

A Guide to applying for a Student Route visa from overseas

To be used in conjunction with 'How to complete the OVERSEAS
online Student Route Visa Application Form'

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Please note: this guide is for **Student Route** application submitted overseas only. If you are already in the UK, and need to extend your visa, then a different application process applies, and you should not follow this guide. We strongly recommend you contact us for advice regarding your eligibility to apply for a visa from within the UK.

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1. How do I apply for my Student Route visa?

You must apply for your visa online at <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/apply>

You need your passport and [CAS \(Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies\)](#) number to complete your application.

The visa officer will check your CAS when assessing your visa application. It is very important that your CAS is accurate and that the information in your CAS and on your online visa application form is consistent.

When submitting your visa application online, you will need to pay the visa fee and the [Immigration Health Surcharge](#).

In most cases, you will then book an appointment at a visa application centre through the application system. **Please note due to Covid-19, you should expect delays and limited availability of appointments, so prepare in advance.**

At the appointment, you will give your [biometrics](#), and submit the following documents:

- A printed version of your online visa application form
- A printed copy of your appointment details
- Your current passport
- A [TB test](#) certificate (if required)
- Evidence that you meet the [maintenance requirements](#)
- Your academic certificates and your IELTS certificate, if your [CAS](#) lists these
- Your [ATAS](#) Certificate, if you are required to have one
- A letter of consent from your parent or a legal guardian if you are below 18 at the date you submit your online visa application
- Any document listed above which is not in English must be accompanied by an original [translation](#) which meets the relevant requirements.

It is a good idea submit a copy of your [CAS](#) email to assist the visa officer, but this is not essential. Read our guide to completing the overseas online Student Route application form on the intranet which explains how to use your CAS to answer the questions on the online visa application form.

Please note, you may be exempt from providing certain documents at the point of application if you qualify for the [differentiation arrangement](#).

2. When can I submit my online visa application?

You should apply no more than six months before the start date of your course. This has changed recently- under the old Tier 4 visa route it was no more than 3 months before the start date. (The start date will be on your CAS email).

3. When can I travel to the UK?

If you are studying a course that is six months or longer or you are undertaking a pre-sessional course that is less than six months, you can come to the UK either one month before your course start date or seven days before your intended date of travel, if entry clearance is granted less than 1 month before the start date of your course.

4. What is a Biometric Residence Permit (“BRP”), and where and when do I collect it?

If you are applying to come to the UK to study a course that is longer than 6 months and your visa is granted, you will be issued with a vignette (sticker) inside your passport which will be valid for 30 days. The vignette is proof only of your permission to enter the UK and it will allow you to travel to the UK within the specified period. If you do not travel to the UK within this period you will have to apply for another vignette. You will be charged an additional fee for this and it will delay your entry to the UK.

Due to Covid-19, currently vignettes are being issued for 90 days.

When you arrive in the UK, you must collect your BRP. The BRP is evidence of your immigration permission for the duration of your stay in the UK. This card contains the biometric information you submitted at your visa appointment. You will need to show your BRP any time you want to enter the UK.

The online visa application form allows you to collect your BRP from either:

- 1) Cardiff University or;
- 2) a Post Office

The form automatically selects the Post Office nearest Cardiff University for you to collect your BRP. Please select the option to collect your BRP from Cardiff University. To do this enter 2HE562 in the ‘Alternative Location’ box. This means your BRP card will be sent directly to Cardiff University.

We will give you your BRP card at the same time as your student ID card, during enrolment.

Due to the COVID-19 situation students who use the Cardiff University ACL code will have their BRPs sent out to their address by the UKVI once they arrive in the UK. The University will email you with more information about the process if you use our ACL code.

For more information on BRPs, please see <https://www.gov.uk/biometric-residence-permits/need-brp>.

Do not lose your BRP: it is a long and expensive process to replace it.

5. What is a sponsor?

If you have an offer of a place to study with us, Cardiff University will be named as the sponsor in your CAS statement. The University has a sponsor license to sponsor international students to come to the UK. The University assigns a CAS to full-time international students applying for a Student Route visa.

