Home Office

Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors

Sponsor a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker

Version 10/26

This version of the guidance is valid from 29 October 2026.

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About this guidance

This document forms part of the collection 'Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors'. It provides guidance for religious organisations on how to sponsor a worker on the following immigration routes.

- T2 Minister of Religion (referred to in the rest of this guidance as the 'Minister of Religion route')
- Temporary Work – Religious Worker (referred to in the rest of this guidance as the 'Religious Worker route')

The Minister of Religion route is for the recruitment of a person who has a key leading role within their faith-based organisation. It is also for members of religious orders in the UK.

The Religious Worker route is for people who want to support the activities of religious institutions in the UK by conducting religious work, such as working in a religious order or filling non-pastoral placements, for up to 2 years.

For convenience, this document refers to the two routes collectively as the 'religious work routes'.

Other guidance you must read

To make sure you meet all of the relevant requirements and fulfil your sponsorship duties, you must read the following parts of the sponsor guidance, in addition to this document:

- Part 1: Apply for a licence – this contains detailed information on how to apply for a sponsor licence and how we assess applications
- Part 2: Sponsor a worker – this contains detailed information on how to sponsor Workers and Temporary Workers, including how to request and assign Certificates of Sponsorship, immigration requirements, and conditions of stay
- Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance – this contains detailed information about your duties as a licensed sponsor and the action we can take if you fail to meet these duties
- the appendices to this guidance (Appendix A, Appendix B and Appendix D)
- the glossary – this contains definitions of terms used through the sponsor guidance (including this document)

This guidance is subject to change. If you have printed or downloaded a copy of this guidance, check the version number and date on GOV.UK to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version.

Glossary

There is a separate glossary of terms used throughout the sponsor guidance (including in this document).

The following additional terms are used in this document:

Minister of Religion

When referring to the immigration route, this means person who is applying for, or who has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the Minister of Religion route; or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on that route.

Minister of religion (role)

When referring to the role, this means a religious functionary whose main regular duties include leading a congregation in performing the rites and rituals of the faith and in preaching the essentials of the creed.

Minister of Religion route

The route in Appendix T2 Minister of Religion to the Immigration Rules. Where the context requires it, it can also refer to the Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) route in Part 6A of the Immigration Rules in place before 1 December 2020.

Pastoral duties

Pastoral duties include:

- leading worship regularly and on special occasions
- providing religious education for children and adults by preaching or teaching; however, you must not use this route to recruit teachers in schools or colleges, even if the school or college is maintained by a religious order – teachers should normally be sponsored on the Skilled Worker route
- leading marriages, funerals and other special services
- offering counselling and welfare support to members of the organisation
- recruiting, training and co-ordinating work of local volunteers and lay preachers

Religious Worker

A person who is applying for, or has been granted, entry clearance or permission to stay on the Religious Worker route; or who you are sponsoring, or intend to sponsor, on that route.

Religious Worker route

The route in Appendix Temporary Work – Religious Worker to the Immigration Rules. Where the context requires it, it can also refer to:

- the route in Appendix T5 (Temporary Worker) Religious Worker in place between 1 December 2020 and 10 October 2021 inclusive
- the Religious Workers sub-category of the Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) route in Part 6A of the Immigration Rules in place before 1 December 2020

See the Immigration Rules Archive on GOV.UK for previous versions of the Rules.

Religious work routes

Collectively, the Minister of Religion route and the Religious Worker route.

Contacts

If you think this guidance has factual errors or broken links, you can email the Business Helpdesk.

If you have read this guidance, and the guidance referred to above, and you still have any queries, you can call us on 0300 123 4699 or email the Business Helpdesk.

Version number and publication

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

- version 10/26
- published on 29 October 2026

You can view previous versions of the guidance on the National Archives website.

Changes to this guidance

This version replaces version 04/26 (published on 8 April 2026). The guidance has been updated to reflect changes to the Immigration Rules coming into effect on 29 October 2026, as set out in Statement of Changes HC 584 (published on 3 September 2026), and to make some other minor amendments.

The changes to the Immigration Rules are:

- if you are sponsoring a Minister of Religion or Religion Worker who is not entitled to National Minimum Wage for their role, you must confirm you will maintain and accommodate the worker (and their dependants, if applicable) for the duration of their permission in the UK – you must be an A-rated sponsor to do this (see 'Financial requirement' in section MRW4)
- the 'resident labour consideration' for Religious Workers has been replaced by new role eligibility requirements (see 'Eligible Religious Worker roles' in section MRW3)
- the 6-year maximum period for Ministers of Religion has been abolished
- a minor amendment has been made to how grant periods are calculated for Ministers of Religion

These changes apply to applications for entry clearance or permission to stay submitted on or after 29 October 2026. If you assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to a worker before that date but they apply on or after, you may need to add a sponsor note to the CoS to explain how the worker meets the new requirements relating to the financial requirement or role eligibility.

