

IFCELS Coronavirus FAQs

Updated 6th May 2020

This is a difficult and stressful time for all our students and offer holders. We understand you are feeling anxious about your student life, and the impact this will have on your studies, family, friends and community and we want to reassure you that the wellbeing of our students is our top priority here at IFCELS. We are working hard to address the concerns of our offer holder community and to confirm important decisions about the next academic year.

In this rapidly developing situation, we hope the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below will help with most queries.

Please note: new questions and answers will continue to be added to this list as required and as the situation develops.

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Applications, Offers, Acceptances

Are you still accepting applications?

YES. We continue to welcome applications for our ICC Foundation, FDPS Pre-Master's and ELAS programmes starting in September 2020. Our Admissions Team is currently working from home and applications are being processed as quickly as possible, but we are asking applicants to be as patient as possible as response times may be slightly longer than normal.

Can I defer my offer?

YES. SOAS will allow a one-year deferral for offers and applications. If you wish to defer, please contact the Admissions Team at ifcels@soas.ac.uk to let them know of your intention.

Do I still need to pay a deposit to accept my offer?

YES, a 10% deposit is still required in order to accept an offer for our ICC Foundation and FDPS Pre-master's and ELAS programmes.

Are deposits refundable?

YES. If a student is unable to attend their programme of study for reasons relating to the coronavirus outbreak, for example they cannot travel to the UK or their programme of study is cancelled, they are entitled to a full refund of their deposit.

I cannot fulfil my offer requirement because my final examinations have been delayed or cancelled. What should I do?

We realise that some students may not be able to meet the requirements of their offer because they are unable to take their final examinations or obtain a transcript of marks or graduation certificate in time. If you think that you might find yourself in this position, please contact ifcels@soas.ac.uk straight away so that we can see if there is another way to fulfil the requirement.

September 2020 and the New Academic Year

Will the new academic year start in September as planned, or will it be delayed?

We are planning to begin the 2020-21 academic year in September at the usual time but, depending on Government advice, teaching may combine on campus, online and blended learning. SOAS is very well prepared for online teaching with 20 years' experience of distance learning programmes, and IFCELS already offers platforms that include student/teacher interactions, student/student interactions, lively discussions, and full student support.

Do I need to travel to the UK if teaching is online?

If teaching has to be delivered online it will be possible for students to study in their own country until the campus is open for teaching.

Will I have everything at home in order to study successfully for my programme?

Yes. Our online flexible format offer:

- Full access to SOAS's online resources as a full-time SOAS student
- Technical support provided Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm (UK time)
- Full access to our wide range of online databases, journals, e-books and other online material
- Face-to-face interaction online with teachers and students
- Constructive and regular feedback

Your Wellbeing

I am feeling anxious about Coronavirus. What can I do?

We are in unprecedented times and it's very normal to be feeling anxious and unsettled at the moment. Although you have not yet commenced your studies with us, we appreciate that you need reassuring that the health and safety of our prospective students is a priority for us. We are regularly reviewing the support that we can offer students who are studying both on campus and online, and there is a lot of information about where you can get help and advice on our [Wellbeing page](#).

There are also steps you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing. A number of organisations have published guidance on mental health considerations relating to the coronavirus outbreak, including:

[Mind](#)

[The Mental Health Foundation](#)

[The World Health Organisation](#)

[Young Minds](#)

What pastoral support is available to me if I study remotely?

We understand that this is a very unsettling time for those due to commence their studies in September. If you would like to discuss anything related to your studies, we recommend emailing the Admissions Team at ifcels@soas.ac.uk or the IFCELS Welfare Adviser at dl20@soas.ac.uk. Each of our students also has a personal tutor who they can contact and talk to about getting the most from their studies, or dealing with problems that may be causing them concern.

If I become ill while I'm studying in the UK, what healthcare can I access?

It is important to remember to look after yourself while you are in the UK. It is likely that the health system in your country works very differently to the UK, so it is important that you read the information below carefully.

The National Health Service (NHS) is the healthcare system in the UK and is primarily funded through general taxation. Some NHS services are free at the point of delivery, others you need to pay for.

Short Term students cannot register with a doctor (known as General Practitioners (GP) in the UK), but you can still visit one as a temporary patient if required. This means you can visit a GP for advice and treatment. You will not have paid the immigration health surcharge as part of your visa application so you will need to obtain private medical insurance to ensure you are covered for any medical treatment. You will only have access to primary care, meaning you cannot be referred to a specialist.

If you have paid the immigration health surcharge as part of your Tier 4 Student Visa application, you will be entitled to full NHS services. If you have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), you can use it to receive free NHS treatment, at least until 31 December 2020.

More information about access to healthcare can be found on the [SOAS Student Advice and Wellbeing website](#)

English Language Requirements

What do I do if I can't take an IELTS because my centre is closed?

We understand that the coronavirus has had an impact on the ability of students from many regions to take the IELTS, TOEFL and PTE Academic test, as test centres have been closed. We therefore will be accepting the Duolingo and TOEFL IBT At Home online tests while IELTS tests are unavailable. [Find out more about online English tests.](#)

Will you run Pre-sessional English courses this summer?

YES. All Pre-sessional English courses are being delivered online, so you can join the course from your home country, and you will not need a visa to take it if you are outside the UK. For UG and PG offer holders, we are running [4-week and 8-week Pre-sessional English Courses](#). We are also running an online 4-week Pre-sessional English course for FDPS Pre-master's and ICC Foundation.

Visa and Immigration

Do I need a visa if teaching is delivered online from September?

We are planning to begin the 2020-21 academic year in September at the usual time but, depending on Government advice, teaching may combine on campus, online and blended learning. As this is an evolving situation, we will continue to update on current UK Government guidelines.

Current Home Office guidance states that you do not need a student visa to start a new course that is **online** if you will be outside the UK. We are, however, aware that many students are unable to leave the UK and need or would like to apply for Tier 4 leave to study a course that at present is provided only online. You might need more time to start a new course, or to change Tier 4 sponsor. We have asked the Home Office to address this question as a matter of urgency. Please wait for further advice. Currently all visa application centres outside the UK are closed.

I need to apply for a visa to come to the UK but my nearest visa application centre is closed.

Please check for updates on when [visa offices in your country](#) are expected to reopen. Remember, students can only apply for a visa three months before their official course start date, so for September 2020 that would be mid-June at the earliest. However, if teaching remains online in September, students will not need to travel to the UK and therefore a Tier 4 visa is not required; a visa is only required to enter the UK.