

Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

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This policy set out the University's approach on sponsoring students under the University of Greenwich Student Sponsor License and the principles under which the University will offer visa sponsorship. It also outlines the University's obligations regarding compliance with sponsor duties as set out by UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI), including circumstances in which student visa sponsorship may be withdrawn.	

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Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out the University's approach on sponsoring students under the University of Greenwich Student Sponsor License and the principles under which the University will offer visa sponsorship by way of assigning a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies).
- 1.2 This policy also outlines the University's obligations regarding compliance with sponsor duties as set out by UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI), including circumstances in which student visa sponsorship may be withdrawn.

2. Context

- 2.1 The University of Greenwich holds a Student Sponsor Licence, issued by UKVI to sponsor international students admitted to programmes of study at the University. This includes for programmes studied at the University of Greenwich International College (UGIC).
- 2.2 The University is obligated to comply with [Student Sponsor Guidance](#) and regulations enforced by UKVI.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to:
 - 3.1.1 applicants and students of programmes delivered on University of Greenwich premises who require a student visa to study in the UK.
 - 3.1.2 Applicants and students of UGIC who require a student visa to study in the UK.
 - 3.1.3 Section 11 applies to non-sponsored students, but who are still subject to immigration control.
- 3.2 This policy does not apply to:
 - 3.2.1 employees of the University (except where the employee is also a student of the University).
 - 3.2.2 applicants and students of University of Greenwich programmes delivered via a partner institution.

4. Admission of New Students (Applicants)

- 4.1 Admission requirements for applicants requiring a student visa to study in the UK must adhere to current [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#) and may be subject to change.
- 4.2 Where UKVI guidance is amended after an application to study has been received, the University will apply the guidance in place at the time a CAS is assigned.
- 4.3 Only applicants for programmes which satisfy the eligibility criteria for student visa sponsorship, as stated in [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#), will be considered for a CAS.
- 4.4 Sponsorship will only be offered to applicants who are required to be in the UK to undertake their studies on a full-time basis. Applicants for programmes delivered wholly, or predominantly, by distance learning are not eligible.
- 4.5 If an applicant commences studies via distance learning, with the intention of becoming a full-time, campus-based student at a later date, sponsorship will be offered for the period that a student is required to be in the UK only.
 - 4.5.1 If 4.5 applies, but a student is unable to obtain a visa and cannot continue with their studies, they will be withdrawn from the University.
- 4.6 Applicants must provide suitable evidence to demonstrate they meet the University's [English Language requirements](#).
- 4.7 Where an applicant has previously studied in the UK, the programme applied for must fulfil the requirements for academic progression, as defined within [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#). Applicants may be required to provide the University with a full academic and/or immigration history to support this.
- 4.8 Applicants must provide the University with specified documentation and fulfil all conditions of their offer before sponsorship can be offered. All documentation will be retained in accordance with the [University's International Retention Schedule](#).
- 4.9 Where a deposit is required, this must be paid in full before a CAS can be assigned.
- 4.10 Following acceptance of an unconditional offer to study at the University, a CAS will be assigned in accordance with section 5 below.
- 4.11 Receipt of an unconditional offer does not guarantee a CAS will be assigned.
- 4.12 The University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship to any applicant. The University will clearly explain reasons for a refusal in sponsorship to an applicant.
- 4.13 Sponsorship is only offered to applicants studying on University premises (including UGIC). Applicants for University of Greenwich programmes delivered via a [partner institution](#) should discuss options for sponsorship directly with that institution. Not all partner institutions are able to offer student visa sponsorship.

