



Home Office

# Innovator Founder

Version 7.0

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# About this guidance

This guidance tells caseworkers about the Innovator Founder category.

The Innovator Founder route is for a person seeking to establish a business in the UK based on an innovative, viable and scalable business idea they have generated, or to which they have significantly contributed.

The application must be supported by an endorsing body.

An applicant must have a key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business.

A partner and dependent children can apply on this route.

The Innovator Founder route is a route to settlement.

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you, or you think that the guidance has factual errors, then you can email the Economic Migration Policy team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on), or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance, then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

## Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **7.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **17 July 2023**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to reflect:

- the new validity requirement for applicants who have or last had permission as a student - this applies to applications for permission to stay submitted on or after 17 July 2023

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Key facts

This page shows you the key facts for the Innovator Founder category.

<b>Key facts</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Validity requirements	<p>A person applying for entry clearance or permission to stay as an Innovator Founder must apply online on the gov.uk website on the specified form as follows:</p> <p>An application for entry clearance or permission to stay on the Innovator Founder route must meet all the following validity requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• any fee and Immigration Health Charge must have been paid</li><li>• the applicant must have provided any required biometrics</li><li>• the applicant must have provided a passport or other document which satisfactorily established their identity and nationality</li><li>• the applicant must be at least 18 years old on the date of application</li><li>• the applicant must have been issued with an endorsement letter by an endorsing body no more than 3 months before the date of application and that endorsement must not have been withdrawn</li></ul> <p>A person applying for permission to stay must be in the UK and must not have, or have last been granted, permission either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• as a Visitor</li><li>• as a Short-term Student</li><li>• as a Parent of a Child Student</li><li>• as a Seasonal Worker</li><li>• as a domestic worker in a private household; or outside the Immigration Rules</li></ul> <p>An application which does not meet all the validity requirements for an Innovator Founder is invalid and may be rejected and not considered.</p>
Suitability requirement	<p>The applicant must not fall for refusal under Part 9: grounds for refusal.</p> <p>If applying for permission to stay the applicant must not be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• in breach of immigration laws, except that where paragraph 39E applies, that period of overstaying will be disregarded</li><li>• on immigration bail</li></ul>

Key facts	Summary
Eligibility requirements	<p>An applicant for entry clearance or permission to stay must be awarded 70 points from the categories below, of which 50 must either be under the 'New Business' criteria or under the 'Same Business' criteria, but not both.</p> <p>New Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business plan - <b>30 points</b></li> <li>• Business venture is innovative, viable and scalable - <b>20 points</b></li> </ul> <p>Same Business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant's previous permission was in the Innovator Founder (including Innovator under Appendix Innovator of the rules before 13 April 2023), Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route and they are pursuing a business assessed by a Home Office approved endorsing body either for the previous endorsement or at a contact point during their last grant of leave – <b>10 points</b></li> <li>• Business is active, trading and sustainable and demonstrates significant achievements against the business plan - <b>20 points</b></li> <li>• Applicant is active in day-to-day management and development of business - <b>20 points</b></li> </ul> <p>Mandatory for all applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language requirement at level B2 - <b>10 points</b></li> <li>• Financial requirement - <b>10 points</b></li> </ul> <p>Innovator teams</p> <p>Multiple innovator founders can apply for endorsement to be co-directors of the same company. However, these are not linked as 'team' applications and each applicant must receive their own individual endorsement from an approved endorsing body. Each applicant must also independently demonstrate that they each have a separate £50,000 available to invest where the applications is under the 'new business' criterion.</p>
Entry Requirements	<p>A person seeking to come to the UK as an Innovator Founder must apply for and obtain entry clearance as an Innovator Founder before they arrive in the UK.</p> <p>A person applying for entry clearance as an Innovator Founder must, if paragraph A39 and Appendix T of these rules apply, provide a valid medical certificate confirming that they have</p>

Key facts	Summary
	<p>undergone screening for active pulmonary tuberculosis and that this tuberculosis is not present in them.</p>
<p>General Requirements for an Endorsement</p>	<p>The application must be supported by an endorsement letter from an endorsing body or Legacy endorsing body which must contain the following information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the name of the endorsing body or legacy endorsing body</li> <li>• their endorsement reference number</li> <li>• the date of issue, which must be no earlier than 3 months before the date of application</li> <li>• the applicant's name, date of birth, nationality and passport number</li> <li>• the name and contact details (telephone number, email and workplace address of an individual at the endorsing body or legacy endorsing body who will verify the contents of the letter to the Home Office if requested</li> </ul> <p>An endorsement letter from an endorsing body must confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the applicant is considered a fit and proper person to receive endorsement under the rules and guidance of the Innovator Founder route</li> <li>• the endorsing body has no concerns over the legitimacy of sources of funds or modes of transfer of funds invested by the applicant into their endorsed business</li> <li>• the endorsing body has identified no reason to believe that the applicant or their endorsed business may be the beneficiary of illicit or otherwise unsatisfactorily explained wealth</li> </ul>
<p>Application forms</p>	<p>European Economic Area (EEA) national with a chipped passport either:</p> <p>Start-up or Innovator using the UK Immigration: ID Check app (when available)</p> <p>The forms listed below for applicants outside or inside the UK (as relevant)</p> <p>Applicants outside the UK:</p> <p>Start-up or Innovator visa</p> <p>Applicants inside the UK:</p> <p>Start-up or Innovator permission to stay</p>