You cannot apply for a Student Route visa without receiving your CAS. You cannot apply to join Cardiff University based on a CAS sent to you by another university.

6. Will I be interviewed as part of my visa application?

The Home Office may ask you to attend an interview to check if you genuinely wish to enter the UK to study. If you are asked to attend such an interview you must do so. If you do not, the Home Office are likely to refuse your application.

7. What is a CAS, and how and when will I get one?

A CAS is a “virtual” document similar to a database record - it is not a paper certificate.

Your CAS will be created by Cardiff University. It will contain your personal information, details about the course you will be studying at Cardiff University, and information about your course fees.

The process involves the following steps:

1. For courses starting in September this year, your CAS email will be issued from May onwards.
2. You will receive an e-mail from Cardiff University asking you to check the details in your CAS statement are correct.
3. Once you have confirmed that the details in your CAS are correct, a CAS number will be sent to you by email.
4. You will need to enter the CAS number in your online visa application.
5. You can print the email which informs you of your CAS number. Alternatively, you can print the web version of the CAS from your SIMS online account. You can submit either as part of your visa application. This is recommended, but not mandatory.

8. My SIMS online account shows the words “Still AV”, what does this mean?

This means your record is still set at Applicant View, and your attempt to confirm the information in your CAS was not completed successfully. Please check your CAS again. When you have successfully confirmed the details in your CAS, you will receive a message to say that your CAS will be issued soon.

9. I have amended my CAS. What happens now?

Your amendment will be considered by staff in the University Points Based Immigration (PBI) team. If it is acceptable, your CAS will be amended before it is sent to the Home Office.

10. My final CAS statement has a mistake on it. Can it be amended?

If your CAS has not been used for a visa application, the Points Based Immigration team can make minor amendments. For example, they can update your CAS to show that you have paid fees to the University. They can also make some basic corrections, such as correcting your passport number.

They cannot make major changes to your CAS, such as changing your course title or your course dates. In these situations, they will need to withdraw your CAS and replace it with a new one. You must delete your old CAS and use the new one.

11. What do “NQF” and “RQF” mean?

NQF and RQF refer to a national standardisation for UK qualifications, they are exactly equivalent. A qualification at NQF/RQF6 is equivalent to a bachelor’s degree course; NQF/RQF7 is equivalent to a master’s; and NQF/RQF8 is equivalent to a PhD. The NQF level can be seen below the course title on your CAS statement. Your CAS states this as NQF, but the application form will request it as RQF.

12. The course end date in my CAS

For bachelor's, master's, and taught PhD programmes the end date on your CAS will be the date you are expected to finish your course. This may change if you have to re-sit any modules. If you do finish your course earlier than the date stated in your CAS, or you decide to write up in your home country, we will inform the Home Office that you have left the UK and they will curtail (cancel) any time remaining on your visa.

13. What is a 'combined CAS' and am I eligible for it?

A combined CAS allows you to apply for a single Student Route visa to cover the duration of your pre-sessional course plus your substantive course (that is, your main academic course starting in September). The UK Immigration Rules mean we can only issue a combined CAS if you meet certain requirements. These can be seen in the [Student Route Policy Guidance](#).

If you are not eligible for a combined CAS you will apply for a Student Route visa to cover the duration of your pre-sessional course only. Once you have successfully completed your pre-sessional course you will normally apply for a visa extension within the UK to cover the duration of your substantive course.

14. I am a dual national and/or I have British nationality. Does this make a difference?

If you are a British citizen (which is normally evidenced by you holding a British passport), you will not require a UK visa.

If you are a dual national, or have more than two nationalities, but none of your nationalities are British and/or EEA or Swiss, then you will require a visa.

If you have a passport that states 'British National Overseas', 'British overseas territories citizen' or 'British overseas citizen', you will need a visa.

15. What is the differentiation arrangement and do I qualify for it?

If you are a national of one of the countries listed below then you may qualify for the differentiation arrangement (you may have heard this referred to as being a 'low risk national'). To benefit, you must make your application in the UK or in your country of nationality.

