

Sponsorship of International Students for Visa Purposes

Document Owner:	Head of Visa Compliance, Student & Academic Services (Registry)
Principal Contact:	Paul Rees, Head of Visa Compliance, SAS
Approving Body:	UKVI Assurance Group
Date of Approval:	TBC
Date Effective From:	1 August 2024
Applies to: <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>	International students who are sponsored by the university under the Student Visa Route
Review Date:	Annually in March
Version:	V8 04.24
Public or internal access only <i>(delete as appropriate)</i>	Public Access Internal Access Only
Summary/Description:	
This policy provides clarity on the university's approach to sponsorship of students and graduates under the UK immigration system. It sets out the principles under which the university will offer sponsorship for immigration purposes, and the circumstances in which such sponsorship may be withdrawn.	

This document can only be considered valid when viewed via the University website. If this document is printed into hard copy or saved to another location, you must check that the version number on your copy matches that of the one on the University website. Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until a new version is available.

Sponsorship of International Students for Visa Purposes

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy provides clarity on the university's approach to sponsorship of students and graduates under the UK immigration system. It sets out the principles under which the university will offer sponsorship for immigration purposes, and the circumstances in which such sponsorship may be withdrawn.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to:
 - 2.1.1 applicants and students of programmes delivered on University of Greenwich premises who require a Student visa to study in the UK.
 - 2.1.2 Applicants and students of the *University of Greenwich International College* (UGIC) who require a Student visa to study in the UK.
 - 2.1.3 Graduates who have been offered sponsorship or endorsement by the university for the Start-up Visa.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to:
 - 2.2.1 employees of the university (except where the employee is also a student or graduate of the university).
 - 2.2.2 applicants and students of University of Greenwich programmes delivered via a partner institution.

3. Background

- 3.1 The University of Greenwich holds a Student sponsor licence, issued by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI), to sponsor international students admitted to programmes of study at the university (including UGIC), for the purpose of obtaining a UK visa under the Student Route.
- 3.2 Until April 2023, the university was provided with annual endorsements, issued by UKVI, for the purpose of sponsoring graduates for a Start-Up Visa. As the Start Up Route is now closed, the University cannot offer new endorsements. However the University remains a legacy sponsor and is obligated to monitor and engage with students it has previously endorsed under the route, who still hold their Start Up visas.
- 3.3 UKVI places obligations upon the university, as the sponsor, as specified within the Student Sponsor Guidance , and the Legacy Start up Endorsing Bodies [Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legacy-start-up-and-innovator-visa-endorsing-bodies-guidance).
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/legacy-start-up-and-innovator-visa-endorsing-bodies-guidance>The University of Greenwich is committed to complying in full with its obligations as a licenced sponsor.

4. Admission of new students

- 4.1 Admission requirements for students who require a Student Visa to study in the UK will adhere to current [UKVI guidance](#) and may be subject to change, in accordance with updates to the guidance.

- 4.2 In the event that UKVI guidance is amended after an application to study has been received, the university will normally apply the guidance in place at the time the CAS is issued.
- 4.3 Only applicants for programmes which satisfy the eligibility criteria for sponsorship under the Student Route, as stated in the Student Sponsor Guidance, will be offered sponsorship under the Student Route.
- 4.4 Sponsorship will only be offered to applicants who are required to be in the UK to undertake their studies. Applicants for programmes delivered wholly by distance learning are not eligible for sponsorship.
- 4.5 If an applicant commences their studies via distance learning, with the intention of becoming a full-time, campus-based student at a later date, sponsorship will only be offered for the period of time that the student is required to be in the UK.
- 4.5.1 If paragraph 4.5 applies, eligibility for sponsorship will be assessed on the requirements in force at the time the CAS is issued. If a student is unable to obtain a visa to travel and study in the UK, and cannot continue with their studies, they will be withdrawn from the university. In such circumstances, any applicable refund of tuition fees will be considered in accordance with section 3 of the [Charging & Refund Policy](#).
- 4.6 Applicants must provide suitable evidence to the university to demonstrate that they satisfy the university's English Language criteria in a manner that is acceptable to UKVI.
- 4.7 Where an applicant has previously studied in the UK, the programme applied for must be deemed by the university to fulfil the requirements for 'academic progression' as defined within the Student Sponsor Guidance. Applicants may be required to provide the university with a full academic or immigration history to support this assessment.
- 4.8 Applicants must provide the university with specified documentation and fulfil all of the conditions of their offer before sponsorship can be offered. All documentation will be retained in accordance with the [university's retention policies](#).
- 4.9 Where a deposit has been requested, this must be paid in full before sponsorship can be offered.
- 4.10 After the university has agreed to offer sponsorship, and an unconditional offer to study has been made, a *Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies* (CAS) will be issued in accordance with section 6 of this policy.
- 4.11 Receipt of an unconditional offer, or an offer of sponsorship, does not guarantee that a CAS will be issued.
- 4.12 The University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship under the Student Route to any applicant. Where such action is taken, the University will clearly explain reasons for this refusal to the student.
- 4.13 The university will only offer sponsorship to applicants who will study on the university's own premises (including UGIC). Applicants for University of Greenwich programmes delivered via a [partner institution](#) should discuss options for sponsorship directly with the partner institution. Not all partner institutions are able to offer sponsorship under the Student Route.

