

INSTITUTIONAL HOME OFFICE COMPLIANCE POLICY

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1. Background

In order to recruit students from outside the UK and Republic of Ireland, the University of Reading (hereafter referred to as 'the University') is required to comply with the terms of the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Act, 2006.

In October 2020, the Tier 4 route was replaced with the [Student route](#). The University holds a Student Route Sponsor Licence issued by the Home Office which permits the University to issue Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to non-EEA, EU and Swiss students from 5 October 2020, and EEA, EU and Swiss students from 1 January 2021. Previously, since December 2008, the University held Tier 4 Sponsor status.

Following the UK's exit from the European Union in January 2020, EU/EEA and Swiss nationals are now required to provide evidence to the University of their immigration status in the UK.

Whilst most of this policy relates to Tier 4/Student visa holders, all other students with time-limited leave subject to UK immigration control must familiarise themselves with Section 4 of this document, which sets out responsibilities for all students with time-limited leave.

All students with time-limited leave should read this policy in conjunction with the UK Government's [Immigration Rules](#).

Tier 4/Student visa holders should also read UKVI's most up to date [Student route caseworker guidance](#) and the [Student Sponsor Guidance](#).

This policy is specific to the University of Reading and does not necessarily set out the full requirements of the Immigration Rules.

2. Definitions of Terms:

- **UKVI:** UK Visas and Immigration: the part of the UK Government's Home Office which is responsible for making decisions on who has the right to enter or remain in the UK.
- **International student:** any non-UK national who is subject to UK immigration control. This relates to nationality and not residency or fee status.
- **Immigration permission:** a generic term for a student's visa or "leave" in the UK.
- **Visa category:** the type of visa held by the student, for example Student visa.
- **Limited leave to enter/remain in the UK:** this type of immigration permission is time-limited as it has an expiry date which will be endorsed on the visa. Leave to enter is issued from outside the UK and leave to remain is issued within the UK, but they are essentially the same type of immigration permission with an expiry date, and it is the students' responsibility to make themselves aware of their individual expiry dates.
- **Indefinite leave to enter/remain in the UK:** this type of immigration permission has no end date, though the actual Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) may have an expiry date.
- **Entry clearance vignette:** the vignette (visa sticker) stuck into a passport to allow entry into the UK. For courses which are longer than 6 months in duration, the vignette will be valid for 90 days to allow the student entry into the UK. The student will then collect a Biometric Residence Permit once they have arrived in the UK. For courses which are less than 6 months in duration, the vignette will cover the entire period of immigration permission which has been granted. For Tier 4/Student visa holders, the vignette should be endorsed with the University's Sponsor Licence number.
- **Biometric Residence Permit (BRP):** a plastic, credit card sized visa issued by the Home Office.
- **Digital immigration status/visa:** no physical BRP/visa is issued by the Home Office, and instead the visa is viewed and verified online using a 'share code' which must be provided to the University by the student.
- **Post-study period:** the additional length of time granted to students after the programme end date. The length of this period varies dependant on the level of study.
- **Visa cancellation:** when the Home Office shortens the length of a visa to reflect the withdrawal of sponsorship, or a new programme end date.
- **Sponsored students:** For the purpose of this guidance, the sponsoring institution is the University of Reading and sponsored students refers to those students studying under a Tier 4/Student visa. This does not refer to financial sponsorship.

- **RISIS:** the Reading Integrated Student Information System (RISIS) is the student records system used by the University. Students and staff both access this system, but users are restricted to the information which can be accessed. The system is accessed through the online RISIS portal.
- **Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS):** a virtual document created between the Home Office and the Student Sponsor Licence holder (the University). The unique CAS number allows both the Home Office and the University to access specific information provided by the University for that student and the programme. The CAS is only valid for study at the specific institution (University of Reading) and for the specific programme detailed in the CAS. A CAS can only be used once in a visa application. Once used, it cannot be used in any further application.
- **Enrolment:** the process a student must complete to become a University of Reading student. This includes completing online enrolment, fee payment, ID/Immigration check and obtaining the campus card.
- **Re-enrolment:** the process a returning student must complete at the beginning of each subsequent academic year of their studies. This includes completing online enrolment and fee payment.
- **Student Engagement:** This term relates to a student's engagement with the programme of study on which they are registered. Expected engagements include attendance at lectures, tutorials, supervisory meetings etc. as well as actions such as handing in coursework and sitting exams. Successful completion of these engagements demonstrates that the student is participating appropriately with their studies.
- **Blended Learning:** a combination of face-to-face and online teaching. Tier 4/Student visa holders are expected, as a condition of their visa, to be engaging in all elements of blended learning from within the UK.
- **Distance learning:** learning that takes place entirely remotely, without any face-to-face teaching or research activities in the UK. Tier 4/Student visa holders are not permitted to learn by distance. The University will withdraw visa sponsorship for Tier 4/Student visa holders who switch to distance learning versions of their programme.