Details of the changes are set out below. Paragraph numbers in brackets refer to the previous version of this guidance where the number was different. Where new paragraphs have been inserted into any section, or paragraphs deleted, any subsequent paragraphs in that section have been renumbered accordingly, unless otherwise indicated:

- MRW1.2 (former MRW3.8 to MRW3.9): the table summarising the differences between the two religious work routes has been moved, reference to the resident labour consideration has been deleted and some other minor drafting amendments have been made; former paragraphs MRW1.2 and MRW1.4 have accordingly been deleted
- MRW 1.7 (former MRW1.8): reference to the resident labour consideration deleted
- MRW2.6: paragraph added to clarify that organisations applying for a sponsor licence must satisfy us they can offer eligible employment
- MRW3.2, MRW5.14: minor clarification that members of religious orders are eligible for the Minister of Religion route
- MRW3.8 to MRW3.14: updated to reflect the replacement of the resident labour consideration for the Religious Worker route with new role eligibility requirements
- MRW3.15 to MRW3.21 (former section MRW6): section on pay and conditions has been moved
- MRW4.5: new paragraph on former officially-sponsored Ministers of Religion added for clarity
- MRW4.6 to MRW4.10 (former MRW4.5 to MRW4.7): financial requirement section updated to reflect new requirements for workers not entitled to National Minimum Wage
- (former MRW4.8 to MRW4.9): paragraphs containing transitional arrangements for the age requirement deleted as no longer required
- MRW4.13 (former MRW4.12), (former MRW4.21 and MRW4.22), (former MRW4.26): references to the maximum period of permission for Ministers of Religion deleted
- MRW4.20 to MRW4.21 (former MRW4.19 to MRW4.20): updated to reflect a minor change to the calculation of grant periods for Ministers of Religion
- (former sections MRW5 and MRW6): deleted
- MRW5.3 (former MRW7.3): redrafted and updated to clarify that only A-rated sponsors can sponsor workers not entitled to National Minimum Wage
- MRW5.15 (former MRW7.15): updated to reflect the new requirement for sponsors to confirm they will maintain and accommodate workers not entitled to National Minimum Wage
- MRW5.17 (former MRW7.17 and MRW7.18): minor amendments to reduce repetition and remove reference to the resident labour consideration
- other minor drafting amendments and housekeeping changes

Contents

MRW1. Sponsoring a person on the religious work routes: overview

This section provides an overview of the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes, the sponsorship requirements you must meet, and other ways religious workers can come to the UK.

What are the religious work routes?

MRW1.1. There are two main routes on which you can sponsor people to work in religious occupations:

- Minister of Religion: this route is for the recruitment of a person who has a key leading role within their religious establishment or organisation in the UK, such as a minister of religion, missionary, or other religious workers in mainly pastoral roles; it is also for members of religious orders
- Religious Worker: this route is for people who want to support the activities of religious institutions in the UK by conducting religious work, such as working in a religious order or filling non-pastoral placements, for no more than 2 years

MRW1.2. The table below provides a summary of the main differences between the two routes. See sections MRW3 and MRW4 for detailed information. It is your responsibility to ensure you apply for a licence and the sponsor the worker on the correct route:

Requirement	Minister of Religion	Religious Worker
Eligible employment	Work must be of a mainly pastoral nature, such as leading a congregation in performing rites and rituals, and preaching the essentials of the creed – for example, religious leaders such as priests, imams, rabbis and other ministers of religion. It can also be used by missionaries and members of religious orders.	Work can involve performing religious duties to support the activities of religious institutions and can be either pastoral or non-pastoral. It can include working in a religious order. You must not use this route to sponsor ministers of religion.
English language	Applicants must meet an English language requirement.	No English language requirement.
'Switching' immigration route while in the UK	Applicants already in the UK on another immigration route can 'switch' to the Minister of	Switching not permitted.