Key facts	Summary
Cost of application	See <a href="#">Fees for Home Office services</a>
Is entry clearance mandatory?	Yes
Is biometric information required for applications made in the UK?	Yes
Entry clearance endorsement	CAT D: Innovator
Entry clearance condition code	Code 1
Code of permission to stay granted	4K
Conditions of permission	<p>Permission under this route is subject to the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• no access to public funds</li> <li>• working must be for own business or businesses the applicant has established or other employment which is in a role requiring a skill level of RQF level 3 or above</li> <li>• study subject to the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) condition in <a href="#">Appendix ATAS of the Immigration Rules</a></li> </ul>
How long is permission normally granted for?	<p>Permission is normally granted for:</p> <p>3 years</p>
Are dependants allowed?	Yes
Are work and study allowed?	<p>Genuine entrepreneurial activity and skilled work (at RQF level 3 or above).</p> <p>Study is allowed.</p>
Is switching allowed?	<p>Switching into the Innovator Founder route is allowed unless the applicant's last grant of permission was in any of the following routes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visitor</li> <li>• short-term student</li> </ul>



Key facts	Summary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent of a Child Student</li> <li>• Seasonal Worker</li> <li>• domestic worker in a private household</li> <li>• outside the Immigration Rules</li> </ul> <p>Applicants who are on immigration bail are also unable to switch into the route.</p> <p>Students can only switch to this category if they have completed their course (or at least the first 24 months of a PhD)</p> <p>Applications from people who are not permitted to switch to this route should be rejected.</p>
Does time spent in this category count towards settlement?	Yes, but time spent in other routes does not count towards settlement in this route.
Is knowledge of language and life required?	Yes, for settlement applications.
Immigration Rules paragraphs	Appendix Innovator Founder

### Related content

[Contents](#)

### Related external links

[Immigration Rules, Appendix Innovator Founder Fees for Home Office services](#)

# Documents not in English

This page tells you about what an applicant must provide if they are providing a document which is not in English.

All documents provided with an application must be in English or Welsh. If they are not, the applicant must provide the original and a full translation which has been independently verified.

The translation must:

- confirm that it is an accurate translation of the original document
- be dated
- include the full name and signature of the translator or an authorised official of the translation company
- include the translator or translation company's contact details
- be fully certified and include details of the translator or translation company's credentials, if the applicant is applying in the UK

## **Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Initial checks: all applications

This section tells you what initial checks you must carry out before you consider an Innovator Founder application.

Before you consider an application, you must check that the:

- application is valid
- applicant's passport or other travel document is genuine
- application and biometric information are registered and verified

## Validation

An application for entry clearance or permission to stay on the Innovator Founder route must meet all the following validity requirements:

- any fee and Immigration Health Charge (IHC) must have been paid
- the applicant must have provided any required biometrics
- the applicant must have provided a passport or other travel document which satisfactorily establishes their identity and nationality
- the applicant must have been issued with an endorsement letter by an endorsing body no more than 3 months before the date of application and that endorsement must not have been withdrawn
- the applicant must not be on immigration bail at the time of application
- all applicants must be aged 18 or over at the time of application

If the applicant has in the 12 months before the date of application received an award from a government or international scholarship agency covering both fees and living costs for study in the UK, they must have provided written consent to the application from that government or agency.

Where an applicant has not demonstrated that they have met a requirement which could be addressed, such as where they have not paid the IHC for the required period, you should normally write out and allow them the opportunity to address this.

Where the application fails on the basis of something that cannot be addressed such as age or current immigration status or where you have requested missing information and have not received this within the time given, you must normally reject their application or exercise discretion to consider.

## Switching

An applicant who is in the UK cannot apply to switch into the Innovator Founder route if they have, or were last granted, permission as any of the following:

- as a Visitor
- as a Short-term Student
- as a Parent of a Child Student

- as a Seasonal Worker
- as a domestic worker in a private household
- outside the Immigration Rules

An applicant who is applying for permission to stay and has, or last had, permission as a Student must have completed the course of study for which the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies was assigned (or a course to which paragraph ST 27.3 of Appendix Student applies). Alternatively, if the course was leading to a PhD award they must have completed at least 24 months of that course.

You can normally determine whether the applicant has completed their course by checking the end date on the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). However, the applicant may have completed their studies, and therefore met the requirement of the Rules, in advance of the end date on the CAS. If the end date on the CAS indicates they have not yet completed their studies, you should consider whether the course may have been completed by looking at any information provided with the application (for example, a results transcript) and any notifications made by the Student Sponsor. You should also check if the course stated on the CAS was at PhD level, and if so, use the course start date to assess whether they have completed at least 24 months.

If required, you should write to the applicant using the Validity reminder template, advising them that they have not shown that they have completed their studies and giving them an opportunity to do so before rejecting the application as invalid

## Endorsing body exits and live application considerations.

The below tells caseworkers what action to take when a migrant has submitted an application for entry clearance or permission to stay and that application is outstanding at the point that:

- the endorsing body has been removed from the [Innovator endorsing body list](#)
- the endorsing body has surrendered their status as an endorsing body
- the endorsing body has withdrawn their support to act as an endorsing body for the migrant
- the endorsing body has withdrawn their support at the migrant's request

Firstly, if consideration of validity is due to the removal of the endorsing body from the Innovator endorsing body, you should establish the reason for this.

