



The University of Buckingham Student Visa Policy and Procedures



Table of Contents

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	3
<u>SECTION 1. THE UNIVERSITY'S DUTIES AS A STUDENT VISA SPONSOR</u>	4
<u>1.1 Record Keeping Duties</u>	4
<u>Other Record Keeping Duties</u>	6
<u>1.2 Reporting duties</u>	6
<u>SECTION 2. STUDENTS' DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS</u>	8
<u>2.1 Students' Duties and Obligations with Regards to the University</u>	8
<u>2.2 International Students' Visa Duties and Obligations</u>	8
<u>SECTION 3 PRESCRIBED PERIOD FOR REGISTRATION</u>	10
<u>3.1 Period of Registration for Taught Programmes</u>	10
<u>3.2 Period of Registration for Research Programmes</u>	10
<u>3.3 Student Visa Application Refusals and Rejections</u>	10
<u>3.4 Admissions Process</u>	11
<u>SECTION 4 REGISTRATION</u>	12
<u>4.1 Procedures</u>	12
<u>SECTION 5 FURTHER INFORMATION ON STUDENT VISAS</u>	14
<u>5.1. Continuing Students</u>	14
<u>5.2 Student route Visa Extensions</u>	14
<u>5.3 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)</u>	15
<u>5.4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES)</u>	16
<u>5.5 Other Important Information on the Student Visa Category</u>	16
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	21
<u>Glossary of Terms:</u>	21
<u>Appendices</u>	23
<u>Appendix A: Declaration Form</u>	23
<u>Appendix B: Authorised Absence Form</u>	25



INTRODUCTION

The University of Buckingham is licensed to sponsor international students under the student route category of the Points Based System (PBS), of the Home Office's UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). By assigning a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)¹ to a student, the University demonstrates its belief that the applicant is genuine student, has the motivation and capability to study a programme at our institution, should they be granted permission to enter the UK to do so.

The main objectives are:

- a) To help to ensure that the students sponsored by the University are genuine and comply with the conditions of their visas and UK immigration law.
- b) To help to prevent abuse of the UK immigration system.
- c) To help to identify and address patterns of student behaviour that might cause concern.
- d) To help students to take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with the Student Visa rules.

Unless otherwise stated, this Policy extends to all of the University's international students studying at all University campuses within the UK, (including taught and research students).

SECTION 1. THE UNIVERSITY'S DUTIES AS A STUDENT VISA SPONSOR

As a Student Visa sponsor, the University of Buckingham has various duties and responsibilities to the UKVI which it must discharge under the terms of its Student Visa Sponsor licence. This document sets out how the University intends to discharge these responsibilities.

1.1 Record Keeping Duties

As a sponsor, the University is required to keep accurate records for all international students:

- a) Copies of immigration documents: passport pages, visa vignette and/or Biometric Residence Permit (BRP).
- b) Copies of entry qualifications, including English Language assessment and references.
- c) Records of attendance and absence (authorised or non-authorised).
- d) Up to date UK contact details, with full history.
- e) Copy of Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate, if required. See section 5.3 for more information on ATAS certificates.
- f) Evidence of any visa refusal and, if applicable, evidence of administrative review.

All international students are required to assist the University in fulfilling its Student Visa sponsor compliance duties and obligations by cooperating with all reasonable requests for information and/or documentation in relation to their visas.



1.1.1 Records of Immigration Documentation

- I. The University's Visa Office is responsible for checking, verifying and copying all students' immigration documentation.
- II. All visas issued under the student route of the PBS must confirm the student's entitlement to study with the University of Buckingham. This is usually indicated by the inclusion of the University's Sponsor Licence Number (SLN) QGHJF1PJ7 on the BRP or visa vignette.
- III. The University is required to verify, copy and keep copies of all its international students' original immigration documents, such as:
 - (a) Current passport, showing all personal identity (including biometric) details, leave stamps and/or immigration status documents;
 - (b) Entry Clearance vignettes.
 - (c) UK Biometric Residence Permit (BRP); and
 - (d) Certificate of immigration status.
- IV. Students are required to provide the University with their original immigration documentation as part of the registration process. This requirement applies to all international students, including students who hold visas/leaves in other categories, such as Indefinite Leave to Remain, Dependants, Spouse and Refugee status.
- V. Where an international student is not able to provide any of the documents listed in paragraph III, registration will not be possible.
- VI. Where an international student is not able to provide the BRP because it has not been collected yet, they may be able to register subject to agreeing in writing to provide this within a prescribed period of time.
- VII. If at any point of the study period, an international student is issued with a new passport or immigration document, they must provide all original documentation to the Visa Office for verification and copying.
- VIII. The Visa Office is also responsible for the regular monitoring of all international students' right to stay in the UK and, where necessary, the Visa Office's staff will contact individual students for further information, documentation and/or clarification on their current immigration status. Students are required to co-operate with all reasonable requests for information and/or documentation.