3. The University of Reading's sponsorship duties

Tier 4/Student visa holders

The University's duties as a Tier 4/Student Sponsor are as outlined below:

1. To keep a copy of passports and visas showing evidence of students' entitlement to study and the period they have permission to stay in the UK.
2. To hold at all times the students' UK contact details (address and phone number) and update them as necessary.
3. To maintain any appropriate accreditation.
4. To offer programmes under the Student route which comply with the Home Office conditions (e.g. programmes with work placements – must not exceed a maximum of 50% work (for a programme at NQF level 6 or above), with the placement assessed as part of the programme, unless there is an essential statutory requirement for the placement to exceed 50%).
5. To assign CAS' only to those students who, to the best of our knowledge, meet the requirements of the Student route and will be able to make a successful visa application.

6. To report to the Home Office any students who fail to enrol on their programme within 10 working days of their latest date to enrol (including those students who defer and are not yet in the UK).
7. To report to the Home Office any students whose engagement falls below the Home Office's [academic engagement requirements](#).
8. To report to the Home Office any students who discontinue their studies (including any deferrals of study) or who stop attending the University because they have been withdrawn or suspended from their programme, within 10 working days of this being confirmed.
9. To report to the Home Office any significant changes in students' circumstances, for example if the length of the programme changes, a student completes their studies earlier than the expected end date of the programme as stated on their CAS, a student changes into a different immigration category, a student leaves the UK on a research period away, or the location of a study/work placement changes.
10. To report to the Home Office if a student defers or suspends studies after arrival in the UK.
11. To report to the Home Office any students found to be breaching the conditions of their Tier 4/Student visa. This may result in the student being suspended or excluded from the University.
12. To report to the Home Office details of any recruitment agents and third parties used in recruiting international students.
13. To notify the Home Office of any errors on Tier 4/Student BRPs or vignettes, for example errors in the number of working hours permitted or visa length.
14. To refer to the police any information that the University has about students engaged in terrorism or other criminal activity.

The International Student Advisory Team monitors and processes changes in status for undergraduate and post graduate taught students and is responsible for making the relevant reports to the Home Office.

The Doctoral Research Office monitors and processes changes in status for postgraduate research students and is responsible for making the relevant reports to the Home Office.

All other students with time-limited leave

For all other students who hold time-limited leave subject to UK immigration control, the University must keep a copy of their visa showing evidence of their entitlement to study and the period they have permission to stay in the UK. Should a visa expire during the period of the student's study with the University, evidence of an in-time application and subsequent copy of the new visa must be requested and retained (see further details in section 4.)

4. Student responsibilities

Proof of immigration permission

All students must provide satisfactory evidence that they have the required immigration permission to be in the UK and to study at the University of Reading. All students must familiarise themselves, and comply with, the conditions of their immigration permission at all times.

Students who fail to provide passports, visas or evidence of an 'in-time' application to extend their leave in the UK when requested to do so may be suspended from the University in accordance with the University's suspension policy. Students sponsored by the University for their Tier 4/Student visa may also have their visa sponsorship withdrawn.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure their visa and immigration status remains valid during the period they intend to study in the UK.

Valid passports

Tier 4/Student visa holders must ensure that they continue to hold a valid passport throughout their studies by extending or applying for a new passport before their current document expires. Students must ensure that they provide the University with up-to-date copies of their passports.

Students must notify the Home Office Compliance Officer within the International Student Advisory Team if they are unable to obtain a new passport from the relevant authority. The student should email immigration@reading.ac.uk and provide an explanation why they have not been able to renew their passport. If the option to renew a passport with the relevant Embassy or High Commission within the UK is available, then the student should do this.

Visa application refusals

Any student, irrespective of their visa category, whose visa application is rejected or refused by the Home Office must inform the International Student Advisory Team as soon as they are notified of the decision for further information and advice. Offer holders to the University should also advise the Admissions Team of a visa rejection/refusal.

Visa errors

It is the students' responsibility to ensure their visa has been issued with the correct working conditions and for the correct length of time. Any errors must be reported to the Home Office to be corrected and copies of the corrected visa provided to the University.

The University also has a responsibility to notify the Home Office of visa errors for Tier 4/Student visa holders and will report errors to the Home Office on behalf of students when acting in its capacity as an Alternative Collection Location for BRPs, and also in instances where it is not clear if the student has reported the error themselves.

Changing immigration status/category

Students must inform the University immediately if their immigration status changes and/or if they switch into another immigration category at any time during their studies. They must provide evidence of their new immigration status or new immigration category to the University.

Students must also inform the University if they change nationality and provide evidence of their new nationality in the form of their new passport.

Students should inform the University about these changes by contacting the Home Office Compliance Officer within the International Student Advisory Team. Failure to do so will mean that the previous immigration category/nationality record will remain on RISIS.

Contact Details

Students must ensure that up-to-date UK contact details (address and telephone number) are held on the RISIS web portal at all times.

Students must also inform the Home Office of any changes to their contact details during their studies. Details of how to do this for a physical visa or BRP can be found [here](#). Details of how to do this for a digital visa can be found [here](#).

Students are expected to attend all face-to-face aspects of their programme in person on campus and should therefore ensure they are living in reasonable proximity to their relevant campus to facilitate this.

Suspension and Withdrawal

Students must follow the University's processes if they wish to [suspend](#) their studies or [withdraw](#) from their programme. Postgraduate Research (PhD) students should refer [here](#) for specific information about suspensions and contact the Doctoral Research Office for further advice.

