



UNIVERSITY_{OF}
WINCHESTER

Visa Sponsorship Policy

2026-27

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Indicate whether the document is for public access or internal access only Indicate whether the document applies to collaborative provision? <i>(Strikethrough text, as appropriate)</i>	Public Access Internal Access Only Applies to Collaborative Provision
Summary: This document defines the policy for compliance with the Home Office regulations relating to Student Route visa students, sponsored by the University. The Policy is specific to the University of Winchester and does not cover all immigration and sponsor requirements. It is reviewed annually but may be amended sooner in response to UKVI Policy changes.	

STUDENT VISA COMPLIANCE POLICY

Contents

STUDENT VISA COMPLIANCE POLICY	2
1 Policy Introduction	4
2 Scope	4
3 Key Requirements of UKVI Policy Guidance	4
4 Specific Responsibilities at the University of Winchester	5
5 Recruitment and Admissions	7
6 Right to Study checks and Enrolment	8
7 Engagement Monitoring	8
8 Review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator	11
9 Re-sit and Repeating Students	11
10 Exceptional Circumstances	11
11 Interrupting/withdrawing Students.....	11
12 Compliance Duties.....	12

1. Policy Introduction

The UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI) requires Higher Education Institutions to undertake a range of duties and responsibilities as Sponsors of students entering the UK with the Student Route Visa. The Student Route Visa requires the issuing of the Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS), accurate record keeping and reporting duties as per UKVI rules and regulations.

The Pro-vice Chancellor (Engagement) is the Authorising Officer and has overall responsibility for the Sponsor Licence.

The Head of International Student Success is the key contact and is responsible for ensuring that the University complies with the UKVI Student Sponsor Guidance.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to applicants and students of programmes delivered on University of Winchester premises who require a Student Route Visa to study in the UK.
- 2.2 This policy does not apply to employees of the university (except where the employee is also a student of the university). This policy also does not apply to collaborative provision.

3. Key Requirements of UKVI Policy Guidance

The University's Policy reflects the requirements set out in UKVI's Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules. They are as follows:

- 3.1 The University shall allow access to UKVI staff; apply their guidance; supply ad hoc data; use the UKVI on-line Student Management System (SMS) and strive to ensure that the University's sponsored students arrive, enrol and complete their studies.
- 3.2 The University shall issue a CAS for students that meet the relevant UKVI and university requirements. The CAS contains essential information on the student's programme, background, fees and English Language Requirements (where required), remote delivery percentage (when required) and Agent details (when required). The CAS is a document used by the student in support of a visa application.
- 3.3 The University will keep copies of an up-to-date passport (specific pages); Visa (Immigration Status/ Digital immigration Status); evidence of date of entry; contact details; attendance and engagement data and any relevant documents in support of their application and during their time of study.
- 3.4 The University will securely keep electronic copies of up-to-date passport (specific pages); visa (Immigration Status/ Digital immigration Status) as evidence of Right to Study for all unsponsored Overseas students.
- 3.5 Visa Compliance will report students who do not enrol; cease engagement; change immigration category or have significant programme changes. Visa Compliance will also report details of students believed to be breaching or attempting to breach visa conditions or involved in terrorism or other criminal activity.
- 3.6 To retain sponsor status, the University must apply for a Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA) every 12 months.
- 3.7 Failure to comply with UKVI requirements may result in the loss or suspension of the University's

licence to sponsor Overseas students.

- 3.8 Sponsored students can only enrol on programmes that meet certain requirements outlined by the UKVI Sponsor Guidance and the UKVI rules and regulations.