The below now includes nationals from the EU, EEA and Switzerland

Australia	Macau SAR**
Bahrain	Malaysia
Barbados	Mauritius
Botswana	Mexico
Brazil	New Zealand
Brunei	Oman
Cambodia	Peru
Canada	Qatar
Chile	Serbia
China	Singapore
The Dominican Republic	South Korea
Hong Kong SAR or BNO passport holders *	Taiwan (ROC) passport***
Indonesia	Thailand

Japan	Tunisia
Kazakhstan	United Arab Emirates
Kuwait	USA

* Hong Kong SAR or British National Overseas (BNO) passport holders who apply in the UK or Hong Kong

** Macau SAR passport holders who apply in the UK or in Macau

*** Taiwan (ROC) passport holders with a residence number in their passport who apply in the UK or Taiwan

This list is updated periodically and can be confirmed in Appendix ST Student of the Immigration Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/appendix-st-student>

Applying under the differentiation arrangement means that you don't have to provide supporting documents in relation to finances or qualifications. However the Home Office reserves the right to request the full range of documents in all cases. For this reason all students should ensure that they have these documents available on request.

16. Do I need to prove my English language ability?

Only very specific language tests are accepted by the Home Office.

These can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prove-your-english-language-abilities-with-a-secure-english-language-test-selt#approved-test-providers-and-approved-tests>

However, as a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance, we can make an assessment of your English level and decide if it is of the required level for a degree level course. Full details of how English language is assessed must be included on every CAS. However the Home Office states that an applicant applying to study at a Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance, they do not have to provide all the documents that the sponsor used to assign the CAS.

17. Do I need Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance?

Details of what the ATAS is can be found [here](#).

Your offer letter and you CAS will confirm whether or not you require an ATAS certificate.

If you do require an ATAS certificate, then you must apply for and receive the certificate BEFORE applying for your UK visa. You can apply for an ATAS certificate up to nine months in advance of your course start date (as stated in your CAS). Early applications are strongly advised. An ATAS certificate is valid for six months from date of issue, which should allow you plenty of time to apply for your visa.

ATAS certificates are issued electronically by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

If your course start date changes, you must inform ATAS (you will need to quote your ATAS applicant ID number). You can contact them by email on ATAS@fco.gov.uk.

You must still provide your ATAS certificate if you are covered by the [differentiation arrangement](#).

Please contact [us](#) if you have any ATAS queries.

18. I have previously studied in the UK. Is this important?

Yes – it is VERY important.

You must tell us about any previous studies in the UK, even if you didn't complete those studies. If you do not, your visa application is at risk of refusal.

You must send scanned copies of any course qualifications, transcripts and certificates showing your previous study in the UK to [Admissions](#). Please also send a copy of any previous CAS statements issued to you by any other UK University and/or college or copies of your previous UK visas.

19. What are the Student Route financial requirements (also called “maintenance”)?

You must prove that you have enough money available to you to pay for your first year's **tuition fees** and your **living expenses**. The Immigration Rules are very specific, and you must follow the guidance below very carefully.

You must still have this money available to you in a suitable format, but may be exempt from providing documentary evidence if you qualify for the [differentiation arrangement](#).

Please contact us if you have any queries

20. How much money will I need to show?

All students applying for Student Route entry clearance must show they have the following levels of funds available to them:

Your course length as stated in your CAS	What you must show
Less than 9 months	Your full course fee plus £1,023 living expenses for each month of your course length
More than 9 months	Your first-year course fee plus £9,207 living expenses

If you have dependants and your course is shorter than 9 months, you will need proof that you have the equivalent of £680 per dependant for each month of [immigration permission](#) they will be granted.

If you have dependants and your course is longer than 9 months, you will also need proof that you have the equivalent of £6,120 for each dependant.

Please note if you apply as a Student dependant on or after 1 December, you must provide evidence of finances, even if you come from a country that is listed under the differential evidence requirement.

21. What if I have already paid towards my tuition fees?

If you have already paid some money for your tuition fees and this is confirmed on your CAS, you can deduct this from the total amount of fees you need to show.