1.1.2. Records of Academic Qualifications

- I. The University is also required to keep copies of the following documentation:
 - (a) Academic certificates of previous studies, including translations where appropriate; and/or
 - (b) Academic transcript, including translations where appropriate; and



- (c) English Language test, where this has been assessed through a Secure English Language Test (SELT) or through a certificate of a degree qualification studied in the UK or at a majority English language speaking country.
- II. Students are required to provide the original academic qualifications, which were used by the University to assess their academic abilities and to issue an offer of study, as part of the registration process.

1.1.3 Records of Attendance Monitoring

- I. As a Student route Sponsor, the University is required to keep accurate records of its international students' attendance and absences (authorised or non-authorised). It is the University's responsibility to monitor and record students' attendance.
- II. Students are expected to attend tutorials, lessons, seminars, supervisory meetings and any other form of engagement regularly and punctually.
- III. After students have registered, their attendance is recorded and monitored in line with the attendance regulations as prescribed in the University's [Regulations Handbook](#).
- IV. Other forms of contact or engagement which are a key feature of study include: independent and self-directed learning, for which students are monitored through their output of coursework submissions, meetings with their tutors and/or supervisors, performance in formative and summative assessments, and in their overall academic progress.
- V. The following may constitute contact/engagements for students on taught and research programmes:
 - a) Registration/Re-registration;
 - b) Payment of fees;
 - c) Attendance at tutorials, lectures, seminars, laboratory sessions, fieldwork throughout each year (some programmes will have more prescriptive attendance requirements than others);
 - d) Attendance at clinical placements throughout each year (Medicine and Clinical MD programmes);
 - e) Submission of continuously assessed work;
 - f) Induction and workshops events;
 - g) Attendance at summative examinations;
- VI. Action against poor attendance, which would result in one of the reportable events described in section 1.2.2, will be taken under the authority prescribed within either Special regulations for each programme in the University's Regulations Handbook or Appendix 7 of the Research Degree Handbook.
- VII. The University's Regulations Handbook can be found at:
<https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/handbooks/regulations-handbook/>



Other Record Keeping Duties

- I. The University is required to keep a record of international students' UK and home country contact details including their UK and home country address, telephone numbers and personal email address.
- II. The University is required to keep copies of students' Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificates. Students applying to study a science related course above master level, such as Applied Computing, will need to obtain this certificate prior to applying for a Student visa.
- III. The University is required to keep copies of evidence of students' visa refusal notifications and administrative reviews and judicial reviews made by the students against a visa refusal.

1.2 Reporting duties

As a licensed student visa sponsor, the University is required to conduct active checks on its international students and report any changes in a students' circumstances to the UKVI.

The Visa Office will report to the UKVI changes to international students' circumstances during their period of studies, after all necessary steps have been taken in accordance with the procedures set out in Section 1.2.2.

1.2.1 Changes of Circumstances Which Must Be Reported

- I. Where a student fails to attend lessons, tutorials or any other agreed form of engagement with the University for a period of 3 consecutive weeks.
- II. Where a student voluntary withdraws from a taught or research programme.
- III. Where a student's studies, whether a taught or research programme, are suspended following a decision laid down by the University's Senate or nominee. The reporting action is to take place after the completion of all appeal procedures or after the period of time permitted to submit an appeal has elapsed.
- IV. Where a student's studies, whether a taught or research programme, are terminated due to unsatisfactory academic progress following a decision laid down by the University's Senate or nominee. This action to take place after completion of all appeal procedures or after the period of time permitted to submit an appeal has elapsed.
- V. Where a student's studies, whether a taught or research programme, are terminated or suspended due to lack of attendance and/or engagement. This action will take place after completion of all appeal procedures or after the period of time permitted to submit an appeal has elapsed. Page 7 of 19 Student Visa Compliance Policy
- VI. Where a student's studies are terminated or suspended due to non-payment of tuition fees.



- VII. Where a student fails to register or re-register.
- VIII. Where a student completes their programme of study earlier than expected.
- IX. Where a student, due to repeat or re-sit a failed module or modules of study, will not be required to attend or engage with the university within a period of more than 60 days.
- X. Where a student breaches the conditions of their Student Visa.
- XI. Where a student transfers to a different immigration category.
- XII. Where a student's visa application or application for administrative review has been refused or rejected.

1.2.2 Consequences of Reporting the Changes in Circumstances

- I. In all the circumstances above, the students' change in circumstances will be reported to the UKVI via the Sponsorship Management System (SMS) within ten calendar days from the date the appeal procedure was completed or the period permitted to submit an appeal has elapsed, whichever comes first.
- II. This will result in the withdrawal of the University's Student sponsorship from the student and the student's Student visa will be curtailed 60 days from the date of the notification. After this period the student's Student visa will no longer be valid.
- III. Students whose change in circumstances has been reported to the UKVI will be required to leave the UK within 60 days of the notification.
- IV. Where applicable, any subsequent intention to resume a taught or research programme of study will require the student to be assigned a new CAS in order to apply for a new student visa to enter the UK.

1.2.3 Other Changes in Circumstances that Must Also Be Reported

- I. Transfer into another taught or research programme of study.
- II. Change of programme location.

