

Student Sponsorship and CAS Issuing Policy

1. Purpose

This document sets out the University's policy regarding the sponsorship of overseas applicants and students requiring a Student visa. This policy is specific to the University of Kent and does not represent a full statement of immigration or Student sponsor requirements. This policy is subject to change and the University is entitled to revise its policies or procedures relating to compliance with its Student sponsor duties at any time. The Immigration Rules and Student route guidance will at all times supersede and override the content of this policy. The University is under no legal obligation to sponsor any individual and exercises caution with respect to issuing a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to not risk its status as a Student sponsor.

2. Key Responsibilities

Responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy and any accompanying procedures lies with Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance who is the Home Office Authorising Officer, with assistance of the Student Immigration Compliance Team (SICT), Central/Medway Student Administration Offices, International Recruitment office, Admissions teams and Divisions.

All staff working with applicants and students covered by the points based immigration system must ensure the policy is adhered to accordingly.

3. Student Sponsorship and CAS Assignment

3.1. The Admissions team is responsible for assigning CASs to applicants starting a new course at the University as well as existing students switching into Student route during their studies. CASs for existing sponsored Students who wish to further extend their permission in order to complete a course will be issued by the Student Immigration Compliance Team.

3.2. The University will only assign a CAS to an applicant if they have met all the conditions of their offer, entry requirements of the University as well as the conditions of this policy.

3.3 CASs will be assigned no more than six months prior to course start date for new applicants currently overseas or three months prior to course start date for any applicants already in the UK. For any student returning from intermission, their CASs will be assigned 3 months prior to the appropriate start date. For existing students requiring an extension to their visa to continue on a course there is no set period prior to visa expiry date in which a student must apply for an extension; however, CASs will only be issued in a reasonable timeframe which align with the student's programme of study and no earlier than 3 months prior to the appropriate visa expiry date.

3.4 The University will make appropriate checks to ensure any applicant or student already in the UK has valid permission to study prior to issuing a CAS. This may include an Immigration History Check (with the applicant/student's consent) conducted through the University's UKVI Account Manager.

3.5 The University may make any additional checks it deems necessary to ensure it only sponsors genuine applicants or students who will successfully obtain a visa. These checks may include, but are not limited to reviewing bank statements and financial documents or requesting previous CAS from former institutions.

3.6. The University will not sponsor applicants or students in the following situations:

- The course the applicant or student intends to study will not comply with Student route requirements.
- If we are not satisfied that an applicant or student will comply with the conditions of their Student permission (e.g. intention to work, past history of working more than 20 hours per week, past history of poor attendance/engagement) or if a student has breached their visa conditions.
- An applicant or student has submitted documents which are proven or suspected to be fraudulent.
- The applicant or student has provided false information to the University, presented fraudulent documentation or omitted relevant information from their application.
- An applicant or student has outstanding tuition and accommodation fee debts with the University.
- The duration of an applicant's or student's course or extension of leave will result in the applicant or student exceeding the maximum allowable time studying as a sponsored Student.
- An applicant will not arrive in time for their course's latest start date. CAS will not be issued after the Friday immediately before week 0 for any student with a standard September start date.
- The course does not represent academic progression in accordance with the Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules and section of this policy.

3.7 The University will only sponsor an applicant or student where it believes the visa application will be successful and will not fall for refusal and reserves the right to not sponsor any applicant or student if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting otherwise.

3.8 The University will not normally sponsor an applicant or student who has overstayed unless there were exceptional circumstances which prevented the applicant or student from making an in-time application. The University applies a high threshold for what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' including:

- Serious illness which prevents the applicant or student or their representative from making an in-time application (supported by appropriate medical documentation)
- Travel or postal delays beyond the applicant's or student's control (e.g. unforeseen postal strike or travel delays due to natural disaster or war)

- Inability to provide necessary documents due to unavoidable circumstances such as the Home Office being at fault of losing or delaying the return of documents

3.9 Where ATAS clearance is required, the University will only issue a CAS once a copy of the ATAS clearance certificate has been sent to the University by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

3.10 Applicants requiring Student sponsorship may not defer their admission to the University, they will be required to re-apply to the University.

3.11 Any student wishing to extend their leave as a sponsored Student to study at the University must:

- submit a CAS Application form
- agree to abide to the University's Terms and Conditions of Student Sponsorship
- provide any required supporting evidence

4. Academic Progression

4.1 The University will only sponsor applicants or students who meet academic progression requirements set out in the Immigration Rules, associated appendices and Student Sponsor Guidance

5. Length of Sponsorship

5.1 The University will sponsor a student for the duration of their course, subject to any compliance requirements of the University or the UKVI which would result in sponsorship being withdrawn. The University may withdraw sponsorship if it is not necessary to continue sponsorship or if the University cannot fulfil its sponsor duties.