5. Visa Extensions for existing students

This section refers to existing students who require more time, or wish to switch to a Student visa from another immigration route, to complete a current programme of study at the university. Applicants and graduates wishing to start a new programme of study should refer to section 4 of this policy.

- 5.1 Students who require a visa extension must request a CAS from the university for this purpose. The university will endeavour to remind students prior to the expiry of their visa, but cannot be held responsible if a student fails to request a CAS to extend their visa.
- 5.2 All requests for a CAS for the purpose of a visa extension will be considered in accordance with current UKVI guidance and section 6 of this policy.
- 5.3 Students seeking a visa extension must provide the university with specified documentation, and fulfil any [conditions specified](#) by the university, before the request can be considered. All documentation will be retained in accordance with the university's retention policies.
- 5.4 A CAS request will only be considered where there is an unequivocal requirement for the student to remain in, or return to, the UK to complete their studies. Where viable, other visa routes may be considered as a preferable option.
- 5.5 Where a student must leave the UK in order to submit a visa application, the CAS will normally be considered upon receipt of suitable evidence of departure.
- 5.6 A request for a visa extension will only be considered where the student has academic approval for extending their period of study, for academic engagement purposes. This does not include extra time to apply for the [Graduate Route](#), whilst awaiting results/Progression & Award Boards or attend a graduation ceremony.
- 5.7 The University will only issue a CAS for a resit or repeat period if they meet [5.124 of the Student Sponsor Guidance – Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#), which require "continued participation (in classes or by contact)".
- 5.8 The University will only issue a CAS to resit or repeat in the UK if they meet any of the following conditions:
 - Continue or complete a UK-based work placement following a resit or repeat period
 - Required to undertake UK-based fieldwork
 - Required to repeat UK-based practical or laboratory work
 - Required to undertake a UK-based exam where there is a requirement to attend in-person OR is a PGR student who has received an extension to their registration or is currently in the examination phase
- 5.9 Under no circumstances will a CAS be issued to a student who has already submitted their final pieces of assessment or where attendance is currently below the expected standard, in line with the [University's Attendance & Engagement Policy](#). It is at the discretion of the Student Visa Compliance Team to consider if attendance has met the required threshold, and reserves the right to not extend sponsorship where necessary.
- 5.10 Students do not have an automatic right to extend their visa. Each request will be considered individually upon its own merit. The university reserves the right to refuse a visa extension to any student and cannot accept any responsibility if a student is unable to secure a visa extension for any reason. Students have the right to review this decision within 10 working days of being notified of the rejection, as outlined in section 6.8.

- 5.11 The university will only offer sponsorship under the Student Route to students who are studying on the university's own premises (including UGIC). Students who are registered on University of Greenwich programmes delivered by a partner institution should discuss options for sponsorship directly with the partner institution.

