



## University of Plymouth CAS Policy

This policy concerns the issuance of Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) documents to non-EEA applicants to study at the University of Plymouth and University of Plymouth International College.

It takes account of the Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors documents 1 -4, the Tier 4 Policy Guidance, the guide to Creating a CAS for education sponsors (SMS guide 4a), University of Plymouth and University of Plymouth International College Admissions policies, and CAS issuing procedure documents.

The University of Plymouth is a licenced sponsor under Tier 4 of the Points Based Immigration System. As such, it is the University's responsibility to assess students whom we intend to sponsor and to decide where that is appropriate or otherwise.

A part of this assessment is to determine that, in our reasonable judgment, the student is able and intends to follow the course of study we offer, will abide by Tier 4 regulations and immigration law, and will leave the UK at the end of their studies or seek immigration permission to remain in the UK in another category.

Within the University and University of Plymouth International College (UPIC), CAS are issued for new applicants by the relevant Admissions team and for current or resuming students by the International Student Advice team.

CAS are issued for the Doctorate Extension Scheme and for Tier 4 Student Union Sabbatical Officers by the UKVI Compliance team.

### **CAS data and dates:**

The information used to produce the CAS i.e. course start and end dates, final enrolment date, etc. is checked every year by Admissions, Compliance and Faculty staff to ensure accuracy.

We do our best to ensure that this information is completely accurate, but academic schedules may sometimes alter slightly in terms of final submission dates. If this is the case, we will carry out any reporting required to UKVI, and inform students accordingly.

CAS dates should include all academic participation expected from the student on their programme, including taught sessions and submission of coursework or dissertation. They will not include graduation or the award board dates.

Applicants and students can only apply for CAS within the timeframes set out by UKVI, for a new student this means not more than 6 months before the course start date. A Tier 4 visa application cannot be made more than 3 months prior to the course start date.

Existing students or students resuming after an Interruption will need to apply for a CAS as we instruct, for example if they need to extend their visa after completing a placement, or to apply for further leave required prior to transferring to a longer degree programme.

**New Students:**

We will issue a CAS to an applicant requiring a Tier 4 visa under the following circumstances:

- As per University of Plymouth and UPIC academic entry requirements and our admissions policy (s)
- The course meets Tier 4 requirements in terms of mode of study, placement percentage, the location of teaching, hours per week if under RQF 6, and it leads to a recognised award
- When the applicant has met all offer conditions, including remitting the required tuition fees deposit or supplying an official sponsorship letter that we deem is genuine and meets UKVI requirements for official financial or government sponsors
- A satisfactory interview has taken place, where required
- Professional body requirements have been met, including a criminal records check and fitness to study assessment where required
- A satisfactory pre-CAS checklist has been completed, and we are satisfied it has been completed by the applicant personally
- University and UKVI English language requirements for Tier 4 students have been met
- The course represents academic progression for the applicant, and can be completed within their Tier 4 time limit
- If the applicant will be under 18 on the day that the CAS is issued, we have received the signed consent and permission of their parent (s) or legal guardian (s) for them to travel to the UK and to live independently
- Where the Tier 4 regulations mean that the applicant is required to apply for new leave outside the UK, we have received a flight ticket or other information to confirm that they are currently outside the UK
- Where we reasonably believe they are a genuine student with the genuine intention to study here, they are able to meet the requirements of the Tier 4 visa category, and they intend to leave the UK at the end of their studies.

**Pre-sessional programmes:**

We will only issue a single CAS for a pre-sessional programme where all requirements are met, including;

- The exit level of the pre-sessional programme is B2
- The applicant holding an unconditional offer in all respects aside from English Language
- They have the required and in date IELTS SELT scores to join the relevant programme
- The pre-sessional is no more than 3 months long and will end no more than one month before the main degree programme starts

Applicants undertaking a pre-sessional programme at UPIC who do not meet the requirements for a single CAS will be instructed to apply for a Short Term Student visa for this programme only. They will need to leave the UK to apply for further leave under Tier 4 for their substantive programme.

