

Student visa guidance for applications made inside the UK

SOAS Student Advice Service endeavours to ensure that the information in this guide is accurate but please note that legislation is subject to change at short notice. We recommend always accessing this guide from the following link to ensure you are using the most up to date version of this document: www.soas.ac.uk/international/entry/applying-for-student-visas/

This guide should be used with the following documents:

SOAS Student visa financial requirement [guide](#)

SOAS Student visa application form [guide](#)

UKVI Student route caseworker [guidance](#)

UKVI Financial Requirements caseworker [guidance](#)

Contents:

Who can apply for a Student visa from within the UK?	3
Your current immigration status.....	3
Switching from a Graduate to a Student visa.....	3
28-day gap	3
Academic progression.....	3
When can I submit my Student visa application?	5
How can I submit my Student visa application?	5
How much does it cost?	5
How long will it take to process my application?	5
Verifying your identity	5
How do I submit my supporting documents?	6
Can I travel outside the UK whilst my visa application is being processed?	6
What happens if my current visa expires during the application process?	6
Receiving your decision and accessing your eVisa.....	6
Visa refusals and rejections.....	7
Visa expiry dates.....	7
Providing your new visa details to SOAS.....	7

Student visa requirements and evidence	8
Differentiation arrangements for ‘low risk’ nationals	8
Translations	8
Qualifications used to obtain offer	8
Academic Progression evidence	8
Financial requirements	9
Consent from your current or previous financial sponsor	9
Consent from parent(s)/guardians if under 18 years old	9
English Language Requirements	9
Summary of documents to be submitted:	11
Dependants	13
Further help	14

Who can apply for a Student visa from within the UK?

You must meet several criteria to extend or switch into the Student visa route from within the UK. If you don't meet these criteria, your application will be refused or rejected as invalid depending on your circumstances.

Your current immigration status

You **cannot** apply in the UK if you hold any of the following types of immigration permission as your application will be considered invalid with no right of appeal or administrative review:

- Standard Visitor
- Short-term Student
- Parent of a Child Student
- Seasonal Worker
- Domestic Worker in a private household
- Permission outside the Immigration Rules

You also cannot apply if you're on immigration bail.

Switching from a Graduate to a Student visa

You cannot enrol at SOAS whilst holding a Graduate visa or whilst you are waiting for a decision on an application to switch from Graduate visa to a Student visa in the UK. Please ensure that you have your Student visa in place by the latest joining date listed on your CAS or you may need to defer your study to next year.

28-day gap

If there's more than 28 days between your current visa expiry date and your course start date listed on your CAS, you **cannot** apply inside the UK as your application will be refused. Instead, you will need to leave the UK and apply from a country where you are legally resident. Read our guidance: [Applying outside the UK](#).

Academic progression

If you have, or previously had, permission as a Student and are applying for a Student visa from within the UK, you must be able to meet the 'academic progression' requirements as set out by UKVI. Normally this means that your new programme must be at a higher level than your previous programme and you must have successfully completed your previous programme, unless one of the following exceptions applies:

- you are applying to repeat modules with attendance to complete your current programme, or
- you have previously needed to repeat modules and need additional time to complete your current programme, or
- you require additional time in the UK to complete your PhD studies, or

- you are applying to undertake a role as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer

If you did not successfully complete the programme for which your current Tier 4 or Student visa was granted and are applying for a Student visa for a different programme, UKVI will not consider this 'academic progression' and you will need to apply outside the UK. Read our [guidance: Applying outside the UK](#)

Evidence of Academic Progression

Study at a higher level

If you have completed the programme for which your current Tier 4 or Student visa was granted and will now go on to study at a higher level, you will need to provide UKVI with the certificate or transcript to prove this unless you can benefit from the ['differentiation arrangements'](#) or your CAS (issued by SOAS as a track record of compliance sponsor) specifically confirms you have successfully completed your previous course and you will be studying at RQF6 or above.