1.2.4 Consequences of Reporting Changes Stated in Sec 1.2.3

- I. The circumstances identified above will have no material effect on a student's visa, except where because of the registration deferral, the leave granted will not cover the duration of the programme of study.
- II. All changes in the student's circumstances will be reported to UKVI via the SMS within ten calendar days from the date the change occurred.



SECTION 2. STUDENTS' DUTIES AND OBLIGATIONS

On registering at the University, all international students agree to abide by the policies and procedures set out in this document.

All international students are responsible for understanding and complying with the conditions of the visa which entitles them leave to stay and study in the UK.

Whilst the Student Visa allows students to study, it also imposes duties and conditions, which they must obey. Students who hold a Student Visa must make sure they are aware of the conditions of their visas and the duties they have as Student Visa holders, to enable them to protect their status as students.

It is strongly advised that students read information on the conditions of their Student Visas.

This information can be found on the Home Office's publication at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655494d850475b00dc5b5e8/Student_and Child_Student.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/655494d850475b00dc5b5e8/Student_and_Child_Student.pdf)

Following a successful application, information relating to the conditions of the student route visa will also be provided by a visa application centre.

II.1 Students' Duties and Obligations with Regards to the University

By registering at the University of Buckingham students agree to abide and observe all the regulations, policies and procedures set out in the University Regulations Handbook and the Research Handbook.

This can be found at: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/about/handbooks/>

International Students' Visa Duties and Obligations

2.2.1 Duties on Enrolment/Registration

- I. Students who have been issued a CAS by the University must enrol at the University following a successful visa application. If they change their mind and want to leave the University to study at another university, they will have to make a new visa application using a CAS from the new university.
- II. At Registration all students are required to provide their original immigration documents as well as the academic documents assessed by the admission staff to issue an offer of a place to study at the University of Buckingham.



2.2.2 Duties After Enrolment/Registration

- I. Students must attend all tutorials, lessons and/or supervisory meetings or any other agreed form of engagement with the University as scheduled in their personal timetable or agreed with their supervisors.
- II. Students are required to cooperate with all reasonable requests for information and/or documentation, including regular requests to verify and/or update their personal contact details. The Visa Office will assist students in this regard.
- III. Students are required to inform the University, by any means of communication available to them, of any changes to their personal contact details as soon as the change in contact details has taken place.
- IV. Students must meet all the conditions of their student route visa with regards to work allowance and police registration.

2.2.3 Consequences of Not Complying with Duties

- I. Where an international student fails to attend scheduled lessons, tutorials or any other form of engagement, the Visa Office will act following the procedure described in section 1.2.2.
- II. Where an international student fails to register, the University's Visa Office will undertake an investigation in consultation with the appropriate academic department or Faculty.
- III. Depending on the results of this investigation, the University will record the student's failure to register and may, subject to conditions, agree to defer the student's registration until the next available start date.
- IV. In such cases, the student's failure to register will be reported to UKVI via the Sponsor Management System (SMS) within ten calendar days of the end of the prescribed enrolment period.
- V. This will result in the withdrawal of the University's Student visa sponsorship from the student and their visa will be cancelled.
- VI. A deferral to study at the University at a later date will require the student to be assigned with a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student Visa to enter the UK.
- VII. Only in exceptional cases, and subject to agreement by the academic departments involved, a registration date that exceeds the end of the prescribed enrolment period may be granted. Where agreed, the date will be entered onto the student's record and reported to UKVI via the SMS. Thus, the student will be expected to register not later than the agreed new date.
- VIII. In such circumstances, the existing CAS may continue to apply.



- IX. If a student fails to attend lessons, tutorials or fails to keep any other agreed form of engagement with the University, the University will carry out an investigation.
- X. If a student fails to respond to a request for information relating to their visas, the University reserves the right to take action and restrict the student's access to facilities until the requested information is provided. Furthermore, registration will become void where a student fails to cooperate or is unable to produce acceptable evidence of their right to remain in the UK by the due deadline. Page 10 of 19 Student Visa Compliance Policy
- XI. This will result in the withdrawal of the University's Student sponsorship from the student. The student's visa will be curtailed to 60 days after the withdrawal of sponsorship.
- XII. The University reserves the right to request appropriate evidence from students to demonstrate that they are complying with the conditions of the visa upon which they hold leave to remain in the UK.
- XIII. The University reserves the right to suspend or withdraw students from their programme of study after due investigation procedures have taken place, where students are found to:
 - a) Be, with reasonable grounds, suspected of failing to comply with the conditions of their visa;
 - b) Be, with reasonable grounds, suspected of failing to hold current leave to remain in the UK which allows them to study on a University programme; or
 - c) Are otherwise deemed to be in breach of their duties under the immigration regulations.

SECTION 3 PRESCRIBED PERIOD FOR REGISTRATION

The prescribed registration period refers to the period of time set by the University during which students are expected to register, or in the case of continuing students, to re-register on their taught programme or research programme. The period applies to all students on all programmes.