We will not issue a CAS to an applicant under the following circumstances:

- An applicant has supplied fraudulent documents as part of their application, or documents that we have reason to believe are fraudulent
- They have withheld information regarding their study or immigration history in the UK, that may have affected our decision to sponsor them under Tier 4
- We believe that they cannot meet the Tier 4 visa requirements in terms of funds or other requirements
- They cannot submit a valid Tier 4 application at all, or in time to meet our enrolment deadlines
- Where we believe that there is a strong possibility they would be subject to a credibility interview and would not be found credible
- We do not believe they are a genuine student with the genuine intention to study
- The course they have applied for is not appropriate for Tier 4, for example the mode of study is blended or distance learning, it is a CPD module with no award at the end
- We believe that the applicant will not meet Tier 4 requirements in terms of their time limit and academic progression
- The applicant has in the past breached immigration regulations, for example working conditions or by overstaying
- They are under 16 years of age and therefore fall outside the Tier 4 (General) route
- Where we reasonably believe they failed to follow immigration instructions issued by any previous Tier 4 sponsor in the UK, for example by remaining in the UK for a long period after their previous sponsor had stopped sponsoring them, and the reason for this is unclear
- If they are a current or previous University of Plymouth student applying to a new course, they should have no tuition fee debts

All decisions taken not to issue a CAS are made on a case-by-case basis, based on all the available information at that time. They may be referred to the University's Authorising Officer in some cases to make a final decision.

### **Current and Resuming Students:**

The University wishes to support all current and resuming Tier 4 students to complete their degree programme successfully, and will issue a CAS to facilitate this whenever possible. However as we are sponsoring the student under Tier 4 we still need to assess their application and only issue a CAS if certain conditions are met.

We will issue a CAS to a current or resuming student under the following circumstances:

- There is an academic reason for their studies to continue, usually as a result of the award board decision
- We have their faculty's agreement that their studies are continuing and confirmation of the new end date
- They have a good record of attendance / engagement with their course
- They have no tuition fee debts
- If their interruption was due to ill health, or there are concerns about their health, we have evidence they are fit to study (a Fit to Study meeting may also be required by their faculty)

- Their participation on their course is required within 60 days or less and there are no gaps in study
- The further CAS would represent academic progression or they are exempt
- They have enough time left under the Tier 4 time limit to complete their degree programme and the programme leads to an acceptable award
- Where the Tier 4 regulations mean the student is required to apply for their visa extension outside the UK, we have received evidence of a flight ticket, or other evidence to show they are currently outside the UK
- We have no other concerns and the student has in the past followed University instructions, for example to leave the UK following our ceasing sponsorship of them under Tier 4
- We reasonably believe they are a genuine student with the genuine intention to study here, they are able to meet the requirements of the Tier 4 visa category, and they intend to leave the UK at the end of their studies

We will not issue a CAS to a current or resuming student under the following circumstances:

- The period of the course the CAS is being issued for cannot or will not lead to an acceptable award, for example if the student's Tier 4 time limit would be met before they can complete their degree and obtain an award, or if the extra time requested is to study for a professional accreditation only
- The student's participation on the course is not required within 60 days, or there are gaps in study, for example if the student is required to repeat in semester two only, we would not sponsor them under Tier 4 in semester one. This also applies where the student decides to defer their dissertation
- If the student has a poor record of attendance / engagement (exceptions might be made where extenuating circumstances have been upheld)
- If the student has a tuition fee debt
- We will not issue a CAS based on provisional results or before results are known, only after the award board decision has been released
- We will not sponsor a student further under Tier 4 if in our judgment we would be unable to meet our sponsorship duties in respect of them, for example if they are repeating a small number of credits, there is no participation required or very little. We will assess this on a case by case basis and take into consideration if the work required can be completed from home
- The student has not followed University instructions in the past and for example, has remained in the UK for a long period of time following our ceasing sponsorship of them under Tier 4, and there is no justifiable reason for this
- Their Tier 4 time limit has been reached or would be reached before completion of their course
- The further sponsorship does not represent academic progression and is not exempt
- We will not issue a CAS if the student cannot submit a valid, in time Tier 4 application at all, or in time to meet our enrolment deadlines
- We will not issue a CAS to cover graduation
- If the student requires a CAS to complete their studies after a placement year, we will not issue this if the student has not submitted any assessment required as part of that placement
- We will not issue a CAS to a student for a blended or distance learning programme, or if their mode of study is OS DIST

- When the student is required apply for their outside the UK, evidence of this has not been supplied
- We reasonable believe that the student has not complied with the conditions of their visa in the past, for example by breaching their working conditions, they have become an overstayer or we do not believe they are a genuine student with the genuine intent to study and ability to complete their course.

