

Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Issuance Policy			
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<p><i>Note: All policies must be read in conjunction with all other SOAS policy, procedure and guidance documents. Printed copies of policies may not be the most up to date, therefore please refer to the policy pages on the SOAS external website or intranet for the latest version.</i></p>			

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1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1. This document sets out SOAS University of London (SOAS)'s policy regarding the issuance of a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies ("CAS") to applicants and students requiring a Student route visa. This policy is specific to SOAS University of London and does not represent a full statement of immigration or Student sponsor requirements. This policy is subject to change and SOAS is entitled to revise its policies or procedures relating to immigration compliance so that they align with its Student route sponsor duties at any time to reflect UK government requirements. The Immigration Rules and Student Route sponsor guidance will always supersede and override the content of this policy, where there is conflict. SOAS is under no legal obligation to sponsor (issue a CAS) to any individual and decisions made will be guided by its duty as a student route sponsor and limiting any risk to its sponsor licence status.
- 1.2. This policy applies to applicants/prospective students (applicants) and existing SOAS students (students) who require a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies to enable them to make an application for a student visa (referred to as "applicants" and "students" respectively throughout the document).
- 1.3. An applicant/student requesting a CAS from SOAS must satisfy SOAS that they meet the Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and SOAS's requirements before a CAS will be issued.

2. Key responsibilities

- 2.1. Overall responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy and any accompanying procedures lies with the institution's Authorising Officer, with the assistance of the Student Visa Compliance Team and Admissions. All staff working with applicants and students subject to UK immigration rules and regulations must ensure the policy is adhered to accordingly.
- 2.2. Only relevant staff who are Level 1 or 2 users on the institution's sponsor licence are authorised to issue CASs to students to enable them to apply for/extend their immigration permission under the Student route. All CASs should be issued in line with the principles set out within this policy, the UK immigration rules and Home Office/UKVI immigration policies (e.g. student sponsor guidance).
- 2.3. Authorised staff should refer to relevant Home Office/UKVI and internal guidance before issuing a CAS.

3. CAS Issuance

- 3.1. A Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies ("CAS") is required if a student needs to apply for permission to stay or permission to enter the UK under the Student route.
- 3.2. The issuing of a CAS is at the discretion of SOAS, and we reserve the right to stop issuing CAS where courses become oversubscribed, or if we reach a limit of CAS allocated by the UKVI to SOAS.
- 3.3. As part of its responsibilities as a Student sponsor SOAS will only issue a CAS to an applicant/student who to the best of its knowledge, meets the requirements under the Student route and will be able to make a successful Student visa application. Authorised staff may require an applicant/student requesting a CAS to provide further information and documentary evidence to enable SOAS to effectively evaluate the case and fulfil its sponsor duties before issuing the CAS.
- 3.4. CAS will be issued no more than six months prior to the course start date for students commencing studies at SOAS and no earlier than is permitted in the rules and guidance on student sponsorship for students wishing to extend/switch their current immigration permission.
- 3.5. Only applicants who have been given and formally accepted an unconditional offer for a place to study on an approved course at SOAS and have submitted all outstanding required documentation including a completed a CAS request form, evidence of ability to meet the financial requirements of the student route (if required) and paid any relevant deposit (unless exempt) are eligible to receive a CAS.
- 3.6. All documents (academic, financial, etc) required for CAS issuance must be submitted in English, where the applicant's/student's documents have not been issued in English they must provide SOAS with a copy of the original along with a fully certified translation prepared by a professional translator or translation company.
- 3.7. Applicants holding an unconditional offer who have opted to attend a pre- sessional (e.g English language), course, which is not a requirement of their offer, may be issued a single CAS to cover both the pre-sessional and the main course of study (degree programme) if appropriate and the Home Office/UKVI requirements are met.
- 3.8. SOAS will issue a combined/single CAS to cover a pre-sessional course and main course of study if the applicant has received an unconditional offer for their main course of study OR a conditional offer where the only condition is that the applicant achieves B2 English language competency at the end of the pre-sessional course and the UKVI requirements are met.
- 3.9. If an Applicant does not meet the above requirements, they will be assigned a separate CAS to enable them to attend the English language pre-sessional course. Before a CAS can be issued, they must provide SOAS with a SELT confirming that they are at least at CEFR B1 level in each component of language learning (reading writing, speaking, and listening).