For example:

Total fees: £17,500

Student Paid: £2,500

17500-2500 = 15000

Students needs to show £15,000 for tuition fees (plus funds for living expenses)

22. What if I have already paid towards my accommodation fees?

If you have paid money to Cardiff University Residences, a maximum of £1,265 can be deducted from the amount you need to show for living costs. Even if you have paid more than this, more CANNOT be deducted.

If you have paid money to private landlords, letting agencies and/or private halls of residence this CANNOT be deducted from your living costs.

23. How do I prove that I have paid my tuition and/or accommodation fees?

Your CAS will show what fees you have paid to the University.

If you pay your fees after you have received your CAS, you MUST notify the PBI team by emailing pbi@cardiff.ac.uk. Include your student number in all contacts.

It can take up to 10 working days (2 weeks) for your fees to reach the University. Once your fees have been deposited, our fees office will automatically send you an acknowledgement of your payment. Forward this email to pbi@cardiff.ac.uk, quoting your student number, and PBI will update your CAS. They will then email the updated CAS to you.

Your visa application can be refused if you use a CAS which has not been updated to show fees paid. PBI will issue you with an updated CAS once your fees have reached the University and been processed by the Finance department. They cannot issue you with an updated CAS any sooner.

24. What documents must I submit to prove that I meet the financial requirements?

The Immigration Rules and Student Route Caseworking Guidance are very strict about the financial documents you must show to prove you have enough money for your Student Route visa.

The visa officer will only accept the following documents:

1. Cash in your personal bank account
2. Cash in your parent or legal guardian's personal bank account
3. A [bank loan](#) in your name
4. [Letter from an official financial or government sponsor](#).

If you are using overseas bank statements that are not in pounds sterling (£), you should write the closing balance in pounds sterling on the statement. Use the official exchange rate, as on the date of your submitted visa application, on the OANDA website <https://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

You must still have this money available to you in a suitable format, but may be exempt from providing documentary evidence if you qualify for the [differentiation arrangement](#).

Money held in a bank account

You must show that you have held the required amount of money in your personal account for at least 28 calendar days before the date of application.

Shares, bonds, overdrafts, credit cards, pension funds and similar savings accounts will not be accepted.

Your money must NOT be held in a bank or a financial institution with which the Home Office is unable to make satisfactory verification checks. More information available [here](#).

You must provide one of the following documents to show that cash funds have been held in a bank account:

- [Personal bank statements](#)
- [Joint account statements](#)
- [Letter](#) from the bank
- Personal [bank statements of a parent or legal guardian](#)

Whichever document you choose to use, it must contain the following information:

- Your name
- Account number
- Date of statement
- Name and logo of bank / building society
- That your balance has not fallen below the amount you are required to show, for the full 28 day period
- That the required amount is in your account until the closing balance of the statement.

Your [personal bank statements](#) must cover a consecutive 28 day period. The end of that 28-day period and the closing balance must be no more than 31 days before the date you submit your online visa application.

If you use [electronic bank statements](#), these must contain all the details highlighted above.

[Joint account statements](#) are acceptable provided you are named as one of the account holders. Again, the statements must cover a consecutive 28 day period. The end of that 28-day period and the closing balance must be no more than 31 days before the date you submit your online visa application.

A [letter from your bank](#) must be produced on the letter-headed paper of the bank. Again it must confirm the money has been held for 28 days, and no more than 31 days before the date of your online visa application.

If you use [cash held in a parent or legal guardian's bank account](#), then you must provide all the following:

- Parental or legal guardian bank statements covering a consecutive 28-day period. The statements must have a closing balance no earlier than 31 days before the date on which you submit your online visa application form.
- Signed and dated letter from your parent(s) or legal guardian which confirms your relationship to them, and that they give permission for the funds to be used for your study in the UK.
- Your:
 - birth certificate showing the names of your parent(s)/legal guardian(s) or;
 - your adoption certificate showing names of both parent(s) or legal guardian(s) or;
 - a Court document naming your parent(s)/legal guardian(s).