Period of Registration for Taught Programmes

3.1.1 Registration Period for Foundation, First Degree and Masters Programmes

- I. For students enrolling on Foundation, First Degree or taught Masters programmes, the prescribed period of registration will normally last for the first two weeks of each term. The last date allowed for registration will be advised to students by the relevant admissions officer.



Period of Registration for Research Programmes

3.2.1 Registration Period for Masters, MPhil and DPhil Programmes by Research Study

- I. For students on research programmes the registration period will also last for the first two weeks of a specific term, but the prescribed enrolment period can be more flexible, with the permission of the appropriate School of Study.

3.3 Student Visa Application Refusals and Rejections

- I. International students, who have submitted a Student route visa application overseas or inside the UK to study at the University and whose applications have been refused or rejected, must inform the Visa Office immediately and seek their advice.
- II. All students whose visa applications have been refused or rejected must provide the University with a copy of their visa refusal or rejection letter and, where applicable, a copy of any administrative review they have submitted.
- III. Where an international student has submitted an in-time request for an administrative review of the visa refusal or rejection decision and can provide satisfactory evidence of this to the Visa Office, the student may be permitted to remain registered on their current programme of study until such time that the outcome of their administrative review is known.
- IV. Where an international student has not yet submitted an in-time request for an administrative review of a visa refusal or rejection decision, the student must present all relevant documentation to the Visa Office in order to assess the likely success of the administrative review.
- V. Where an appeal or administrative review is assessed as likely to fail, the student will be advised to voluntarily suspend or withdraw from their current programme of study.
- VI. In such cases, the Visa Office will report the student's change of circumstances to UKVI in accordance with section 1.2.1 of this Policy. In so doing, the University will withdraw its current sponsorship from the student and will be required to leave the UK.
- VII. Should the student intend to resume their study or research Programme, they will be required to obtain a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student visa to enter the UK.
- VIII. Where an administrative review is upheld in the student's favour, full documentation which supports this outcome, including the student's original passport and BRP, must be presented to Visa Office for verification and copying.
- IX. Where an administrative review is rejected, the student must inform the Visa Office and seek further advice immediately. The student will be advised to voluntarily suspend or withdraw from their current programme of study.



- X. In such cases the Visa Office will report the student's change of circumstances to UKVI in accordance with section 1.2.1 this Policy. In so doing, the University will withdraw its current sponsorship from the student, and they will be required to leave the UK.
- XI. Where an administrative review is rejected and the student chooses not to voluntarily suspend or withdraw from their current programme of study, or where the Visa Office deems that an administrative review is likely to prove unsuccessful and the student chooses not to voluntarily suspend or withdraw from their current programme of study, the University reserves the right to suspend or withdraw the student from their programme of study.
- XII. The Visa Office will report the student's change of circumstances to UKVI via SMS and, in so doing, will withdraw its current sponsorship from the student. The student will be required to leave the UK and, should the student intend to resume their programme of studies or research programme, will be required to obtain a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student visa to enter the UK.

3.4 Admissions Process

3.4.1 Pre-CAS Audit and High-Risk Countries

- I. International applicants from "high-risk countries" are considered by the University to be "high risk" of not meeting the requirements for a Student Visa for entry to the UK, based on historical precedent in previous admissions cycles.
- II. A Pre-CAS audit will be conducted to confirm that offer holders are suitable to move through to the CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) stage of the admissions process.
- III. International students who hold an offer from countries with a high risk of financial issues are not required to complete the full Pre-CAS audit but will undergo financial checks conducted by the Visa Office before moving to the CAS stage. If the Visa Office confirms that the applicant can meet the financial requirements, the applicant will then receive an unconditional offer and can progress to the CAS stage.

3.4.2 Gifted University Students

- I. As the University of Buckingham is listed as a Higher Education Provider with a Track Record of Compliance, in exceptional circumstances, the English Language requirement can be waived, if the student is studying at degree level and the University believes the student to be gifted.
- II. The University can only proceed with this if English language proficiency is not integral to the course, and a pre-sessional course would be inappropriate.
 - II I. The Academic Registrar (or equivalent) must provide written confirmation that they approve of this decision and state reason for why they believe this student to be gifted.



iiii. The University will then provide the student with an official letter, signed by the Academic Registrar (or equivalent). The letter will confirm:

- a) The University's name (as the sponsor)
- b) The University's sponsor licence number:
- c) The name of the student
- d) The course the student will be studying, alongside the appropriate RQF Level of study
- e) Confirmation that the Academic Registrar (or equivalent), considers the student to be gifted and the reason why

v. If the student is applying for their Visa from overseas, they must have this letter to hand when they enter the UK

vi. The gifted student exemption is for limited use only. If the UKVI are concerned with the number of gifted students who have been assigned a CAS by the University, they will contact the Academic Registrar (or equivalent).

SECTION 4 REGISTRATION

Joining instructions and information on the registration process are included in the student's registration pack. This information can also be found on the University's website: <https://www.buckingham.ac.uk/admissions/joininginstructions>

The first formal contact or interaction, which will be monitored for Student compliance purposes, is the student's initial registration with the University.

