria (mandatory)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Innovation</b> – The applicant has a genuine, original business plan that meets new or existing market needs and/or creates a competitive advantage.		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		
<b>Viability</b> – The applicant's business plan is realistic and achievable based on the applicant's available resources. The applicant has the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and market awareness to successfully run the business described above.		
Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		
<b>Scalability</b> – There is evidence of structured planning and of potential for job creation and growth into national and international markets.		

Short description of how the applicant meets this requirement:		
[ <b>Name of endorsing body</b> ] is satisfied that the applicant will spend their entire working time in the UK on developing business ventures.		
[ <b>Name of endorsing body</b> ] is satisfied the applicant is either the sole founder of the business or an instrumental member of the founding team, including when the business has already begun trading in the UK.		
[ <b>Name of endorsing body</b> ] is satisfied the applicant is relying on their own business plan. The applicant must have generated the ideas in the plan (or made a significant contribution to those ideas) and must be responsible for executing the plan.		
[ <b>Name of endorsing body</b> ] is able to confirm that applicant has sufficient investment funds available to them.		

Investment funds	Amount (£)
Funds provided by [ <b>name of endorsing body</b> ]	
Funds which [ <b>name of endorsing body</b> ] has verified are available from other sources (including applicant's own funds)	
Funds which [ <b>name of endorsing body</b> ] has verified have already been invested in the business described above	

Type of endorsement: **Innovator (same business as established during their previous endorsed leave)**

Criteria (mandatory)	Y	N
The applicant has shown significant achievements, judged against the business plan assessed in their previous endorsement.		
The applicant, during their previous period of leave and with permission and agreement from [ <b>Name of Endorsing Body</b> ], has changed business venture and continued to develop this new business.		
Short description of achievements since previous endorsement:		
The business is registered with Companies House and the applicant is listed as a director or member of that business.		



Companies House number: <input type="text"/>		
The business is active and trading.		
The business appears to be sustainable for at least the following 12 months, based on its assets and expected income, weighed against its current and planned expenses.		
The applicant has demonstrated an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business.		
Short description of the applicant's role in the business:		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is reasonably satisfied the applicant will spend their entire working time in the UK on continuing to develop business ventures.		

Type of endorsement: **Innovator – settlement in the UK**

<b>Criteria (mandatory)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
The applicant has shown significant achievements, judged against the business plan assessed in their previous endorsement.		
Short description of achievements since previous endorsement:		
The applicant's business is registered with Companies House and the applicant is listed as a director or member of that business.  Companies House number: <input type="text"/>		
The business is active and trading.		
The business appears to be sustainable for at least the following 12 months, based on its assets and expected income, weighed against its current and planned expenses.		
The applicant has demonstrated an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business.		
Short description of the applicant's role in the business:		
<b>[Name of endorsing body]</b> is reasonably satisfied the applicant will spend their entire working time in the UK on continuing to develop business ventures.		

<b>Criteria (optional, must meet at least 2)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Further information</b>
At least £50,000 has been invested into the business and actively spent furthering the business plan assessed in the applicant's previous endorsement.			Amount invested:
The number of the business's customers has at least doubled within the most recent 3 years and is currently higher than the mean number of customers for other UK businesses offering comparable main products or services.			No. of customers:

<b>Criteria (optional, must meet at least 2)</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Further information</b>
The business has engaged in significant research and development activity and has applied for intellectual property (IP) protection in the UK.			What IP protection has been applied for:
The business has generated a minimum annual revenue of £1 million in the last full year covered by its accounts.			Annual revenue in last accounts:
The business is generating a minimum annual revenue of £500,000 in the last full year covered by its accounts, with at least £100,000 from exporting overseas.			Annual revenue in last accounts:  Revenue from exporting overseas:
The business has created the equivalent of at least 10 full-time jobs for settled workers, which have existed for at least 12 months.			Jobs created and salaries:
The business has created the equivalent of at least 5 full-time jobs for settled workers, which have existed for at least 12 months and have a mean salary of at least £25,000 a year (gross pay, excluding any expenses).			Jobs created and salaries:

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**Any other relevant information:**

# Annex B: SCS supporting letter

This template is **mandatory** for new applications to becoming an endorsing body and you should ensure the government department supporting your application completes this form, before submitting your application.

<b><u>Details of the proposed endorsing body</u></b>	
<b>Name</b>	
<b>Name(s) of directors</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Website</b>	
<b>Type of business</b>	
<b>What is the organisation's intended activity in the Start-up/Innovator route? Are you satisfied that it will only endorse individuals with innovative, viable and scalable business ideas? Please provide details.</b>	
<b>How does this organisation's business aims contribute to the published strategic objectives of your Department? Please provide as much detail as possible.</b>	
<b>What experience in helping entrepreneurs in the UK (including UK residents, not just migrants) does the business already have?</b>	
<b>Please outline how the organisation has demonstrated it is sustainable as an endorsing body, with robust systems in place to be able to monitor successful applicants and endorse them for future extension and settlement applications.</b>	
<b>Please provide details of the engagements your Department has had with the organisation to date.</b>	
<b>Length of time the relationship with your Department has existed. If less than 6 months, please set out reasons for supporting this organisation. Please also provide as much detail as possible outlining how you know them.</b>	
<b><u>Department information</u></b>	
<b>Named first point of contact</b>	
<b>Team/Unit</b>	

<b>Contact details of the official</b>	
<b>I confirm that the Department is satisfied that the above information is correct. I am happy to support the organisation's application to become a Start-up/Innovator visa endorsing body.</b>	
<b>SCS signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
<b>Contact details of the SCS</b>	