Study at the same level

If you have been offered a place on a new programme at the same level as your previous course of UK study (e.g., you're going to study a second UK master's programme), SOAS Admissions and Visa Compliance will assess whether you exceptionally meet the 'academic progression' rules or not. If SOAS agree that you meet this exception, you will be able to apply in the UK and issued a CAS confirming that:

- you have successfully completed your previous course, and
- your new programme is related to your previous programme; or
- the two programmes in combination support your genuine career aspirations

A caseworker may decide to call you for a credibility interview in this situation. If you receive a notification about this, contact the Student Advice Service before your interview for guidance. If SOAS Admissions does not agree that you exceptionally meet this rule, you may still be issued a CAS to study a second master's, but you would be required to leave the UK and apply for your visa from overseas.

I do not have my results yet - how can I prove 'academic progression'?

If you have not yet received a result for the programme for which your current Tier 4 or Student visa was granted, you will need to request a letter from your current sponsor. Your current sponsor must be a 'Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance'. The letter must have the following information:

- confirm they are confident that you are 'highly likely' to complete your programme successfully based on their assessment and your performance throughout your programme
- the date your qualification will be awarded

If the letter and your sponsor type meet these requirements, SOAS will issue your new CAS with wording to this effect. It is important that you check your CAS information carefully before applying for your visa to avoid a refusal. If you do not successfully complete your programme by the

expected date in the letter, SOAS will have to report this to UKVI and withdraw sponsorship for your new programme.

If you do not meet the 'academic progression' rules and don't meet any of the exceptions, your application will be refused. Further information about 'academic progression' can be found in the [Student route caseworker guidance](#).

When can I submit my Student visa application?

The earliest you can apply is **3 months** before your course start date listed on your CAS. You can only submit your visa application once you have [received](#) your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) email and you meet any of the necessary financial requirements and other criteria outlined in this guidance.

How can I submit my Student visa application?

Student visa applications made in the UK are submitted to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) via their online application form. You will also need to confirm your identity. Most applicants will be able to use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app on their smartphone to do this and some will need to visit a UKVCAS service point to provide their biometric information. For guidance through this process please read our [Student visa online application guide](#)

How much does it cost?

You will need to pay:

- £524 application fee for applications made on or after 9 April 2025
- If you're required to visit a UK Visas and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) centre to provide biometric information there may be a charge to pay. Free appointments are available but difficult to obtain.
- the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) – see our [IHS guidance](#) for more information.

How long will it take to process my application?

You'll usually get a decision within 8 weeks. Visit GOV.UK to find out more about [processing times](#) and how to get a [faster decision](#) by paying an additional £500 for 'priority' service.

Verifying your identity

As part of the application process, you'll need to verify your identity using either the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app on your smartphone or by booking a biometric appointment at a UKVCAS service point. At the beginning of the form you will be asked a series of questions to check if you can use the 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app or not.

If you're not able to use the UK Immigration: ID Check app, you will be directed to the [TLScontact website](#) at the conclusion of your online application to register an account and book an appointment at a UKVCAS service point. This should be completed as part of the online application process, and you should receive emails from GOV.UK and TLScontact to begin the process of booking an appointment.

How do I submit my supporting documents?

If you're eligible to use 'UK Immigration: ID Check' app, you will upload any required documents to your UKVI account on GOV.UK after confirming your identity, completing your online application form, and paying the application and IHS fees.

If you're required to attend a biometric appointment at a UKVCAS service point, you upload your documents to your online TLScontact account prior to your appointment. We advise taking paper copies of all your required documents to your appointment in case there have been any issues uploading your documents and they need to be uploaded again. If you choose not to upload your documents before your appointment, you will pay a fee to TLScontact for scanning.

Can I travel outside the UK whilst my visa application is being processed?

You can keep your original documents and passport whilst your application is being processed. However, you should not travel outside the Common Travel Area (UK, Republic of Ireland, and Crown Dependencies) until you receive a decision on your application, or your application will be considered automatically withdrawn.

What happens if my current visa expires during the application process?

If you submit a valid application before your current immigration permission expires, you will be protected by 3C leave after your visa expires. Section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971 protects applicants from becoming overstayers if the Home Office has not decided their application by the time the permission that was endorsed in their passport or biometric residence permit expires. Section 3C leave also extends that permission and the conditions attached to it beyond the date of expiry until a decision has been made on your visa application has been made.

