

RUSSIAN LANGUAGE UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES LTD

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Web site: www.rlus.co.uk

GUIDELINES FOR GETTING A RUSSIAN VISA

VISA INVITATIONS

You cannot apply for your visa until you receive your visa invitation. We expect to receive it 3-8 weeks before departure and will send it to you, as soon as we receive it, provided that you have paid the course balance and have produced proof of insurance. Please note that we cannot be more precise about when RLUS will receive the invitation, as this depends on Russian bureaucracy, which is notoriously unpredictable. You should also receive an e-mail informing you that your visa invitation has been sent.

There are two types of visa invitation: paper and electronic. If it is a paper invitation, the original invitation is normally required. This is a valuable document and cannot be replaced. **Warning: if you lose it, you are unlikely to go to Russia, as our Russian partners normally cannot obtain a duplicate.** Don't forget to let Dr Bivon know in writing if you have moved, or want documents sent elsewhere.

If RLUS receives an electronic invitation, it will be sent to you by e-mail. All you need do, is print it off and take it with you to the visa agency. The invitation will state where you can apply for your visa. You are unlikely to get a visa at another agency. If it states London as the place where you should apply for your visa, you can also go to the Manchester office, as this is a sub branch of the London agency. Please note that if you have an electronic invitation, the visa agency will have to check with the consulate to ensure that the invitation is valid. The London consulate closes between 12 and 2.30. This may mean that you will have to return after 2.30 to complete the visa process.

The invitation will normally allow you to obtain a single entry visa for three months. Some centres may give you a double entry visa. If that is the case, please make sure that you apply for a double entry visa. Please note that if you apply for a single entry visa (with a double entry invitation), you cannot change it to a double entry once in Russia. This will mean that you will not be able to leave the country for the length of the course.

If your course lasts longer than three months, single entry visas will be extended on arrival in Russia. There has recently never been a problem in converting your visa to a multi-entry one, allowing you to leave Russia during the reading weeks or over the Christmas break. There will be a small charge for this, payable in Russia.

If your paper visa invitation is being sent to a UK address, it will be sent by Special Delivery and the cost of this is included in the visa invitation fee that RLUS has charged you. You will need to sign for it. Visas take about 2 weeks to process. If you need it sooner, you can pay more to receive it in 24 hours. The cost of obtaining a visa is on the VFS Global website.

If you have asked for the paper invitation to be sent outside the UK, it will be sent to you by UPS. You will be expected to pay the additional cost (currently £45). Sending visa invitations outside the UK by the ordinary postal system (even if a signature is required) has resulted in invitations being lost in the postal system and there is no way of tracking where they are, once they have left the UK. As a result, RLUS is not willing to risk the invitation being lost.

Most students obtain their visa in the UK. It has to be done through an organisation called VFS Global (see below), and not through the Russian consulates either in London or Edinburgh. An alternative in London is to use an agent such as Scott's Tours (141 Whitfield St London W1T 5EW, phone 020 7383 5353), e-mail: visas@scottstours.co.uk to obtain your visa for you. They are very helpful if you need an urgent visa.

If you wish to apply for a visa outside the UK, this is normally possible in your home country, or in a country where you are studying. You were asked, when you applied for your RLUS course, where you planned to apply for your visa. If you have since changed your mind, this, from experience, should not be a problem if you have a paper visa invitation. However, rules can change without warning. You are advised to check with the consulate that you can obtain a visa from them and you will need to check the document they require.

If you have dual Russian/UK nationality, you will have to travel on your Russian passport. If you don't have one, please apply straightaway, as it can take a long time to get it.

COURSE DATES

Some students would like to arrive in Russia before the start date of the course. Please note that the Russian institutes or universities are only allowed to issue visa invitations for the course dates. This means that your visa will normally start on the day the group flight arrives. They sometimes start a day or two before the start of the course, If you are arranging your own travel, do not try to cross the Russian border even one day before the start date of your visa, as you will be refused entry.