If this was the result of wrongdoing, you must consider whether there is evidence to show that the applicant was a knowing participant in this. If there is sufficient reason to demonstrate that the applicant was aware that they did not qualify for endorsement or that they have been complicit in any abuse, you should reject the application as invalid.

If there is no good reason to believe that the migrant was aware of any wrongdoing or complicit in the reasons their endorsing body was removed from the list, then you should write to the migrant requesting that they obtain a valid endorsement to

validate their application and allow a period of 90 days for this to be sought and returned.

If you are considering not validating for any of the following reasons:

- the endorsing body has voluntarily surrendered their status from the Innovator Founder endorsing body list
- the endorsing body has withdrawn its support from the migrant

Then you must write to the migrant requesting that they obtain valid endorsement to validate their application and allow a period of 90 days for this to be sought and returned.

If in any of the above scenarios a valid endorsement is not sought and returned within 90 days, the application should be rejected in the usual way. For more information, see:

- Validation, variation and withdrawal of applications

## Endorsement letter

All applicants for the Innovator Founder route must have been endorsed in this category by an [endorsing body listed on the GOV.UK website](#).

The application must be supported by an endorsement letter from an endorsing body or legacy endorsing body which must contain the following information:

- the name of the endorsing body or legacy endorsing body
- their endorsement reference number
- the date of issue, which must be no earlier than 3 months before the date of application
- the applicant's name, date of birth, nationality and passport number
- the name and contact details (telephone number, email and workplace address) of an individual at the endorsing body or legacy endorsing body who will verify the contents of the letter to the Home Office if requested

An endorsement cannot be accepted if:

- it has been used in an application made after more than 3 months after date of issue
- it has been withdrawn by the endorsing body
- the endorsing body has lost its status as an endorsing body at the date of decision

In addition to the above the endorsement letter must also include the endorsing body's confirmation that in their assessment the applicant meets the individual requirements of either the 'new business' or 'same business' criteria.

An endorsement letter from an endorsing body issued to any one issued their first endorsement after the 13 April 2023 must confirm that:

- the applicant is considered a fit and proper person to receive endorsement under the rules and guidance of the Innovator Founder route
- the endorsing body has no concerns over the legitimacy of sources of funds or modes of transfer of funds invested by the applicant into their endorsed business
- the endorsing body has identified no reason to believe that the applicant or their endorsed business may be the beneficiary of illicit or otherwise unsatisfactorily explained wealth

A letter of endorsement from a legacy endorsing body in support of an application under the 'New Business' criteria will only be accepted, and points will only be awarded, if:

- the endorsement letter was issued by the legacy endorsing body before 13 April 2023 for use in the Innovator route
- the applicant previously had permission under the Start-up route and the endorsing body for that previous permission is the same as the legacy endorsing body supporting the current application

A letter of endorsement from a legacy endorsing body in support of an application under the 'Same Business' criteria will only be accepted, and points will only be awarded, if:

- the applicant has or, in the 12 months immediately prior to the date of application, had permission as an Innovator Founder
- the legacy endorsing body supporting the current application is the same as the endorsing body for that previous permission

## Innovator Founder teams

Applicants do not need to be the sole founder of the business and may be a member of an entrepreneurial team and share the same business idea and plan as another Innovator Founder team member.

However, each member of the Innovator Founder team must be issued their own individual endorsement and meet all the requirements of the route in their own right.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

[Checking endorsement validity](#)

Validation, variation and withdrawal of applications

### Related external links

[List of approved endorsing bodies](#)

# Checking endorsement validity

This page tells entry clearance officers how to check the validity of endorsements.

You must check the validity of any endorsement provided with an Innovator Founder application by contacting the Innovator Founder route inbox stating:

- the name of the applicant
- the secure reference number
- the name of the endorsing body
- the contact name on the endorsement letter

Once the Innovator Founder route inbox manager has confirmed the validity of the endorsement, you must reply to this email stating the following:

- the decision on the application
- the date the decision was made
- the date the application was submitted

This process must be followed in all cases.

## **Related content**

[Contents](#)

[Endorsement letter](#)

## **Related external links**

[List of approved endorsing bodies](#)

## Points scoring requirement

This page tells you about the point scoring requirements for the Innovator Founder route.

An applicant for entry clearance or permission to stay must be awarded 70 points from the table below, of which 50 must either be under the new business criteria or under the same business criteria, but not both.

Endorsement	New or same business	Requirement	Points
Innovator Founder	New business	Business plan	30
Innovator Founder	New business	Business venture is innovative, viable and scalable.	20
Innovator Founder	Same business	Applicant's previous permission was in the Innovator Founder, Innovator, Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route and they are pursuing a business assessed by a Home Office approved endorsing body either for the previous endorsement or at a contact point.	10
Innovator Founder	Same business	Business is active, trading and sustainable and demonstrates significant achievements against the business plan	20
Innovator Founder	Same business	Applicant is active in day-to-day management and development of business	20



<b>Endorsement</b>	<b>New or same business</b>	<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Points</b>
All	Mandatory for all applicants	English Language requirement at level B2	10
All	Mandatory for all applicants	Financial requirement	10
Total number of points required	-	-	70

**Related content**

[Contents](#)

# New business requirements

## Business plan

The applicant must:

- have a business plan and have either generated or made a significant contribution to the ideas in that business plan
- demonstrate that they will have a day-to-day role in carrying out the business plan
- confirm that they will have at least 2 contact point meetings with the endorsing body at regular intervals during their period of permission
- be either the sole founder or an instrumental member of the founding team

It is permissible for an individual to have joined a business after it was registered with Companies House, providing the business had not already commenced trading. Where this occurs, you must be satisfied that the applicant made a significant contribution to the business plan and has not been added to an existing business plan primarily for the purpose of facilitating investment.

