



Home Office

Aircrew

Version 11.0

This guidance is based on the Immigration Act 1971 and the Immigration Rules.

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About this guidance

This guidance tells you how to consider applications for permission to enter or remain in the UK as aircrew.

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 email the Economic Migration Policy Unit.

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 Review, Atlas and Forms team.

If you have read the relevant Immigration Rules and this guidance, and still need more help with this category, you must first ask your senior caseworker or line manager.

Airline employees' section (ALE) contact details:

Official – sensitive: start of section

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

Official – sensitive: end of section

Publication

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

- version **11.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **30 July 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

- updated with clarifications on operational crew not requiring an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)
- formatting changes

For previous changes to this guidance you will find all earlier versions in the archive.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Aircrew

Topic	Information
Eligibility requirements	<p>People employed in the working or service of an aircraft, including the captain. This does not include ground crew or security guards.</p> <p>Aircrew:</p> <p>operational crew may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enter without permission if they leave the UK within 7 days as operational crew of an aircraft - Section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 (the act) • enter without permission as above, and extend for more than 7 days by applying for permission to enter (under section 11(5) of the act) • enter with permission and stay longer than 7 days under the Immigration Rules <p>They can arrive as positioning, deadheading or as supernumerary crew. In these circumstances, they must seek permission to enter at an immigration control.</p> <p>There are special arrangements for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some sky marshals <p>There is a concession, outside the immigration rules for aircrew of the following airlines who are based in the UK:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air New Zealand • Japan Airlines • Qantas Airlines • United Airlines • Virgin Atlantic Airlines

Topic	Information
	For more information, see Aircrew based in the UK under concession .
Cost of application	UK Visa and Immigration fees
Entry clearance mandatory?	Yes, for visa nationals. No, if coming into the UK under section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 or for those not needing a visa and who are applying for permission to enter at port.
Is biometric information required for applications made in the UK?	Yes, for visa nationals and non-visa nationals staying in the UK more than 6 months. No, if coming for less than 7 days in the UK under section 8(1) the 1971 Act or for non-visa nationals staying beyond 7 days but no more than 6 months.
Code of permission to enter or remain granted	Permission to enter - code 5N or code 1 Permission to remain - code 1
Entry clearance endorsements	D: Airline employee (name of carrier) D: Joining aircraft (name of carrier)
How long is permission to remain normally granted for?	Applications can be made to remain in the UK under another provision of the Immigration Rules. For more information see Aircrew based in the UK 7 days or more .
Are dependants allowed?	Yes, but only spouse, partners and unmarried children under 18.
Work and study allowed?	Code 1 – yes Code 5N – no (non-visa nationals may study for up to 6 months Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor)
Switching into this category allowed?	No
Does this category lead to settlement (indefinite leave to remain)?	No
Is knowledge of language and life required?	No
ATLAS case type	Operating crew – LTE - OC-LTE
Immigration Rules paragraphs	Aircrew are covered by the following sections of the Immigration Act 1971: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • section 8(1) • section 10(1) • section 11

Topic	Information
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • section 33(1)

Related content

[Contents](#)

Check applicant meets requirements

This section explains what you must check before you consider whether to allow an aircrew member into the UK.

You must not examine crew members who are entering the UK without permission under section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971, as you will then have to grant them permission to enter. You must only examine a crew member if there have been concerns raised about their status, or if you are asked to examine them for another purpose.

If you examine a crew member

If you do examine a crew member, it automatically triggers an examination under schedule 2, paragraph 2 of the Immigration Act 1971, and prevents their entry without permission. You must then grant any permission on an IS 123.

Check the application is valid

You must check the:

- application form, when one is appropriate
- correct documents are provided
- correct fee, is enclosed, when it is appropriate

For more information, see [Home Office – Fees for our services](#).

Check person's identity

You must check:

- the person's passport or travel document
- they have given their biometric information, if required
- they are aged 18 or over

For more information see Identity checks.

For more information on the documents required by aircrew, see [Aircrew members' identity documents](#).

Check general grounds for refusal

You must check whether there are any general grounds for refusing the person. For more information, see: grounds for refusal.

For information on whether a crew member has a criminal conviction, see: [Aircrew convicted of offences in the UK](#).

Related content

[Contents](#)

Identity checks

[Aircrew convicted of offences in the UK](#)

Related external links

[Part 9: grounds for refusal](#)

Roles covered by the Immigration Act 1971

This section explains who can and cannot qualify for entry without permission as aircrew under section 8(1) of the [Immigration Act 1971](#).

Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA)

S8(1) compliant aircrew do not need an ETA, [Entering the UK: exemptions to controls](#).