Receiving your decision and accessing your eVisa

You will be informed of the decision made on your application by email so make sure to monitor your emails including junk mail.

As of 31 October 2024, the Home Office stopped producing biometric residence permit cards (BRPs), therefore all successful applicants will receive a digital immigration status known as an [eVisa](#).

Your visa decision email/letter will include instructions on what you need to do to access your eVisa, to check your immigration status and use the [View and Prove](#) service to generate a 'share code'. Read this email carefully and follow all the instructions contained in it.

You must keep your details in your UKVI account up to date, especially if you get a new passport to avoid having difficulties accessing and proving your immigration status.

Is your eVisa correct?

UKVI sometimes can sometime make mistakes, so it is important that you check your visa details carefully. If there are any errors such as the number of hours you can work or the [visa expiry](#) date is incorrect, then you should [report](#) the error as soon as possible. You can contact Student Advice Service for assistance with reported errors if required.

Visa refusals and rejections

If you've received a decision notice stating that your visa application has been refused or rejected as invalid, you will need to inform the Student Visa Compliance team immediately (compliance@soas.ac.uk), including a copy of the decision notice and the visa supporting documents you provided. You will then be referred to Student Advice Service for advice on your refusal, and whether you have grounds for an Administrative Review.

Visa expiry dates

Your visa should expire according to the course dates on your CAS, please check this when you receive digital visa. If you're returning to your course after a leave of absence, the caseworker should use your original course start date listed in the CAS in when calculating when your visa should expire:

Course duration	Visa expiry date
12 months or more	4 months after your course end date
6 months or more but less than 12 months	2 months after your course end date
Less than 6 months (pre-sessional course)	1 month after your course end date
Less than 6 months (not a pre-sessional course)	7 days after your course end date

Providing your new visa details to SOAS

As part of the visa sponsor duties, SOAS must keep up to date immigration records for all students enrolled at the School. Visit [the enrolment pages](#) to find out which documents you need to upload and how to upload them.

Student visa requirements and evidence

You must meet all the Student visa requirements and be able to provide evidence in the required format to make a successful visa application.

Differentiation arrangements for 'low risk' nationals

You can qualify for Student visa differentiation arrangements because you are a national of one of the 'low risk' countries or hold certain type of passport listed in [ST 22.1](#) (Eligibility requirements section) of the Immigration Rules. If your nationality or passport is listed in [ST22.1](#) (Eligibility requirements section), you do not need to include the following documents with your visa application. However, as part of your Student visa application you will need to sign a declaration confirming that you have these documents.

- Evidence of qualifications listed on your CAS in the 'Evidence used to obtain offer' section
- Proof of meeting the financial requirements
- Evidence of meeting the English language requirements
- Proof that you successfully completed you're the course that your current visa was issued for

UK Visas and Immigration can contact you during their decision-making process to ask you to provide your qualifications and financial documents. If you cannot provide them by the deadline that you are given, then your Student visa application will be refused. We would therefore recommend that you prepare the documents anyway so that you will have them ready if UK Visas and Immigration ask for them.

Translations

Any document provided to support your application that is not in English, or Welsh must be translated into English to the requirements detailed in the [Student route caseworker guidance](#).

Qualifications used to obtain offer

When you applied to study at SOAS, you needed to provide proof of your qualifications to obtain your unconditional offer, e.g., proof of your undergraduate degree qualification to study on a masters. Refer to your CAS which will list these documents in the '*Evidence used to obtain offer*' section.

If your CAS states that you will be studying on a degree level course (RQF 6) or above, you do **not** need to provide evidence of these qualifications to UKVI as SOAS is a HEI sponsor with a track record of compliance.

If you will study on a course at RQF 5 or below, you **must** provide a certificate or transcript of your results for each qualification listed unless you can apply under the '[differentiation arrangements](#)'.

Academic Progression evidence

See [previous section](#).