- 3.10. If an incoming student is studying a course on a stand-alone Foundation Education (level) programme which is different from a four-year degree course with a foundation (year zero) year, SOAS will issue a CAS to cover the year for the foundation course. Progression to any degree course and the issue of any further CAS is subject to the satisfactory completion of the Foundation Education (level) programme and any specific conditions of undergraduate entry as required by SOAS.
- 3.11. Receipt of an academic admission offer from SOAS does not guarantee that a CAS will be assigned to the applicant. The applicant's immigration history, previous UK study, status other risk factors will be assessed in accordance with the Student route and other relevant UK immigration rules and policies in place at the time.
- 3.12. SOAS may make any additional checks deemed necessary to ensure it only sponsors genuine students who are likely to make a successful visa application. These checks may include, but are not limited to, conducting interviews, requesting bank statements and financial documents, academic qualifications or requesting previous immigration history (from the individual and UKVI) and CASs from previous institutions of study and proof of departure from the UK.
- 3.13. SOAS reserves the right to refuse to issue a CAS even if the applicant meets all its academic entry requirements. Where an applicant/ student has been declined a CAS the applicant/student may seek a review of this decision. The decision to refuse the CAS will be reviewed by the Academic Registrar (or their nominee) in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager. Appeals should be sent within 10 days of being informed that they will not be issued a CAS.
- 3.14. SOAS will not issue a CAS in the following situations:
 - Where the course the applicant/student intends to study will not comply with the Student route requirements.
 - If there is any reason to believe that the individual will not comply with the conditions of their Student route visa
 - The applicant/student is unable to demonstrate that they meet the requirements for a visa under the Student route or have breached any immigration rules
 - The applicant/student is in breach of any of SOAS's regulations.
 - If an applicant/student has submitted documents which are proven or suspected to be fraudulent.
 - Where a student has outstanding tuition or other debts with SOAS and / or SOAS has concerns about the applicant/student's ability to pay tuition and/or other fees.
 - If the duration of an applicant/student's course will result in them exceeding the maximum length of study allowable in the UK under the Student route, unless exempt
 - If SOAS decides that sponsoring an applicant/student will put its sponsor licence at risk or has concerns about the applicant's/student's intention to study and genuineness.

- The student is not making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with SOAS's Academic Regulations or has failed to engage with their course during their studies at SOAS.
- The course the applicant/student is seeking visa sponsorship for does not represent academic progression in accordance with the Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules and no exemptions apply.
- Where sponsorship has been withdrawn by SOAS previously and the student has remained in the UK but is unable under the existing Immigration Rules or Home Office/UKVI guidance to apply for a Student route visa inside the UK.
- Where another type of visa application is pending. In such cases, the applicant/student must wait for the outcome of that visa application before the University will decide whether to issue a CAS

3.15. The University will only issue a CAS (sponsor) to 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, including:

- A history of visa refusals.
- Insufficient funds (tuition and maintenance).
- Criminal convictions or involvement with terrorist activity.
- Any behavior or evidence which would lead SOAS to believe the applicant/student is not a genuine student does not truly intend to study.
- Any evidence to suggest an applicant/a student has broken immigration laws or conditions of any previously held UK immigration permission.
- The applicant/student has overstayed their UK immigration permission as defined in the Immigration Rules.
- The applicant/student is in the UK and does not hold valid UK immigration permission to be in the country or they are in the UK in an immigration category, which does not permit switching into the Student route.
- Outstanding debts to the NHS
- The applicant/student's course does not represent academic progression and they are not exempt from the requirement.
- if the applicant has failed a course of study at another institution in the UK, unless due to medical conditional or serious personal circumstance (to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis).
- Poor English language ability.
- The applicant/student has provided false information to the SOAS or presented fraudulent documentation or omitted relevant information from their application.
- There are less than 10 working days before the latest start date for an applicant's course. This requirement may be waived by the Academic Registrar/ their nominee in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.
- An applicant/a student will not arrive in time for their course's latest start date. This requirement may be waived by the Academic Registrar/ their nominee in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.

4. Financial Requirements

- 4.1. In submitting a CAS request an applicant/current student confirms that they are aware of the financial requirements for the Student route as set out in the relevant immigration rules and Home Office/UKVI guidance and have the required amount of funds/money to cover their tuition (less any CAS deposit paid) and maintenance in place before submitting their Student route application for permission to enter/stay (visa). SOAS reserves the right to request documentation demonstrating that the applicant/student meets the UKVI financial requirements as a pre-condition for CAS issuance.
- 4.2. SOAS reserves the right to require an applicant/student to pay their course fees in full as a pre-condition for CAS issuance.