Where an applicant is only investing in a company and does not meet these requirements, their application must be refused. Where the endorsing body has supported the applicant but there are reasons to question the applicant's role in creating and implementing the business plan, you must request further information to conclude if this requirement has been met or not. If you are satisfied that the applicant was not responsible for the business plan, will not be actively involved in implementing it or was not the sole founder or an instrumental part of the founding team, you must consider refusal under the Genuine Innovator Founder requirement at INN F 4.1.

## Business is innovative, viable and scalable

The applicant must have an innovative, viable and scalable business venture and they must meet all the following requirements:

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

The endorsing body supporting the application must state in the endorsement letter that they are satisfied the requirements have been met and provide a short description of how the applicant has done so.

Where there is reason to question that the applicant genuinely meets this requirement, for example, where it is unclear that the applicant has the relevant knowledge or skills to carry out their business plan, or it is unclear how the applicant's proposed business meets a market need or creates a competitive advantage, you can request further information from the applicant to support their claim.

You must only award points for this if you are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirement, on the balance of the information provided by both the applicant and the endorsement letter. You can find further guidance on what constitutes innovative, viable and scalable in the [endorsing body guidance](#).

## **Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Innovator Founder: same business requirements

## Business previously assessed by an endorsing body

In order to qualify for an award of points under the 'Same Business' criteria:

- the applicant must have or have last had permission as an Innovator Founder or on the Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route
- the letter of endorsement must confirm that the applicant meets the requirements of INNF 9.2 to INNF 9.4

Paragraph INNF 9.2. of the Immigration Rules states that the applicant's business must be a business that has previously been assessed by an endorsing body or legacy endorsing body while the applicant had permission as an Innovator Founder or on the Start-up or Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) route.

Paragraph INNF 9.3 of the Immigration Rules require that the applicant must:

(a) if they have or have last had permission as an Innovator Founder, demonstrate that they have attended at least 2 Contact point meetings with their endorsing body at regular intervals during their period of permission or similar regular checkpoint assessments with their legacy endorsing body; and

(b) confirm that they will have at least two Contact point meetings with the endorsing body at regular intervals during their period of permission.

The endorsing body (if it is the same that supported the applicant's previous application) or the current endorsing body (if it is different from the previous application) must be satisfied that the applicant's business is active, trading, sustainable and demonstrates significant achievements against the most recently agreed business plan.

Where there is reason to question the applicant's business meets the requirements for the route, you must request further documents to enable you to decide whether this is the case. Where it is clear that the business does not meet the requirements for the route, you must refuse the application.

## Business is active, trading and sustainable

Paragraph INNF 9.4. of the Immigration Rules states that the applicant's business must be active, trading and sustainable and the applicant must have made significant progress against their business plan.

Paragraph INNF 9.5. states that the applicant's business must be registered with Companies House and the applicant must be listed as a director or member of that business.

Where there is reason to question the applicant's business meets the requirements for the route, you must request further documents to enable you to decide whether this is the case.

## **Applicant is actively involved in day-to-day management**

An applicant must be actively involved in the day-to-day management and development of the business. Endorsing bodies are required to confirm this in the endorsement letter, but where there is reason to believe the applicant is not actively involved in the day-to-day development of the business, you must request further information to determine that the applicant is actively involved in the business. It is not sufficient for an Innovator Founder to solely have a financial interest in a business.

### **Related content**

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# Requirements for all applicants

In addition to meeting either the 'New Business' or 'Same Business' requirements, all Innovator Founder applicants must satisfy the English Language and Financial requirements.

## English Language

Unless an exemption applies, the applicant must show English Language ability on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages in all 4 components (reading, writing, speaking and listening) of at least level B2.

The applicant must demonstrate that they meet the English Language requirement as shown in [Appendix English Language of the Immigration Rules](#).

For more information, see: English Language.

## Financial requirement

[Appendix Finance of the Immigration Rules](#) sets out how applicants demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to establish and maintain themselves in the UK.

## Level of funding

Where an applicant is applying from in the UK and has been in the UK for more than 12 months at the time of application, they will automatically meet the financial requirement and will not need to show funds.

Where an applicant is applying from outside of the UK or has not already been in the UK for at least the 12 months before their application, they must demonstrate that they have sufficient funds to support themselves and any dependants.

The applicant must show that they have held the required level of funds for a 28-day period, as set out in [Appendix Finance](#).

The relevant levels for Innovator Founder applicants are:

- £1,270 for the main applicant
- £285 for a dependant partner
- £315 for a first child
- £200 for each subsequent child

## Related content

[Contents](#)

Financial requirement guidance

Dependent guidance

# Genuine Innovator Founder applicant

This page tells you about how to consider whether an applicant is a genuine Innovator Founder applicant.

You will not normally need to carry out a genuineness assessment for Innovator Founder applications. An endorsing body will already have assessed an applicant's business plan and caseworkers are not expected to duplicate that assessment.

A balance of probability test should only be carried out on an application if you have reason to believe that there are specific grounds to doubt a migrant's genuineness. This power is primarily intended to be used where the Home Office has information that would not otherwise have been considered by an endorsing body when it has assessed a migrant's suitability for endorsement.