5. Assigning a CAS

- 5.1 By assigning a CAS, the University confirms it is willing to act as an applicant/student's sponsor for the purposes of obtaining a student visa.
- 5.2 All requests for a CAS are subject to extensive checking and verification by the University. This may include an immigration history check through UKVI. Where false or misleading information is provided (including unintentionally), the University reserves the right to invoke the [Student Disciplinary Procedure](#) and/or refer the matter to UKVI or relevant authorities where appropriate.
- 5.3 All CAS are assigned in strict accordance with [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#) in force at that time.
- 5.4 A CAS will only be assigned to an applicant/student where the University believes that a visa application will be successful; this includes assessing factors such as, but not limited to, financial requirements, immigration history and credibility.
- 5.5 It is the responsibility of an applicant/student to check all information in their CAS is accurate prior to submitting a visa application. Where an error has been made, the applicant/student must inform the University immediately. The University cannot accept responsibility for matters arising from the use of an inaccurate CAS if not informed at the time that a CAS remains assigned and a visa application has not been submitted.
- 5.6 Assigning a CAS does not guarantee a successful visa application. The University cannot accept responsibility for a failed visa application, when no error has been made or for any consequences of such failure, including financial.
- 5.7 The University will not normally issue a CAS, including to extend, in instances where an applicant/student has:
 - a) a record of poor attendance/engagement on their current or previous programme
 - b) not made sufficient academic progress
 - c) breached, or is suspected to have breached, the conditions of their current/previous visa
 - d) overstayed in the UK beyond their visa end date
 - e) an ongoing application for another visa route, which is awaiting decision
 - f) given the University any reasonable cause to doubt their intention for seeking a visa
 - g) been found, or is suspected, to have used any form of deception (including unintentionally) as part of a current/previous visa and/or University application, including by providing fraudulent/falsified information or documentation to mislead

- h) an adverse immigration history
 - i) outstanding tuition fee debt to the University
 - j) a gap of more than 60 calendar days before they are required to engage with their studies
 - k) where the remaining duration of their programme will result in an applicant/student exceeding the maximum permitted length of study as a sponsored student
- 5.8 An applicant may appeal against a decision to refuse a CAS to join the University. This must be submitted in writing to the CAS Operations Manager at casrequests@greenwich.ac.uk within 10 working days of the decision.
- 5.9 A continuing student may appeal against a decision to reject a CAS for visa extension purposes. This must be submitted to the Senior Student Visa Compliance Officer at studentvisaappeals@greenwich.ac.uk within 10 working days of the decision.
- 5.10 Assigning 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 Deputy Head of International: Operations for applicants and Assistant Head of Visa Compliance for current students.

6. Assigning CAS for Visa Extensions & Current Students

This section refers to current students requiring more time to complete their programme of study; including those requesting to switch to the Student Route. Applicants, including graduates intending to start a new programme, should refer to section 4.

- 6.1 Current students needing to extend their student visa must apply for a CAS from the University by submitting a completed [CAS Request Form](#). The University endeavours to remind students of their visa end date, however cannot be held responsible if a student fails to submit their CAS request in-time.
- 6.2 All CAS requests for visa extension purposes are considered in accordance with current [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#) and this policy.
- 6.3 Students seeking a visa extension must provide the University with specified documentation and fulfil any [conditions specified](#) before a request can be considered. All documentation will be retained in accordance with the [University's International Retention Schedule](#).
- 6.4 A CAS will only be considered where there is an unequivocal requirement for a student to remain in, or return to, the UK to complete their studies.

- 6.5 Where a student is required to depart the UK to apply for their visa, a CAS will normally only be considered upon receipt of sufficient evidence of departure.
- 6.6 A CAS request to extend will only be considered where a student has academic approval for extending their period of study and for academic engagement purposes. Under no circumstances will a CAS be issued to a student who has already submitted their final piece of assessment.
- 6.7 A CAS for resit or repeat purposes will only be assigned if continued participation (in classes or by contact) is required, as per [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#). An in-person resit exam alone does not normally constitute continued participation.
- 6.8 The University will not assign a CAS to continue sponsorship for any student whose attendance is below a satisfactory level. A review of attendance will be undertaken across a student's entire programme studied to date; this does not need to be limited to the current academic year they are studying. It is the student's responsibility to maintain a good level of attendance and engagement with their studies at all times. The University reserves the right to not extend visa sponsorship if this is not met.
- 6.9 Students do not have an automatic right to extend their visa. Each request is considered on its own merit. The University reserves the right to not extend sponsorship and reject further CAS to any student and cannot accept any responsibility if a student is unable to secure a visa. Students have the right to review this decision within 10 working days of being notified of the rejection, as outlined in section 5.9.