5. Students requiring Student route visa extensions

- 5.1. SOAS will assess the academic performance/progression, previous academic engagement (if applicable) of any applicant/student who has previously held or currently holds Student route (prev Tier 4) permission and has studied in the UK. To receive a CAS an applicant/student must normally be applying for a course which is at a higher RQF level than the previous course studied under Student/Tier 4 route. Where an applicant/student has previously studied on a course in the UK at the same level as the course they intend to study at SOAS, SOAS will only consider issuing a CAS for a visa extension inside the UK if the requirements as set out in the relevant student route guidance and Immigration rules are met, unless they are exempt
- 5.2. If an applicant/student is unable to meet the requirements for a Student permission extension as set out in the Immigration Rules they will normally be advised to leave the UK to apply for the visa overseas and must provide evidence of their departure from the UK before a CAS will be issued to them.
- 5.3. SOAS will only provide a CAS to an existing SOAS student to enable them to extend their leave if it is satisfied the student intends to and is able to follow the course of study as evidenced by previous academic performance and engagement.
- 5.4. For the purposes of applying for a visa extension in the UK, a CAS will only be issued to an applicant/student whose current visa permits for an extension or switching into the Student route.
- 5.5. Any student wishing to extend their leave under the Student route category must complete CAS request form (current/returning student), which should be received at least 10 working days before the expiry date of their current Student visa. A CAS extension will be considered once an applicant/student has signed and submitted these documents as well as any other required documentation.

6. Sponsorship and Length of Sponsorship

- 6.1. SOAS will sponsor an applicant/student for the duration of their programme, subject to any compliance requirements of the University or UKVI. SOAS may withdraw sponsorship if it is no longer necessary to continue sponsorship, or if the University cannot comply with its sponsor duties or if at any point the student becomes ineligible for student sponsorship following the issuance of a CAS
- 6.2. The duration of a CAS will correspond with the programme start and end date on the student's registration taking into consideration date of registration, course induction and the date by which an applicant or student needs to complete all academic elements of the course including taught sessions, examinations, assessments and writing and submitting dissertations and thesis unless these can be completed from overseas and there is no substantial reason to remain on campus/in the UK.
- 6.3. If a student meets the conditions to have their leave extended to continue their course, SOAS will only assign a CAS for the remaining duration of the course.
- 6.4. The course end date for PhD courses will normally be for 4 years from the course start date and covers the registration period where the student is undertaking full-time study as a registered student including any writing up period and continuation year. If additional time is required to complete the course and this has been approved by the Doctoral School an extension CAS will be issued, provided the student meet the requirements for sponsorship under the student route

7. Student visa refusals

- 7.1. If an applicant/student's visa application is refused, SOAS may consider issuing only one additional CAS in the relevant academic year to an applicant/student following a visa refusal on maintenance grounds or due to an administrative error by SOAS staff. Students requesting a CAS following a visa refusal will be required to provide evidence to show there is minimal chance of their visa being refused a subsequent time.
- 7.2. Further CASs will not normally be issued for the same academic year where an incoming applicant/student has been refused based on credibility/genuineness
- 7.3. A CAS will not be issued where the visa application has been refused based on deception, fraudulent document(s) or the applicant/student's presence in the UK is deemed not conducive to the public good.
- 7.4. Any applicant/student whose application for a Student visa or where an administrative review request was refused will be reported to UKVI and Student sponsorship will be withdrawn in line with the reporting requirements set out in the student sponsor guidance.
- 7.5. Any applicant/student whose Student visa is refused by UKVI and requires a new CAS from SOAS must provide a full copy (all of the pages) of their Home Office/UKVI refusal notice and any other relevant information requested (e.g. evidence of meeting the UKVI financial requirements) and will need to consent to UKVI sharing information with SOAS about their Student route visa application.

- 7.6. Provided the above conditions are met, SOAS may issue one additional CAS to an applicant/student following the refusal of a Student route visa application. However, if the applicant/student's visa application is refused a second time SOAS will not issue a further CAS.
- 7.7. SOAS reserves the right to not issue a CAS to any applicant/student who has had their Student visa application refused.

8. **Deferrals and CAS issuance**

- 8.1. Applicants who are unable to enrol by the agreed enrolment deadline and wish to defer their place on the course for longer than the stipulated late enrolment period allowed must contact the Admissions team as soon as possible for further guidance.
- 8.2. Applicants deferring their place on a course due to a visa refusal will normally only be permitted to defer their place for one academic year.

9. **Sending a CAS to a Student**

- 9.1. CAS details will normally be provided directly to an applicant/student. CAS details should not be sent to any other party without the applicant/student's written consent. In all cases where an applicant/student has provided consent to send their CAS to a third party, such as an Agent, the applicant/student must be copied into the correspondence.
- 9.2. SOAS will provide the applicant/student with details of their CAS number, qualifications and other relevant information that was used for the admissions offer and CAS issuance. The applicant/student should be asked to confirm/identify any errors immediately upon receipt of their CAS details.

