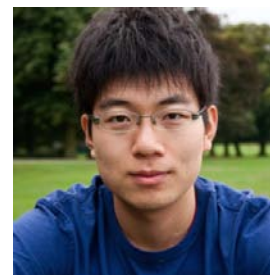


Case study

Name: Yang

Nationality: Chinese (mainland)

Course: PhD in Materials Processing Modelling at the School of Metallurgy and Materials, University of Birmingham



Describe your current job role

My job title is research associate. It's a postdoctoral research position in my school. My daily work involves developing novel modelling methods to study the double oxide film defects formed in aluminium casting.

Do you have any hints and tips about applying for a visa/making the transition?

The process of transition from a Tier 4 to Tier 2 visa is quite clear, but the international student, whose first language is not English, should pay attention to the language requirement, as the process requires the applicant to provide his IELTS test result. So they may book an IELTS test in advance. In my case, I enrolled on an international programme and, therefore, had my first degree in England, so I can use my degree certificate to demonstrate my English skills.

In terms of switching from the Tier 4 visa to the Doctoral Extension Scheme (DES), I think many PhD students do not understand the nature of this visa scheme. I think the international department in university should let their PhD students know clearly that DES is just an extension to their Tier 4 student visa, but without the 20 hours/week cap for working. They can use the 12 months for job hunting, but they still need to switch to a Tier 2 working visa when they find a job. Another issue is that the timing for applying to the DES is crucial. The application process for the DES is quite similar to the Tier 4 student visa, but the student must submit his application in the UK and within 60 days before his course ends, which can be confusing as PhD students may not necessarily have a fixed course ending date. For example, in Birmingham, I had a date for minimum registration (36 months), a deadline for submitting my thesis (extra 12 months for writing up) and, when I finished my viva, I had another deadline for correcting my thesis (depending on my viva results). The course ending date that is referred to in the DES is the final ending date that is stated on the CAS letter provided by the university. So the individual student must clarify his own course date in advance to avoid missing the date.

Do you have any hints and tips about getting a job?

For PhD students, job hunting can be started before they finish their viva or even their theses. I know many PhDs submitted their theses after they started working. Besides, PhD students should pay more attention to the job market, both in academia and industry, during their study, rather than waiting until they finish the theses.

How easy/difficult was the visa/transition process?

The process was very easy for me: I have a Tier 2 work visa. The university HR department asked me to prepare the documents beforehand and provided the sponsorship swiftly, so my application was smooth.