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## **Official – sensitive: start of section**

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

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## **Official – sensitive: end of section**

### **Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Settlement

A person on the Innovator Founder route who is applying for settlement must apply online on the gov.uk website on the specified form 'Settlement Innovator'.

Before you consider an application, you must check that the:

- application is valid (same requirements as for permission to stay, except all applicant last permission must have been in the Innovator Founder route)
- applicant's passport or travel document is genuine
- part 9: grounds for refusal do not apply

For more information, see:

- Validation, variation and withdrawal of application
- Grounds for refusal and cancellation

An application for settlement must meet all the following requirements:

- any fee must have been paid
- the applicant must have provided any required biometrics
- the applicant must have provided a passport or other travel document which satisfactorily establishes their identity and nationality
- the applicant must be in the UK
- the applicant must have been issued with an endorsement letter by an endorsing body or legacy endorsing body no more than 3 months before the date of application and that endorsement must not have been withdrawn

The applicant must meet the Knowledge of Life in the UK requirement as set out in [Appendix KOL UK](#).

The applicant must have, or have last been granted, permission as an Innovator Founder. An application which does not meet all the validity requirements for settlement for an Innovator Founder is invalid and may be rejected and not considered.

## Continuous residence

Applicants for settlement in the Innovator Founder category must have continually resided in the UK for at least 3 years immediately prior to application. In determining if an applicant meets this requirement for continuous residency, you must be satisfied that the applicant has not had combined absences from the UK in excess of 180 days in any consecutive 12-month period as set out in [Appendix Continuous residence](#) in the Immigration Rules.

For further guidance on calculating the continuous period see: Continuous residence



## Endorsement letter requirement

INNF 17.1. Where the applicant is applying for settlement and their previous permission was as an Innovator Founder, they must provide an endorsement letter issued by an endorsing body, or legacy endorsing body which includes all of the following information:

- (a) confirmation that the applicant has shown significant achievements, judged against the business plan assessed in their previous endorsement; and
- (b) confirmation that the applicant's business is registered with Companies House and the applicant is listed as a director or member of that business; and
- (c) confirmation the business is active and trading; and
- (d) confirmation that 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; and
- (e) confirmation the applicant has demonstrated an active key role in the day-to-day management and development of the business; and
- (f) confirmation the applicant's business venture has met at least two of the following requirements:
  - (i) at least £50,000 has been invested into the business and actively spent furthering the business; or
  - (ii) the number of the business's customers has at least doubled within the most recent three years and is currently higher than the mean number of customers for other UK businesses offering comparable main products or services; or
  - (iii) the business has engaged in significant research and development activity and has applied for intellectual property protection in the UK; or
  - (iv) the business has generated a minimum annual gross revenue of £1million in the last full year covered by its accounts; or
  - (v) 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; or
  - (vi) the business has created the equivalent of at least 10 full-time jobs for settled workers; or
  - (vii) the business has created the equivalent of at least 5 full-time jobs for settled workers, each of which has a mean salary of at least £25,000 a year (gross pay, excluding any allowances).

An applicant cannot meet the above requirements 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 one criterion, not two).

## Innovator Founder teams

If the business venture has one or more other team members who are applying for, or have been granted, settlement as an Innovator Founder, they cannot share the same means of meeting these criteria (for example, if 2 applicants are relying on the requirement to have created 10 jobs, 20 jobs must have been created in total).

If the applicant is relying on the criteria for creating jobs in INNF 17.1. (vi) or (vii), the following requirements must be met:

- (a) each job must have existed for at least 12 months and comply with all relevant UK legislation, including (but not limited to) the National Minimum Wage Act 1998 and the Working Time Regulations 1998; and
- (b) each job must involve an average of at least 30 hours of paid work per week, but two or more part time jobs held by different employees that when combined add up to 30 hours per week will represent the equivalent of a single full-time job, as long as each of the jobs has existed for at least 12 months; and
- (c) a job will be considered one for a settled worker if the worker met the definition of settled worker in the rules in force at the time they started the job, and they remained employed for the whole claimed 12-month period, even if they ceased to be a settled worker at a later date.

A letter of endorsement from a legacy endorsing body will only be accepted if the legacy endorsing body supporting the current application is the same as the endorsing body that supported the applicant's last grant of permission.

If you have identified settlement applications from other team members in the same business, and it is not clear from the endorsement letters that enough success criteria have been met to cover all applicants, you should check this with the endorsing body.

#### **Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Cancellation

This section tells you about cancellation.

You may be asked to consider whether permission should be cancelled under paragraph 9.25.1 or 9.32.1 of the Immigration Rules. Paragraph 9.25.1 provides that permission may be cancelled where a migrant's endorsement is withdrawn by their endorsing body and paragraph 9.32.1 for where an endorsing body loses its status as an endorsing body for the relevant category.

You may also cancel a visa where information has come to light which would cause them to fail to meet the fit and proper person test for the Innovator visa route which is set out at paragraph 9.13A.1 of the immigration rules. More information can be found at the [Fit and proper person](#) section of this guidance.

In considering whether it would be appropriate to cancel an innovator's permission you must take the individual circumstances into account. Unless there is evidence to show that they have been complicit in any deception you must normally allow them to find another endorsing body in the first instance. Where they are unable to do so in a reasonable time it would normally be appropriate to cancel any remaining permission.