Initial registration requires international students to formally register with the University, and in so doing they agree to abide by all University policies, regulations and procedures, see section 2 of this guide.

Procedures

4.1.1 Registration Flag

I. In exceptional circumstances the University may allow students who are unable to provide all their original immigration documents to partially register to the University. The Visa Office will mark the student on the University systems with a "Registration Flag". The student will be given 10 working days to provide the Visa Office with all outstanding Visa documentation. The student must sign the declaration form ([see Appendix A](#))

II. In the event that all reasonable steps to elicit the required documentation prove unsuccessful, or where further checks indicate that an international student is unable to place themselves in a compliant immigration position within a reasonable time frame, the student's registration may be voided.



iii. In the instances above, the University reserves the right to defer a student's registration until the next available intake and/or to de-register a student from their course of study. The University will also notify UKVI that the student has not enrolled, automatically withdrawing sponsorship of the current Visa. The student will then have 60 days to leave the UK.

iv. In such cases, Paragraphs IV and/or VII in Section 2.2.3 will apply. This would require the student to leave the UK and any subsequent agreed start date or further application to study at the University would require the student to obtain a new CAS to make a new application for a Student Visa from overseas.

4.1.2 At Registration

- I. At registration all international students are required to provide their original immigration and qualification documentation to be fully registered and enrolled into their courses.
- II. The following groups of international students are exempt from supplying original academic qualification documentation at registration:
 - a) Students progressing from The University of Buckingham's Foundation Pathway, First Degree or Masters programmes onto higher level programmes.
 - b) Students applying via UCAS where the applicable school or college has indicated that they will allow academic results to be imported to the University's systems via the Academic Board Linkage (ABL) scheme.
- III. International students will not be considered fully registered until students have provided all the documents referred to in Section 1.1.1.
- IV. Where a student fails to register, the Visa Office will undertake an investigation in consultation with the appropriate academic departments or School before taking action. Please refer to Section 2.2.2.

SECTION 5 FURTHER INFORMATION ON STUDENT VISAS

This section gives further information on other matters which are directly linked to Student route Visa and which may have an impact on international students' ability to remain in the UK as students.

5.1. Continuing Students

5.1.1 Signing in/Re-registering at the Beginning of the Term

- I. All students are required to sign in with their Schools at the beginning of each term within the prescribed enrolment period and to confirm or update their personal contact details.
- II. Students who are re-starting or resuming their taught or research programme are required to re-register at the Registry and sign in with their Schools of Study.



5.1.2 Failure to Sign in/Re-register

- I. Where an international student, who is expected to progress onto the next stage or re-start their programme, fails to sign in and/or re-register within the prescribed enrolment period, the University's Visa Office will take all the necessary steps to ascertain the student's intention to continue with their programme of study. This will be done in consultation with the appropriate academic department or School of Study.
- II. Depending on what can be established, paragraph II in Section 2.2.2 will apply.
- III. In such cases, the student's failure to sign in and/or re-register will be reported to the UKVI via the SMS within ten days from the date the procedure to ascertain the student's intentions were completed. This will lead to the withdrawal of the University's sponsorship from the student, thereby curtailing their visa.
- IV. The student will be required to leave the UK. Any subsequent agreement to restart their studies at the University would require the student to be assigned a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student visa from overseas.

5.2 Student route Visa Extensions

5.2.1 Information on assigning a CAS

- I. International students who require a visa extension in order to undertake a new programme, must obtain a new CAS and submit a new visa application before the new programme starts. The Visa Office will provide advice and assistance.
- II. International Students who need to extend their visa in order to continue their current programme of study, must request a CAS from the Visa Office within three months of the expiry date of their existing leave.
- III. International students residing outside the UK who require a new visa in order to resume their current programme (e.g. following a period of suspension) must request a CAS from the Visa Office within three months of the date they expect to return to their studies.
- IV. As part of any request for a CAS, international students will be required to complete a declaration form and provide supporting documentation in relation to their immigration status and history.
- V. A CAS is assigned once students have demonstrated that they meet the Student regulations regarding financial requirements, academic progression, and the time limits imposed on the length of time students can study in the UK at a specific course level.
- VI. The University reserves the right not to issue a CAS where it is not satisfied that a student's Student application and/or supporting documentation meet any of the Student regulations.
- VII. Before the CAS process for a Visa extension can begin, the Student Fees office must confirm that the student is not in any outstanding tuition debt.



5.2.2 Research Extensions

I. For students who are undertaking an approved research programme, an additional 3 calendar months will be added to the end date of study, for the CAS extension. Viva and any required amendments for Research students normally take place after the submission deadline. The CAS is therefore issued for an additional 3 months to ensure these can take place.

5.3 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

5.3.1 ATAS Certificate

- I. ATAS is the UK's Home Office scheme designed to prevent those undertaking postgraduate study from acquiring knowledge that could be used in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) activities. It requires applicants from non-EEA countries, in specific subject areas, to obtain ATAS clearance after they have been made an offer to study and before they make an application for a Student visa.
- II. The ATAS certificate will display the University name and programme of study/research. The ATAS certificate must match the institution's name and programme detailed on the student's offer for the Student route visa application to be considered.