Bank loan letters are only acceptable if the loan is provided by a national government, a state or regional government, or a government sponsored student, a loan company or is part of an academic or educational loans scheme.

The loan must be:

- in your name, not in the name of your parents or legal guardian
- made up of money held by a financial institution which is regulated by either the Financial Conduct Authority or the Prudential Regulatory Authority (if the institution is based in the UK) or, in the case of overseas accounts, by the home regulator (that is, the official regulatory body for the country the financial institution is in and where the money is held) for the purpose of student loans.

There must be no conditions placed on the release of the loan funds to you, other than your Student Route application being successful.

To evidence your loan, you must provide a letter from the financial institution confirming the loan. The letter must show:

- your name
- the date of the letter
- the financial institution's name and logo
- the money available as a loan
- that the loan is provided by your national government, their state or regional government, a government sponsored student loan company or is part of an academic or educational loans scheme.

The letter must be no more than 6 months old. It must be produced on official letter-headed paper.

If you are being given Official Financial Sponsorship:

The Home Office define an official sponsor as:

- The UK Government or your country's Government
- The British Council
- Any international organisation
- Any international company
- Any university

If your studies are wholly funded by an 'official financial sponsor' you do not have to provide separate evidence of your savings. However, you must provide a letter confirming that the sponsor will pay all your tuition fees and living expenses.

The letter must be:

- Printed on official letter-head paper
- Not more than 6 months old

The letter must show:

- Your name
- The date
- Name and contact details of your official financial sponsor
- Length of sponsorship (including start and end date)

- The amount of money they will give you OR confirmation that they will cover all tuition fees and living expenses
- Your dependant(s) names (if applicable)

If your sponsor only pays some of your costs, you will need a letter from them (as above) and proof that you have enough money yourself to meet the rest of the maintenance requirement e.g. personal bank statements.

If your total tuition fees and living expenses are covered by your official financial sponsor and they limit the time you may study in the UK, your visa extension will be limited to the same length of time (which is stated on the sponsor letter) plus the usual post-course period allowed.

If you have previously studied in the UK and you are no longer financially sponsored and your sponsorship ended within 12 months of making your visa application, your former sponsor must provide a letter saying that they agree that you can study in the UK. If the financial sponsor does not give consent, the Home Office could invalidate or refuse your application.

International scholarships

Please send any queries you have about international scholarships to international@cardiff.ac.uk .

If you are awarded an international scholarship, we will include this information in your CAS. If your CAS does not include this information, contact PBI@cardiff.ac.uk (quote your student number in the report) with evidence of your scholarship, and we will update your CAS. You must wait until your CAS is updated before you submit your online visa application.

25. What is the Immigration Health Surcharge, and do I have to pay it?

The Immigration Health Surcharge is a charge to cover any health care treatment you may receive while in the UK. The cost is £470 per year of your Student Route visa.

You will pay half of the yearly amount if your application includes a part year which is less than 6 months. If your application includes part of a year that is more than 6 months you will pay for the full year.

Most international students applying for a Student Route visa to enrol on a course of 6 months or longer will pay the IHS. Even if you do not need to pay the IHS, you still need to apply for an IHS number.

You will be prompted to pay the IHS fee when submitting your visa application form online.

For further information on the IHS, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/overview>.

26. Do I need a TB Test?

If you are coming to the UK for more than 6 months and you live in one of the countries listed [here](#), you will need to be tested for tuberculosis (TB) and obtain a certificate that states you are free from infectious tuberculosis. The test includes having a chest X-ray and it must be undertaken at an accredited clinic or hospital which has been approved by the Home Office.

You must have received your TB test certificate before applying for your visa. Your TB certificate is valid for 6 months and must be included with your visa application.

You will not require a TB test if you are a national of one of the above countries and you have lived in a country where TB screening is not required for at least 6 months, and you have been away from that country for no more than 6 months (you will need to provide proof that you meet this exemption as part of your visa application).

For further information, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa/overview>

This document must be provided even if you qualify for the [differentiation arrangement](#).