6. Issuing a CAS

- 6.1 By issuing a CAS, the university confirms that it is willing to act as the applicant/student's sponsor for the purposes of obtaining a Student Visa and agrees to comply with its obligations as a Student sponsor.
- 6.2 All requests for a CAS are subject to extensive checking and verification by the university. Where false or misleading information is provided to the university in relation to a CAS request (whether knowingly or unknowingly), the university may invoke the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#) and/or refer the matter to UKVI or other relevant authorities.
- 6.3 CAS's are issued in strict accordance with the Student Sponsor Guidance in force at the time that the CAS is assigned on the UKVI Sponsor Management System.
- 6.4 A CAS will only be assigned where the university believes that the applicant/student is able to make a successful Student visa application. This includes, but is not limited to, monetary requirements, academic progression, immigration history, and the ability to satisfy a UKVI caseworker during a credibility interview.
- 6.5 The university will not normally issue a CAS in instances where a student has:
- a) demonstrated a lack of engagement with their current or a previous programme
 - b) not made sufficient academic progress
 - c) broken the conditions of their current or a previous visa
 - d) stayed in the UK beyond the expiry of their current visa
 - e) an ongoing alternative application for another visa route, which is awaiting decision
 - f) given the university any reasonable cause to doubt their intention for seeking a UK visa
 - g) been found to have used any form of deception, whether knowingly or unknowingly, as part of a current or previous visa or university application
 - h) an adverse immigration history
 - i) an outstanding and overdue tuition fee debt to the university
- 6.6 In considering the circumstances listed above in 6.5, the university will consider any evidence as it deems appropriate.
- 6.7 The issue of a CAS is at the sole discretion of the university. The university reserves the right to refuse a CAS to any applicant/student. The final decision on whether a CAS may be issued rests with the Head of Visa Compliance for current students, or the Senior International Operations Manager for new applicants.
- 6.8 A student may request a review of a decision to refuse a CAS, to be submitted in writing to Paul Rees, Head of Visa Compliance (P.Rees@greenwich.ac.uk), within 10 calendar days of the decision by using the *Student Review Template* in *Appendix*.

- 6.9 A new applicant may request a review of a decision to refuse a CAS to join the University. This should be submitted in writing to Ben Singer, Deputy Head of International: Operations (Ben.Singer@greenwich.ac.uk), within 10 calendar days of the decision.
- 6.10 Applicants/students are responsible for checking the accuracy of the information contained in their CAS prior to submitting a visa application. Where an error has been made, the university will always endeavour to correct it in a timely manner, but cannot accept responsibility for matters arising from the use of an inaccurate CAS if not informed at the time that CAS status was assigned and a visa application has already been made
- 6.11 Issuing a CAS does not guarantee a successful visa application. The university cannot accept any responsibility for a failed visa application, or for any consequences (financial or otherwise) of such failure.

7. Withdrawal of sponsorship under the Student Route

- 7.1 Sponsorship under the Student Route will be withdrawn for students who:
- a) fail to fully register for their programme of study within required timeframes. Students are required to re-register at the beginning of each academic year on an annual basis
 - b) have their studies terminated by a Progression and Assessment Board, including successfully completing studies ahead of schedule and before initial CAS end date
 - c) withdraw or interrupt from their programme of study
 - d) do not engage, or are unable to engage, with their studies for a period of more than 60 days
 - e) do not require 'continued participation' with their studies for a period of more than 60 days (except for recognised University vacation periods), as per 5.125 of the [Student Sponsor Guidance – Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#)
 - f) are expelled or suspended for a period of more than 60 days from the university
 - g) move to a different visa category
- 7.2 Sponsorship will normally be withdrawn for students who:
- a) successfully complete their programme in advance of the end date stated on their CAS
 - b) Fail to meet the requirements set out in the University's [Attendance and Engagement Policy](#)
 - c) elect to transfer to part-time or distance-learning
 - d) fail to provide accurate and up to date UK term-time contact details, to include a UK-based address and phone number
 - e) fail to provide the university with a copy of their passport, visa, or qualifications when requested
 - f) are discovered to be in breach of the terms of their visa
 - g) are in breach of UKVI regulations for any reason
- 7.3 Students for whom sponsorship has been withdrawn will normally have their studies permanently or temporarily terminated, unless evidence is provided to show that they hold immigration status which permits study.
- 7.4 A student may request a review of a decision to withdraw sponsorship, to be submitted in writing to Paul Rees, Head of Visa Compliance (P.Rees@greenwich.ac.uk) within 10

calendar days of the notification of sponsorship withdrawal (see Appendix for *Student Review Template*).

8. Start Up Visa

- 8.1 UKVI closed the Start Up Route to new applicants in April 2023. This means the University cannot offer new endorsements under the Start Up Route. However the University remains a legacy sponsor and is obligated to monitor and engage with students it has previously endorsed under the route, who still hold their Start Up visas.
- 8.2 Graduates who have been offered endorsement by the University and hold a Start Up Visa are expected to maintain regular contact with the university and adhere to the requirements of the mentoring scheme provided by *Generator*.
- 8.3 The university may revoke endorsement and inform UKVI if:
 - a) the graduate fails to maintain regular contact
 - b) it considers insufficient progress has been made in implementing the business plan
 - c) it believes that the graduate is in breach of the conditions of their visa
 - d) it considers that continued endorsement of the graduate or business would cause undue damage (reputational or otherwise) to the university
- 8.4 A graduate may request a review of a decision to refuse or withdraw a Start Up endorsement, to be submitted in writing to Paul Rees, Head of Visa Compliance (P.Rees@greenwich.ac.uk) within 10 calendar days of the decision (see *Appendix* for *Student Review Template*).