All decisions taken not to issue a CAS are made on a case-by-case basis, based on all the available information at that time. They may be referred to the University's Authorising Officer in some cases to make a final decision.

### **Switching Immigration Category:**

Students switching into the Tier 4 visa route (if their other immigration permission is expiring) are required to meet the full requirements for a CAS to be issued as per those for **new students**, if they have studied at the University or UPIC for less than one full academic year when requesting the CAS.

We will assess them based on these criteria rather than "progress to date". Students are made aware of this when applying to the University with other immigration permission.

### **Doctorate Extension Scheme:**

PhD students applying for a CAS under this route should satisfy our general requirements as outlined above, but must also complete a DES application form and supply a supporting statement explaining why they wish to be sponsored under this route.

They also must have the support of their Director of Studies for the application, the consent of their sponsor if they have been sponsored within the last 12 months and must be within 60 days of their completion date, but not have uploaded their thesis to PEARL, which would mean they have completed their degree.

The completion date is confirmed by the Doctoral College and if this "slips", the DES CAS dates will not be altered.

Doctoral Extension Scheme leave cannot be extended beyond 12 months so a further CAS cannot be issued.

### **SU Sabbatical Officer:**

Tier 4 Students who have been elected to a full time, salaried executive union position at the University of Plymouth or to a national NUS position can be issued with a CAS to allow them to extend their visa to take up the position, or to complete their studies afterwards.

They must satisfy our general requirements as above, have completed their studies in their previous academic year in order to take up the position full time and we must have received confirmation of their post from the Student's Union. The position can be extended for a further year if they are re-elected, if requirements are again satisfied a further CAS would be issued.

### **Visa refusals and Overstaying:**

If an applicant, current or resuming student receives a visa refusal we expect them to notify the University as soon as possible, and to supply all documents pertaining to the refusal.

In order to determine if the University will issue a second CAS after a visa refusal, we require the applicant or student to submit their documents for assessment. If we are confident there is only a small risk of a second refusal, another CAS will be issued by the relevant area.

If their visa has been refused on grounds of fraud, or credibility, it is unlikely a further CAS would be issued to them.

Where an Administrative Review will be sought, we expect the applicant or student to follow the University's guidance on this matter and to inform us as soon as possible if this has been submitted. They must also supply all relevant documentation submitted to UKVI as part of the admin review.

If a current student cannot submit a valid, in time application and risks becoming an overstayer, we will instruct their faculty to withdraw them from their programme at that point. We may consider sponsoring them again under Tier 4 in the future depending on the circumstances; this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Ceasing Sponsorship under Tier 4:**

The University will stop sponsoring students under Tier 4 and report this to UKVI under the following circumstances:

- Withdrawal from programme for academic or person reasons
- Interruption
- Where we cannot meet our sponsorship duties in terms of attendance or other factors
- Poor attendance
- Academic failure
- Tuition fee debts
- Breaching conditions of the Tier 4 visa
- Failure to obtain required new leave for their programme when instructed to do so
- Failure to enrol
- Changing mode of study or immigration route
- Required to withdraw as a result of disciplinary or academic offences
- Where the student will complete their studies from home.

This is a non-exhaustive list; please see the UKVI Compliance webpages for more information.

### **Tier 4 responsibilities:**

All students at the University of Plymouth and University of Plymouth International College should be aware of their Tier 4 responsibilities and ensure that they are meeting them.

Please see the full list here <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/international/compliance/current-student/tier-4-student-responsibilities>

They should also check the International Student Advice webpages for immigration updates and respond to any communications sent to them by the University promptly.