If you go to Russia before your course starts on a tourist visa, you will have to return to the UK (or to your home country, if it is not the UK) to get your student visa. You cannot have two Russian visas in your passport at the same time and you can only apply for your student visa in the country where you are living or studying.

If you are planning to travel abroad before your course starts, it is likely that you will have to return to the UK (or your home country) to get your Russian visa. Please allow enough time to do this.

If you wish to stay on after the course ends, it may be possible to extend your visa for a short time. Please ask immediately you arrive and do not make any travel arrangements, until you have confirmation that it is possible.

If you are going on two RLUS courses at two different universities or institutes, you will have to leave Russia at the end of your autumn term course, return home and apply for your spring term course visa, as soon as you receive your visa invitation. You will not be able to stay in Russia between the two courses. You cannot transfer the visa from one institution to another. The only possible exception is if you have applied for a 16 week autumn term and 18 week spring term course at the same university. The university may be able to provide you with a single visa for both terms. This cannot be guaranteed and you should ask about it immediately on arrival in the autumn. You are warned that if you do this, the spring term course is likely to repeat material from the autumn term.

If you have applied for a 32 or 36 week course, you will be able to stay in Russia over Christmas and New Year.

WHEN TO APPLY FOR A VISA

You are advised to apply for a visa as soon as you receive your visa invitation. I am informed that the standard processing time for student visas is now 4 weeks. Please therefore apply in good time to avoid having to pay extra costs for an urgent visa. Please note that the visa invitation will only be sent, once you have provided proof of insurance and have paid the RLUS administration fee. Students at UCL, Manchester, St Andrews and Birmingham are automatically insured by their university and do not need to send proof of insurance.

You should be warned that the Russian Consulate can change the rules, or change the way they interpret them, without warning. RLUS only finds out about this when a student informs them. This can result in you having to resubmit your application. For this reason, it is not advisable to leave things till the last moment. If you fail to get your visa in time to start your course with the

group, not only will you miss the start of the course, you may also lose your air ticket. You are unlikely to be covered by your insurance.

PASSPORTS

Your passport should have four clear pages. You need two to get a visa and a further two in Russia when your visa is extended and converted to a multi-entry one. If your passport does not have enough space, please apply for a new one straight away.

APPLYING FOR A VISA

This section applies to applications in the UK only. If you are applying outside the UK, you should check with the Russian consulate the documents and fee that you need to pay. The rules are different in different countries.

If you have an electronic visa invitation, you will have to go the agency mentioned on the invitation. Please note that if London is the city on the invitation, I have been informed that you may also go to Manchester, as Manchester is part of the London agency.

Please note that the procedure can change without warning. If any of the information below is no longer accurate, please let Dr Bivon know immediately.

If you have any questions that this document does not answer, please ring the VFS Global call centre on 0905 889 0149. Please note they charge 50p a minute.

If you have difficulty applying online, VFS Global in London have a few computers that you can use to apply for the visa. You can also use them if you have answered any questions incorrectly. They make a small charge for this service.

Go to the VFS website <http://ru.vfsglobal.co.uk>. Select *Know your visa type* and from the next menu *Student Visa*. From this menu you can get information about the visa fees, the documents required, processing time, and photo specifications. Then select *Online Application Form*. Select *Click Here* at the bottom of the page. Select *Student* and *United Kingdom* (or your nationality) from the two drop down boxes. You will be given a list of documents that you have to take with you, when you apply for a visa. The UK list is given on pages 6 and 7. Agree to the terms and conditions and click on *Proceed to Online Application Form* at the bottom of the page. Select Country and Language from the drop down boxes. Tick the box at the bottom of the page, confirming that you have read the information and click on *Complete new application form*. Supply a password and enter the code. Click on Submit. Make a note of your identification number and click on next.

There now follows a large number of pages to fill in. You can save the application at any time and go back to them if you can remember your ID and password! Most questions are straightforward. Below you will find help with less obvious questions. If your answer is rejected, please make sure that you do not include spaces or punctuation marks in telephone numbers, etc.