Requirement	Minister of Religion	Religious Worker
	Religion route (with certain exceptions).	
Maximum initial period of permission	Up to 3 years.	Up to 24 months.
Maximum overall stay	None. May be eligible to apply for settlement (indefinite leave to remain) after 5 years on this route.	Maximum stay of 24 months with no option to apply for settlement.
'Cooling-off' period	None.	Applicants outside the UK are not eligible to apply for 12 months (known as the cooling-off period) if they've been in the UK as a Religious Worker or Charity Worker in the last 12 months.
Former students previously financially sponsored by a government or international scholarship agency	Consent to application required from sponsoring government or agency if the applicant received official sponsorship in the previous 12 months.	Requirement does not apply.

MRW1.3. Both routes allow the worker to bring their dependants (partner and dependent children) with them, if they meet the requirements for dependants on the relevant route.

Who needs to be sponsored on the religious work routes?

MRW1.4. You will need to sponsor any overseas national you wish to employ if they are not a 'settled worker' or do not otherwise have immigration permission to work for you in the UK. This includes most EU, EEA and Swiss nationals who arrived in the UK after 31 December 2020.

MRW1.5. You do not have to sponsor certain categories of worker, including

- Irish citizens (with very limited exceptions)
- people who have been granted status under the EU Settlement Scheme
- people with indefinite leave to enter or remain in the UK (also known as 'settlement')

MRW1.6. This is not a complete list. For further information on who does, and does not, need sponsorship, see section S1 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker.

What are the sponsorship requirements for the religious work routes?

MRW1.7. If you wish to sponsor a person on the Minister of Religion route or the Religious Worker route, you must:

- hold a valid sponsor licence for the Minister of Religion route and/or the Religious Worker route
- understand the general requirements for sponsoring workers – see Part 2: Sponsor a worker
- understand which roles you can sponsor workers for on these routes
- offer pay and conditions that are at least equal to those given to settled workers in a similar role
- otherwise only sponsor workers for eligible roles, as defined in the separate glossary
- satisfy yourself the worker you wish to sponsor can meet the relevant immigration requirements for the route
- assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to the worker you wish to sponsor and pay the relevant CoS fee
- have eligible Key Personnel in place to manage your licence and assign CoS – see section L4 of Part 1: Apply for a licence for guidance on Key Personnel
- keep records for each worker you sponsor, including information on how you recruited them – see Appendix D to the sponsor guidance
- understand and comply with all of your sponsor duties – see Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance

Other routes available to religious workers

MRW1.8. Religious organisations can also sponsor workers to fill temporary positions on the Charity Worker route, provided the work is unpaid and comes within the definition of voluntary fieldwork which applies on that route – this includes a requirement that the work is directly related to the organisation's charitable aims.

MRW1.9. Religious workers can come to the UK for up to 6 months to preach, do pastoral work, or live in a religious order, without being sponsored, on the Visitor route, provided they:

- will not take employment, or work which amounts to them filling a role or providing short-term cover for a role within a UK-based organisation; and
- will not receive payment, except reasonable expenses to cover the cost of their travel and subsistence

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MRW2. How to get a sponsor licence for the religious work routes

This section tells you about the requirements you must meet to be eligible for a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker sponsor licence.

General requirements

MRW2.1. If you wish to sponsor a worker in a religious role, you must hold a valid sponsor licence for the Minister of Religion route and/or the Religious Worker route. If you do not already hold such a licence, you must apply for one by completing the online application form, paying the relevant application fee, and submitting the supporting evidence specified in Appendix A to the sponsor guidance.

MRW2.2. Before applying for your licence, you should read:

- Part 1: Apply for a licence for detailed information on the general requirements and the application process
- this section for guidance specific to the religious work routes

MRW2.3. If you already hold a valid licence to sponsor workers, but it does not include either of the religious work routes, you can apply to add one or both routes to your existing licence. You may have to pay a fee for this. For further information on adding routes to your licence, see section L10 of Part 1: Apply for a licence.

MRW2.4. You are responsible for paying the sponsor licence fee and any associated administrative costs. If you are granted a licence, we will normally revoke your licence if we find you have recouped, or attempted to recoup, any part of the sponsor licence fee or associated administrative costs, by any means, from a worker you are sponsoring on or after 9 April 2025. For further information, see 'Sponsorship fees' in section L6 of Part 1: Apply for a licence.

