

Making a Student visa application outside the UK

This guide should be used with the Student visa Policy Guidance which can be found on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

To apply for a Student visa for your programme at SOAS from your home country (or country of residence) you first need to find your local British Embassy or Visa Application Centre. In some countries you may be able to submit documents by post. In others you will submit them in person. You cannot make your application more than 6 months before your programme at SOAS starts.

Part of the process of applying for a Student visa is to provide your biometric information. This is a photograph of your face and a scan of your fingerprints that are taken every time you make a Student visa student visa application. Your visa application cannot be processed until your biometric information has been given.

Important note: Covid-19 and vignettes

SOAS is offering a blended learning experience whereby all lectures and seminars will be delivered online in term 1, combined with on-campus appointments with academics and student support. We hope to transition to some increased on-campus teaching from term 2 in January 2021, in line with health and safety guidance at that time. However, all lectures will be delivered remotely, for both term 1 and term 2. We hope the number of such face-to-face activities will increase in term 2 following government guidance. You can find further information for all students [on this SOAS webpage](#).

We are hoping all students intending to arrive to commence studies in term 1 will be here on time. However, as there are potentially delays with access to Visa Application Centres (VACs) and flights, if you are delayed you can enrol remotely and begin your studies online and travel when your visa is processed.

With these potential delays in mind, UK Visas and Immigration have extended the length of your vignette (the visa stamp in your passport that allows travel to the UK). A vignette usually gives you 30 days from your planned date of travel to the UK, but it will now be valid for 90 days due to delays caused by the pandemic. If you are delayed in any way travelling or receiving your vignette due to visa processing delays you will still be able to use it to travel within 90 days of your intended travel date.

Important note: eGates

Nationals from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA, Japan, Singapore and South Korea can now use eGates when entering the UK. This means that you will not be issued with an entry stamp in your passport. If you are intending to rent a property, or a room in a property, from a letting agent, private landlord or host family for more than 3 months, then you will need to retain evidence i.e. boarding card, flight ticket or a travel booking confirmation dated within the last 6 months. This evidence must be shown to your landlord, agent or host family along with your passport, otherwise you may have problems securing your accommodation.

Once you arrive in the UK you will be issued with a plastic card called a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). This card has a chip in it which contains your fingerprints and photograph. The BRP will also show the date your visa is valid until, it will confirm how many hours you are allowed to work and your entitlement to NHS healthcare.

You will collect your BRP from a Post Office nearest to the UK address you entered into the visa application. You must collect your BRP within 10 days of arrival in the UK. For more details about collecting your BRP please see the [GOV.UK website](#). UK Visas and Immigration have confirmed that 'Students will not be penalised for being unable collect their Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) while coronavirus measures are in place.'

You will be able to enroll on your programme before you have collected your BRP by showing the visa vignette in your passport. However, you will need to show the BRP (or scan), once you have collected it, to the Registry team at SOAS.

To make your Student visa application outside the UK you will need to:-

- Go to the [GOV.UK website](#) to '**Start Now**'
- Confirm your country of nationality. You can then choose to translate your application form, if you wish. You must give your answers in English.
- You then need to select 'confirm you visa type' – i.e. **Student**.
- You then need to enter the country you are applying from and confirm that you are able to travel to an available biometric enrolment location in your selected country.
- Read the guidance carefully and click '**Apply now**' to complete the online application. You cannot add family members ('dependants') to this application. You must complete a separate form for each dependant applying with you.
- The application fee: £348 for main applicant and each dependant.
- You must also pay the Immigration Health Surcharge for yourself and for your dependents. Please read our [Immigration Health Surcharge guidance](#).
- Passport. You must submit your current passport and it must still be valid on the day you travel to the UK.
- CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies). Once you have an unconditional offer for your programme, if you do not already have one, you can [request a CAS via the SOAS website](#). This is an electronic document created by SOAS within the UK Visas and Immigration computer system. You will be emailed a CAS statement and will need the information in this statement to complete your visa application.

- Qualifications. Your CAS statement will list the qualifications you used to obtain your place at SOAS. If your programme is degree level or above **you do not need to provide these documents**.
- Proof of English language ability. Before SOAS can issue a CAS, we must check that you meet the Student visa requirements for English. See **English Language Requirements** below.
- Maintenance. You need to show proof that you have enough money to pay your tuition fees and living costs for yourself (and any dependants). Please see **Maintenance Requirements** below.
- Student visa credibility interviews. You will be interviewed by a UKVI member of staff using video conferencing as part of the visa application process. Please see [this document](#) for details of what questions to expect.

Tuberculosis (TB) Screening

If you are making your Student visa application in some countries, you must show a certificate to prove that you have been screened for tuberculosis (TB) before you can be granted a visa. These countries are listed in [Appendix T of the Immigration Rules](#).