REGISTRATION

When you arrive in Russia, you will have to register. If you are in homestay arranged by the university or institute, they will check that your host family registers you. If you have arranged your own accommodation, it is essential that the owner of the flat where you are staying, registers you. It is illegal for you not to be registered. If you do not register, you are liable to be thrown out of the country and not be able to return. Some flat owners make ask for a large sum of money to register you. Please check this, before agreeing to rent a flat. If you leave the city where you are studying and stay in a hotel or hostel, they will automatically register you. This replaces your registration at your homestay or flat. You will have to reregister on your return.

Your host family or flat owner may make a charge, as the process involves a lot of form filling and going to the appropriate office.

FINGERPRINTS

Please note that you will have to give your fingerprints to obtain a visa. This means that you will have to go in person to the VFS Global office in London, Manchester or Edinburgh to obtain a visa. You will not be able to get a visa by sending documents by post.

VISA DETAILS Purpose of visit (section)

STUDY

Purpose of visit (section)

STUDY

Purpose of visit

STUDY (if your invitation says *учеба*) or *COURSES* (if your invitation says *курсы*)

Visa Category and type

COMMON EDUCATIONAL

Number of entries

Single (or double, if that is on your visa invitation)

Single entry (but not double entry) visas will be changed on arrival in Russia to a multi-entry one. This will allow you to leave Russia in the middle of your course. It is very important that you do have a multi-entry visa, as each year some students have to return home unexpectedly for family reasons. If you only have a single entry visa, you will not be able to return to complete your course.

Date of entry into Russia

Put the start date as on the invitation. You don't have to travel on that date. You can travel on any date after it. The invitation often will allow you to arrive a day or so earlier than the start of the course, but there is no guarantee. If you are booking your own air ticket before you have your visa invitation, do not book it to arrive even one day before the course starts

Date of exit from Russia

Put the finish date as on the invitation – this will be earlier than the end of your course. Student visa invitations are for single entry and for 90 days only. Don't worry: your visa will be extended in Russia and converted to multi-entry!

PERSONAL DETAILS

All answers should be obvious

PASSPORT DETAILS

Type of passport

ordinary

Issued by

This is on UK passports under *Authority*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Answers should be obvious.

VISIT DETAILS

What institution you are going to visit

Give the name and address of the centre where you will be studying. Put the address, as on the invitation translated into English. Likely addresses are given below.

Please note that in St Petersburg the 3 week course will have invitations from the Benedict School. All other students in St Petersburg on 13 week courses will have invitations from St Petersburg State University.

TIN organization/ Directive (telex) number?

Leave blank

Invitation number

Note that the third character is a numeral, not a letter. If it is 0, it is the numeral, and not the letter.

Itinerary (places of visit)

Put only the towns listed on the visa invitation. If you put other towns, the application is liable to be rejected. Do not worry, you can travel to other towns!

Have you ever been issued a MMI?

Answer *Yes* and put in your insurance provider

Who will pay for your trip and stay in Russia

Company

Name of organization

your university

Do you plan to stay anywhere (hotel, individual) during your stay in Russia?

Yes

Type of place of visit:

Select *hotel*

Do not select *private*, as you will not be able to answer the questions that follow (e.g. tax number). To avoid any problems, if you have arranged your own accommodation, you are advised to give the above answers.

Name, address and phone of person or hotel that you plan to stay with in Russia?

Name

c/o the centre where you are studying

Address and phone number:

Kazan (KAZ13S, KAZ18S)

Kazan Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, ul. Kosmonavtov 39, Kazan 420061, phone 8432983605 kraevan@list.ru

Moscow (MLL13, MLL16, MLL18, MLL36):

*Language Link, ul Sushchovskaya 21, Moscow 125055 phone 495 258 08 04
info@languagelink.ru*

St Petersburg Benedict School (PBEN3)

St Petersburg 190008, ul. Srednyaya podyacheskaya 1a, phone 812 312 4029

benedict.russian@gmail.com

St Petersburg State University (PST13)

St Petersburg 199034 Universitetskaya Nab.7/9 phone 812 274 14 85 coord3@mail.ru

Please note that students on 13 week courses in St Petersburg will be studying at the State University and that is the address you should put on the visa form. 3 week students should put the Benedict School.