Specific requirements for the religious work routes

MRW2.5. In addition to the general requirements for a sponsor licence set out in Part 1: Apply for a licence, to be eligible for a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker sponsor licence, you must be a bona fide religious organisation which:

- has charitable status (see paragraph MRW2.8 below)
- is the structure for a faith-based community with a common system of belief and spiritual goals, codes of behaviour and religious practice, which exists to support and/or propagate common beliefs and practices and where beliefs:

    - include any religious belief or similar philosophical belief in something transcendental, metaphysical or ultimate
    - exclude any philosophical or political belief concerned with man, unless that belief is similar to religious belief
- does not exclude anyone from your community on the basis of gender, nationality or ethnicity
- receives financial and material support for your core religious ministry from your congregation or community on a voluntary basis, without promise or coercion
- does not breach, or encourage others to breach, any UK legislation
- does not work against the public interest, or have a detrimental effect on personal or family life as commonly understood in the UK

MRW2.6. You must also satisfy us that you are able and intend to sponsor workers in roles that meet the eligible employment requirements for the relevant route, or routes, as set out in section MRW3.

Exception: Ministry of Defence

MRW2.7. The only exception to the requirement to be a bona fide religious organisation with charitable status applies to the Ministry of Defence, which can apply to be a sponsor on the Minister of Religion route, provided they will be employing religious personnel (for example, an army chaplain).

Meaning of 'charitable status'

MRW2.8. With the exception of the Ministry of Defence (see paragraph MRW2.7 above), your organisation must be either:

- a registered, an excepted or an exempt UK charity in line with the relevant charity legislation in force in your part of the UK
- an ecclesiastical corporation, either corporation sole or body corporate, which has been established for charitable purposes

MRW2.9. You can find the relevant legislation for your part of the UK at the following links:

- Charities Act 2011 - England and Wales
- Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005
- Charities Act (Northern Ireland) 2008

MRW2.10. For guidance on how to prove your charitable status, see section 2.1 of Appendix A to the sponsor guidance.

Evidence you're an eligible religious organisation

MRW2.11. You must provide the information and evidence specified in section 3.4 of Appendix A to show you're an eligible religious organisation.

Minister of Religion: additional evidence

MRW2.12. If you are applying for a Minister of Religion licence, you must tell us why you are applying for a licence and provide information about your organisation and the jobs you wish to fill – see section 3.11 of Appendix A for further information.

How to keep your licence

MRW2.13. If you are granted a licence, you must comply with all of your sponsor duties to keep it. If you do not, we may take action against you, including:

- downgrading your licence
- suspending your licence
- revoking your licence
- reporting you to the police or other relevant authorities

MRW2.14. For details, see Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance.

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MRW3. Eligible employment on the religious work routes

This section provides information on the types of roles that are eligible for sponsorship on the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes (including pay and conditions).

Eligible Minister of Religion roles

MRW3.1. This route is for those coming to fill mainly pastoral roles in bona fide religious organisations, or the Ministry of Defence. It includes anyone doing preaching and pastoral work, such as ministers of religion. It is also for those coming to the UK as missionaries or members of religious orders, as described below.

MRW3.2. You must not use this route to sponsor people who will undertake mainly non-pastoral duties, such as school teaching, media production, domestic work, or administrative and clerical work, unless the role is a senior position within your organisation (such as a financial controller) or you are sponsoring a member of a religious order. Other roles, including those which are mainly administrative, should be sponsored on another suitable route. For example, schools that are maintained by a religious organisation and wish to sponsor a teacher must do so on the Skilled Worker route.

Missionaries

MRW3.3. The duties of a missionary may include the organisation of missionary activity, but should not be mainly administrative or clerical, unless the individual will be filling a senior post. A senior post may be one which does not involve the individual doing fieldwork themselves, but where they will be supervising staff and/or co-ordinating the organisation of missionary work. They may also be in charge of activities such as accounts, finance, personnel management or IT. Working full-time as a teacher in a school run by a church or missionary organisation does not count as missionary work, but translating religious texts does.

Members of a religious order

MRW3.4. A religious order is defined for sponsorship purposes as a lineage of communities or people who live in some way set apart from society in accordance with their specific religious devotion, and which must be part of a bona fide religious organisation. This includes, for example, a monastic community of monks or nuns, or a similar religious community involving a permanent commitment.

MRW3.5. The work must be within the order itself, or outside work directed by the order. Teachers working in schools, whether or not maintained by their order, must be sponsored on the Skilled Worker route. Novices whose

training takes place in the daily community life of their order can be sponsored on this route, but anyone studying for a qualification on a formal full-time course or training in an academic institution not maintained by the order should be sponsored on the Student route. Similarly, people who are not members of a religious order, but who are working or studying within such a community, are not eligible on this route and must be sponsored on the Student route.