Definition of a crew member

To be a member of aircrew who can qualify for entry without permission, a person must meet the definition of a crew member as set out in section 33 (1) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Crew members are defined as ‘all people who are employed in the working or service of an aircraft, including the captain’. This does not include ground crew or security guards.

Security guards on aircraft

Security guards employed on an aircraft are not crew members and cannot benefit from the exemption in section 8(1) of the [Immigration Act 1971](#). They must meet entry requirements in the normal way. Visa nationals must have a valid entry clearance for the purpose that they are seeking entry. If they do, you must grant permission in accordance with their entry clearance.

Qualifying B5JSSK nationals should be granted permission to enter verbally in accordance with B5JSSK guidance. Other non-visa nationals’ passports should be endorsed with a code 5N. See: [Immigration Rules paragraph 24](#).

Airport-based operational ground staff

Airport-based operational ground staff of overseas-owned airlines are not crew members. This includes:

- station managers
- security managers
- technical managers
- engineers and loadmaster
- air travel assistants

These people need entry clearance before they travel to the UK and must apply for permission to work under the points-based Immigration system - Skilled Workers.

In flight engineers on test electric aircraft can be considered to be crew under this definition.

Related content

[Contents](#)

[Aircrew based in the UK 7 days or more](#)

[Aircrew based in the UK under concession](#)

Related external links

[Immigration Act 1971](#)

[Immigration Rules paragraph 24](#)

Aircrew members' identity documents

This page explains how to check the identity documents specific to aircrew.

You must check the identity documents before you start to consider whether to grant entry clearance, permission to enter or permission to remain.

You must not examine crew members who are entering the UK without permission under section 8(1) of the [Immigration Act 1971](#). You must only examine a crew member if either of the following apply:

- there are concerns about their status
- you are asked to examine them for another purpose

If you examine a crew member

If you do examine a crew member it automatically triggers an examination under schedule 2, paragraph 2 of the [Immigration Act 1971](#) and prevents their entry without permission. You must then grant any permission on an IS 123.

Aircrew must hold a valid passport and any of the following:

- a pilot's licence
- a crew member certificate
- a cabin crew ID

All documents must contain a description of the holder, including their nationality and their photograph.

Obligation of the captain of an aircraft to produce details of crew members

You must make occasional visits to an aircraft on arrival to examine the documents of crew members as follows:

Aircraft arriving in the UK from or after calling at a place outside the common travel area. Under the Immigration and Police (Passenger, Crew and Service Information) Order 2008, you can ask the captain for a list of:

- names and nationalities of all the passengers
- names, dates of birth and nationalities of all members of the crew

Aircraft arriving in the UK which started their flight in the Republic of Ireland. Under the order, you can ask the captain for:

- a list of names and nationalities of all passengers, who are not Irish citizens, who started their journey to the UK outside the common travel area and who

travelled through the Republic but were not given permission to land in the Republic in line with Irish law.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Immigration Act 1971](#)

[Immigration and Police \(Passenger, Crew and Service Information\) Order 2008](#)

Grant or refuse entry clearance

This section explains when aircrew can enter without obtaining entry clearance, and when they need entry clearance.

Aircrew who do not need entry clearance

Aircrew members do not need entry clearance if they:

- are operating crew (including flight attendants)
- hold pilots' licences or cabin crew ID or valid crew members' certificates and passports
- are departing, as members of the crew, on the same or another aircraft within 7 days

For a definition of aircrew, see: [Roles covered by the Immigration Act 1971](#).

Crew are not permitted to work in the UK without permission. Crew can only benefit from the S8(1) exemption if they are undertaking work that is in line with their role aboard the aircraft and incidental to their employment.

The worker should not base themselves in the UK as their main place of work.

Aircrew who do need entry clearance if they are visa nationals

The following aircrew are not covered by the exemption in section 8(1) of the [Immigration Act 1971](#) and must apply for entry clearance if they are visa nationals:

Crew members who:

- have at any time been refused permission to enter and have not since been given permission to enter or remain
- have a deportation order in force against them must not be granted entry clearance or permission to enter

Staff of overseas-owned airlines arriving as:

- crew on training
- passengers (including crew not leaving as operational crew)
- supernumeraries, positioning, and deadheading
- trainees
- crew not leaving within 7 days

The following airport staff may be eligible to apply under the points-based system:

- airport-based station managers
- security managers

- technical managers
- engineers and loadmasters
- air travel assistants

For more information on the points-based immigration system see: [Skilled Workers](#).

Related content

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Grant or refuse entry without permission at UK port: aircrew leaving UK within 7 days

This section explains the process for those operating both ways as aircrew and leaving the UK within 7 days.