Tver State University (TV32)

ul. Zhelyabova 33, Tver 170100 phone 4822 34 24 52 Nikolaev.DS@tversu.ru

Yaroslavl (Y13, Y16, Y18, Y32)

*Russia 150000 Yaroslavl ul Sovetskaya 14 ,Yaroslavl State University phone 4852 97 746
depint@uniyar.ac.ru*

Appointment date:

This is the approximate date when you plan to go to VFS Global. You do not need to make an appointment.

STUDY INFORMATION

Why did you decide to study in Russia?

University course

Did you attend any place of study since you were 11 years old?

You will need to list schools attended and your current study at university. If you don't have precise details, make them up!!

Have you studied in Russia before?

Provide any information or answer "no".

Name of place of study

Details are above

Why did you choose this place of study?

On advice from UK university

Course (faculty)

Russian as a foreign language

What qualifications are you going to acquire?

UK university requirement

Most of the other questions in this section are obvious.

Name of the person who made a decision to enrol you at this course

Your university liaison officer

What is the monthly cost of your study?

Check the cost on the website and divided by the number of months of study.

Who will pay for your tuition?

UK University

Will your tuition be sponsored?

I am not sure what answer is expected – you can answer *Yes* and put your university.

LAST VISIT DETAILS

Have you ever been issued a Russian visa?

If you answer *Yes*

Where

Probably London or Edinburgh – it is where your visa was issued in the UK

When

This will be on the visa stuck in your passport

List all countries you have visited in the last ten years and indicate the date of visit List any countries that have stamped your passport. If you wish to include other countries and don't know the precise date, make up a date! If you have a new passport and don't know precise dates, give an approximate date.

Is this your first British passport?

If the answer is no, provide details. If you don't have them, make something likely up!

Please check that all the information is correct and amend if necessary by going back to the appropriate page

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Most answers should be obvious.

Current/latest place of work

Other

Student

You only have to answer questions which have a red star next to them. You can leave the others blank

APPLICATION SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED

You must have Adobe Acrobat on your computer. Select A4 (bottom left) and print the form.

Don't forget to sign and date the form. Make sure that your signature is the same as in your passport. Stick a passport sized photograph in the box.

DOCUMENTS TO TAKE WITH YOU TO VFS GLOBAL

As a student, you are not unemployed and do not need to take the documents listed on the VFS Global website for unemployed persons.

If you do not hold a UK passport, please check the VFS Global website to find out the documents that you have to take. If you hold a UK passport, these, according to the website, are the documents that you should take:

1. Current passport which should be valid for a minimum of six months after visa's expiration date and has at least 2 blank pages which do not need to be consecutive.
2. Visa application form filled in and printed out from this website only. Kindly ensure that the dates of your entry and exit, as entered in the application form, match with or fall within the period specified in the supporting documents.
3. One recent passport size photo glued to the indicated space on the application form.
4. Original invitation issued by General Directorate for Migration for the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia.
5. Introductory letter from your company/organization (or from yourself if you are self-employed) giving full details of the traveller, destinations, dates and purpose of the visit as well as stating the name of inviting organization, contact details of the responsible person in Russia and explaining who will take financial responsibility of the trip.
6. Self-employed, company directors, working from home or unemployed applicants need to provide bank statements for the last three months which have a current balance of a minimum of £100 per day for the duration of the visit. Please note that if you wish to provide online banking printouts please make sure they will be certified and stamped by your bank.
You are not self-employed and do not need to provide bank statements.
7. When applying for student visa you must additionally submit HIV Test (AIDS) Certificate taken within the last three months. HIV Test (AIDS) Certificate should still be valid for 15- 30 days on the day of your application

Note: a few students have informed us that if the visa invitation says “курсы”, (not учеба), they did not require an HIV test. You may be able to obtain a visa without an HIV test. However, I cannot guarantee that this will always work.