Eligible Religious Worker roles

MRW3.6. The Religious Worker route is for people coming to the UK for a temporary period (of up to 24 months) to support the activities of religious institutions. The role must involve performing religious duties within, or directed by, the sponsor, including:

- non-pastoral placements within a religious organisation
- as a member of a religious order – members of a religious order can also be sponsored on the Minister of Religion route

MRW3.7. You must not use the Religious Worker route to fill the role of a minister of religion. If you wish to sponsor a minister of religion, you must do so on the Minister of Religion route.

MRW3.8. There is no longer a resident labour consideration requirement on the Religious Worker route if the worker applied for entry clearance or permission on or after 29 October 2026. Religious Workers must instead meet one of the following requirements:

- the role is supernumerary (see paragraphs MRW3.13 to MRW3.14)
- the worker will mainly live within and be a member of a religious order – for example, an order of nuns or monks (sees paragraphs MRW3.4 to MRW3.5)
- the worker performed religious duties outside the UK for the same faith-based organisation to which you are affiliated for at least 6 months immediately prior to the date of application – the worker must provide evidence of this with their application for entry clearance or permission
- the worker is applying for permission to stay from within the UK and you sponsored the application which led to their last grant of permission on the Religious Worker route

MRW3.9. When you assign a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) to a Religious Worker, you must give an explanation (either in the job description field or by adding a sponsor note) of how the job meets the above requirements. If the role is supernumerary, you must clearly explain how it is supernumerary – it is not sufficient simply to say the job is supernumerary. If you fail to give this information, the worker's application may be delayed or refused.

MRW3.10. If the worker applied for entry clearance or permission before 29 October

2026, you must be able to show how you satisfied the resident labour consideration, unless the worker or role was exempt from that requirement. See the relevant archived version of this guidance for further information.

MRW3.11. If you assigned the relevant CoS before 29 October 2026 but the worker applies on or after that date, you must add a sponsor note if, at the time you assigned the CoS, the resident labour consideration was met because you either:

- identified the worker from national records you hold of all available workers
- advertised the role

MRW3.12. You must explain in the sponsor note how the worker meets the new role eligibility requirements described in paragraph MRW3.8.

Meaning of 'supernumerary'

MRW3.13. A role is supernumerary if it is over and above your normal staffing requirements. This means that if the person filling the role were not there, it wouldn't be filled by anyone else – for example, where the worker offers pastoral support to members of a church community as part of their own development, but the work would stop if they were not there and you wouldn't replace them

MRW3.14. A position that is not supernumerary is one that is vital to the normal work of your organisation. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a translator of religious texts working for a missionary organisation – if that person left, but there was still a need for a translator, the role is not supernumerary
- a choir director, worship musician or ceremonial assistant filling an established role in regular services – if you would need another person to perform those duties if the worker left, the role is not supernumerary

Pay and conditions for the religious work routes

MRW3.15. You must ensure any worker you sponsor on the religious work routes will receive pay and conditions that are no less favourable than those given to settled workers doing the same role.

MRW3.16. In all cases, the role must comply with both the National Minimum Wage Regulations 2015 and the Working Time Regulations 1998 (unless an exemption in those regulations applies). We will refuse any application for entry clearance or permission to stay where we have reasonable grounds to believe the role does not comply with these regulations, and we will also consider revoking your sponsor licence. For further information, see section S4 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker.

MRW3.17. If you will not be paying the worker National Minimum Wage because of an exemption in the National Minimum Wage Regulations, you must include an explanation of this on the CoS. You can include this information either:

- in the 'Gross salary' box when you are assigning the CoS
- by adding a sponsor note after you have assigned the CoS

MRW3.18. If the worker will not be entitled to National Minimum Wage, you must confirm on the CoS that you will maintain and accommodate the worker (and their dependants, if relevant) for the duration of their permission in the UK. You must be an A-rated sponsor to do this.

MRW3.19. If an exemption does not apply, you must ensure the worker receives at least National Minimum Wage. You cannot refuse to pay National Minimum Wage just because (for example) the worker can support themselves out of their own funds or from donations.

MRW3.20. You must include details on the CoS of any payments the worker will receive (whether this is a traditional salary, stipend, board and lodgings or other allowances and payments). The gross salary figure must be what you will pay to the worker, gross of any tax paid (whether paid in the UK or overseas) and must include any guaranteed allowances and guaranteed bonuses. The total of all guaranteed allowances and guaranteed bonuses paid, and included in that figure, should be entered in the 'gross allowances' box on the CoS, then broken down and detailed in the free text box that follows.