27. I have changed my passport. Will this affect my visa application and/or my CAS?

Yes. You have two options:

1. PBI can send you your CAS containing your current passport number. Then, when you receive your new passport, you should send a copy of it to us and we will then update your CAS with your new passport number. We will send you an updated CAS, email; or
2. PBI can place your CAS on hold until you notify us of your new passport number. Once you have your new passport, tell us what your new passport number is, and PBI will send you a CAS containing that new number.

28. Do I need to translate my documents?

All documents that you are submitting with your visa application must be in English. If any of your documents are not in English, the documents must be accompanied by a full translation that can be independently verified by the Immigration Officer. The translation must contain:

- confirmation from the translator or translation company that it is an accurate translation of the original document;
- the date of the translation;
- the full name and original signature of the translator or of an authorised official of the translation company; and
- the translator or translation company's contact details and credentials.

To find a professional translator who is able to provide official certified translations contact the British Council in your country: www.britishcouncil.org.uk .

If there is a local education advisor in your country, they may be able direct you to a professional translator

29. What happens if my visa is refused?

You will normally have the right to challenge a Visa Officer's decision to refuse your visa. This process is called 'Administrative Review'. You must explain in writing why you believe the refusal is incorrect.

The process is free of charge and your written case must be returned to the address contained on your Refusal Notice within the deadline specified.

The person assessing your Administrative Review will either uphold the Visa Officer's original decision to refuse your application. Alternatively, that person will overturn the refusal, which will result in your visa being granted.

The Review process can take up to 28 days. If you aren't able to wait this long because, for example, you need to travel to the UK and enrol at Cardiff University, then you can apply for a new visa without following the Administrative Review process. Ensure that your new application meets all the requirements (and that it addresses the reasons why your last visa application was refused). To submit a new visa application, you will need to request a new CAS from PBI@cardiff.ac.uk. Please read further below.

For more information on the Administrative Review process, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/ask-for-a-visa-administrative-review>

30. Can I apply for a new visa if my previous application was refused?

If your visa is refused, you can submit another visa application online.

You need to carefully read the Refusal Notice to ensure that any new visa application addresses the reasons why your previous application was refused.

If you choose to apply for a new visa, please be aware that:

- You need to request a new CAS (the CAS you used for your refused application will no longer be valid);
- As part of your request for a new CAS, you must send PBI@cardiff.ac.uk a full copy of your Refusal Notice;
- The University may request evidence of your finances before issuing a new CAS if your earlier visa application was refused because you failed to meet the financial requirement;
- A new CAS may not be issued if the University considers that your new visa application will not be successful, e.g. where the refusal was based on credibility or previous immigration history;
- You will need to submit a brand-new visa application and pay the visa fee again (the fee for your refused visa application will not be refunded);
- You will need to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge again (the IHS fee you paid towards your refused visa application will be refunded to you, but this may take some time).

31. Once I am in the UK, can I apply to extend my visa from within the UK?

Whether you are entitled to extend your Student Route visa from within the UK depends on your circumstances.

Following major changes to the UK Immigration Rules in April 2016, you will need to return home to apply for your new visa in certain circumstances.

Please contact us on iss@cardiff.ac.uk for further information.

32. Who should I contact with further questions?

- For visa queries, contact iss@cardiff.ac.uk
- For CAS queries, contact PBI@cardiff.ac.uk
- For scholarship queries, contact international@cardiff.ac.uk
- For queries on residences and accommodation, contact Residences@cardiff.ac.uk
- For queries about your course, please contact your school.

33. Where can I find more information about the Student Route visa?

Please visit the following websites for further information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/points-based-system-student-route>

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Applying-for-a-Student-route-visa-outside-the-UK>



Immigration advice and services regulated by the Immigration Services Commissioner

Disclaimer

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information herein, Cardiff University can accept no responsibility for errors or omissions.

Cardiff University is not responsible for the content or reliability of the linked websites and does not necessarily endorse the views expressed within

The government makes changes to the immigration rules and procedures on a regular basis, so it is important that you check the current guidance and rules when applying for a visa. For further information visit [UKCISA](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk) and the [Home Office](https://www.gov.uk) website.