

Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

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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the university will offer sponsorship for immigration purposes, and the circumstances in which such sponsorship may be withdrawn.	

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Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy provides clarity on the university's approach to sponsorship of students 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the university will offer sponsorship for immigration purposes, and the circumstances in which such sponsorship may be withdrawn.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.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to:
- 2.2.1 employees of the university (except where the employee is also a student 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.

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 9 of the Tuition [Fees Policy and Procedures](#) .
- 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 a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) can be offered.
- 4.10 After the university has made an unconditional offer to study , a CAS will be issued in accordance with section 56 of this policy.
- 4.11 Receipt of an unconditional offer, 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. Issuing a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.

- 5.5 The university will not normally issue a CAS (including for visa extensions purposes) in instances where an applicant/student has:
- a) demonstrated a lack of engagement with their current or a previous programme
 - b) not made sufficient academic progress
 - c) breached the conditions of their current or a previous visa
 - d) stayed in the UK beyond the expiry of their most recent 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
 - j) where a student has a gap of more than 60 days before they are required to re-engage with studies
- 5.6 In considering the circumstances listed above in 5.5, the university will consider any evidence as it deems appropriate.
- 5.7 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 Assistant Head of Visa Compliance for current students, or the Deputy Head of International: Operations for new applicants.
- 5.8 A student may request a review of a decision to refuse a CAS, to be submitted in writing to the Assistant Head of Visa Compliance (studentvisa@greenwich.ac.uk), within 10 working days of the decision by using the [Student Review Template](#) (available on the same web page as the policy).
- 5.9 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 Deputy Head of International: Operations (casrequests@greenwich.ac.uk), within 10 working days of the decision.
- 5.10 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 applicant/student must inform the university immediately, and the university will always endeavour to correct it in a timely manner. However, the university 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
- 5.11 Issuing a CAS does not guarantee a successful visa application. The university cannot accept any responsibility for a failed visa application, when no error has been made by the university, or for any consequences (financial or otherwise) of such failure.

6. 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.

- 6.1 Students who require a visa extension must request a CAS from the university for this purpose via the [University's visa extension web pages](#). 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.

- 6.2 All requests for a CAS for the purpose of a visa extension will be considered in accordance with current UKVI guidance and section 5 of this policy.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 Where a student must leave the UK in order to submit a successful visa application, the CAS will normally be considered upon receipt of suitable evidence of departure.
- 6.6 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. Under no circumstances will a CAS be issued to a student who has already submitted their final piece of assessment.
- 6.7 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)".
- 6.8 The University will only issue a CAS to resit or repeat in the UK if a student meets 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 *and* also meets section 6.7 as above
 - Is a PGR student who has received an extension to their registration or is currently in the examination phase
- 6.9 Under no circumstances will a CAS be issued to a student where attendance is below the expected standard, in line with the Student Attendance Policy and Procedure. It is at the discretion of the Visa Compliance Team to consider if attendance has met the required threshold.. It is the student's responsibility to maintain a good level of attendance and engagement with their studies at all times and the university reserves the right to not extend sponsorship if this is not met.
- 6.10 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 to issue a CAS 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 5.8.
- 6.11 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.

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 (PAB), including successfully completing studies more than two weeks ahead of schedule and before initial CAS end date as per 3.12 of the [Student Sponsor Guidance – Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#)
 - 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 calendar days
 - e) do not require 'continued participation within 60 calendar days of the next academic period starting (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 calendar 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) Fail to meet the requirements set out in the University's [Principal Conditions of Registration](#)
 - d) elect to transfer to part-time or distance-learning
 - e) fail to provide accurate and up to date UK term-time contact details, to include a UK-based address and phone number
 - f) fail to provide the university with a copy of their passport, visa, or qualifications when requested
 - g) are discovered to be in breach of the terms of their visa
 - h) 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 the Assistant Head of Visa Compliance (studentvisa@greenwich.ac.uk) within 10 working days of the notification of sponsorship withdrawal (see [Student Review Template available on the same web page as the policy](#)).

8. Graduate Route

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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, please see [here](#) for details of the process. This report will only occur once a Progression & Award Board (PAB) has sat and a degree outcome has been officially published, and the student still holds valid Student leave.

9. Skilled Worker Visa

- 9.1 The Skilled Worker Visa is a sponsored route for full-time employment.

- 9.2 Student Visa holders who choose to switch to the Skilled Worker Visa during their studies, will normally be required to change to part-time mode of study. As a duty of care, normally the university does not allow international students to continue studies on a full-time basis alongside full-time employment.
- 9.3 The university will require evidence of permission from their employer to undertake part-time study alongside full-time employment.
- 9.4 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.
- 9.5 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.

10. Student Union Sabbatical Officers

- 10.1 A student who is elected to undertake a Student Union Sabbatical Officer position during their studies will be required to interrupt from their main programme for which their most recent visa leave was granted.
- 10.2 A sponsored student may wish to consider seeking immigration advice before accepting the position of Student Union Sabbatical Officer.
- 10.3 All Student Union Sabbatical Officers will be required to adhere to the same conditions as other sponsored students, which include the requirement to re-register each academic session, and meet the engagement requirements as set out in the [Attendance Monitoring Policy and Procedures](#). Failure to meet these requirements may result in a withdrawal of visa sponsorship.
- 10.4 The university will not allow a student to utilise the Student Union Sabbatical Officer role as a work placement if studying on a Sandwich programme, as any Sandwich placement year is strictly classified as study for UKVI purposes. The Home Office (August 2024 FAQs, see *Appendix 1*) have stated that a 'Student Union Sabbatical Officer is expected to [take] a sabbatical from their studies for the purpose of undertaking a full-time, salaried, elected, executive union position. They should not therefore be studying and working full-time at the same time'.

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, 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 1

Home Office FAQ Study Team – August 2024

5. Studying full time whilst working as a Sabbatical Officer

A CAS is issued either for a course of study, or for a role as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer (SUSO), not for both in combination. Though it is possible to commence a SUSO role with a Student CAS when the sponsor reports a change of circumstances as per paragraph 4.40 of [document 2](#) of the Student Sponsor Guidance.

A Student Union Sabbatical Officer is expected to be taking a sabbatical from their studies for the purpose of undertaking a full-time, salaried, elected, executive union position. They should not therefore be studying and working full-time at the same time. Those issued permission as a SUSO are exempted from the term-time working hour limits, which apply to ensure students following a course of study are able to prioritise their studies, on this basis.