Permanent residents of these countries will require a test. **However, please note** that if you have been living in a country listed in Appendix T (above) for more than 6 months just prior to making your Student visa application you will also require a test.

An acceptable TB Test for visa application purposes must have been carried out at an approved test clinic in a country listed. Therefore, you must be tested for TB in an approved clinic before you leave the listed country and return to your home country to make your Student visa application.

For more information including a list of approved clinics [please see the Gov.UK website](#).

Translations

Please note: 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 visa Policy Guidance on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Differentiation arrangements for 'low risk' nationals

If you are a student of a 'low-risk nationality' and you are applying for a Student visa you do not need to include any academic or financial documents with your application.

UK Visas and Immigration define the following nationalities as 'low-risk': Australia; Bahrain; Barbados; Botswana; Brazil, Brunei; Cambodia; Canada; Chile; China; The Dominican Republic; Hong Kong; Macau SAR; Indonesia; Japan; Kazakhstan; Kuwait; Malaysia; Mauritius; Mexico; New Zealand; Oman; Peru; Qatar; Serbia; Singapore; South Korea; Taiwan; Thailand; Tunisia; United Arab Emirates; United States of America and British National (Overseas) This list is subject to change.

However, as part of your Student visa application you will need to sign a declaration confirming that you have the required documents. It is possible that UK Visas and Immigration will still ask you to provide your original academic 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 advise you to prepare the documents anyway so that you will have them ready if UK Visas and Immigration ask for them.

Maintenance Requirements

A common reason for Student visa refusals is a problem with financial documents or an incorrect amount of funds being shown.

To meet the maintenance requirement, you will need to show that you have first year/current year's tuition fees + £11,385 for maintenance in your bank account for a 28 day period ending no more than 31 days before your application. Funds must not drop below the required amount throughout the whole 28 day period or your visa application will be refused.

If the course you will be studying is less than 9 months in length, you will need £1,265 for each whole or partial month you will be studying for. For instance, if your course is 2 and a half months long you will need to show enough money for 3 months = £3,795.

If you have paid fees to SOAS before you apply for your Student visa and this amount is shown as paid on your CAS statement, you can deduct the amount from the total you need in your bank account.

Unfortunately, because SOAS and University of London student halls of residence are provided by third-party organisations, you do not pay hall fees directly to SOAS and therefore this money cannot be mentioned in your application.

Bank statements

If you are using your own bank statement for your visa application, you must show that you have had the total amount of money in cash funds in your bank account for a 28 day period. Your bank statement must be dated within 31 days of your application (ie: be less than one month old). Funds must be available for use. You cannot use shares, bonds, fixed deposits, property, an overdraft or a credit card to show maintenance.

The bank statement you submit must be an original document printed on the bank's letterhead and must include all of the following:-

- Your name or your parents(s)/legal guardians name.
- Account number.
- Date of the statement.
- Financial institution's name and logo.
- Amount of money available.

If you are using your parent's bank statement for your visa application, you must also provide:-

- Your original birth certificate confirming your relationship or,
- a certificate of adoption (or notarized copy*) showing your name and the name of the parent who holds the funds or,
- a court document (or notarized copy*) stating that your legal guardian is the person who holds the funds, or
- a government-issued household register (or notarized copy*) and
- a letter of parental consent giving permission for this money to be used for your studies in the UK.

* A notarized copy is one which has been certified as authentic and/or legitimate by affixing a notary's stamp and signature.

If using a letter from the bank (with the details listed above included) it must also include confirmation that funds have been held in the account for a 28 day period ending within 31 days of your application.

You can use a bank statement from an online account (with the details listed above included), but you must provide a supporting letter from your bank on headed paper confirming the authenticity of the statements.

Ad hoc bank statements printed on the bank's letterhead are acceptable as evidence (this excludes mini-statements from cash points).

If you want to use a joint account as proof of your money, you must be named on the account along with one (or more) other person. You can only use joint accounts where you are a named account holder. You cannot submit a joint account in the name of a parent.

If the funds are in your local currency, UK Visas and Immigration advise that you convert the closing balance to Pounds Sterling (GBP) using the [OANDA website](#). Write the converted figure next to the closing balance.

The UK Visas and Immigration have a list of banks and financial institutions which they will not accept documents from. Please see the [GOV.UK website](#) for the up to date list.

To check the validity of your financial documents please use our online [Student visa financial evidence checker](#).

Certificates of deposit

Certificates of deposit are documents issued by a bank which confirm an individual has deposited or invested a sum of money. To be acceptable as evidence:

- the certificate of deposit must have been issued within 31 days of the date of application
- at least 28 days must have elapsed between the date of the deposit and the date of issue of the certificate

To check the validity of your financial documents please use our online [Student visa financial evidence checker](#).

Loans

If you are supporting yourself financially with a loan, it must be held under your own name and the loan letter must be dated no more than 6 months before the date of your application. There must be no conditions on the release of the loan funds to you, other than your making a successful Student visa application.