1.a.2 When is an ATAS Certificate Required?

- I. As part of the admission process applicants will be made aware of subject areas that require ATAS clearance.
- II. Applicants whose subject area requires ATAS clearance must provide the correct ATAS certificate to the University before a CAS can be issued.
- III. International students residing inside or outside the UK who require an extension to their Student leave in order to resume or continue on their current programme, must re-apply for ATAS clearance and provide to the Visa Office with a new ATAS certificate, together with their financial documents with their request for a new CAS.

5.4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES)

5.4.1 What is the DES?

- I. The scheme is designed to give students, who have almost completed their PhD qualification, an additional 12 months of Student leave to remain in the UK, after they complete their studies.
- II. During this period, students are able to seek for and engage in full time employment in the UK.



- III. Applications for this visa subcategory can only be made from inside the UK and within 60 days of the end date of the PhD level course.
- IV. Sponsorship under this scheme is not automatic. The University reserves the right to grant or reject sponsorship to students. The University will assess the suitability of candidates, taking into consideration their academic performance, attendance and credibility.
- V. PhD students who wish to apply for sponsorship under the DES must meet the same Student regulations as student on Student visas and must provide the relevant supporting documentation to the Visa Office.
- VI. The Visa Office will liaise with the Fees Office and relevant School of Study in order to assess students' suitability to be sponsored under the scheme. Should the student be suitable, the Visa Office would be able to start the process of assigning a CAS
- VII. Students will be required to sign a Declaration Form agreeing to the conditions of the DES visa and University's conditions upon which the sponsorship has been granted.
- VIII. The conditions include:
 - a) To keep the University informed of the progress of the application and provide copies of any correspondence received from the Home Office;
 - b) To provide the university with the original immigration documentation after an outcome of an application has been received;
 - c) To remain in contact with the University throughout the duration of their extended leave to remain under the Scheme; and
 - d) To respond to any communication from the University within ten working days.
- IX. Where a student fails to meet any of the above conditions, the University reserves the right to withdraw its DES sponsorship from the student (Thereby curtailing their UK Student DES visa). The student will be required to leave the UK.

5.5 Other Important Information on the Student Visa Category

5.5.1 Work Allowance

- I. Holders of a student route visa are allowed to undertake part-time employment.
- II. Students studying at degree level or above can work up-to 20 hours per week during term time and full-time during holidays. Students on courses below degree level can work up-to 10 hours per week during term time and full-time during holidays.
- III. Student students are not allowed to undertake the following types of work:
 - a. self-employed, sports person, entertainer or as doctor or dentist in training;
 - b. Set up a business as a sole trader or in a partnership;
 - c. Participate in business activities such as being a company director or shareholder.



5.5.3 Public Funds

- I. The immigration conditions prohibit students from accessing 'public funds', which include certain welfare benefits and local authority housing.
- II. Sending dependent children to a state school, being exempt from the Council Tax, and paying "home" fees for study do not count as accessing 'public funds'.
- III. If students claim, 'public funds', the UK immigration authorities can refuse a visa application or remove students the UK.

5.5.4 Study Abroad

- I. Some programmes require students enrolled to spend some of their study period outside the UK. This is called study abroad.
- II. International students engaged on a period of study abroad as an integral part of their programme are permitted to remain on their existing Student route visa and will continue to be sponsored by the University for the duration of their study abroad.
- III. Whilst the responsibility for monitoring the engagement of those studying abroad as part of their programme of study rests with the appropriate School of Study, in accordance with the rules laid down by the appropriate curriculum, the responsibility for investigating any Student visa compliance risk for those international students studying abroad rests with the Visa Office.
- IV. Where it is identified and/or suspected that the required monitoring duties cannot be fulfilled at the study abroad location for any given Student, the University reserves the right to withdraw its Student Visa sponsorship from the student (thereby curtailing their Student visa). Students will then be required to obtain a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student visa to enter the UK and resume their studies.

5.5.5 Work Placements

- I. Some courses may require students to spend a period of their studies in work placements.
- II. International students undertaking work placements as an integral part of their programme, whether based within or outside the UK, may be permitted to remain on their existing Student visa and will continue to be sponsored by the University for the duration of their placement(s).
- III. Responsibility for monitoring the engagement of those students undertaking a work placement as part of their programme of study rests with the Dean School of Study, in accordance with the attendance policy of the programme.



- IV. Where poor attendance is reported, an investigation will be undertaken in accordance with procedures and, where applicable, action would be taken under the authority prescribed in the programme's specification within University's Handbook.
- V. Student students whose work placement does not form an integral part of their programme, and whose registration is therefore suspended by the University for the duration of the placement(s), will not be sponsored by the University for the duration of the placement(s). Subsequent resumption of study at a UK University would require the student to be issued with a new CAS in order to apply for a new Student visa.