Financial requirements

A common reason for Student visa refusals is a problem with financial documents or an incorrect amount of funds being shown. If you can apply under the [‘differentiation arrangements’](#), you must meet the financial requirements but do not need to provide the evidence. See our [guide](#) Financial requirements when applying for a Student visa either inside or outside the UK.

Consent from your current or previous financial sponsor

If all the following are true, you will need to provide a letter of consent from your financial sponsor:

- you have completed a course of studies in the UK within the 12 months prior to your Student visa application date, and
- you were awarded a scholarship or official financial sponsorship for that course, covering both fees, and living costs, and
- the scholarship or financial sponsor was a government or international scholarship agency.

Your application will be invalid if you don’t provide this letter and is required even if you benefit from the [differentiation arrangements](#). If you’re applying for further immigration permission to continue your current programme, we recommend contacting the Student Advice Service for guidance on this letter before submitting your application.

Consent from parent(s)/guardians if under 18 years old

If you submit your visa application when you’re under 18, you must provide a letter of consent from your parents, legal guardian or one parent if they have sole responsibility for you. You should also provide evidence of your relationship to them such as a birth certificate. Please note that the definition of parent excludes step-parents and restricts the definition of a parent to biological parents, legal parents, and adoptive parents. If in doubt, contact our team for guidance.

The letter should confirm the following:

- their relationship to you
- consent to your Student visa application
- consent to your living and care arrangements in the UK
- consent to your travel arrangements to the UK and reception on arrival

English Language Requirements

As your Student visa sponsor, SOAS are required by UK Visas and Immigration to confirm that you have met a minimum level of acceptable English to be able to enrol on a course in the UK. If you hold an unconditional offer from SOAS you will already have met these language requirements as part of the course application process. If you can apply under the [‘differentiation arrangements’](#), you do not need to provide evidence of how you meet the English language requirements.

To understand what evidence, you may need to provide to UKVI to prove your English language ability, please check what your CAS states in the English language qualification section.

English language qualification

Is SELT required?

Reason not required:

If your CAS states 'Y' for the question '*Is SELT required?*', you need to enter your [SELT test](#) number on your visa application form. It's valid for 2 years only

If your CAS states 'N' for the question '*Is SELT required?*', your CAS will state the reason a SELT is not required. Check below what evidence (if any) you need to submit with your visa application:

- [Migrant has met required English level in a previous successful visa application](#)

Evidence: Although the guidance does not specify how this will be checked, confirmation on the CAS and on the visa application should be sufficient.

- [Higher Education Institute \(HEI\) sponsor has made assessment](#)

Evidence: confirmed on the CAS no other evidence required

- [National of a majority English-speaking country](#)

Evidence: your passport

- [Migrant holds degree from majority English speaking country](#)

Evidence: transcript or certificate plus if the qualification was awarded outside the UK, you will also require an [Ecctis](#) (formerly UK NARIC) Visa and Nationality Statement (English proficiency).

Summary of documents to be submitted:

Depending on how you apply online, you will upload scans of these documents to your UKVI account after submitting your visa application online or to your TLS account before attending your biometric appointment. Our other guide explains how to apply online, [Student visa application form guide](#).

Document	Low risk applicant, see ST 21.2 *	Other applicants
Passport	Yes	Yes
Evidence of Academic Progression if an exception doesn't apply.	No, if your CAS confirms successful completion of previous course.*	No, if your CAS confirms successful completion of previous course as SOAS is a HEP with a track record of compliance
Qualifications listed on CAS in 'Evidence used to obtain offer' section.	No*	Yes, if you will study a course below RQF 6.
English language assessment (see CAS)	No*	Yes, unless 'HEI sponsor has made assessment' or 'met in a previous successful application' is listed on CAS
Financial documents (automatically met if you're applying inside the UK and have lived in the UK with valid immigration permission for 12 months prior to visa application)	No*	Yes
If using parent or partner account, proof of relationship, plus letter of consent (automatically met if you're applying inside the UK and have lived in the UK with valid immigration permission for 12 months prior to visa application)	No*	Yes
Letter of parental consent to application if under 18-years old, plus proof of relationship	Yes	Yes
Letter of consent from your Official Financial Sponsor (required in some circumstances)	Yes	Yes
Translations of any submitted documents not in English or Welsh	Yes	Yes
Consent to verification checks signed form - Only if available to download from your online application portal.	Yes	Yes
Document Checklist (not available or required for those who use UK Immigration: ID Check app to verify identity) Available to download from your application portal once you pay the application fee.	Yes	Yes