Aircrew arriving as a crew member and leaving within 7 days

Aircrew may enter without permission under section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 if they are engaged to leave within 7 days on the same or another aircraft.

They may remain in the UK until the departure of the aircraft on which they are engaged unless any of the following apply:

- they are the subject of a deportation order
- they have been refused permission to enter the UK at any time and have not been granted permission to enter or remain in the UK subsequently
- they are required to submit to examination by an immigration officer in line with schedule 2 of the Immigration Act 1971

For information on aircrew arriving as supernumerary passengers and leaving within 7 days, see: [Examination of aircrew – leaving UK within 7 days](#).

For a definition of aircrew, see: [Roles covered by the Immigration Act 1971](#).

In emergency circumstances the airline employees (ALE) section at Heathrow terminal 3 can authorise an extension. You must contact them for further details.

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Examination of aircrew: leaving UK within 7 days

This section explains what you must do if you examine an aircrew member wishing to remain in the UK under Section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971.

If you have to check details further for a crew member of an aircraft arriving in the UK, you must either grant or refuse permission to enter. Once the person is examined, the exemption in section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 ceases to apply.

If you give permission to enter you must issue form IS123, which gives permission for 7 days on code 1.

Grant or refuse entry at UK port

Aircrew leaving UK within 7 days

This section explains the process for aircrew who will be leaving the UK within 7 days, who have entry clearance or need permission to enter.

This section explains the process for aircrew who have entry clearance, or need permission to enter, because they are not covered by section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971.

Positioning, deadheading or supernumerary crew who do not hold entry clearance

Aircrew who do not qualify under S8(1) are considered as arriving passengers and therefore need to go through immigration control, if you decide to grant permission to enter, under this concession, you must grant permission as follows:

Deadheading or positioning non-visa national crew can be granted permission to enter verbally in accordance with relevant guidance other non- visa nationals should be landed on code 5N, (write 'ALE' below the immigration officers date stamp).

They must provide evidence they:

- arrived and will depart by air
- have the relevant general confirmation declaration / movement order for the flight they are operating
- are able to confirm they are departing by air before 11:59pm the day after their arrival
- are able to show their passport and pilot's licence, or a crew member certificate or crew ID

Non-visa national crew who arrive under this concession do not need an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA). See: [Entering the UK: exemptions to controls](#).

Deadheading or positioning visa national crew can be landed on code 3 (write 'ALE' below the immigration officers date stamp).

They must provide evidence they:

- arrived and will depart by air
- have the relevant general confirmation declaration / movement order for the flight they are operating
- are able to confirm they are departing by air before 11:59pm the day after their arrival
- are able to show their passport and pilot's licence, or a crew member certificate or crew ID

Within the C3 arrival reference number box write 'ALE/outbound flight number'.

In emergency circumstances the airline employees (ALE) section at Heathrow terminal 3 can authorise an extension. You must contact them for further details.

Positioning, deadheading or supernumerary crew who hold entry clearance

If the entry clearance visa states they are joining an aircraft or airline employee, you must date stamp the entry clearance.

Refusal of permission to enter

You must refuse permission to enter under the relevant section of the Immigration Rules.

For example, if an aircrew member seeks to enter under section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 and does not meet the requirements, you must refuse under relevant part 9 grounds for refusal as they are applying for entry in a category not in the Immigration Rules.

When a refusal involves a deportation order or issues of national security, you must refer to your line manager or senior caseworker. If they are not able to provide an answer, you should contact your Regional Command and Control Unit and if necessary, they will contact Border Force National Command Centre.

Related content

[Contents](#)

External links

[Immigration Rules part 9: grounds for refusal](#)

Aircrew extending beyond 7 days

This section explains what to do if a member of an aircrew wishes to stay longer than their original 7 days.

When a crew member has already lawfully entered under section 8(1) of the Immigration Act 1971 and wishes to stay beyond the 7 days, they are classed as seeking permission to enter and must report to an immigration officer. This is covered under section 11(5) of the Immigration Act 1971. For more information see related link: [Immigration Act 1971](#).

You must do both of the following:

- examine them under schedule 2 of the Immigration Act 1971
- grant or refuse permission to enter as appropriate

If you decide to grant permission to enter as a crew member it must be on code 1 for the duration of their proposed stay. Within the C1 arrival reference number box write 'ALE/ outbound flight number/date of outbound flight, otherwise grant permission to enter as appropriate under the Immigration Rules under which they have applied.

You must contact the [airline employees \(ALE\)](#) section at Heathrow Terminal 3 for any aircrew staying longer than 7 days.

Aircrew based in the UK 7 days or more

This section explains the process to follow for aircrew arriving who will be based in the UK and require permission to enter. This only applies to aircrew of overseas airlines that have concessionary arrangements.