9. Graduate Route

- 9.1 The Graduate Route is a non-sponsored route and the university will not issue a CAS solely for the purpose of submitting a Graduate Route application.
- 9.2 Upon successful completion of studies, the university will notify UKVI of this for any student on a Student Visa with an established presence in the UK. This report will only occur once a Progression & Award Board has sat and degree outcome has been officially published, or via Chair's Action.

10. Skilled Worker Visa

- 10.1 The Skilled Worker Visa is a sponsored route for full-time employment.
- 10.2 Student Visa holders who choose to switch to the Skilled Worker Visa during their studies, will be required to change to part-time mode of study. As a duty of care, the university does not allow international students to continue studies on a full-time basis alongside full-time employment.
- 10.3 The university will require evidence of permission from their employer to undertake part-time study alongside full-time employment.
- 10.4 In the event where part-time mode is not available on a student's programme of study, they will be required to exit from the university or change programme where appropriate. The university is not responsible for any adverse consequences as a result of students' actions in switching immigration categories.

- 10.5 The university will not allow a student on a Sandwich programme to undertake the work placement element under the Skilled Worker Visa, as the Sandwich placement year is classified as study for UKVI purposes.

11. General

- 11.1 From time to time, it may be necessary or desirable to make exceptions to this policy. Any exception will be considered on an individual basis without precedent and will be at the sole discretion of the Head of Visa Compliance.
- 11.2 UKVI policy is subject to change. The university's policy and procedures may therefore change at short notice in order to remain compliant with current requirements. The university cannot accept any liability for any loss (financial or otherwise) incurred as a result of policy changes imposed by UKVI.
- 11.3 The university will collect and retain information about its applicants/students/graduates sponsored under the Student Route, or Start Up Visa as it considers appropriate to be in accordance UKVI guidance. The university may share this information with UKVI to the extent that it believes is required or desirable to comply with its duties as a licenced sponsor.
- 11.4 The university cannot accept any liability for any loss (financial or otherwise) incurred as a result of action which it believes to be necessary or desirable to comply with its duties as a licenced sponsor.
- 11.5 The university cannot accept any liability for any loss (financial or otherwise) incurred as a result of action taken by UKVI against the university in relation to its status as a Student sponsor or Legacy endorsing body under the Start-Up Visa scheme.

APPENDIX - Student Request for Review: Template

Before completing this form, please ensure that you have read the **Sponsorship of International Students for Visa Purposes Policy & Guidance**.

Your appeal should be submitted within **10 calendar days** of the email notification that you received informing you of the decision taken.

All current requests must be emailed to Paul Rees, Head of Visa Compliance (P.Rees@greenwich.ac.uk) and/or studentvisa@greenwich.ac.uk. New Applicant requests must be emailed to Ben Singer, Deputy Head of International: Operations (Ben.Singer@greenwich.ac.uk),and /or casrequests@greenwich.ac.uk

1. Personal Information:

First name	
Surname	
Banner ID	
Programme of Study	
Year/Stage of Study	
University Email Address	
Personal Email Address	
Contact Telephone Number	
<i>Note: if any of the above differs to that which is shown on Banner, you must also update your details on the portal.</i>	

2. Reason for Review:

You have the right to request a review on the following grounds. **Please tick one of the below and enter the date you are submitting your request to us:*

<input type="checkbox"/>	CAS for visa extension not granted
<input type="checkbox"/>	Withdrawal of Student Visa Sponsorship

	Endorsement for Start-Up Visa was withdrawn
--	---

Date review request submitted:	
--------------------------------	--

3. Further details:

Please give an explanation below as to why you have requested the review and any information which may be useful to your case.

Note: Please include any information that you wish to be considered as part of your review. It is important that only relevant information is included and to keep the information factual and concise.

--

4. Any associated evidence:

Please outline here and attach in your email any documents/evidence in support of your review.

Note: attached evidence should be relevant to your review only, and you do not need to provide original ID documents or previous BRPs unless necessary for your case.

a)

b)

c)