4. Specific Responsibilities at the University of Winchester

4.1 CAS Issuing

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
Issue CAS to new students	Marketing, Communications & Engagement – Admissions Student Support and Success - Study Abroad students
Issue CAS to continuing students	Student Support and Success - International Student Success

4.2 Record Keeping

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
Copies of relevant passport pages, visas (Immigration Status/ Digital immigration Status)	Registry and Visa Compliance
Contact details	Registry and Visa Compliance
Attendance and Engagement records	Personal Academic Tutors
Attendance and Engagement records PSRB Placements	Placement Module Leads/ Admins
Attendance and Engagement records PSRB Placements	Placement Module Leads
PhD/ Research	The Doctoral School
Evidence used for CAS issuing	Admissions (new students) International Student Support (Study Abroad and continuing students)

4.3 Reporting Duties (see [Student sponsorship Guidance for detail](#))

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
Student visa refusal	Visa Compliance
Student delayed	Visa Compliance
Student fails to enrol	Visa Compliance
CAS Withdrawal when status is Assigned	Admissions
Student Withdrawal/deferral	Visa Compliance
Student engagement	Visa Compliance
Sponsorship withdrawal and any other reasons which require reporting (i.e. work placement, completion of early programme, change of immigration category, etc.)	Visa Compliance
Successful completion of course confirming eligibility for Graduate Route Visa	Visa Compliance
Student wanting to change course of study	Admissions (within the first two weeks of term) after this period lapses, Visa Compliance

5. Recruitment and Admissions

- 5.1 Applications to study at the University are received via UCAS, Department for Education (DfE) Apply, via an international partner or using a University of Winchester Application Form.
- 5.2 Applications are considered according to the University's academic and English language entry requirements, as published on the University website.
- 5.3 All programmes at the University are taught and assessed in English. Applicants whose first language is not English and who require student visa sponsorship to study in the UK must normally hold a recognised English language qualification that assesses each of the four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing) separately and has been achieved at the required level to meet UKVI requirements.
- 5.4 As a University with a track record of compliance, students may also demonstrate their English language suitability in other ways, for example, by having a degree-level academic qualification that was taught in English.
- 5.5 Entry requirements for certain programmes may include an audition or interview as part of the application process to determine an applicant's suitability.
- 5.6 Offers made do not guarantee a CAS will be issued to the student. The University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship under the Student Route to any applicant. Where such action is taken, the University will provide reasons for this decision to the student.
- 5.7 Once a student has accepted an unconditional offer, they are required to provide further information about their UK Immigration history.
- 5.8 Students are normally required to pay a tuition fee deposit to demonstrate their commitment to University study before a CAS is issued.
- 5.9 Students may be required to provide financial evidence to demonstrate they have sufficient funds to study in the UK. Only where the University is satisfied that a student has sufficient funds, will a CAS be issued. Further details can be found in the CAS Issuing Procedures.
- 5.10 Students may be required to undertake a pre-CAS credibility interview. This will be used to assess the credibility of the student before CAS is assigned.
- 5.11 When a CAS is provided to a student, they will also be sent information about our expectations and the conditions of visa sponsorship, via email.
- 5.12 Whilst CAS are issued following a rigorous procedure that assesses a candidate as being highly likely to be issued a visa, it should be noted that a CAS does not guarantee a successful visa application.
- 5.13 Any Agent or other intermediary will be appointed and managed by Marketing, Communications & Engagement - International Recruitment, in line with the University's Agent Policy.
- 5.14 Visa Compliance will provide UKVI with a list of agents it works with. If there are changes to the list, Visa Compliance will provide UKVI with the required information within the timescales specified in the Student Sponsor Guidance.

- 5.15 When an agent has been involved in the recruitment of a student, agent details will be recorded on each individual CAS.
- 5.16 Visa refusal for new students will be reported to the UKVI by Visa Compliance. Depending on the nature of the refusal, a new CAS may be issued to allow the student to submit a new visa application. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and will be at the discretion of Visa Compliance.
- 5.17 Applicants will be strongly encouraged during the process to apply for an Administrative Review should they receive a Visa Refusal. Applicants will also be advised to inform Admissions and Visa Compliance immediately on receiving notification of a visa refusal.
- 5.18 The University will financially support Administrative Reviews that are not related to fraud or criminal activity. The applicant/ student will be required to submit dated evidence of the Administrative Review submission to Visa Compliance and a re-imburement will be issued.