MRW3.21. For further information on salary requirements and what to do if the worker takes unpaid leave or you reduce their salary, see section S4 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker.

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MRW4. Immigration requirements for the religious work routes

This section tells you about the immigration requirements applicants must meet to qualify on the religious work routes, and where you can find further information.

Overview

MRW4.1. People who wish to come to the UK on these routes must meet the relevant requirements of the Immigration Rules. These are set out in:

- Appendix T2 Minister of Religion
- Appendix Temporary Work – Religious Worker

MRW4.2. In case of a Minister of Religion, these include, but are not limited to, the requirement that the applicant scores 70 'points' for the following criteria:

Points type	Description	Points available
Sponsorship	The applicant must have a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) from an approved sponsor for eligible employment.	50
English language	The applicant must have English language skills at level B2 or above on the Common European Framework of Reference for language in all 4 components (speaking, listening, reading, writing). See Appendix English Language to the Immigration Rules for further information.	10
Financial requirement	See 'Financial requirement' below.	10

MRW4.3. The Religious Worker route is not a points-based route but applicants must also have a valid CoS for eligible employment and meet the financial requirement. There is no English language requirement on the Religious Worker route.

MRW4.4. Applicants on both routes must also meet the following requirements:

- be aged 18 or over on the date they apply
- genuinely intend and be able to undertake the role for which they are being sponsored
- not intend to undertake employment other than in the role for which they are being sponsored, or as otherwise permitted by their conditions of stay – see section S8 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for further information on conditions of stay

- be sponsored in a role that meets the pay and conditions requirements of these routes (including compliance with National Minimum Wage and the Working Time Regulations)

Former officially-sponsored students

MRW4.5. If the applicant is applying as a Minister of Religion, and they received an award covering fees and living costs from a government or international scholarship agency in the 12 months before the date of application, the government or agency must provide written consent to the application. Without this, the application will be rejected. This requirement does not apply to the Religious Worker route.

Financial requirement

MRW4.6. If the applicant will not be entitled to be paid the National Minimum Wage for their role, you must confirm on their CoS that you will maintain and accommodate the applicant (and any dependants, if relevant) for the duration of their permission in the UK. You must be an A-rated sponsor to sponsor a worker in these circumstances.

If you assigned the relevant CoS before 29 October 2026 but the applicant applies on or after that date, you must add a sponsor note to the CoS to confirm you will maintain and accommodate the applicant (and any dependants) for the duration of their permission.

MRW4.7. If the applicant will be paid at least National Minimum Wage, they will automatically meet the financial requirement if both of the following conditions are met:

- they are applying for permission to stay (from within the UK)
- they have been living in the UK with permission for 12 months or longer on the date of application

MRW4.8. This means the applicant does not have to show evidence of funds and you do not have to certify their maintenance.

MRW4.9. If the applicant will be paid at least National Minimum Wage and is either applying for entry clearance, or has been living in the UK with permission for less than 12 months, they must meet the financial requirement in one of the following ways:

- if you are an A-rated sponsor, you can ‘certify maintenance’ for the applicant (and their dependants, if applicable) up to the end of the first month of their grant of permission
- the applicant must show they have the level of funds specified in the Immigration Rules

MRW4.10. For further information, including the level of funds required, see ‘Financial requirement’ in section S7 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker.

Entry requirement

MRW4.11. Applicants must apply for entry clearance (a visa) to be able to come to the UK on these routes. If they arrive in the UK without the relevant visa, they will be refused entry, even if they otherwise meet the requirements.

MRW4.12. If you are sponsoring a Religious Worker who needs to apply for entry clearance, you should check they are not subject to the cooling-off period.

Extension of permission

MRW4.13. Those already in the UK with permission as a Minister of Religion or Religious Worker can apply to extend their stay on the relevant route (up to a maximum of 24 months in the case of a Religious Worker), if they meet the requirements. This could be to continue in the same employment or change sponsor or employment. See section S9 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for further information on extension and change of employment applications.

'Switching' to the Minister of Religion route

MRW4.14. People in the UK on another immigration route can 'switch' (change route) to the Minister of Religion route if they meet all the relevant immigration requirements and were not last granted permission:

- as a Visitor
- as a Student, unless they meet the additional rules for people switching from the Student route (as set out below)
- 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

MRW4.15. Switching to the Religious Worker route is not permitted.

MRW4.16. If you wish to sponsor a person who is in the UK but they are not eligible to switch to either the Minister of Religion route or Religious Worker route (as relevant), they must leave the UK and apply for the relevant entry clearance from overseas.