7. Attendance Monitoring

- 7.1 Sponsored students are expected to adhere to the University [Attendance Policy & Procedure](#) at all times.
- 7.2 Failure to demonstrate active and consistent engagement with studies can have implications on student visa sponsorship, as outlined in sections 6.8, 9.1 and 9.2 of this policy.

8. Programme Transfers

- 8.1 Students are only permitted to request to transfer their programme of study, as permitted under the conditions set out in the University's [Principle Conditions of Registration](#).
- 8.2 All requests to transfer programme for sponsored students must obtain approval from the Visa Compliance Team.
- 8.3 All programme transfer requests will be reviewed on their own merit and must sufficiently meet the following conditions, in accordance with [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#):

- a) the new programme can be completed within a student's current period of permission
 - b) the new programme is not at a lower level, it is related to the previous programme for which the student's CAS was assigned, and supports the applicant/student's genuine career aspirations
- 8.4 The final decision on whether a sponsored student can transfer programmes rests with the Visa Compliance Team.
- 8.5 In the event that an invalid programme transfer is processed without obtaining prior approval from the Visa Compliance Team, the University reserves the right to request a student be reverted to their original programme of study.
- 8.6 If a programme transfer request cannot be approved, the student will be informed that if they wish to continue with the transfer, they must withdraw from their current programme of study and reapply for the desired programme. In such instances, sponsorship will be withdrawn and a student will be required to apply for a new CAS; this is likely to involve needing to depart the UK.

9. Withdrawal of Student Visa Sponsorship

- 9.1 The University will withdraw student visa sponsorship for students who:
- a) fail to complete enrolment for their programme by the University deadline
 - b) fail to re-register each academic year of their studies
 - c) are exited from their programme at a Progression & Award Board (PAB)
 - d) successfully complete their studies more than two weeks before their CAS end date
 - e) choose to withdraw from or interrupt their studies
 - f) are withdrawn, or interrupted, from their studies by the University
 - g) do not engage, or are unable to engage, with their studies for a period of more than 60 calendar days
 - h) are not required to engage with their studies for a period of more than 60 calendar days (except for recognised [University vacation periods](#))
 - i) are expelled or suspended from the University for a period of more than 60 calendar days
 - j) switch immigration category

- 9.2 The University will normally withdraw student visa sponsorship for students who:
- a) fail to meet the requirements set out in the University's [Principal Conditions of Registration](#)
 - b) fail to adhere to the University's [Attendance Monitoring Policy & Procedure](#)
 - c) request to transfer to part-time or distance-learning mode
 - d) fail to provide an accurate and up-to-date UK term-time and phone number
 - e) fail to provide the University with a copy of their passport, visa or qualifications when requested (including valid ATAS where applicable)
 - f) are discovered to be in breach of their visa conditions or UKVI regulations for any reason
- 9.3 In instances where sponsorship has been withdrawn, a withdrawal or interruption from studies will normally be requested, unless a student provides evidence of a valid immigration status, which permits study.
- 9.4 A student may appeal against of a decision to withdraw sponsorship by submitting a [Request for Review](#). This must be submitted to the Assistant Head of Visa Compliance at studentvisaappeals@greenwich.ac.uk within 10 working days of the notification of withdrawal.

10. The Graduate Route

- 10.1 The Graduate Route is a non-sponsored route. The University's obligation as per [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#) is to report successful completion of studies for its eligible sponsored students.
- 10.2 Successful completion of studies will be reported to UKVI where a student:
- a) has successfully completed their programme and this meets the qualification requirement
 - b) has met the requirement for studying in the UK
 - c) holds a valid student visa
- 10.3 Reporting to UKVI will only occur once results have been ratified and officially published following a Progression & Award Board (PAB).
- 10.4 Reporting successful completion does not guarantee a successful visa application.