Paragraph 39D of the Immigration Rules gives you the power to ask a person who has permission to do either or both the following:

- provide additional information and evidence to the Home Office
- attend an interview

When such a request has been made under paragraph 39D, you must consider cancelling a person's permission if, without reasonable explanation, they do either or both of the following:

- do not provide additional information and evidence to the Home Office at the address specified in the request within 28 calendar days of the date the request is sent
- fail to attend an interview

If you cancel permission for this reason, you must do so under paragraph 9.9.2 of the Immigration Rules.

The below tells caseworkers what action to take for migrants who have permission to stay in the Innovator Founder route where their endorsing body has:

- been removed from the [Innovator Founder endorsing body list](#)
- voluntarily surrendered their status from the [Innovator Founder endorsing body list](#)
- withdrawn their support to act as an endorsing body for the migrant
- withdrawn their support at a migrant's request

Firstly, if consideration of cancellation is due to the removal of the endorsing body from the [Innovator Founder endorsing body list](#) you should establish the reason for this.

If this was the result of wrongdoing, you must consider whether there is evidence to show that the applicant was a knowing participant in this. If there is sufficient reason to demonstrate that the applicant was aware that they did not qualify for endorsement or that they have been complicit in any abuse you should cancel leave with immediate effect in line with the Cancellation and Curtailment of permission guidance.

If there is no sufficient reason to believe that the migrant was aware of any wrongdoing or complicit in the reasons their endorsing body was removed from the list then you should refer the migrant for cancellation of their leave to a period of 90 days.

If consideration of cancellation is due to the removal of the endorsing body from the Innovator Founder endorsing body list as a result of the endorsing body voluntarily surrendering its status, you should refer the migrant for cancellation of their leave to a period of 90 days.

If consideration of cancellation is due to an endorsing body withdrawing its support from the migrant you should refer the migrant for cancellation of their leave for a period of 60 days.

In all cases you must draft the wording for cancellation caseworkers by deleting as applicable from the template below:

You were granted **permission to enter/permission to stay** as under the Innovator Founder route within the Immigration Rules.

Your **permission to enter/permission to stay** has been cancelled because **your endorsing body [insert EB name] has been removed from the list/your endorsing body [insert EB name] no longer wishes to be an endorsing body/your endorsing body [insert EB name] has informed the Home Office that they are no longer supporting you.**

**If you are cancelling on the basis of the endorsing body no longer supporting the migrant, please also include the additional wording below:**

On **[date]**, your endorsing body **[insert EB name]** notified the Home Office that they had withdrawn their endorsement due to not meeting the required progression with your business/at your request as you are no longer pursuing your business under the Innovator Founder route.

Your **permission to enter/permission to stay** is therefore cancelled from **(insert cancellation date).**

**In all scenarios where you are referring a migrant for cancellation to the cancellations team please give sufficient detail about the length of time they should be cancelling the migrant's leave to; the reasons for cancellation as outlined above and provide cancellation wording as above – refer to cancellations team.**

For more information, see: Cancellation and Curtailment of permission

**Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Change of circumstances

This page tells you about changing the circumstances under the Innovator Founder route.

The applicant must use the appropriate form to change any of the following.

To change:

- contact details
- details of criminal convictions
- representative's details
- a dependant's details

they must complete a change form. See: [Changes during your stay](#).

You must confirm the change of circumstances have been noted in a letter.

If the current permission is a biometric residence permit (BRP), a new application must be sent on form no time limit (NTL) or transfer of conditions (TOC) to change their:

- name
- date of birth
- nationality
- gender
- appearance

## **Related content**

[Contents](#)

# Grant or refuse

This page tells you about granting or refusing an application for an Innovator Founder migrant.

For more information, see links in this section:

- [Granting or refusing entry clearance](#)
- [Granting or refusing entry at UK port](#)
- [Granting or refusing an extension of stay in UK](#)
- [Granting or refusing settlement](#)

## Related content

[Contents](#)

## Related external links

[Appendix Innovator Founder](#)

# Grant or refuse entry clearance

This page tells you about granting or refusing an application made overseas to come to the UK through the Innovator Founder visa.

## Grant entry clearance

You must grant entry clearance if the applicant meets all the relevant requirements of Appendix Innovator Founder of the Immigration Rules and none of the [grounds for refusal](#) in part 9 apply.

## Fit and proper person test

From 13 April 2023, there is a new paragraph 9.13A.1 in Part 9 (Grounds for Refusal). This provides that an application for entry clearance, permission to enter or permission to stay as an Innovator Founder may be refused where the decision maker has reason to believe that the applicant either:

- is the subject of any serious civil or criminal investigations or proceedings with regard to corruption or other financial crime or financial misconduct
- is or has been the subject of non-criminal sanctions, including being disbarred from acting as a director or carrying out regulated financial activities in any country

Serious civil or criminal investigations or proceedings with regard to corruption or other financial crime or financial misconduct should be understood to include, but is not limited to, investigations or proceedings in relation to any instance of tax evasion, corruption, fraud, or money laundering regardless of length of custodial sentence or whether any adverse civil or criminal finding against the applicant would normally be considered spent.

## Length of permission

Three years.

The endorsement is one of the following:

- Cat D Innovator Founder Migrant Code 1
- Cat D Innovator Partner Code 1
- Cat D Innovator Child Code 1

The endorsement must be valid on the date the applicant intends to travel to the UK.