Tier 4/Student visa holders who suspend for more than 60 days or withdraw from their programme will be reported to the Home Office within 10 working days of the suspension/withdrawal being processed, and sponsorship for their visa will be withdrawn.

It may be possible for the University to maintain visa sponsorship for Tier 4/Student visa holders who suspend for 60 days or less if the student can still complete their programme within the validity of their current visa and if the University can continue to carry out its engagement monitoring duties.

Tier 4/Student visa holders who suspend for 60 days or less, where visa sponsorship is maintained, must remain in contact with the relevant school. In these cases, specific arrangements to maintain contact with the student must be made in agreement with the school and relevant compliance staff member (Doctoral Research Office for PhD students; Head of the International Student Advisory Team for all other students). If monitoring cannot be arranged, then visa sponsorship will be withdrawn.

In the event that visa sponsorship is withdrawn, the Home Office Compliance Officer will write to the student with information and advice regarding the change in visa conditions.

Working in the UK

Tier 4/Student visa holders must not work more hours than permitted by the Home Office. Work permission is stated on either an entry clearance vignette, BRP or visa application decision letter from the Home Office.

The Home Office defines the working week as a period of seven days, starting on a Monday. Tier 4/Student visa holders are restricted to either 10 hours or 20 hours work per week during term-time, depending on the level of programme for which the visa is issued.

Tier 4/Student visa holders are permitted to work more hours during vacation time. [University term dates](#)¹ and University closure dates are available online. University closure dates apply to all students, except PhD students.

Term dates depend on the type of programme the student is on:

- University term dates published online apply to all undergraduate students. These also apply to students on a 9-month duration postgraduate taught programme.
- Students on a full-time one-year taught master's programme are required to study for one calendar year and therefore do not have a summer vacation. This applies to all master's students, whether the programme started in January or September.
- Students on a full-time Postgraduate Research programme are required to be in continuous attendance. Any holiday should be agreed and taken in accordance with [University regulations](#).
- [Pre-sessional English student course dates](#)² are available online.
- [International Foundation Programme dates](#)³ are available online.

¹ <https://www.reading.ac.uk/essentials/The-Important-Stuff/key-dates>

² <https://www.reading.ac.uk/isli/pre-sessional-english/how-long-to-study>

³ <http://www.reading.ac.uk/ifp/coursestructure/ifp-datesofterms.aspx>

If a student is conducting research or writing-up during a vacation period, they must not exceed the restricted hours of work per week during this time.

Students may register with Campus Jobs to work for the University. The working hours permitted by the Home Office includes all paid work carried out, whether that work is for the University via Campus Jobs, or work external to the University. Therefore, students working for multiple employers should ensure they keep a detailed record of how many hours they work to ensure the limit is not exceeded.

Students should also read the University's policy regarding [combining work and study](#) for full-time students.

Students found to be working more hours than permitted by the conditions of their visa will be reported to the Home Office and withdrawn from the University.

Tier 4/Student visa holders are not permitted to undertake certain types of work, including self-employment. For more information on the type of work prohibited, please check the Home Office [Student route caseworker guidance](#).

Students should contact the International Student Advisory Team if they are unsure how many hours they are permitted to work or if they are unsure whether they are permitted to undertake a specific form of work.

5. Recruitment and Admissions

Sponsorship Management System and CAS processing

It is the student's responsibility to familiarise themselves with the UK immigration requirements, meet the requirements for issuance of a CAS and ensure that they can make a successful Student visa application.

Admissions decisions are taken by the University in good faith based on the qualifications provided and statements made in a student's application. If it is discovered that a false statement has been made, false documents submitted or significant information has been omitted from a student's application form, the University may withdraw or amend its offer, report the student to the Home Office, refuse or withdraw sponsorship and terminate the student's enrolment at the University, according to the circumstances.

Receipt of an academic offer does not guarantee that a CAS will be assigned to the applicant. The applicant's immigration history, previous UK study and status will need to be assessed in accordance with the Student visa requirements and Immigration Rules. The University reserves the right to refuse a CAS even if the applicant meets all academic entry requirements.

Only applicants holding unconditional offers and who have paid a deposit (if applicable) will be issued with a CAS. The CAS will be issued no earlier than 6 months prior to the start of the programme. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they apply at the correct time before the programme start date when applying from inside the UK.

Applicants holding an unconditional offer who choose to attend a Pre-session course which is not a requirement of their offer will be issued a single CAS to cover both the Pre-session and the main degree programme.

A single CAS may be issued to applicants who need to improve their English language within level B2 for both a Pre-Sessional English (PSE) course and their main degree programme, providing all other entry conditions have been met. The University's decision on this is final.

The most recent or most relevant qualification on which any offer is based, together with details the applicant's English language competence, will be recorded on the student database (RISIS) and will inform any academic offer made.

The University reserves the right to refuse to issue a CAS if the Immigration Rules are not met, meaning the visa application would be refused by the Home Office.

Study

Students must reach the level of academic attainment required for the programme.

Tier 4/Student students are required to undertake a programme of study which is eligible for CAS sponsorship. The only exception to this requirement exists where elements of the programme must be retaken in order to progress on or complete the programme.

