

New extended student visitor visa means English language students can study in the UK for 11 months at any proficiency level

English UK today welcomed an announcement by the UK Border Agency that from 10 January 2010, the Student Visitor Visa will be valid for a maximum of 11 months for English language courses only.

The students must return home at the end of their course, but then should have reached a high enough standard in English that they could apply for a General Student Visa (GSV) to further improve their language skills or enrol at a British university.

Since March, the GSV has only been available for students who had already achieved level B1 – roughly equivalent to AS Level. This was almost impossible to achieve within the previous six-month limit of a SVV, and prevented many genuine students from studying in the UK.

Students who want an extended SVV (including non-visa nationals) must apply in their own country, showing that they have enrolled on a course lasting 6-11 months. They cannot work, bring dependents, switch to another visa type or extend their stay. The extended SVV will be a pilot in the first instance.

Tony Millns, English UK Chief Executive, said: "This change to the student visitor maximum length will provide a route for English language students who are relative beginners and are likely to need a course longer than six months to reach level B1.

"We will monitor how this change works in practice, and will respond to the consultation on student visas, but welcome this as a positive interim move by the UK Border Agency."

Notes to Editors

1. English UK is the world's leading language teaching association, with 440 accredited centres in membership. It covers university and further education college language departments, international study centres in independent schools, educational trusts and charities, and private sector colleges. English UK is a UK registered charity (www.englishuk.com).
2. Students who come to the UK to learn or improve their English contribute about £1.5 billion to the UK economy in course fees, accommodation and general spending. Many students go on from English language courses to UK degrees or professional qualifications. There are long-term affinity benefits to Britain as well, since many students go on to be opinion-leaders and senior figures in their own countries.
3. For further comment please contact Tony Millns at English UK on 07976511439.