For more information see: [Aircrew based in the UK under concession](#).

For ALE details, see [Contacts](#).

Aircrew that require entry clearance

Aircrew operating out of a UK base must have a visa endorsed 'Airline employee with [name of airline]'. This will have been issued by the entry clearance officer after it has been authorised by the ALE section.

Passport endorsement for aircrew based in the UK and their dependants

You must:

- EC holders - endorse entry clearance

For more information on ALE procedures, contact the [ALE section](#).

Related content

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Aircrew based in the UK under concession

This section explains what to do when an overseas airline wants to base members of their aircrew in the UK on a long-term basis under the carrier concession, which operates outside of the Immigration Rules.

Carrier concession

Concessionary arrangements, outside the rules, have been made to allow the following 5 airline operators to base limited numbers of overseas flight crew in the UK:

- United Airlines
- Air New Zealand
- Qantas
- Japan Airlines
- Virgin Atlantic Airlines

All crews under these arrangements are administered by the airline employee (ALE) section and are required to pay all application and other fees. The ALE section maintains an index of operational crew members. To contact ALE, see [ALE contacts](#).

If an officer in charge of a port receives a direct request from an airline for general approval, they must do both of the following:

- forward the request to the ALE section at Heathrow Terminal 3
- enclose a report giving the reason for the request and any other relevant information

You must notify the ALE section of any change in the status of UK based crew of these airlines (for example, to foreign spouse status).

Related content

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Dependants

This section explains how to deal with dependants of aircrew arriving under the carrier concession.

Dependants of aircrew based in the UK

An aircrew member based in the UK may be accompanied or joined by their:

- spouse
- partner
- unmarried children under 18

Dependants should obtain an entry clearance in advance of their arrival to the UK.

Engineering base concession to Air India

Air India is the only authorised engineering base. This is because the Indian government do not permit their carriers to contract out aircraft engineering and flight certification.

Official – sensitive: start of section

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

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Aircrew based in the UK arriving as passengers

This section explains the procedures to follow for aircrew who are based in the UK and arrive as passengers or supernumerary.

When a crew member arrives as a passenger or supernumerary, they need permission to enter. If a crew member arrives before their previous permission as an aircrew member has expired, you can grant permission to enter until that leave has expired.

For passengers who will be leaving as crew members, see: [Aircrew leaving UK within 7 days](#).

For more information on endorsing passports, see: [Aircrew based in the UK 7 days or more](#).

Permission has expired or will expire within 2 months

When this occurs, you must not grant 2 months permission in place of expiring conditions. This can create problems when the local airline employee (ALE) section wants to make sure certain flight attendants depart.

Some crew members may also use the 2 months in place of expiring conditions to avoid contact with the ALE section.

You must only give permission up to the point their previous conditions expire. If that date has passed, you must refer to the [ALE section](#) at Heathrow Terminal 3 before you make a decision.

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Aircrew convicted of offences in the UK

This section explains what to do if an aircrew member has been convicted of offences in the UK.

If you discover an instance of an aircrew member being convicted of an offence in the UK, you must:

- refer to a Senior Officer, if you are considering refusing permission to enter and removing them from the UK because of the seriousness of the offence
- submit a report to the assistant director, [airline employees' \(ALE\) section](#), including precise details of the offence and sentence

Similarly, if the details of the above type of convictions come to the attention of caseworkers you must send full details of the offences to ALE.

Related content

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Grant or refuse extension of leave

This section explains the process for aircrew who wish to extend their stay in the UK.

Applications for extensions (permission to remain) for aircrew based in the UK must be made on the FLR(IR) application form. This application must be authorised by the [airline employee \(ALE\) section](#) at Heathrow Terminal 3.

You can only grant permission to remain for a crew member to fulfil the purpose their original permission was granted for.

You can only grant extensions of stay to permit aircrew based in the UK to remain for up to a maximum of 4 years and applications must be accompanied by a letter from the ALE section at Heathrow Terminal 3.

Aircrew must be away from the UK for at least a year before qualifying for a further 4 years. Aircrew given permission under these arrangements are not eligible to apply for indefinite leave to remain (settlement).

Refusal forms

This section tells you which refusal forms to use to refuse aircrew members.

Reason for refusal	Refusal form
Aircrew member does not have a valid entry clearance.	Part 9.14.1 of the Immigration Rules
Aircrew member has a valid entry clearance. (There are a number of provisions which may apply in this category. Consult the Immigration Rules.)	Part 9 of the Immigration Rules

For more information on refusing under Part 9 of the Immigration Rules, see: [Immigration Rules – grounds for refusal](#).

See also information on rights of Administrative review.

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