

## **Student visa responsibilities as a full-time student**

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### **Introduction**

This document explains the responsibilities of a full-time student sponsored by the University of Cambridge for a student visa and provides guidance on protecting your immigration status in the UK. It is important that you understand and comply with the responsibilities of your student visa and cooperate with the University in fulfilling our shared sponsorship duties. Any breach could have serious implications on your studies and continued stay in the UK. In using the University's CAS to apply for your student visa, you agree to the requirements outlined in this document.

If you are a visiting student not affiliated to a College, your host Faculty or Department undertakes the role of the College as described in this document.

These responsibilities apply to students who hold a Student visa, or a Tier 4 visa applied for prior to 5 October 2020. The responsibilities attached to these visas are the same and therefore references to 'student visa' in this document cover both.

Please note that the immigration rules and guidance are liable to change. The most up-to-date version of this guide is available online at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/student-visa-responsibilities](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/student-visa-responsibilities). This version was updated in May 2023.

### **International Student Office**

The International Student Office provides a visa advice service to applicants and students and has a responsibility for ensuring institutional student immigration compliance. They can advise on queries relating to the conditions of a student visa and should be contacted for information on how a change in your circumstances may have implications for your immigration status in the UK. Email [international.students@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:international.students@admin.cam.ac.uk).

### **Entering the UK on your student visa**

You must ensure that you enter the UK within the validity of your student visa. You cannot enter the UK on your student visa before the 'valid from' date. In addition, you cannot enter the UK earlier as a standard visitor (tourist) and then 'switch' inside the UK to your student immigration permission when this becomes valid. If you enter the UK as a visitor prior to your student visa being valid, you will need to leave the Common Travel Area (UK and Ireland) and re-enter to activate your immigration permission as a student prior to starting your studies.

You will not be permitted to start your course if you are in the UK as a visitor.

### **Your BRP or digital status**

The Biometric Residence Permit (BRP), where issued, is the documentary evidence of your immigration permission in the UK. It is a credit card sized document and contains your personal and biometric information. It is very important you keep it secure. You must take it with you if you travel overseas, as you will require it to re-enter the UK and may need it for flights within the UK. Note that there is no requirement to carry ID in the UK, so it is advisable not to carry your passport/BRP inside the UK, other than where necessary for formal identification purposes.

[EEA](#) and Swiss nationals are not issued a BRP and are issued a digital status only. Similarly, those eligible to apply for a student visa from inside the UK and use the ID phone app as part of their application will be issued a digital status and only [certain nationalities](#) will also receive a BRP.

### **Collecting your BRP if you apply for your visa outside the UK**

You will collect your BRP in the UK after entering the UK on your student permission, using a time-limited entry vignette which will be issued in your passport when you receive a successful decision on your visa application.

You will need to collect your BRP after arriving in the UK. The collection point will normally either be your College, if you have used a code in your application for the BRP to be delivered to the University, or the Post Office. This will be confirmed in the decision letter you receive after your visa application has been processed. Further information on collecting your BRP is available at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-visa-brp](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-visa-brp).

### **Receiving your BRP if you apply for your visa inside the UK**

If you apply for further permission to stay in the UK and use the phone app to confirm your identity as part of the process, you will be issued a digital status which can be verified online. When asked to provide evidence of your status, for example by your College, you can obtain a 'share code' at [www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status](http://www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status) and provide this to enable verification. Students of [certain nationalities](#) will be issued both a digital status and a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). It is not always possible to use the phone app to confirm your identity, in which case you will be issued with a BRP only. When a BRP is produced, it will be delivered by courier to the address you provided in your visa application. You should check your [eligibility to apply in the UK](#) before doing so.

### **EEA and Swiss nationals**

If you apply for your student immigration permission as an EEA or Swiss national and use the phone app to confirm your identity as part of the process, you will not be issued a BRP. You will be granted a digital status which can be verified online. You will be able to enter the UK with your passport after you have been granted your student immigration permission. When asked to provide evidence of your status, for example by your College, you can obtain a 'share code' at [www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status](http://www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status) and provide this to enable verification.

### **Checking your visa**

It is a Home Office requirement to have any errors on your visa corrected.

The duration of immigration permission granted depends on the course. You should check your CAS course end date and ensure you have been granted the correct length of leave:

- the length of the course plus four months for undergraduate and PhD courses;
- the length of the course plus two months for Masters courses of 12 months or less;
- the length of the course plus four months for Masters courses lasting 12 months or more;
- the length of the course plus two months for other courses lasting less than 12 months, e.g. exchange students.