You will need to pay the visa fee -- the details are on the VFS Global website. You can pay for this with a card at the visa agency. You can choose to pay more for an urgent visa. If so, you will need to return to the visa agency to collect it. If you opt for the cheaper version, they will post it to you by DX for a fee currently £9.80 or you can collect it from the agency. They will inform you when it will be available.

Item 4 RLUS will send you a letter of invitation issued by a Russian Federal Migration Service agency 3 to 8 weeks before departure.

Item 5 Your University Liaison Officer will provide the letter in 5 above. This should state that you are a full time student and indicate where you are studying in Russia and the course dates, as well as the name and contact details of the relevant student representative in Russia.

If you have a paper invitation, the FAQ section on the VFS Global website states that you can submit photocopies of documents. However, experience shows that is not advisable, as students have been refused a visa when submitting photocopies. Please therefore submit original documents only. They will not be returned and you do not need them, once you have your visa.

The visa agency addresses are:

15-27 Gee Street, London EC1V 3RD
64 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QZY
Peter House, Oxford Street, Manchester M1 5AN

Please note that the Manchester agency currently does not have the urgent visa service and does not have a collection service. All passports will be returned by post. If you have an electronic visa invitation for London, I have been informed that you may also go to Manchester, as it is part of the London agency. You will not be able to get your visa in Edinburgh.

Your visa will be stuck in your passport. Your visa invitation and any documents you have sent will be retained and not returned to you. You will not need them, once you have your visa. When you receive your visa, you must check that there are no mistakes and, if necessary, return it for corrections. Check that the start date for the visa is the date of your flight or earlier.

Please note that you will not get a visa for longer than 90 days, whatever the length of your course. If the return date on your visa is earlier than the end of your course, do not worry; travel to Russia using the visa. It will be extended in Russia. Your visa will be a single or double entry one.

When you arrive in Russia and register your visa, your visa will be converted to a multi-entry one, allowing you to leave the country when you want and to return as many times as you need. There will be a small fee for doing this and you may be without your passport for a long time. If you only have a single entry visa and you need to return to the UK unexpectedly (e.g. the illness or death of a close relative), you will not be able to return to Russia to complete your course.

You are responsible for applying for your visa in time. Do not leave it until the last moment as sudden unpredictable changes in regulations can cause delays. If you fail to get a visa and are not able to leave with the group, there may be considerable extra expenditure involved (air ticket, additional meeting in Russia, travel in Russia, etc.). RLUS will not be liable to cover these costs. Your insurance is very unlikely to cover any costs you may incur if you fail to get your visa on time.

Once you arrive in Russia there are additional costs for the registration of your visa and exit or multi-entry visas. You will also be responsible for paying to extend your visa.

None of the above have been included in the cost of your placement or paid by you in advance. Only the cost of the visa invitation has been included in your invoice.

HIV CERTIFICATE

For a student visa you will need to produce an HIV certificate. All you require is a letter from your GP or a clinic stating that you are HIV negative. As long as it is on official headed notepaper, it will be acceptable.

Your local health centre may do the HIV test for you. Alternatively you may need to attend a GUM clinic. You can find your nearest NHS GUM clinic that will do a test for you by going to www.bashh.org. Please note that it can sometimes take a long time to get a certificate from an NHS clinic. Please make sure that you apply in good time. If you need a test done more quickly, private clinics will produce one more quickly. You will find information on private clinics by doing a Google search on the web.

You may be required to take another HIV test soon after arriving in Russia. This rarely happens, but as practice varies from one town to another and the rules change unpredictably, it is not possible to say whether or where this will be necessary. You can, if you wish, bring a sterile

needle pack. However, some clinics will insist on using their own. They do not reuse needles and you will be able to check that they are using a sealed pack.