Time limits

There is a maximum period of five years that an individual can spend studying at degree level (RQF level 6) in the UK with a Tier 4/Student visa, unless an exemption applies. Any period studied whilst under Tier 4 or any other predecessor to the Student route will count towards the calculation of degree level study.

The University will calculate whether an applicant's previous study and their proposed study would exceed the maximum period of study permitted before assigning a CAS, in line with the [student route caseworker guidance](#). A CAS will not be issued if the proposed study would mean the five-year time limit is exceeded.

Part-time study as a Tier 4/Student visa holder

In January 2018, the Home Office introduced the option of part-time study at RQF Level 7 and above. Applications to study part-time at the University under the Student visa route will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Head of the International Student Advisory Team, in collaboration with colleagues within Admissions, the applicant's school and the University's Disability Advisory Service.

Students should familiarise themselves with the conditions and restrictions of part-time study before considering making an application.

6. Academic Progression

The University will assess academic progression for CAS purposes in line with the Home Office [Student Sponsor Guidance](#).

Current Tier 4/Student visa holders or those requiring Student visa sponsorship must apply for a programme of study which represents appropriate academic progression from their current/previous programme of study in the UK. Applicants requiring Student visa sponsorship must declare any previous studies undertaken in the UK, whether completed in full or not, prior to the University providing visa sponsorship (a CAS). Failure to declare previous UK study may result in a CAS or visa sponsorship being withdrawn and risks any visa application in process being refused.

For students who apply to extend their Tier 4/Student visa from within the UK, the University is required to confirm that the programme the student is applying to study represents academic progression before it will issue a CAS. Only students who have successfully completed the course for

which their previous visa was issued can make a further Student visa application from within the UK, unless an exemption to the academic progression rule within the [UK's Immigration Rules](#) applies.

For students who have previously studied in the UK and are making a new Student visa application from outside the UK, the University is not required to confirm that the programme the student is applying to study represents academic progression. However, an assessment is required to be made which takes this into account before issuing CAS sponsorship due to the overall credibility assessment and requirement.

If a student changes their programme during the course of their studies and requires a visa extension to enable them to complete the new programme, depending on the change, the student may be required to leave the UK to apply for a new Student visa from outside the UK before being allowed to continue their studies.

Confirmation of English Language and Academic qualifications

Applicants who are not from a majority-English speaking country, or applicants who have not studied at degree level or above in one of the relevant countries, must provide evidence that they meet the level of English required by their programme of study to be issued with a CAS. The English language qualification used to support their application to the University must be from an accepted test provider. Further information on the University's English language entry requirements can be found at the University's [Acceptable English Language Tests](#) webpage.

7. Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) applies to all students and researchers (apart from exempt nationalities) who are subject to UK immigration control and are intending to study or research at postgraduate level in certain sensitive subjects.

An ATAS certificate is valid for 6 months from the date it is issued. Students should apply for an ATAS certificate as early as possible after receiving their offer from the University.

Students wishing to study as a Student visa holder for an ATAS-relevant qualification must obtain an ATAS certificate (and provide evidence to the University) before they will be issued a CAS. Students should ensure that the certificate does not expire before applying for their Student visa.

All other students subject to UK immigration control who are studying for an ATAS-relevant qualification must obtain an ATAS certificate (and provide evidence to the University) before they will be permitted to enrol.

Current students must ensure their ATAS certificate remains up to date and accurately reflects the programme details including dates of study, modules or proposed research being undertaken. If any of their programme details change, the student should check whether a new ATAS certificate is needed and apply for a new one as appropriate.

Students already registered at the University who wish to progress to another programme which requires an ATAS certificate must apply for the certificate and be granted prior to making an application for a visa to extend their stay or commence the new programme. Students should allow sufficient time to complete their ATAS application and leave to remain application before their current permission expires.

Where an existing student is unsuccessful in gaining an ATAS certificate, they must remain on the existing programme or will be required to suspend or withdraw from their studies.

Students should read the UK Government's [ATAS guidance](#) for further information.

8. Enrolment

Students must arrive and enrol in person by the last date of enrolment, indicated on the CAS for Student visa holders, or within their programme information and on [Essentials](#) for other students. Enrolment after this date will not be possible and the University will withdraw visa sponsorship for Student visa holders who have failed to enrol. Returning students must complete re-enrolment for their course on time each academic year.

Students who are unable to enrol by the last date of enrolment and would like to defer their place on the programme must contact the Admissions Office. Students who do defer their place will have the current CAS withdrawn and will need to be issued a new CAS to apply for a new Student visa.

University staff will take reasonable steps to satisfy themselves of the authenticity of the documentation provided for enrolment and will take a copy of the biodata page of the passport (if not already held) and the visa/immigration permission.

The Home Office's decision as to whether a student has the right to study in the UK is final. The University may be able to seek clarification from the Home Office on a student's behalf, but the University is bound by the Home Office's decision.

If it is established that the student is not the rightful holder of the documentation produced or is not entitled to study at the University of Reading, the individual will be referred to the Head of the International Student Advisory Team immediately. The use of false or forged documents will be reported to the Home Office, the student's registration will be terminated, and they may be required to leave the UK.