If you have a BRP this should contain the following information:

- *Type of Permit:* STUDENT or T4 GENERAL STUDENT
- WORK 20HRS MAX IN TERM-TIME
- 4NUV7KB58 (*University of Cambridge sponsor licence number*)

If this information is missing or there are any other errors on your BRP with your name, personal details or the length of permission granted, contact the International Student Office who will be able to advise you on getting it corrected.

### **On arrival and before you begin your studies**

After arrival in the UK and prior to commencing your studies, you will need to provide evidence of your immigration status to be checked and copied for your student record. This is undertaken by your College and full instructions will be sent prior to you starting your studies.

#### **If you applied for your student visa from outside the UK**

In addition to your passport and student visa, you will also need to provide evidence of when you entered the UK. For many students, this will be the date stamp marked on the entry vignette in your passport at immigration control on arrival in the UK. In the absence of this stamp, applicable to students who are able to use the [eGates](#) at immigration control, other evidence of your date of entry to the UK (e.g. flight ticket) will be required.

#### **If you applied for your student visa in the UK**

If you currently hold a student visa for a different institution, you cannot use that visa to study at Cambridge. A student visa allows you to study a course with a particular sponsor only. If you wish to make your new student visa application for Cambridge inside the UK, you can only start your course after you have presented either a new BRP showing the University of Cambridge sponsor licence number or having provided evidence of submitting an in-time application for a new student visa for Cambridge.

You can start your studies at your own risk based on evidence of having applied for a new student visa, but you will need to keep your College up to date with the progress of your visa application and take your new BRP for copying when received. If your visa application is unsuccessful, you must notify the International Student Office immediately as you will require urgent advice on your circumstances.

If you have completed one course at the University of Cambridge and are continuing to a further degree here, in line with Home Office policy, you must apply for a new student visa within six weeks after the new official course start date or before your current permission expires, whichever is earlier. You must provide evidence to your College which confirms you have submitted your new visa application.

Note that you may not start on the basis of a pending student visa application if you are switching from a Graduate visa or a High Potential Individual visa – the study restrictions of these visas mean you must obtain your new student visa before starting your course.

### Contact details

You are required to keep your UK contact details up to date on your student record throughout your studies. This includes both your residential address and telephone number. You can update your details via CamSIS self-service or by informing your College of any changes.

### Monitoring Academic Engagement

The University is a residential institution and all full-time students are required to be in residence in Cambridge, unless they are an undergraduate student on a year abroad as part of their course or a postgraduate student who has approved [Leave to Work Away](#) for activity such as fieldwork. Similarly, a student visa is granted for the purpose of study at a specific institution in the UK and requires you to be engaging with your studies in person in Cambridge.

The University is required by the Home Office to keep a record of your continued engagement with studies as part of its visa sponsorship duties. This is to ensure that, in accordance with student visa policy, you are actively and consistently following your course of study. Mechanisms that monitor the academic engagement of all students are used for this purpose:

- For undergraduate students, this will be the supervision system in your College.
- For students on taught Masters and Advanced Diplomas, your Department/Faculty will monitor and record your engagement with studies.
- For postgraduate research students, the termly reports submitted by your supervisor as part of the Postgraduate Feedback and Reporting System (PFRS) will be used.
- For visiting students hosted by a Faculty/Department, your supervisor will monitor your academic engagement, and this will be checked and recorded at specific points during the year.

Please note that students will not be disadvantaged where an internal process to monitor engagement does not happen as expected.

Where a student's academic engagement is not satisfactory, this will be investigated by the College and/or Faculty or Department. Depending on the circumstances, support may be provided to assist a student in reengaging with their studies as required, or it might be appropriate for a wider University procedure to be followed such as intermission or temporary withdrawal. For those on a student visa, this may have implications for continued visa sponsorship. Information is outlined on the 'change of circumstances' webpages at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/changes-circumstances](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/changes-circumstances).

## Working

The Home Office **and** the University restrict both the number of hours a student can work in the UK and the type of work that can be undertaken. It is very important you understand these working conditions and check with the International Student Office if you are unsure prior to commencing any work, paid or unpaid. If you plan to undertake any work in the UK whilst on your student visa, it is important you read the full information at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/student-visa-responsibilities/working-student-visa](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/student-visa-responsibilities/working-student-visa).

## Changes in circumstances

If your circumstances change during your studies, the Home Office may need to be informed and there could be implications for your student visa.

Some changes must be reported by you. You are required to inform the Home Office of the following changes using the change of circumstances form: [www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp](http://www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp)

- contact details
- criminal convictions
- passport number
- dependants' details, for example if the relationship breaks down
- if any children stop living permanently with you.