5.2 The course start date on the CAS will correspond with the date of registration in person on the course or induction, whichever is earlier.

5.3 The course end date on the CAS will correspond with the course end date of the applicant's or student's programme of study and is the date by which an applicant or student has completed all academic elements of the course including taught sessions, examinations, assessments and writing and submitting dissertations and thesis unless these can be completed from afar and there is no substantial reason to remain on campus.

5.4 The course end date for PhD courses will be 4 years from the course start date. This covers the 3 year registration period where the student is undertaking full-time study plus the 1 year continuation period.

5.5 If a student wishes their leave to be extended to continue their course, the University will only sponsor the student for the remaining duration of the course. In the case of a postgraduate research student an extension will be granted only to the extension date authorised by either the Graduate and Researcher College/appropriate division or the submission deadline indicated on the student record/confirmed in writing as the completion date.

6. Visa Refusals

6.1 The University will only consider assigning one additional CAS following a visa refusal and only if the applicant or student can provide evidence to show there is minimal or no chance of their visa being refused a subsequent time.

6.2 Further CASs will not normally be assigned where an applicant or student has had a refusal due to failing a credibility interview.

6.3 Any applicant or student with a visa refusal will be reported to UK Visas & Immigration and any sponsorship will be withdrawn (unless they intend to submit an Administrative Review and sponsorship should not be withdrawn whilst the outcome is still pending).

6.4 Any applicant or student with a visa refusal who requests a new CAS must provide to the University all pages of their Home Office refusal notice plus transcripts of any interview that has taken place.

7. Sending a CAS to an Applicant or Student

7.1 A CAS will be provided directly to an applicant or student. A CAS will not be sent to any other party without the applicant's or student's consent. In all cases where an applicant or student has provided consent to send their CAS to a third party, such as an agent, the CAS will be sent to the applicant or student and copied to the third party.

8. Intermissions, Re-sits and Repeats

8.1 When a student returns to their studies following a period of intermission the University will only sponsor the student if they meet the conditions of this policy.

8.2 If a sponsored Student is outside the UK and is required to re-sit an exam the University will not assign a CAS to a student if there is no further participation or intention to study after the exam. The student will be expected to obtain a Standard Visitor visa (or entry clearance if a non-visa national) which will allow them to enter the UK to re-sit the exam.

8.3 If a student is required to repeat modules then a CAS will be assigned if the student's continued participation is required within 60 days of the start of the next academic period. For example, if a student is required to repeat 60 credits in the autumn term only and write exams in May then sponsorship would cease at the end of the autumn term. At the end of December there would be no continued participation required of the student within 60 days of the start of exams. Therefore the student would be required to leave the UK and return for their exams in May.

9. Writing Up, Vivas and Revisions

9.1 The University will not issue a CAS for a post graduate research student who has already submitted their thesis and requires an extension to their leave to attend their viva or complete revisions. This may be reviewed on a case by case basis.

9.2 In the event a student's continued participation on campus and use of University facilities is required for the purposes of carrying out revisions then the University may consider issuing a CAS

provided the University can continue to meet its sponsorship duties. These cases will be rare and the University will consider requests on a case by case basis and reserves the right to refuse any request to issue a CAS for a student in such circumstances.

9.3 Postgraduate research students outside the UK will not be sponsored to return to the UK to attend their viva. Students will be required to obtain a Standard Visitor visa (or entry clearance if non-visa nationals).

10. Pre-sessional Courses and International Foundation Programmes

10.1 The University will only assign a combined CAS to cover a pre-sessional course and main course of study if the applicant holds an unconditional offer on their main course of study and the pre-sessional English course is less than 3 months duration.

10.2 In all other cases a separate CAS will be issued for the pre-sessional course and a new CAS will be assigned for the main course when the student successfully completes the pre-sessional course, meets all conditions of their offer on the main course of study as well as meets the conditions of this policy.

10.3 Applicants studying an undergraduate course with an Integrated Foundation Year will be issued a single CAS to cover the entire period of study. Failure to successfully complete the Foundation Year may result in the withdrawal of sponsorship due to the strict study cap for undergraduate studies.

10.4 Students studying the International Foundation Programme (IFP) will be sponsored only for the period of study required to complete the IFP course.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with the Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules as well as good sector practice.

Version	Effective Date	Activity	Previous Version
1.0	17/01/2014	Initial version	N/A
2.0	2015	Updated by former Compliance Manager (Overseas Students)	1.0
3.0	29/04/2016	Updated by former Compliance Manager (Overseas Students)	2.0
4.0	2017	Updated by former Head of Student Immigration Compliance	3.0
5.0	16/05/2018	Updated by former Head of Student Immigration Compliance	4.0
6.0	19/12/2022	Updated by Student Immigration Compliance Manager	5.0
7.0	14/07/2023	Updated by Student Immigration Compliance Manager	6.0