Visa and enrolment checks- Student visa holders

At enrolment, Student visa holders must provide the University with their current passport with their entry clearance vignette and BRP or their digital visa so that copies can be taken. Should a passport and visa not be available, enrolment will only be allowed where the student can show that the passport and previous visa have been sent to the Home Office in order to make an 'in-time' visa application. An 'in-time' visa application means that the application was submitted before the expiry of the previous visa. If the application made is for a Student visa, the student must show the application was made using the University of Reading's CAS. Enrolment will only be permitted in this circumstance where the applicant's previous Immigration permission permitted study. If it did not, the applicant will not be permitted to enrol until they have received their new Immigration permission which confirms study is permitted. As a result, enrolment may not be possible until the following academic year.

Student visa holders may be able to enrol using their entry clearance vignette whilst they wait for delivery of their BRP, if they can provide the Home Office decision letter confirming the BRP is due to be delivered to the University. If the BRP is due to be delivered to a post office or private address, and is available, the student will need to collect their BRP before enrolment can continue.

Students with a digital visa will need to provide a share code to enable the University to verify their immigration status online. Students should bear in mind that share codes are valid for 90 days, and so should ensure the share code is still valid at the time they attend enrolment.

The University will only permit students to enrol under the Student route where the visa documentation contains the University of Reading's sponsor licence number.

Visa and enrolment checks- all other students with time-limited leave

Students holding visas in categories other than the Student Route may have to fulfil additional requirements to register. For example, applications from students holding leave under the Skilled

Worker visa route (previously Tier 2) to register for full-time programmes will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Head of the International Student Advisory Team, and the University will require a letter from the employer confirming that undertaking the proposed programme of study will not interfere with their ongoing full-time employment for which the current visa was issued, before a decision can be made.

On occasion, the University may need to ensure that a student's immigration status is as stated., for example if the immigration status document does not clearly indicate if the student has a right to study or if the student cannot obtain a copy of the immigration status document. To do this, the University will carry out an eligibility check with the Home Office to confirm the student's immigration status.

The student will need to give consent for the Home Office to disclose relevant information to the University. If the student does not give their consent and the eligibility check therefore cannot be processed, the student will not be permitted to enrol or continue with their programme until satisfactory evidence (as determined by the University) has been provided and verified.

The Home Office's decision as to whether a student has the right to study in the UK is final.

Visa and enrolment checks- leave to remain application pending with the Home Office

To permit a student to enrol with an application for leave pending with the Home Office, the University may need to carry out an eligibility check with the Home Office to confirm that the application was made 'in-time' and that the student retains the right to study in the UK whilst their application is considered. The student will need to give consent for the Home Office to disclose relevant information to the University. If the student does not give their consent and the eligibility check therefore cannot be processed, the student will not be permitted to enrol or continue with their programme until satisfactory evidence (as determined by the University) has been provided and verified.

The University will continue to conduct eligibility checks with the Home Office at regular intervals until a decision on the application is made. It is the student's responsibility to ensure an in-time visa application is made and the student must keep the International Student Advisory Team informed of its progress and outcome. Failure to do so may result in the student's suspension from their studies.

Students who enrol on a programme with a visa that expires before the end date of their programme or on the basis of having an outstanding application with the Home Office, do so at their own risk.

Non-Enrolment

The University is required to report to the Home Office within 10 working days any Tier 4/Student visa holders who were issued with a CAS but who fail to arrive by the latest enrolment date permitted by the University. Depending on the type of programme the CAS has been issued for, the latest date can be up to 1 month after the course start date.

If the CAS has been used in a visa application and the student fails to arrive in time, the University will withdraw sponsorship for the student and any visa which was issued will no longer be valid for use. The University will securely destroy any associated BRP we may have received for the student.

If the CAS has not been used in a visa application, the CAS will be withdrawn so that it is no longer valid for use in a visa application. In both instances the applicant/student will be informed by email that this has been done.

9. Attendance monitoring

Students are expected to comply with the University's [attendance and engagement expectations](#) and should familiarise themselves with the University's [Student Charter](#) and [Attendance Management and Engagement Policy](#), for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes. Students on Postgraduate Research programmes should familiarise themselves with [Student Charter](#), [Code of Practice on Research Students](#) and the [Policy on and procedures relating to PhD and MPhil student academic engagement and fitness to study](#). The attendance and academic engagement expectations of the University are the same for all students, irrespective of their visa/fee status.

Monitoring Tier 4/Student visa holders' attendance is the responsibility of the Schools, Support Centres and the School Support Team for PhD students in conjunction with the International Student Advisory Team.

Academic and support staff have access to a range of data sets relating to enrolment, attendance at in-person and online timetabled taught sessions, usage of the virtual learning environment and submission of coursework, which help the University to maintain oversight of academic engagement as well as to offer additional support where appropriate.

The University is required by the Home Office to monitor attendance and engagement for Tier 4/Student visa holders, and failure to attend and academically engage satisfactorily may put their visa status at risk. The process by which this is done will vary dependant on the level of study.

Weekly Blackboard login data, library access data, combined attendance data from in-person or online taught sessions (where recorded) and Blackboard Collaborate taught sessions will all be used by the Home Office Compliance Officer as evidence of attendance and engagement for the purposes of Home Office compliance requirements for Tier 4/Student visa holders. Other engagement points include: classroom assessments; essays; submission of coursework; attendance at examinations; meetings with personal tutors; contact with research supervisors (for postgraduate research students).