5.6 Research Students

For students who are undertaking an approved research programme, an additional 3 calendar months will be added to the end date of study, for the CAS. Viva and any required amendments for Research students normally take place after the submission deadline. The CAS is therefore issued for an additional 3 months to ensure these can take place. Therefore, the end date on the CAS will be 3 months longer than the end date listed in the offer letter email. The CAS end date should be used for the visa application, rather than the end date stated in the offer letter email.

5.7 Debt

Students must **fully engage** in their studies by attending lectures, seminars, tutorials and any other timetabled sessions throughout the duration of their programme of study. If a student is placed 'on stop' due to tuition fee debt, their studies will be suspended. This means attendance at any such teaching event is no longer permitted. Non-attendance is a breach of their visa conditions and may result in the curtailment of their visa.

5.8 Authorised Absence Form

I. Students on a Student Visa who miss a significant number of classes or other study-related activities could impact their Visa sponsorship. The UK Visas and Immigration expects the University to report students who are not fully engaging in their course. The University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship of a Student Visa if a student takes unauthorised absence.

II. The University may grant a short period of authorised absence under specific circumstances, allowing students on a Student Route Visa to take a brief period of leave without losing visa sponsorship. Authorised absences will not be approved during term time for holidays, cultural or religious events that can be observed in the UK. The University will not approve authorised absences for early departure before a vacation period begins. A student's school of study will only support a request for authorised absence if it is satisfied that a student will not miss critical course elements and can resume their studies upon return without needing to repeat any material. If a student's school of study does not authorise the absence, a student must attend all studies as normal.

III. A student must complete the authorised absence form ([see Appendix B](#)) and provide evidence of the reason for requesting the authorised absence. The student must also confirm that if their



period of absence exceeds the approved period, they understand that this may result in their studies being suspended and as a result, their visa being curtailed. As such, they would be expected to leave the UK. *Please note, medical students should refer to the specific absence forms for sickness and other absences as outlined by their school, rather than the general authorised absence form.*

III. The authorised absence must not impact on the original course completion date. The student will still be expected to complete their studies by the original course date. Authorised absences are granted only if no critical course elements are missed and if you can return to studies without needing to repeat any material. Full attendance is required if an absence is not authorised. Exceptional absences are not additional holiday entitlement and should only be requested when necessary.

V. UKVI regulations require the University to collect and retain attendance and engagement data, which may be shared with UKVI. Failure to engage in your studies may result in the loss of your visa sponsorship.

5.8.1 Types of Authorised Absences

I. Health-Related Absences: Health-related absences of more than 7 days require documentary evidence, such as a medical certificate from a registered practitioner. Evidence from family or friends, even if medically qualified, will not be accepted.

II. Exceptional Circumstances: For cases like bereavement, severe illness of a close family member, or parental responsibilities (including maternity and paternity leave), you can request exceptional absence. This must be submitted 14 days in advance with supporting evidence. Retrospective requests will only be considered if timely submission was impossible. No exceptional absences will be approved during assessment periods.

III. Other Absences: Absences not covered above will be considered individually. The University reserves the right to approve or decline requests based on their impact on your studies. Unauthorised absences or those without a valid reason may result in the withdrawal of your visa sponsorship.

5.8.2 Absence Requests and Mitigating Circumstances Policy

I. Absence requests under this policy should not be confused with the University's *Mitigating Circumstances Policy*. This separate policy covers significant, unexpected events beyond your control that affect academic performance and may require an extension or accommodation (see the [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#) for details).



CONCLUSION

The Visa Office provides professional advice to the University's international students on Student leave applications. It also ensures that all our international students have valid visas to study in the UK and assists students when they need to extend or renew their visas.

International students should contact the Visa Office if they require any advice regarding their ability to stay in the UK to study at the University.

The Visa Office is located in Istra Cottage, Hunter Street, Buckingham.

Policy owner:	Head of Academic Services
Implementation date:	Corrections made October 2024
Review date:	October 2025
Related policy:	Admissions Code of Practice CAS Code of Practice

Version	Approved	Revisions made	Date
1.0	N/A	Corrections to terminology and related policies listed.	5 th February 2024
2.0		Added sections on Registration Flag 4.1.1 and Authorised Absence 5.8	01.10.2024



Glossary of Terms:

ATAS: Academic Technology Approval Scheme. A UK Home Office scheme designed to prevent those undertaking postgraduate study from acquiring knowledge that could be used in Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) activities.

BRP: Biometric Residence Permit. An identity card, issued separately but to be taken in conjunction with the holder's passport, which indicates the basis and extent of their current leave to remain in the UK, and holds a series of their biometric data.

CAS: Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies. An electronic certificate (identified by a unique number) that is issued to a prospective student by a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in order that they may use it in support for an application for leave to remain in the UK as a Student (General) Student under the UK Home Office's Points-Based Immigration System. An HEI must be satisfied that the prospective student meets a number of strict criteria before it can issue a CAS.

DES: Doctorate Extension Scheme

. A UK Home Office scheme designed to give students who have almost completed their PhD qualification an additional 12 months of Student immigration permission in which to look for and engage in employment in the UK.