*Low risk applicants do not have to submit some documents, but they must still meet the requirements of the Student visa application. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) can contact you during their decision-making process to ask you to provide your qualifications and financial documents. If you cannot provide them by the deadline that you are given, then your Student visa application will be refused. We would therefore recommend that you prepare the documents, so you are ready to submit them if a UKVI caseworker contacts you.

Dependants

Which students can bring dependants?

You can only bring dependants with you to the UK when studying at SOAS if:

- you're studying a full-time PhD programme of 9 months or more in duration, or
- you're receiving a scholarship or financial sponsorship from your national government or His Majesty's government and are studying a programme of 6 months or more in duration.
- you're studying or have studied on a full-time course lasting at least six months and all four bullet points below apply:
- your Student permission is current or expired no more than three months before this immigration application.
 - Your new immigration application is for a full-time course that is at least six months.
 - Your dependant already has Student dependant immigration permission (or it expired no more than three months before this application), or your dependant is your child who was born since you were last granted your immigration permission.
 - You are applying for immigration permission at the same time as your dependant.

Our MRes degrees do not meet the requirements to be eligible to bring dependants unless you meet bullet point two or three above.

Your dependants visa should expire on the same date as your Student visa.

Who are considered dependants?

- your spouse
- your civil partner
- your unmarried partner if you have been in a 'durable' relationship similar to marriage for at least two years before the application, evidence of this will be required.
- Your child or children (under 18 years if coming to the UK for the first time as your dependant). Both child's parents must be in the UK or coming to the UK with the child unless exemptions apply. Please see the [UKCISA](#) website for further details or contact our team.

Other family members who wish to join you in the UK must apply for a Standard Visitor visa (see [GOV.UK](#) or more details).

Application costs

- £524 application fee per dependant for applications made on or after 9 April 2025
- the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) – see our [IHS guidance](#) for more information
- Required documents

Evidence is set out in the [Relationship with a partner: caseworker guidance](#) which is subject to change at any time.

You will need to provide the following documents:

- proof of your marriage or civil partnership e.g., marriage or civil partnership certificate*
- evidence of co-habiting for two years if not married or in a civil partnership with your partner or evidence to explain why you don't live together*

- child applicants need evidence of the relationship between parent/legal guardian and the child e.g., birth certificate*
- child applicants need a letter from both parents/legal guardians confirming all the following:
 - Their relationship to the child.
 - Whether both or one parent/legal guardian has legal responsibility for the child.
 - They consent to the child's Dependant visa application.
 - They consent to the living arrangements in the UK and the address the child will be staying.
- evidence of meeting the dependent financial requirements

*These are not required if they were already submitted in a previous successful Student dependant application but sometimes caseworkers still ask to see them. However, you will need to show evidence that you and your spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner are still in a relationship since the last visa was granted by including evidence such as a recent utility bill, council tax bill or bank statement in both your names.

If your child's other parent is not coming to the UK, you will need to show evidence that you meet an exemption for not requiring both parents come to the UK. Please see the [UKCISA](#) website for further details or contact Student Advice Service.

Financial requirements and evidence

See our [guide](#) Financial requirements when applying for a Student visa either inside or outside the UK.

Further help

This guide should be used with the following documents:

SOAS Student visa financial requirement [guide](#)

SOAS Student visa application form [guide](#)

UKVI Student route caseworker [guidance](#)

UKVI Financial Requirements caseworker [guidance](#)

If you need further immigration advice after reading this guidance, please email the Student Advice Service with your full name, nationality, name of the country in which you are making your Student visa application and SOAS student ID (if issued).

Email: advice@soas.ac.uk

[UK Council for International Student Affairs](#) (UKCISA) has lots of helpful resources on student immigration and living in the UK as an international student.