10. **Leave of Absence, Re-sits and Repeats**

- 10.1. When a student wishes to return to their studies following a period of approved leave of absence, SOAS will only sponsor the student if they meet the relevant conditions for CAS issuance as detailed in this policy including:
 - meeting the requirement to provide valid documentary evidence of English language ability at CEFR level B2 for courses at RQF 6 and above in accordance with UKVI's requirement and SOAS's English language policy, unless exempt;
 - obtaining the relevant academic/Registry approval for extending their programme;
 - demonstrating academic progression in accordance with published Home Office/UKVI Rules and SOAS's institutional requirements including attendance and engagement with their course.
 - the extension will not cause them to exceed the maximum period of study permitted by SOAS regulations or Home Office/UKVI policy.
 - has no outstanding financial obligations to the SOAS, whether for tuition or other fees;
 - has not breached any UK Immigration Rules during their studies and/or during the period of their deferral/intermission; and

- providing SOAS with any documentation requested such as updated immigration history details, evidence of departure from the UK and evidence of finances etc. The Student Visa Compliance team may require returning students requesting a CAS to provide further information and documentary evidence to enable SOAS to effectively evaluate the case and fulfil its sponsor duties before issuing a CAS.

It is the responsibility of the student to provide any required information and to fulfil any conditions set by SOAS.

- 10.2. If a student is required to repeat modules, then a CAS may be issued where there will be genuine attendance and/or academic engagement/contact, or a demonstrated requirement for the student to remain in the UK to repeat the module(s).
- 10.3. If a student is outside the UK and is only required to re-sit an exam (s) SOAS will not normally assign a CAS to that student if there is no further active participation required immediately following the exam in such circumstances they will be advised to enter the UK under the standard visitor route.
- 10.4. If a student is required to repeat modules, then a CAS may be issued where there will be genuine attendance and/or academic engagement/contact, or a demonstrated requirement for the student to remain in the UK to repeat the module(s).
- 10.5. Where a student is completing assessment only without repeating module(s) in full, SOAS will not normally issue a CAS, but requests for a CAS in such scenarios will be reviewed and assessed for eligibility on a case-by-case basis. Students will also be expected to provide supporting evidence/statements from relevant academics to support such requests.
- 10.6. If a student's continued participation on campus is not required within 60 days of the start of the next academic period and or/their current Student route will expire, a student will normally be required to leave the UK and apply for a new visa under the Student route.

11. Research degree vivas and corrections

- 11.1. The normal expectation is that research students will submit their thesis and complete their viva within the standard permitted period of enrolment and therefore the end date of their Student visa. SOAS will not normally issue a CAS to a research postgraduate student who has submitted their thesis and have only the viva to complete. In such instances, if the viva cannot be held remotely, the student would be advised to obtain a standard visit visa to facilitate their in-person via presentation unless there is a valid reason for a further CAS to be given to enable them to extend their Student route visa. Such requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 11.2. Following the viva, where a student has minor corrections to complete (as defined in the Regulations), a CAS will not normally be issued. Request for additional CAS for minor corrections will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to assess eligibility. Students and the Doctorial School/Academic supervisor will be asked to provide a statement to support such requests.

- 11.3. Following the viva, where a student is required to make major corrections, and their continued participation on campus and use of SOAS facilities is required, a CAS, may be issued, provided SOAS can continue to meet its sponsorship duties. For example, a student may require the use of specialist equipment or resources for the purpose of completing major revisions. SOAS will consider requests on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to refuse any request to issue a CAS to a student in such circumstances.
- 11.4. If a postgraduate student is currently outside the UK and is required to return to campus to attend their final presentation/viva, SOAS will not normally assign a CAS and will expect the student to utilise the standard visitor route, if applicable.

12. Terms and Conditions of Student visa sponsorship

- 12.1. All students sponsored by SOAS are expected to abide by all applicable University terms and conditions, policies and procedures, including the Terms and Conditions of Student Visa Sponsorship. The University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship if it considers an applicant (incoming student) or current student may be in breach of the Student Visa sponsorship terms and conditions and/or other relevant SOAS terms and conditions. Applicants and students should read and familiarise themselves with the applicable Policies and Procedures.

13. Appeals

- 13.1. Where an applicant/ student has been declined a CAS the applicant/student may seek a review of this decision by the Academic Registrar or their nominee in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.
- 13.2. Appeals should be sent within 10 days of being informed of the refusal to compliance@soas.ac.uk, with the subject line 'appealing CAS request refusal' and should set out the reason(s) why they believe they should be given a CAS as well as any supporting documentation.

14. Key CAS and visa support Contacts

Name	Contact Details	Area of Work
Admissions/ new student CAS issuance Team	casrequest@soas.ac.uk adviceservice@soas.ac.uk	For CAS queries from prospective students and offer holders.
Student Visa Compliance team	compliance@soas.ac.uk	For queries related to CAS issuance for current /returning SOAS students, responsibilities under the student route.
Advice team	advice@soas.ac.uk	Visa application support and other UK visa related advice

15. Policy Review

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