11. Other Visa Types

- 11.1 As per the University's [Principle Conditions of Registration](#), all students studying at the University must ensure they hold and retain the right to study for the full duration of their programme. This applies to all students subject to immigration control, whether sponsored or unsponsored.
- 11.2 It is the responsibility of all students, sponsored or unsponsored, to provide the University with evidence of their valid immigration status, including proof of [3C leave](#) where necessary, to demonstrate continued right to study.
- 11.3 It is at the discretion of the Visa Compliance Team to determine whether evidence of a student's immigration status is sufficient to support continuation of studies.
- 11.4 In the event that a student no longer holds valid leave to remain or study in the UK, the University may request to withdraw them from their studies.
- 11.5 A student may appeal against a decision to withdraw by submitting a [Request for Review](#). This must be submitted to the Assistant Head of Visa Compliance at studentvisaappeals@greenwich.ac.uk within 10 working days of the notification of withdrawal.
- 11.6 The Skilled Worker visa is a sponsored route for employment purposes. Holders of this visa type are normally required to study via part-time mode only; this is as a duty of care to our students.
- 11.7 Where part-time mode is not available, a student on a Skilled Worker visa will be required to transfer programme or exit from the university if an appropriate alternative is not available. The University cannot be held responsible for any adverse consequences as a result of a student choosing to switch immigration category.

12. Student Union Sabbatical Officers

- 12.1 A sponsored student can be elected to undertake a Student Union Sabbatical Officer position, either during their studies or in the academic year immediately after graduating. This can be for up to two years.
- 12.2 The University is required to report details of a student's Sabbatical Officer year to UKVI, including contract start and end dates.
- 12.3 It is the responsibility of a student before signing their contract, in conjunction with the Greenwich Student Union (GSU), to ensure they are permitted to undertake the role and discuss any implications with the Visa Compliance Team, as well as their faculty. It is also recommended that a student seeks immigration advice prior to onboarding.

- 12.4 Study is not permitted whilst undertaking a Sabbatical Officer position; this includes in the form of a work placement. Therefore, a student who is partway through their studies will be required to interrupt from their programme and will be reinstated once their contract is complete.
- 12.5 In the event that a student has not passed all assessments and is required to resit some items, they will not be permitted to start their Sabbatical Officer position until an agreement has been reached between the faculty, Visa Compliance Team and GSU. The University cannot accept responsibility if a student is unable to start their Sabbatical position on its original start date due to incomplete study.
- 12.6 If a Student Union Sabbatical Officer's visa is due to expire either during or shortly after their contract, they should request a [CAS](#) in the normal way.
- 12.7 Student Union Sabbatical Officers are required to comply with the same conditions as per their sponsorship, including meeting the engagement requirements as set out in the [Attendance Monitoring Policy & Procedure](#) and re-registering each academic year. Failure to meet these requirements may result in a withdrawal of visa sponsorship.

13. General

- 13.1 On occasion, it may be necessary to make exceptions to this policy. Any exception will be considered on an individual basis without precedent and is at the sole discretion of the Assistant Head and/or Head of Visa Compliance.
- 13.2 This policy is subject to regular change and the University is entitled to revise its procedures in accordance with its Student Sponsor duties or due to UKVI policy change. The University cannot accept liability for any loss, financial or otherwise, incurred as a result.
- 13.3 The University will collect and retain information about its applicants, sponsored students and graduates, as required in accordance with [UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance](#). The University may be required to share this information with UKVI under its duties as a Student Sponsor license holder.
- 13.4 The University cannot accept liability for any loss, financial or otherwise, incurred as a result of action deemed necessary to remain compliant with its Student Sponsor license duties.
- 13.5 The University cannot accept liability for any loss, financial or otherwise, incurred as a result of action taken by UKVI against its Student Sponsor license.