## Refusing entry clearance

When the applicant has not provided the required evidence that they meet all the requirements of the relevant paragraph, or if any of the [grounds for refusal in part 9 of the Immigration Rules](#) apply, you must refuse the application.



## Biometrics for entry clearance

Successful applicants for entry clearance will be given a [biometric resident permit \(BRP\)](#). If the entry clearance application is successful, they must be given a 30-day visa to allow them to collect their BRP after they have arrived in the UK.

## Appeals

See: Appeals and litigation.

## Rights of appeal and administrative review - out of country applications

If an application for entry clearance is refused, the applicant cannot appeal against our decision. However, if they think the Home Office has made an error in considering their application, they can apply for an administrative review.

## Further information on administrative reviews

See: [Ask for a visa administrative review](#).

### Related content

[Contents](#)

Visas and entry clearance

Administrative review

### Related external links

[Part 9: grounds for refusal](#)

[Immigration Rules Appendix Innovator Founder](#)

[Entry clearance vignettes: types, safeguarding and validity](#)

[Administrative review – forms for migrants outside the UK](#)

# Grant or refuse entry at port

This page tells you about granting or refusing entry at a UK port to a person seeking to enter the UK through the Innovator Founder visa.

## Grant permission

Before you grant permission to enter to someone seeking entry on the Innovator Founder route, you must be satisfied that none of the grounds for refusal or cancellation of entry clearance or permission in [Part 9: grounds for refusal of the Immigration Rules](#) apply.

## Refusal of entry

You must refuse under paragraph, 9.14.1 of the Immigration Rules if someone seeks entry as an Innovator Founder without a valid UK entry clearance or permission to stay (leave to remain) for this purpose. If you are considering cancelling an applicant's entry clearance or permission to stay as an Innovator, you must refer to Part 9 of the Immigration Rules.

## Refusal of permission

You must refuse a visa national who seeks entry without a valid UK visa under [paragraph 9.14.1 of the Immigration Rules](#).

You must refuse a non-visa national who seeks entry in this capacity without the requisite entry clearance under paragraph INNF 3.1 of the Immigration Rules.

If the applicant is subject to a deportation order, any permission that they have been granted is cancelled. You must refuse under paragraph 9.2.1 of the Immigration Rules.

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**Official – sensitive: end of section**

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**Related content**

[Contents](#)

[Refusal of entry clearance or permission](#)

**Related external links**

[Immigration Rules Appendix Innovator Founder](#)

# Entry clearance: checking endorsement validity

This page tells entry clearance officers how to check the validity of endorsements. You must check the validity of any endorsement provided with an Innovator Founder application by contacting the Innovator Route inbox stating:

- the name of the applicant
- the secure reference number
- the name of the endorsing body
- the contact name on the endorsement letter

Once the Innovator Founder route inbox manager has confirmed the validity of the endorsement, you must reply to this email stating the following:

- the decision on the application
- the date the decision was made
- the date the application was submitted

This process must be followed in all cases.

## **Related content**

[Contents](#)

[Endorsement letter](#)

## **Related external links**

[List of approved endorsing bodies](#)

# Grant or refuse permission of stay

This page tells you when to grant or refuse an extension of stay to a person who seeks an extension of stay through the Innovator Founder visa.

## Grant

You must grant permission to stay if:

- the applicant meets all the relevant requirements of Appendix Innovator Founder of the Immigration Rules
- none of the [grounds for refusal](#) in part 9 of the Immigration Rules apply

The wording on the Biometric Residence Permit is:

Front:

INNOVATOR  
LEAVE TO REMAIN  
RESTRICTED WORK

NO SPORTSPERSON

Reverse:

NO PUBLIC FUNDS

## Refuse an extension

You must refuse permission if:

- the applicant does not meet all of the relevant requirements of [Appendix Innovator Founder of the Immigration Rules](#)
- any of the [grounds for refusal](#) in part 9 of the Immigration Rules apply and you consider refusal appropriate
- the applicant is in breach of immigration laws, except:
  - any period of overstaying allowed under the Immigration Rules

For more information, see: Applications from overstayers.

## Appeals

See: Appeals and litigation.

## Rights of appeal and administrative review: in country applications for permission to stay

Applicants cannot appeal against our decision. However, if they think the Home Office has made an error in considering their application, they can apply for an administrative review. Details of how to make an administrative review application must be included in the decision letter.

### Further information on administrative reviews

See: Administrative review.

#### Related content

[Contents](#)

#### Related external links

[Immigration Rules Appendix Innovator Founder Part 9 grounds for refusal](#)

# Grant or refuse settlement

This page tells you how to grant or refuse an application through the Innovator Founder visa for settlement.

An applicant must complete a continuous residence period of 3 years as an innovator.

To qualify for settlement, an innovator migrant must meet the requirements listed below:

- they meet all the requirements of INNF 17.1 to 17.5 of the Immigration Rules
- they must not fall for refusal under the [grounds for refusal](#) in part 9 of the Immigration Rules
- they must have spent a continuous period of 3 years lawfully in the UK, with absences from the UK of no more than 180 days in any 12 calendar months during that period, with permission as an innovator migrant
- they must have sufficient knowledge about life in the UK, in accordance with paragraph INNF 20.1 of the Immigration Rules, unless they are aged 65 or over at the date the application is made
- they must not be in the UK in breach of immigration laws, except that where paragraph 39E applies, that period of overstaying will be disregarded

If the applicant meets all the above criteria, you must grant their application.