Switching from the Student route

MRW4.17. If a person you wish to sponsor as a Minister of Religion will be applying for permission to stay (from within the UK) and they have, or last had, permission as a Student (including as a Tier 4 (General) Migrant), they must meet one of the following conditions on the date they make their application to be allowed to switch:

- they must have completed the course of study for which they were being sponsored as a Student
- they must be studying a full-time course of study at degree level or above with a higher education provider which has a track record of compliance, and the start date on their CoS must be no earlier than the course completion date
- they must be studying a full-time course of study leading to the award of a PhD with a higher education provider which has a track record of compliance, and the start date on their CoS must be no earlier than 24 months after the start date of their PhD

MRW4.18. A 'higher education provider with a track record of compliance' will be shown on the register of student sponsors with the type 'Higher Education Institution (HEI)' and with the status 'Student Sponsor – Track Record'.

MRW4.19. If you wish to sponsor a Minister of Religion who has, or last had, permission as a Student, you must carefully check they can meet one of the above conditions before you assign a CoS to them. If they do not meet one of these conditions, they will not be permitted to switch to the Minister of Religion route.

How long a Minister of Religion can stay

MRW4.20. If the applicant makes a successful application for entry clearance or permission to stay on the Minister of Religion route, they will be granted entry clearance or permission for whichever is the shorter of:

- up to 14 days after the period of employment stated on their CoS
- 3 years

MRW4.21. A Minister of Religion can apply for settlement (indefinite leave to remain) after 5 years' continuous residence in the UK on this route (or other eligible route), if they meet the relevant requirements.

How long a Religious Worker can stay

MRW4.22. If the applicant makes a successful application for entry clearance on the Religious Worker route, they will be granted entry clearance for whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of the role on the CoS plus 14 days before and after
- 24 months

MRW4.23. If the applicant makes a successful application for permission to stay on the Religious Worker route, they will be granted permission for whichever is the shorter of:

- the period of the role on the CoS plus 14 days after

- the difference between the period the applicant has already spent in the UK since their last grant of permission as a Religious Worker and 24 months

MRW4.24. 24 months is the maximum period a person can be sponsored on this route. After this period, the worker must leave the UK (unless they qualify on another route). If they wish to come back to the UK as a Religious Worker (or a Charity Worker), they will be subject to the 'cooling-off period', as described in the paragraphs below.

Cooling-off period for Religious Workers

MRW4.25. Before you sponsor a Religious Worker who is applying for entry clearance (not permission to stay), you should check they are not subject to the 'cooling-off' period. If they are, we will refuse their application.

MRW4.26. The cooling-off period applies if, during the 12 months immediately before their application for entry clearance, the applicant was in the UK with permission on either the Charity Worker route or Religious Worker route (including their predecessor routes).

MRW4.27. If the cooling-off period applies, the worker will not be eligible for a further grant of entry clearance on either route until 12 months have passed since either:

- the date their last permission on either the Charity Worker or Religious Worker route expired
- the date they last left the UK, if they can show this was earlier than the date their permission on the Charity Worker or Religious Worker route expired

Further information

MRW4.28. You can find more information on the requirements for these routes on the GOV.UK website:

- Minister of Religion visa (T2)
- Religious Worker visa (Temporary Work)

MRW4.29. You should also read sections S7 to S9 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for further information on immigration requirements, conditions of stay, extension applications and change of employment applications.

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MRW5. Certificate of Sponsorship for the religious work routes

This section tells you how to assign a valid Certificate of Sponsorship to a worker on the Minister of Religion and Religious Worker routes.

Overview

MRW5.1. If you have followed all the rules in this guidance and you wish to sponsor a worker on the Minister of Religion route or Religious Worker route, you must assign them a valid Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), using your sponsorship management system (SMS) account.

MRW5.2. Before assigning a CoS, you should satisfy yourself that the worker can meet the relevant immigration requirements.

MRW5.3. You must normally be an A-rated sponsor to assign a CoS. You can only assign a CoS as a B-rated sponsor if all of the following are true:

- the worker is applying for permission to stay on the same route as in their last grant of permission
- you sponsored the application which led to that grant of permission
- the worker will be paid at least National Minimum Wage for their role

For more information on sponsor ratings, see section L8 of Part 1: Apply for a licence.

MRW5.4. For detailed information on what a CoS is, and how many you can assign, see section S2 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker.

MRW5.5. You can find detailed technical guidance on how to assign a CoS on GOV.UK: User manuals: sponsorship management system (SMS) – see in particular manual 8.

