



COP26 – Visa Guide

This is a short guide to immigration and visa requirements for those attending COP26.

Exempt

Some delegates to COP26 may be exempt from immigration control, even though they do not have a right of abode in the UK, when travelling or coming to the UK for the conference. This means that they will not be subject to the Immigration Rules as other foreign nationals travelling to the UK are.

Those who are exempt from immigration control include:

- heads of state and eligible members of their households
- serving government ministers and equivalent on an official visit and their eligible family members
- members of certain international organisations

The FCDO or UNFCCC will be able to inform delegates on whether they are exempt from UK immigration control for the purposes of attending COP26. Diplomats posted outside the UK and senior government officials travelling to the UK on official business are not exempt unless they are eligible through a separate category of exemption.

We strongly encourage visa national delegates who are exempt from immigration control to apply for an exempt vignette. This is the vignette issued to confirm that someone is exempt from immigration control and is free of charge. An exempt vignette confirms an individual's exempt status and should facilitate the holder's travel to the UK.

Exempt individuals may demonstrate their exempt status by submitting a note verbal or official letter from their employing organisations.

- [Applying for an exempt vignette](#)
- [Exempt guidance](#)

Visa and non-visa nationals

Most people are not exempt from immigration control and must meet the requirements set out in the UK Immigration Rules. Visa nationals require a visa before travelling for visits to the UK. Non-visa nationals do not need a visa to visit and can ask for permission to enter at the UK border. However, aside from visas, the requirements of the UK Immigration Rules are the same for all visitors.

- [Visa national list](#)

- [Guidance on applying for a standard visitor visa](#)
- [Visiting the UK: guide to supporting documents](#)
- [Immigration Rules Appendix V: Visitor](#)
- [Immigration Rules Appendix Visitor: Permitted Activities](#)

Standard visitor visas, including COP26 visitor visas, are valid for 6 months and for multiple entries to the UK. Long-term standard visitor visas are available, but are not free of charge and cost more than 6 month visas. Those who already have a valid visit visa or are in the UK with valid permission, will be covered for COP26 and do not need to apply for a new visit visa.

Holders of Official UNFCCC acknowledgement

Those who have a UNFCCC official acknowledgement of their nomination / visa support letter will be given a unique reference number. With this the delegate can apply for a COP26 visitor visa free of charge, with 6 months validity, using the [UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties \(COP26\) attendee](#) route on GOV.UK. The UK will ask the delegate to enter their unique reference number in order to access the free application and the UK will cross reference applications against the UNFCCC online registration system. The usual requirements of the UK Immigration Rules will apply.

Other attendees

Visa nationals without a UNFCCC official acknowledgement of their nomination / visa support letter must pay for a standard visitor visa. They should not use the free COP26 route; any applicants who do may be refused a visa. See the links under Visa and non-visa nationals for help with applying for a visitor visa.

The application process

- Find a visa application centre (VAC): [Find a visa application centre - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Find the correct application route and guidance on GOV.UK: [Check if you need a UK visa - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- Complete an online application form
- Make a biometrics / VAC appointment. Those applying for an exempt vignette are not required to give biometrics, but must submit their application at a VAC, which can be done by a third party
- Upload supporting documents ([see the guide to supporting documents](#)). Self-scanning is free of charge. For an additional charge customers can have their supporting documents scanned at a most visa application centres
- Attend the VAC appointment and give biometrics where required

- Await a decision. Decisions can be collected from the VAC in person or in most cases there is an option to pay for it to be couriered, avoiding a 2nd trip to the VAC

Application processing time

The UK aims to process straightforward applications in 15 working days. The UK strongly recommends that delegates make their applications early and the UK accepts applications up to three months ahead of travel.

For a quicker decision, delegates can use the UK priority services, where available, for an additional fee.

Value added services at VACs

The UK visa application centres offer a variety of services at additional cost. These vary according to location, but usually include priority services for a quicker decision, a 'keep my passport while applying' service, a courier service to return decisions, and in some locations a mobile biometric service where VAC staff travel to the customer for giving biometrics.

See the location specific [VAC websites](#) for more information on the services available.

Note that where the visa application is free of charge, other than the mandatory 'user pays' fee at some VACs, customers are responsible for paying any additional charges themselves.

Arriving in the UK

The UK advises delegates to check guidance on the GOV.UK website before travelling, for any special arrangements or requirements, such as health regulations: [Entering the UK - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)