6 Right to Study checks and Enrolment

- 6.1 Sponsored and unsponsored students will complete a Right to Study check prior to formally enrolling at the University. Students who are unable to evidence their Right to Study will not be permitted to enrol onto their course. Further details can be found in the document, Students Subject to UKVI Immigration Control: Requirements and Procedures.
- 6.2 All students must ensure they have the Right to Study for the duration of their course and will be responsible to apply for further immigration permissions if their leave expires before their course, including non-sponsored students.
- 6.3 If the student is unable to provide their Right to Study, the University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship.
- 6.4 If the student requires a visa extension, they are required to contact International Student Support so that appropriate information, advice and guidance can be provided.
- 6.5 It is recommended that students live within a 60 mile/90-minute radius of the University to ensure they are able to meet their engagement requirements. From September 2026, students will be required to sign the Student Route Visa: Commuting Responsibility Agreement at Enrolment, this can be updated at any point in a student's time of study at the University.
- 6.6 Throughout the student's study, Visa Compliance will continue to check UK addresses and will reach out to students should they change address and live outside the recommended radius.

7 Engagement Monitoring

This section is based on the [Student Sponsor Guidance, Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#) and should be read alongside the University of Winchester's Attendance Policy, Academic Engagement Dashboard Procedures and Students Subject to UKVI Immigration Control: Requirements and Procedures.

- 7.1 Faculties are responsible for recording the attendance and engagement of its sponsored students on taught programmes via the Academic Engagement Dashboard (AED), ensuring no falsifying of attendance is taking place.

- 7.2 Personal Academic Tutors are responsible for calling a student after a 14 day alert and logging this on the AED as outlined in the Attendance and Engagement Procedures.
- 7.3 Visa Compliance will make contact with sponsored students following any tiered alert
- 7.4 Research Knowledge and Exchange (RKE) are responsible for recording PhD students by way of monitoring engagement with Supervisor meetings, escalating to Visa Compliance when required.
- 7.5 Students studying a Foundation year as part of their degree should be considered as 'degree level' and will be monitored by their Faculty via the Academic Engagement Dashboard (AED). the Attendance Policy and the Students Subject to UKVI Immigration Control: Requirements and Procedures.
- 7.6 Relevant staff/ teams will follow the procedures outlined in the Academic Engagement Dashboard Procedures for any student non-attendance and/or non-engagement. Visa Compliance will follow the Students Subject to UKVI Immigration Control: Requirements and Procedures and the Attendance Policy for students that do not attend.
- 7.7 Faculty Placement Module Leads for PSRB courses and non-PSRB courses are responsible for monitoring attendance and engagement on placements and voluntary placements and are required to escalate non-attendance Visa Compliance.
- 7.8 Faculty Placement Module Leads are responsible for ensuring that the work placement provider is aware of the requirements relating to sponsored students in their workplace.
- 7.9 Placement and shall continue to comply with all sponsor duties, including those relating to attendance monitoring and the maintenance of current contact details.
- 7.10 Faculties must keep a record of regular contact with Postgraduate and Research students in the writing-up phase of their course as outlined in the Attendance Policy.
- 7.11 Postgraduate students in the write up phase of their dissertation are recorded as 'Current'. This period runs from the end of term two or term three (as appropriate) until the course end date.
- 7.12 The attendance and engagement of sponsored students who are undertaking official roles as Student Union Sabbatical Officers is monitored by Visa Compliance in conjunction with Student's Union.
- 7.13 There is no requirement to monitor academic engagement for immigration purposes during university designated vacation periods or post study periods.

