

Oury Clark Quick Guides:

Global Business Mobility

UK Expansion Worker



The UK Expansion Worker sponsor licence is a must for an overseas business who wish to establish themselves in the UK and send senior staff across.



What is the UK Expansion Worker route?

The UK Expansion Worker route allows an overseas business that **is not already trading in the UK** to send up to a maximum of five senior workers to the UK to help set up and expand its UK business.

It requires the overseas business to apply for a UK Expansion Worker sponsor licence. Once the UK sponsor licence is obtained, senior workers can apply for UK Expansion Worker visas.

If the overseas business is already trading in the UK, it should apply for a [Skilled/Senior or Specialist Worker sponsor licence instead.](#)

What are the UK Expansion Worker sponsor licence requirements?

The UK Expansion Worker route allows an overseas business to send one senior employee (who can later be joined by a team of up to four additional senior workers) to set up a UK branch or wholly owned UK subsidiary of the overseas company.

The overseas company must submit an online application form to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) with supporting documents which evidence:

- Proof of a UK footprint of the overseas company.
- Evidence of the company's overseas trading presence (at least 3 years subject to some exceptions).
- Evidence of the company's planned expansion to the UK.
- Specified additional documents.

Unlike the Skilled/Senior or Specialist Worker route, the sponsor licence process for the UK Expansion Worker does not necessarily require the company to already have a UK bank account, or a senior person based in the UK.

Once the UK Expansion Worker sponsor licence application is submitted for consideration, a decision will typically take around eight weeks. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) may also request additional information during that eight-week period.

Once the UK Expansion Worker licence has been granted, the first overseas employee can then be assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS).

What are the requirements for the UK Expansion Worker visa?

The overseas employee must:

- be employed as a senior manager/specialist employee of the overseas operation and appear on the list of eligible occupations.
- have worked for the overseas business for the last 12 months (unless they earn at least £73,900 p.a.).
- meet the minimum salary requirement of £45,800 p.a. or the going rate for their job.
- have £1,270 in their bank account and be able to show they can support themselves.

What does the UK Expansion Worker visa application process look like?

The overseas employee will need to be assigned a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS), following which, they must complete an online application form and submit supporting documents to UKVI, to demonstrate they meet the requirements of the UK Expansion Worker route.

Following online submission, the employee will also typically need to attend an appointment within their local vicinity to enrol their biometric information as part of the process. A decision can typically take around three weeks.

What is the length of the visa?

The overseas employee can stay in the UK with a UK Expansion Worker visa for whichever is shorter of:

- 12 months after the start date of the job on their certificate of sponsorship or
- The time given on their certificate of sponsorship plus 14 days.

If they wish to stay longer in the UK, they can extend their visa by a further 12 months.

The maximum time they can stay in the UK on a UK Expansion Worker visa is up to two years.

After the two years, if the business intends to remain in the UK with their sponsored workers, it should apply for a [Skilled/Senior or Specialist Worker Sponsor Licence](#).

There is no path to settlement in the UK under the UK Expansion Worker visa route.

Additional information

Once the overseas employee receives their UK Expansion Worker visa, they will usually need to update their details on the Sponsor Licence and request this is upgraded from a 'Provisional rating' to an 'A-rating'.

The partner and children of the overseas employee may apply to join them in the UK as their dependants, assuming they are eligible and can prove requisite funds to support themselves in the UK.

There are ongoing sponsor compliance obligations for the business when it sponsors workers under this route, and these must be adhered to in order to enable the business to continue sponsoring workers in the UK.

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