Fees

MRW5.6. You must pay a fee for each CoS you assign. The amount you pay will depend on which route you are sponsoring the worker – see UK visa fees on GOV.UK for information on current fee levels.

MRW5.7. For CoS assigned to Ministers of Religion on or after 9 April 2025, you must not recoup, or attempt to recoup, by any means, any part of the CoS fee, or associated administrative costs, from any workers you sponsor. If we find you have done this, we will normally revoke your licence.

Use of the CoS

MRW5.8. Once you have assigned a CoS, the worker must use it within 3 months to apply for:

- entry clearance (a visa) if they are outside the UK
- permission to stay if they are in the UK and eligible to extend their stay on the Minister of Religion or Religious Worker route or switch (change) from another route to the Minister of Religion route

MRW5.9. If the CoS was issued more than 3 months before the date of application, we may reject their application and not consider it.

MRW5.10. The worker must not apply for a visa or permission to stay more than 3 months before the start date recorded on their CoS. If they do, we will refuse their application.

MRW5.11. We will also refuse the application if the CoS:

- has been withdrawn by you or cancelled by the Home Office – see section S6 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for information on when a CoS can be withdrawn or cancelled
- was used in a previous application that was refused

What the CoS must confirm

MRW5.12. For a CoS to be valid on these routes, it must meet the requirements of the relevant Immigration Rules:

- Minister of Religion: paragraphs MOR 5.1 to MOR 5.4 of Appendix T2 Minister of Religion
- Religious Worker: paragraphs RW 4.1 to RW 4.6 of Appendix Temporary Work - Religious Worker

MRW5.13. By assigning a CoS on these routes, you are guaranteeing that:

- the role is eligible to be sponsored on the Minister of Religion or Religious Worker route (as appropriate)
- the worker is qualified to do the job in question
- the worker will receive pay and conditions at least equal to those given to settled workers in the same role, and the role will comply with both the National Minimum Wage Regulations and the Working Time Regulations
- the worker will comply with their conditions of stay – see section S8 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for more information

MRW5.14. In addition, by assigning a CoS to a Minister of Religion, you guarantee that:

- the worker will perform religious duties within your organisation or as directed by your organisation in the UK (which may include preaching, pastoral and non-pastoral work)
- the worker's role will not involve mainly non-pastoral duties, such as school teaching, media production, domestic work or administrative and clerical work, unless the role is a senior position within your organisation or they are a member of a religious order

MRW5.15. The CoS must confirm all of the following:

- that you are sponsoring the worker on the Minister of Religion or Religious Worker route, as appropriate
- the worker's personal information (such as name, date of birth, nationality), passport details and contact details
- the start and end date of their employment – see section S3 of Part 2: sponsor a worker for information on start and end dates
- where the worker will carry out their employment – this should include their main work address and any other regular work addresses, if relevant
- whether you used an agent (such as a recruitment agency, employment business or other intermediary) to find the worker and, if so, details of that agent
- the job title
- the relevant SOC 2020 occupation code (select from the drop-down list under 'Job type' – for Ministers of Religion, this will normally be 2463 (clergy)) – see section S3 of Part 2: Sponsor a worker for further information on occupation codes
- the main duties of the role for which the worker is being sponsored
- the worker's gross salary (including any guaranteed allowances and bonuses)
- the worker's religion
- where the worker is entitled to National Minimum Wage, whether you wish to certify maintenance for the worker (and, if relevant, their dependants) – you can only do this if you're an A-rated sponsor
- where the worker is not entitled to National Minimum Wage, confirmation that you will maintain and accommodate the worker (and, if relevant, their dependants) for the duration of their permission in the UK – you must be an A-rated sponsor to do this

MRW5.16. If your organisation is a religious order, you must confirm that the worker is a member of that order. You can do this in either job description field or by adding a sponsor note.

MRW5.17. If you are sponsoring a Religious Worker, you must also explain how the role meets the requirements of the Religious Worker route. You can include this information either in the job description field or by adding a sponsor note.

Reporting duties and record keeping

MRW5.18. Once you have assigned a CoS to a worker, you must tell us if they fail to start their employment, are absent without permission, or there are any significant changes to the nature of their work or salary, or to your organisation. For full details of your reporting and other duties, see: Part 3: Sponsor duties and compliance.

MRW5.19. You must also keep records for each worker you sponsor as specified in Appendix D to the sponsor guidance.

MRW5.20. If you fail to meet these duties, we may revoke your sponsor licence.

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