You are required to apply for a new BRP if any of the following change:

- name, e.g. if you have gotten married
- nationality
- gender
- facial appearance
- date of birth

Other changes, such as intermission or course changes, may need to be reported by the University as your visa sponsor and could have implications for your student visa and/or continued studies. Detailed information on these changes in circumstance and the implications is outlined on our webpages at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/changes-circumstances](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/changes-circumstances).

If you encounter a change in circumstances during your studies, or think this might be likely, you should check if there are any implications for your student visa by contacting the International Student Office.

## Changes to research for ATAS clearance

Students undertaking a PhD-level research degree, Masters course or four-year undergraduate degree in certain science and technology subjects require an ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) clearance certificate. You would have been informed if you had to apply for an ATAS certificate for your course prior to applying for your visa; certain nationalities are exempt from the requirement. You are required to apply for a new certificate:

- if there are any changes to the course content or research proposal. Changes are those other than minor changes to the areas of research or the use of any new research technique;
- if your course end date is postponed by more than 3 calendar months;
- if you wish to change to a new course that requires ATAS clearance.

If any of these apply to you, you should contact the International Student Office to request updated guidance to be able to apply to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) for a new ATAS certificate.

## Changes to immigration documentation during studies

If you obtain a new passport, BRP or UK immigration status during your studies, you are required to provide evidence of this to your College for checking so a copy can be uploaded to your record.

If you lose your visa/BRP, or it is stolen, you are required by the Home Office to apply for a replacement at an additional cost, if it is valid for 3 months or more or if it is valid for less than 3 months and you plan to travel overseas and re-enter the UK on your student immigration permission. The International Student Office can be contacted for further guidance in these circumstances.

If you change your immigration status during your studies, you must notify your College and provide updated evidence. The University is required to report this change to the Home Office and cease visa sponsorship. If you change your citizenship and intend to reside in the UK on the basis of this new citizenship, you should contact the International Student Office to notify them and seek guidance on any implications for your visa.

## Completing your studies

If you complete your course on or after the expected date as stated on your CAS, then your visa expiry date does not change. Completion means unconditional approval of your degree.

### Completing early

If you complete your course earlier than the date stated on your CAS, the University is required to report this to the Home Office. The Home Office will curtail your immigration permission to the normal entitlement period following a course end date. If you leave the UK after your permission has been

curtailed, or you are overseas at the point of curtailment action, you may not be permitted re-entry to the UK on your student visa.

### **Visa expiry and 'overstaying'**

You must leave the UK by the expiry date of your visa unless you have submitted a visa application to extend your permission in the UK. There is no 'grace period' following the expiry date of your visa. You will become an 'overstayer' if you are in the UK the day after your visa expires without having submitted a valid application for further leave or having obtained other valid immigration permission. This is the case even if you are able to enter the UK as a visitor without a visa. You cannot switch from your student immigration permission to visitor status automatically from within the UK. You would need to leave the UK and re-enter as a visitor. Entry to the UK is at the discretion of Border Force officials.

The University will not allow you to continue your studies as an 'overstayer'. You would also need to declare any periods of overstay on future visa applications to the UK and many other countries.

### **Graduate visa**

The Graduate route is an unsponsored visa enabling international students to work or look for work after their studies after successful completion of their course. It is granted for 2 years, or 3 years for a PhD student, and it is only possible to be granted the visa once. Detailed guidance, including the eligibility requirements, are outlined at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/graduate-visa](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/graduate-visa).

## **Protecting your immigration status: Checklist**

This section provides a summary of what you need to do to adhere to the University's sponsor licence responsibilities, your visa conditions and other considerations.

### **Visa sponsorship responsibilities**

- Enrol by the course dates specified in your CAS.
- Before starting your studies, present your passport and immigration documentation to your College.
- Check your BRP and contact the International Student Office if there are any errors, as they will need to be corrected.
- Keep your UK contact details on your student record up to date throughout your studies. This includes residential address, telephone number and email address.
- Continue to engage with your studies.
- Check with the International Student Office how changes to your studies may have implications for your visa.
- Complete your course on time and within the time limits imposed by your visa. If your visa is expiring and you need more time to complete your studies, and the University has approved an extension, contact the [International Student Office](#) to discuss your options.



- If you obtain a new passport or BRP during your studies, present this to your College.
- Inform your College if you switch to another immigration category.

#### Adhere to your student visa conditions

- Only work within the conditions set by the Home Office for a student visa and the greater restrictions set by the University.
- Do not attempt to apply for 'public funds', including welfare and local authority housing benefits.
- Report any relevant changes of circumstance to the Home Office.
- Apply for a new BRP if your personal details change. Such changes include name and nationality.
- Apply for a replacement if your BRP, or visa in your passport, is lost or stolen.
- Make sure you leave the UK prior to your visa expiring unless you obtain further leave or have submitted a valid visa application to extend your permission in the UK.