Schools/Support Centres/Support Team for PhD students may also notify the Home Office Compliance Officer of students whose engagement is of concern. Appropriate action will then be determined based on the circumstances.

The University is required to withdraw sponsorship for Tier 4/Student visa holders when they fail to engage as required (dependant on the level of programme being studied) as per the Home Office's academic engagement policy for higher education providers in the [Student sponsor guidance](#).

Tier 4/Student visa holders are required by the conditions of their visa to be studying their programme from within the UK during term-time, unless they are on an approved work placement/study abroad programme/period of research away. This requirement continues to apply when students are working on dissertations/taking online exams. Tier 4/Student visa sponsorship will be withdrawn if a student is identified as studying from overseas during term-time.

Postgraduate Research students

Postgraduate research students do not have any predetermined vacation time. Postgraduate Research students may take up to eight weeks (40 weekdays) of holiday during each year of their registration. Students are expected to be working on their research project during Bank Holidays and University closure days unless holiday has been taken. Students must obtain permission from their supervisor and receive confirmation from their School/Department PGR Administrator before taking holiday. Postgraduate research students are expected to be actively participating in their programme on a full-time basis for the remainder of the time.

Monitoring the engagement of postgraduate research students is conducted on a rolling basis, except during periods of authorised annual leave. When a student undertakes a period of research away (outside the UK) from the University, including those on split programmes, the student and department/school must notify this to the Doctorate Research Office before the student leaves the UK to enable the required report to be made to the Home Office. Engagement with students must continue whilst they are away from the UK if the student continues to hold Tier 4/Student immigration permission.

Students are expected to have at least one contact point identified per month. Contact points will be identified by the schools and evidence of attendance retained. Contact points must be face to face contact, except where the student is on an official period of working away outside the UK, when contact via video call and email are acceptable. The details of these contact points are entered on the RISIS system by the end of each quarter (end of the autumn term, end of the spring term, end of summer term and end of September).

Postgraduate research students who have completed their research and who remain in the UK whilst writing up are required to maintain regular contact and engage with their department/school on a monthly basis. This includes between submission and attendance of the viva. Contact monitoring must continue until the student has completed their programme and been awarded their degree.

Work Placement students

Students are permitted to undertake work placements which are confirmed as an assessed and integral part of the programme, and which do not exceed a maximum of 50% of the total duration of the programme (unless there is a statutory requirement for the placement to be longer). All placements must be authorised in advance through the relevant school and the placement team.

Details of all work placements are held by the relevant placement coordinator. The details of work placements being undertaken by Tier 4/Student visa holders must be reported to the Home Office, irrespective of the placement's location or duration, in advance of the placement commencing. The Home Office Compliance Officer will provide the Home Office with the dates, duration and location in advance of the placement commencing.

Placement providers are required, by virtue of their contract with the University, to alert the University to any unauthorised absences by students. The placement provider will advise the appropriate school administrator of any student failing to attend and/or engage with their placement and the administrator will refer this matter to the appropriate Programme Director to follow-up.

10. Student absences and suspensions

The absences referred to in this section relate to **authorised absences only**. Absences will only be authorised if the student is still able to complete their programme within the validity of their current Tier 4/Student visa.

Students are reminded that they are expected to be present and engaging in all aspects of their programme from within the UK and should not be absent during term-time for the purposes of personal holidays or travel.

Given the level and intensity of face-to-face teaching and student attendance and participation in taught programmes, it is unlikely that an extended period of absence would be authorised by the University for students on these programmes, and therefore a suspension would likely be required.

Up To 60 days

For authorised absences of up to 60 days, the University will maintain Tier 4/Student visa sponsorship and the student will not be required to leave the UK during the period of absence. The student will be expected to return to their studies after this short absence and must remain in contact with their school and agree regular points of contact during this period of 60 days.

If the student seeks to extend the period of absence beyond 60 days or does not return to their studies by the date agreed, the Home Office Compliance Officer/Doctoral Research Office will submit a report to the Home Office and sponsorship will be withdrawn.

Over 60 days

Students taking an authorised leave of absence of over 60 days (regardless of the reason for the absence) will be referred to the Home Office Compliance Officer/Doctoral Research Office for a report to be submitted to the Home Office, and sponsorship will be withdrawn. The student will be advised to leave the UK. Such students will need to apply for a new Student visa, or appropriate visa category, to return to the University. If a student is unable to leave the UK during the period of absence, sponsorship will still be withdrawn, and the student advised to seek advice from a qualified Immigration Solicitor.

Student appeals and complaints

Where a Tier 4/Student visa holder has been required to withdraw from their studies but has submitted an appeal against this decision, the University is required to report to the Home Office that sponsorship of their Tier 4/Student visa is withdrawn as the student cannot meet the conditions of their visa. The student will be advised to leave the UK to await the outcome of the appeal.

Where a Tier 4/Student visa holder has an outstanding complaint under the University student complaints procedure but is otherwise deemed by the University to be actively engaged in their studies, then visa sponsorship will continue as normal.