If you are applying from overseas, the loan funds must be available to you before you travel to the UK; unless the loan is an academic/student loan from your country's national government and will be released to you by your national government or your Student visa education provider when you arrive in the UK.

If you are providing a loan letter as evidence of maintenance, the letter must be issued by a financial institution which must be regulated by either the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA)/Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA) for UK accounts, or in the case of overseas accounts, by the official regulatory body for the country the financial institution is based in.

To check the validity of your financial documents please use our online [Student visa financial evidence checker](#).

Financially sponsored students

If you are financially sponsored by your government, a university, an international company or another scholarship agency, you must provide a letter from your sponsor confirming the details of your sponsorship including the amounts of money received. This should be on official letterhead paper, stamped by the sponsor and dated within the latest 6 months.

If you are sponsored by SOAS, your CAS statement must show this information including the amount of scholarship you will receive. You do not have to provide any personal bank statement if your scholarship covers all of your tuition fees and at least the required amount of maintenance detailed above. If your scholarship only covers your tuition fees, you will have to provide your bank statement to show the required amount of maintenance.

If you have been wholly financially sponsored for fees and living costs in the past 12 months you must include written permission from your sponsor with your application. This must letter must confirm that your sponsor has no objection to you continuing your studies in the UK. Please see the [Points-based system: Student route guidance](#) for more details.

To check the validity of your financial documents please use our online [Student visa financial evidence checker](#).

Dependants

You can only bring dependants with you to the UK if you are studying a postgraduate programme of 9 months or more in duration, or if you are a government sponsored student studying a programme of 6 months or more in duration.

Your husband, wife, civil partner, unmarried partner and any children under 18 can be apply as your dependant. Other family members who wish to join you in the UK must apply for a Visitor visa (see the [GOV.UK website](#) for more details).

The application costs an extra £348 for each dependant. You will also need to show documents that prove your relationship such as birth or marriage certificates.

You will also need to show a further £7,605. The money must be in a bank account in either your name or the dependant's name that meets UK Visas and Immigration guidance. Please see **Maintenance Requirements** above.

If the course you will be studying is less than 9 months in length, you will need to show £845 per dependent for each whole or partial month of leave you will be issued. If your programme is more than 12 months in length you will be issued 4 months of extra leave after your programme ends. You must calculate your dependents maintenance including this period.

For instance, if you are applying for a visa for 3 months to finish your PhD you would need to show 3 x £1,265 (£3,795) until the new 'course end' date on your CAS. Your dependents will need to show 7 x £845 (£5,915) which includes the extra 4 months of leave following your 'course end' date.

For more information about dependant applications please see the PBS Dependant policy guidance on the [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk).

[UKCISA also have useful guidance](#) for dependant applications. If you need further advice please email advice@soas.ac.uk

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 enroll 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 are studying at degree level or above, when you make your Student visa application you will not be expected to provide documentation proving this.

If applying to study a course below degree level, you must have the equivalent of level B1 of the Common European Framework of References for English language.

If you are applying for a visa to study a combined pre-session course you will need to demonstrate level B1 English by providing a SELT meeting the requirements, and on completion of the pre-session English language course must reach B2 level English in order to progress.

Whether you need to provide documentation or not will depend on what country you are from and what is mentioned on your CAS statement. If under "Evidence used to obtain offer" it states that "We confirm that it is equivalent to CEFR level B2 standard in each of the four components of language learning" (or a similar wording) then you require no further evidence.

If you used an English language test to obtain your offer from the UK (i.e. IELTS) it will be listed as “Evidence used to obtain offer” in your CAS statement. If that is the case you would need to provide the original certificate with your application.

If you hold a previously completed a qualification equivalent to a UK degree which was taught in one of the following majority English-speaking countries then this will be listed in your CAS and you should provide it as proof of your English; Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Ireland, Jamaica, Malta, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago, United Kingdom and United States of America

If you are a national from a majority English speaking country you do not need to provide any proof of English as you are already assumed to meet this standard. UK Visas and Immigration lists the following countries as majority English speaking: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Canada, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, New Zealand, St Kitts and Nevis, Lucia, Vincent & the Grenadines, Trinidad & Tobago and the United States of America. UK Visas and Immigration will confirm your nationality on the basis of your passport.

Important note: Covid-19 and English Language Requirements

Due to the pandemic some English language test centres have been closed and because of this UK Visas and Immigration have relaxed the requirement for English testing for students coming to study at undergraduate or postgraduate degree level in the 2020/21 academic year. A range of alternative online tests can be accepted by SOAS. The Admission teams can then amend your CAS to ‘exempt’ you from the requirement to show any evidence of English. To find out more please [see this SOAS webpage](#).

If you after reading this guidance you need further advice please contact John Hitchman or Carrie McMinn, Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) via advice@soas.ac.uk with your full name, nationality and the name of the country in which you are making your Student visa application.