8 Absences

- 8.1 The university recognises that, on occasion, students may have legitimate reasons for being unable to attend a class or engage in their studies for short periods of time. In such instances, students must contact the Visa Compliance team to request an authorised absence using the authorised absence form.
- 8.2. When reviewing absence requests, the Visa Compliance team (in consultation with the Faculty team) will consider the grounds on which requests are made, the length of time requested and the impact of the absence on the student's academic studies. The following sets out examples of circumstances that the university would normally accept as valid reasons for absence. The list is not exhaustive:

- Illness or other reasonable health-related circumstances that temporarily prevent attendance
- Death or serious illness of a close family member or a close friend
- Significant adverse personal or family circumstances such as divorce, burglary, fire, major legal proceedings or financial hardship beyond the student's control

8.3. Students must provide corroborating documentary evidence for any absence lasting longer than one week. An absence of normally no more than 2 weeks authorised absence can be granted by the Compliance team. If personal, financial or medical difficulties continue to impact studies, we may advise an interruption of studies.

8.4 Research Students

- Discretion may be applied to allow absences of up to 2 weeks
- These must be approved by the Doctoral School with prompt notification sent to the Visa Compliance team.
- Students who fail to re-engage or need additional time away will be directed toward the University's interruption or withdrawal processes.

8.5 Pregnancy and maternity leave

- Antenatal Care: Absences for appointments and scans can be authorised upon submission of appointment letters to the Visa Compliance team.
- Persistent Illness: If a student faces persistent pregnancy-related illness, the Visa Compliance team will discuss potential interruption options. If the student declines, further absences will be managed under standard policy guidelines.
- Post-Delivery leave: Students must take a minimum of two weeks and may take up to 60 days of leave following delivery. During this time, they must:
 - Maintain two contact points with their academic department and Student Support and Success team.
 - Complete their course within their existing visa dates.

8.6 Unauthorised Absences

Any absence that is not officially approved will count toward the student's overall academic attendance percentage, which may trigger formal intervention measures in accordance with university Attendance policy <https://www.winchester.ac.uk/media/Attendance-Policy-2025-6.pdf>

8.7 Exceptional Circumstances

If a student requires a CAS for the purpose of a visa extension due to exceptional circumstances, this will be escalated to the Head of International Student Success and will be assessed on a case-by- case basis alongside the Director of Student Support and Success.

9 Interrupting/withdrawing Students

Visa Compliance and Registry will follow the Students Subject to UKVI Immigration Control: Requirements and Procedures for sponsored students that need to withdraw and/or interrupt.

10 Compliance Duties

- 10.1 Visa Compliance will undertake several scheduled activities throughout the year to monitor the University's compliance as per the requirements outlined in the Student Sponsor Guidance, Document 2 Sponsorship Duties. The key activities to be monitored include and not limited to:
- Completeness of documents required for Right to Study Checks
 - Maintenance of attendance and engagement records
 - Changes to UKVI policies and regulations
 - Annual Licence activities such as annual CAS allocation application and Basic Compliance Assessment.
 - Updating the Study Risk Team of any new Agents used
 - Addition of new teaching sites
- 10.2 The University of Winchester will continue to meet its Educational Oversight requirements by maintaining the required ratings during inspections.
- 10.3 Material changes will be reported if applicable as per the Sponsorship Guidance docume

Equality Impact Assessment	
Summary of process undertaken to determine equality impacts:	Assurance of access, equity and inclusivity and that no process or required procedure places an unfair advantage or disadvantage for any person possessing, associated with or perceived to be possessing any of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equalities Act 2010. To also ensure that UKVI regulations and sponsor guidance and followed for Student Route Visa holders and those on other visa sponsorship (where appropriate).
University Committee (name/ date) where equality impacts discussed (may be Committee of approval, or another):	Academic Regulations Policies and Procedures Committee and Senate
Has this policy been screened to ensure compliance with the University's Free Speech expectations?	Yes (remove as appropriate)
Identified equality impact(s) on colleagues and students (i.e. any specific impacts related to this policy that may cause disadvantage for people due to one or more particular protective characteristic)	
Protected Characteristic	Impact(s) identified and any action(s)/mitigation(s) to address these impact(s), as necessary.
Age	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Disability	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Gender Identity	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Marriage/Civil Partnership	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Pregnancy and Maternity	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).

Race (incl. nationality)	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Religion and Belief	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Sex	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).
Sexual Orientation	Where applicable, this policy is subject to the rules and regulations of the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).