Where a Tier 4/Student visa holder has an outstanding complaint under the University student complaints procedure but is not deemed by the University to be actively engaged in their studies, the University is required to report to the Home Office that sponsorship of their Tier 4/Student visa is withdrawn as the student cannot meet the conditions of their visa. The student will be advised to leave the UK to await the outcome of the complaint.

Students required to undertake reassessment

Students are only permitted to attend the teaching aspect of their programme once, unless an application for extenuating circumstances is approved by Schools/Faculty.

11. Examination re-sits, repeats and extensions

Students required to re-sit an in-person examination from within the UK should re-sit within the designated re-examination period. It is University policy that the University will continue to sponsor the student (on their current visa) during this time, which is usually during the summer vacation period. If outside the summer re-sit period, the University will continue to sponsor the student (on their current Tier 4/Student visa) providing they sit the next available re-examination, and this takes place within 60 days of the initial examination results being published.

If the re-examination takes place more than 60 days after the initial examination results, the University will be required to withdraw sponsorship of the Tier 4/Student visa. The student will need to leave the UK and obtain a new visa before returning to take the re-sit examination.

Previous Tier 4/Student visa holders may be able to return to the UK to take their re-sit exams under the [Standard visitor route](#), if they meet the eligibility requirements. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they meet the eligibility requirements and to familiarise themselves with the conditions of this visa category (for example, no right to work in the UK.) New Student visa sponsorship (a new CAS) may be issued for re-sit purposes, but this will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the International Student Advisory Team. The student should contact the [International Student Advisory Team](#) for advice.

If the re-sit is an online examination only, the University will only consider providing visa sponsorship if the student confirms they will be taking the re-sit from within the UK, and visa sponsorship will be withdrawn if the student does not return to take the re-sit from within the UK.

Repeating with attendance

In exceptional cases, a student may be authorised to repeat part of the programme with full attendance. It is University policy that they must enrol on the relevant modules and meet all relevant attendance and engagement requirements. Tier 4/Student visa holders repeating with attendance will continue to be sponsored by the University.

Dissertation extensions

In most circumstances, further Student visa sponsorship will not be provided to students who have been given an extension to complete their dissertation or re-submission of their dissertation as this can generally be completed from overseas. The University is unlikely to be able to meet its sponsorship duties during the extension period, which includes the monitoring of students' attendance and engagement, and therefore CAS sponsorship cannot be provided in these cases. The student should contact the [International Student Advisory Team](#) for advice.

Extensions for students on Postgraduate Research programme

In most cases visa sponsorship is provided for 4 years and 7 months for full-time programmes. This is the maximum period that the University will normally sponsor students and covers submission (no later than 4 years), viva examination and a period of Minor Amendments (up to 3 months). No further visa extensions will usually be supported unless there are academic reasons for doing so.

An extension to a student's registration does not automatically mean that they will be granted an extension to their visa sponsorship. An extension to visa sponsorship will usually only be granted in exceptional circumstances, for example: circumstances beyond the student's control or where the University is at fault. Students should contact the Doctoral Research Office for further information.

12. Other changes in circumstances

Programme changes

The University is required to report programme changes for Tier 4/Student visa holders to the Home Office.

In some circumstances, it may be possible under the Immigration Rules for a Tier 4/Student visa holders to change programme from within the UK.

Tier 4/Student visa holders who are permitted to change programme from within the UK are referred to the Home Office Compliance Officer, who will submit a report to the Home Office advising them of the student's new programme details and new expected end date. This includes where a student changes programme, even if the end date does not change, or adds/removes a work placement year from their programme.

Where a report is made to the Home Office which does not affect the validity of the visa, a student is not routinely informed. Students should familiarise themselves with their new programme end date (and therefore new visa end date) in the event of a programme change and ensure they prepare to make a new Student visa application (including requesting a new CAS) in good time.

Where a student is not permitted to change programme from within the UK, the student will need to leave the UK to apply for re-entry onto their new programme. Proof of exit from the UK (in the form of a flight ticket/re-entry stamp) will need to be provided before the University will issue a new CAS.

Tier 4/Student visa holders who wish to change programme should contact the International Student Advisory Team for further information and advice.

Early completion

If a student completes their programme earlier than their expected end date (as stated on their CAS), the Home Office Compliance Officer will report this to the Home Office. The student's visa will be cancelled (shortened) by the Home Office to reflect their actual programme end date.

Students should be aware that if they leave the UK during the post-study period having successfully completed their programme early, their Tier 4/Student visa will no longer be valid for re-entry into the UK.

13. The Graduate Route

In line with [Graduate Route](#) guidance, the University will notify the Home Office of a student's successful completion and potential eligibility for the Graduate Route once the RISIS record has been updated with award details. This will be after the publication of confirmed results and degree classifications. The University will inform the student by email once this report has been sent to the Home Office.

Receiving email confirmation from the University that a report has been made to the Home Office for successful completion does not confirm eligibility of the student for a Graduate Route application. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure they are eligible and meet the relevant [Immigration Rules](#).

The University does not provide Graduate Route visa advice or an application checking service.

The University accepts no responsibility for the outcome of Graduate Route applications.