EEA: European Economic Area. An area of free movement comprised of 27 of the 28 European Union member states, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Entry Clearance: Initial visa issued overseas in the form of a vignette affixed to a passport. Its validity will depend on the length of the course. Where a course is fewer than 6 months in length, it will be valid for the duration of the course. Where the period of study is longer than 6 months it will be valid for 1 month, and the student will have to collect a BRP at their designated post office.

HEI: Higher Education Institution

International student: A student registered, or who is intending to register, at the University of Buckingham and who has been categorised by the University as 'overseas' for fee payment purposes. An international student may not be residing in the UK on a Student (General) Student visa, and may hold any nationality, including British and/or other EU/EEA member states.

PBS: The UK Home Office's Points-Based Immigration System. Student (General) Student is one of a number of immigration categories; other categories may relate to those with leave to remain in the UK as an employee, spouse or dependant.

SLN: Sponsor Licence Number. Unique number issued to all UK HEIs that hold a licence to sponsor Student international students. The University of Buckingham's SLN is QGHJF1PJ7.

SMS: Sponsor Management System. An online portal that allows holders of a Student sponsor licence to request the issue and updating of a CAS, and to discharge their compliance reporting responsibilities.



Student: Category of the UK Home Office's Points-Based Immigration System under which a person may apply for leave to remain in the UK as a student

Student visa: An international student registered, or who is intending to register, at the University of Buckingham who holds, or who is applying/has applied for permission to hold, leave to remain in the UK as a Student under the UK Home Office's Points Based Immigration System

UCAS: Universities and Colleges Admissions Service UK Home Office: UK government department responsible for immigration, counterterrorism, police, drugs policy, and related science and research

UKVI: UK Visas and Immigration. A Division of the UK Home Office responsible for making decisions on who has the right to enter and remain in the UK.



Appendices

Appendix A: Declaration Form

University of Buckingham - International Student Visa Declaration Form

Student Registration Declaration for Visa Documentation

Full Name (as per passport):

Student ID Number:

Declaration:

As an international student at the University of Buckingham, I acknowledge that I have not yet presented all the required visa documentation to the university to complete my registration. I understand that due to this, a registration flag has been placed on my student account.

I am aware that I have **10 working days** from the date of signing this declaration to provide the required visa documentation. Failure to do so will result in the university taking the following actions:

1. The University of Buckingham will notify UKVI that they have **withdrawn sponsorship** of my student visa, as I will have failed to comply with the necessary visa conditions.
2. Once my visa sponsorship is withdrawn, I understand that the UK Home Office will begin the process of **curtailing my visa**.
3. Following the curtailment of my visa, I will have **60 days** from the date the University notifies UKVI to leave the United Kingdom, in accordance with UK immigration rules.

I understand the importance of complying with my visa conditions and acknowledge that failure to provide the required documentation within the given timeframe may result in serious consequences for my ability to remain in the UK and continue my studies at the University of Buckingham.

I declare that I fully understand the terms and conditions stated above and accept the consequences of non-compliance.

Student Signature:

Date:

University Representative Signature:



Date:

For Official Use Only

Date of Registration Flag Placement:

Deadline for Documentation Submission (10 working days from signature):

Document(s) missing:

Important Notice:

If you require assistance or have any queries regarding your visa documentation, please contact the Student Visa office immediately at:

Email: Studentvisa@buckingham.ac.uk

Phone: +44 (0)1280 820126



Appendix B: Authorised Absence Form

Section 1: Guidance notes for students:

This form is to be used to request an authorised absence – please read before submitting your request.

Please be aware that missing a significant number of classes or other study-related activities could impact your visa sponsorship. Your Student Visa requires full-time, in-person attendance on campus, and UK Visas & Immigration expects the University to report students who are not fully engaging in their course. The University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship of your Student visa if you take unauthorised absence. The University may grant a short period of authorised absence under specific circumstances, allowing students on a Student Route Visa to take a brief leave without losing visa sponsorship.

Note: Please refer to The Student Visa Compliance Policy

Section 2: Student to Complete:

Full Name	
Student ID Number	
Start date of absence	
End date of absence	

Reason for requesting authorised absence (please tick)

- Exceptional Circumstances
- Medical (illness is over 7 days)
- Other

Please give further details of your absence request:

Declaration and signature

In the event that my period of absence exceeds the approved period, I understand this may result in my studies being suspended and my visa being curtailed and I would be expected to leave the UK.

I declare that the above information is a true reflection of my current circumstances, that I have read the guidance and that ticking this box this will function as my signature.

- Please tick if you agree to this statement.**



Section 3: School of Study authorisation (*staff use only*)

I confirm that the School supports this request and is satisfied that the student will be able to resume their studies upon their return.

I acknowledge that the school is responsible for ensuring the student does not exceed the permitted authorised absence and must maintain retrievable and auditable records of all authorised absences.

Name	
Signature	
Position	
Date	

****Any absence should not impact on the original course completion date – the student will still be expected to complete their studies by the original course end date.***

Once complete, please forward a copy of this form to The University of Buckingham Visa Compliance Team – StudentVisa@buckingham.ac.uk