## Related content

[Contents](#)

Knowledge of language and life in UK

Continuous residence

Applications from overstayers

## Related external links

[Immigration Rules Appendix Innovator Founder](#)

[Part 9 Grounds for Refusal](#)

# Conditions of permission

This page tells caseworkers about the conditions that an applicant must follow if they are granted permission as an innovator migrant.

Applicants granted permission in this category are subject to the following conditions:

- they cannot use public funds
- they must register with the police, if they are required to do so by part 10 of the Immigration Rules
- study is permitted, subject to the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) condition in [Appendix ATAS](#)
- work undertaken outside own business should be skilled to RQF level 3 or above

## Related content

[Contents](#)

Public funds

Cancellation and Curtailment of permission

## Related external links

[Immigration rules Appendix Innovator Founder](#)

[Immigration Rules – part 9](#)

[Immigration Rules – Appendix ATAS](#)



# Dependants

This page tells caseworkers which dependants can join a person who comes to the UK through the Innovator route.

Under [paragraphs INNF 22.1 to 30.2](#), the following dependants are allowed to come to the UK to join a person granted entry clearance or permission to stay as an innovator:

- spouse, civil partner or unmarried
- dependent children

For more information on the requirements that dependants must meet in order to be granted permission in line with an innovator, see: Family members of work and economic migrants.

In addition, a person applying as the partner of an Innovator Founder must show that the relationship meets the relationship requirements as specified in Appendix Relationship with Partner. For more information on these requirements, see the guidance on Relationship with a Partner.

## **Related content**

### [Contents](#)

Family members of work and economic migrants

# Managing the Innovator route inbox

This page tells caseworkers how to manage the Innovator route inbox.

You must check the Innovator route inbox on a daily basis. This section gives examples of the types of emails you may receive and how to deal with them.

Once you have dealt with an email, you must move it from the Innovator or Innovator Founder inbox to the Example endorsement folder.

## The endorsing body has issued an endorsement

### Legacy endorsing bodies

They will have provided a copy of the endorsement with the email. You must update the Innovator allocation monitoring spreadsheet stored in the team's local area.

Each endorsing body has a specific number of secure reference numbers (SRNs). You must record the applicant's details against the correct SRN detailed on the endorsement.

You must record the following information and then save the spreadsheet:

- date of the endorsement
- applicant's name
- qualification details
- business intention

### Current endorsing bodies

You must ensure that you have validated the ERN before you decide any case.

**For current endorsing bodies only:** on concluding a case you must update the ERN log with the outcome of that case.

## The endorsing body has withdrawn their endorsement for an applicant

The endorsing body can withdraw their endorsement at any time, including during the application process or after the application is approved.

You must identify what stage of the process the application is at on Atlas.

If there is no application currently recorded, you must record details of the endorsing body's decision on the limit monitoring spreadsheet - change the status from 'Endorsement Given' to 'Endorsement Withdrawn'.

If the application is under consideration, you must record details of the endorsing body's decision on Atlas comments, then record the decision on the limit monitoring spreadsheet. The following is an example of the Atlas wording required:

'Notification received from (state name of endorsing body) on (date) - the endorsing body has advised the Home Office they no longer wish to endorse the migrant (reason).'

If a grant of permission to stay has already been made, the applicant's current permission may fall to be cancelled - you must follow the current cancellation guidance.

## **The endorsing body says the applicant has missed their regular contact**

The applicant must have at least 2 contact point meetings with the endorsing body at regular intervals within their permission (normally after 12 and 24 months). The endorsing body must advise the Home Office if the applicant has missed a contact. Update Atlas notes with the missed contact.

If the endorsing body states they wish to withdraw their sponsorship, follow the instructions in the [endorsing body has withdrawn their endorsement](#) section.

## **The endorsing body is asking a policy question or general query**

If you cannot provide a direct response to the endorsing body, you must liaise with your higher executive officer (HEO) and with the Economic Migration Policy team.

You must send a holding response to the endorsing body.

Once you have received a response from the HEO, you must reply to the endorsing body.

## **The endorsing body has been removed from the list**

If you receive notification that a body has been removed from the list of approved endorsing bodies, you must:

- update the allocation monitoring spreadsheet
- change the endorsing body status field to void then contact the cancellation team, giving them the details of any other applicants associated with that endorsing body
- provide the applicant's full name and case ID

## The endorsing body says the applicant is breaching their conditions

You must establish if there is enough evidence to cancel the applicant's permission. If there is enough evidence to prove the applicant is breaching their conditions, you must complete the cancellation in line with current procedures.

If there is not enough evidence, note Atlas with details of the endorsing body email and no further action is required.

## An overseas post is requesting verification of an endorsement

You must check that the SRN and applicant details given by the post match the details given previously by the endorsing body which are stored on the allocation monitoring spreadsheet.

If the details match those on the spreadsheet, you must respond to the post confirming the details supplied are correct.

If the details do not match, you must send a holding response to the post and contact the endorsing body to confirm the endorsement is as issued.

You must:

- update the spreadsheet with the endorsement details if the endorsement is correct
- confirm the information with the post as received from the endorsing body

## An overseas post is notifying a case decision

You must check the details of the applicant on the allocation monitoring spreadsheet, to make sure it matches, and update it with the post decision.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

[Endorsement letter](#)

Cancellation and Curtailment of permission