14. Overstaying

Responsibility for a student's visa validity remains solely with the student. Enrolled students will receive automated email reminders regarding their visa expiry date. These will be sent to the student three months, two months, and two weeks before the visa expiry date and again once the visa has expired. In these reminders, students are advised to contact the International Student Advisory Team for guidance. The Home Office Compliance Officer will contact those students directly who fail to respond to the University with regards to their visa.

Once a visa/immigration permission has expired, if an 'in time' application has not been made then the student is considered an overstayer. Once a student becomes an overstayer they cannot continue to study in the UK, and they will be suspended from their studies. There is no grace period which allows students to make a further visa application in the UK once their visa has expired.

A student may be permitted by the Home Office to make a visa extension in the UK up to 14 days after their leave has expired if there were reasons beyond the student's control which meant they could not submit an in-time application. If a student is permitted by the Home Office to make an application in these circumstances, the student is still considered to be an overstayer until a positive decision is received from the Home Office on their application.

The University will not routinely sponsor students to make a visa application in the UK when they have no valid immigration permission, and CAS issuance to overstayers will be considered on a case-by-case basis depending on the circumstances. In these circumstances, the student must leave the UK to make their new application from overseas.

15. Visa Support and Extensions

Any queries or information requests regarding visa extensions should be referred to the International Student Advisory Team as they are trained to provide guidance in this regard. The guidance offered must be viewed as guidance and not as legal advice.

16. Communications

The University communicates with students primarily through the student's University email address (for applicants who do not yet have a University email account, the email address provided to the University). Tier 4/Student visa holders will also be informed of compliance duties and responsibilities at various times and in various ways:

- When a CAS is issued and notified via email to applicants/students
- Information sessions during Welcome Week/Welcome and Induction programmes
- Specific web-page for international students
- University social media accounts- X (formally known as Twitter) and Facebook
- Immigration related emails and social media updates from the International Student Advisory Team

17. Recording and reporting of information

Information about individual students must be recorded on RISIS in a timely fashion to enable reporting to the Home Office within the required timescales. An automated report from RISIS is provided weekly to the Home Office Compliance Officer to identify changes to Tier 4/Student visa holders student record which may require reporting to the Home Office.

Reporting to the Home Office will be completed in line with deadlines set by the Home Office.

18. Withdrawal of sponsorship

The University retains the right to withdraw visa sponsorship of a Tier 4/Student visa holder in the circumstances listed below.

Circumstances when sponsorship will be withdrawn include but are not limited to:

- Student's non enrolment on the programme by the published date.
- Student's failure to re-enrol when required.
- Student submits non genuine documents, statements, representations to the University.
- Student withdraws from the programme.

- Student suspends from their programme for duration or more than 60 days.
- Student is withdrawn/registration is terminated by the University.
- Student successfully completes their programme earlier than stated on the CAS.
- Student fails to engage with their programme as required.
- Student fails to pay tuition fees when due or accrues financial debt which they fail to clear when required. (e.g. accommodation and re-assessment fees)
- Student moves to a different immigration category that does not require sponsorship.
- Applicant/student is asked to provide evidence to show they can make a successful Student visa application and have either refused to do so or is unable to do so.

Other circumstances may lead to withdrawal of sponsorship and will be considered on their own merit in accordance with the risk the student has or does pose to the University's Sponsor Licence or Sponsor Status.

If the student is permitted to return academically after a period when sponsorship has previously been withdrawn, the University reserves the right to refuse to issue a further CAS if the student has previously failed to adhere to Tier 4/Student visa compliance regulations or has previously shown to pose a risk to the University's Sponsor Licence or Sponsor Status.

19. Managerial Oversight and review

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary, as the Student Licence Authorising Officer for the University and a member of the University's Executive Board, meets with key staff (Head of the International Student Advisory Team, Director of Student Services (or their delegate), Student and Academic Services Manager and Director of Centre for Quality Support & Development) as required to review the University's working practices and to ensure compliance with its obligations under its Sponsor licence and Sponsor status. The group reports to the Executive Board.

The Head of the International Student Advisory Team sits on the International Operations Group which meets termly and provides compliance status update to the group.

The Head of the International Student Advisory Team convenes a termly meeting of operational teams including International Student Advisory Team, Admissions and Doctoral Research Office representatives who oversee activities and monitoring relating to Tier 4/Student visa holders.

The Head of the International Student Advisory Team convenes a bi-monthly meeting with Human Resources and Campus Jobs.

Overall oversight of all the University's Home Office Sponsor Licences and Compliance with licence requirements rests with the licence's Authorising Officers. The University's Tier 4/Student Licence Authorising Officer is the Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary, Richard Messer. The University's Workers licence and Temporary Workers licence (previous Tier 2 and 5) Authorising Officer is the Director of Human Resources, Claire Rolstone. Authorising Officers report compliance status and assurance to the University Executive Board.

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Policy to be reviewed annually or when required in response to new guidance issued by the Home Office.

Version control

Version	Keeper	Reviewed	Approved by	Approval date
1.0	ISET	Annually	K Robertson	01/08/16
1.1	International Student Advisory Team	Reviewed in line with UKVI policy updates.	K Robertson	24/11/16
2.0	International Student Advisory Team	Reviewed in line with UKVI policy updates.	GESB	22/05/2024