



University of Plymouth CAS and Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

This policy concerns the issuing of Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) documents to applicants and students to study at the University of Plymouth and University of Plymouth International College. It also covers the circumstances in which Student visa sponsorship would not be granted, or would be withdrawn.

It takes account of a number of policy and guidance documents including the Student visa Guidance for Sponsors documents 1-4, the Student visa immigration rules, 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 the Student visa route of the Points Based Immigration System. As such, it is the University's responsibility to assess all students prior to deciding to sponsor a student, where appropriate.

A part of this assessment is to determine that, in our reasonable judgment, the student:

- has the ability and intention to follow the course of study we offer;
- will abide by the Student visa 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.

CAS data and dates:

The information used to produce the CAS i.e. course start and end dates, final enrolment date, etc. is reviewed annually by Admissions, the University's UKVI Compliance team 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. CAS dates 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 Student 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 instructed by the University, 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:

The University will issue a CAS to an applicant requiring a Student visa under the following circumstances:

- As per University of Plymouth and UPIC academic entry requirements and our admissions policy(s)
- The course meets Student 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 by the applicant personally
- University and UKVI English language requirements for Student visa students have been met
- The course represents academic progression for the applicant, and can be completed within their Student visa time limit
- If the applicant is under 18 years of age on the day that the CAS is issued, the University will have received the signed consent and permission of their parent (s) or legal guardian (s) for them to travel to the UK and to study and live independently
- Where the Student visa regulations mean that the applicant is required to apply for new leave outside the UK, the University will have received a flight ticket or other information to confirm that they are currently outside the UK
- Where the University reasonably believes the student meets the overall threshold of the assessment as set out on page 1.

Pre-sessional programmes:

The University 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
- The applicant has 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. In such circumstances, students will need to leave the UK to apply for further leave under a Student visa 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 the University has reason to believe are fraudulent
- The applicant has withheld information regarding their study or immigration history in the UK, that may have affected our decision to sponsor them under a Student visa
- The University believes that they cannot meet the Student visa requirements in terms of funds or other requirements
- The applicant cannot submit a valid Student visa application at all, or in time to meet our enrolment deadlines
- Where the University believes that there is a strong possibility the applicant would be subject to a credibility interview and would not be found credible
- The University does not believe the applicant is a genuine student with the genuine intention to study
- The course they have applied for is not appropriate for a Student visa, for example the mode of study is blended or distance learning, it is a CPD module with no award at the end
- The University believes that the applicant will not meet Student visa 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 beyond a visa expiration date
- The applicant is under 16 years of age and therefore falls outside the Student visa route
- Where the University reasonably believes the applicant failed to follow immigration instructions issued by any previous Student visa 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 the applicant is a current or previous University of Plymouth student applying to a new course, they should have no tuition fee debt owed to the University

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. These decisions 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 Student visa students to complete their degree programme successfully, and will issue a CAS to facilitate this whenever possible. However given the University's responsibilities as a licensed sponsor, it will still need to assess a student's application and only issue a CAS if certain conditions are met.

The University 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 an Award Board decision
- The University has the faculty's agreement that a student's studies are continuing and has confirmation of the new end date
- The student has a good record of attendance / engagement with their course
- The student has no tuition fee debts

- If a student's interruption was due to ill health, or there are on-going concerns about their health, the University has evidence the student is fit to study (a Fit to Study meeting may also be required by the student's faculty)
- A student's 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 the student is exempt
- The student has enough time left under the Student visa time limit to complete their degree programme and the programme leads to an acceptable award
- Where the Student visa regulations mean the student is required to apply for their visa extension outside the UK, the University has received evidence of a flight ticket, or other evidence to show they are currently outside the UK
- The University has no other concerns and the student has in the past followed University instructions, for example to leave the UK following a decision to cease sponsorship of them under the Student visa route
- We reasonably believe they are a genuine student with the genuine intention to study here, they are able to meet the requirements of the Student 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 Student visa 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, the University would not sponsor them under a Student visa 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
- The University will not issue a CAS based on provisional results or before results are known, only after the Award Board decision has been released
- The University will not sponsor a student further under a Student visa if in its judgment the University would be unable to meet its sponsorship duties in respect of them, for example if the student is repeating a small number of credits, there is very little or no participation required. The University 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 a Student visa, and there is no justifiable reason for this
- A student's Student visa 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

- The University will not issue a CAS if the student cannot submit a valid, in time Student visa application at all, or in time to meet University enrolment deadlines
- The University will not issue a CAS to specifically to cover attendance at graduation
- If the student requires a CAS to complete their studies after a placement year, the University will not issue this if the student has not submitted any assessment required as part of that placement
- The University 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
- The University reasonable believes 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. Cases may be referred to the University's Authorising Officer in some cases to make a final decision.

Switching Immigration Category:

Students switching into the Student 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.

The University 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.

SU Sabbatical Officer:

Student visa 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.

In such circumstances, students 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 the University 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; subject to requirements again being 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 it will issue a second CAS after a visa refusal, the University requires the applicant or student to submit their documents for assessment. If the University is confident there is only a small risk of a second refusal, another CAS will be issued.

If a student's visa has been refused on grounds of fraud, or credibility, it is highly unlikely a further CAS would be issued.

Where an Administrative Review will be sought, the University expects the applicant or student to follow the University's guidance on this matter (guidance would be given by the International Student Advice team) 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 administrative review.

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

Ceasing Sponsorship under a Student visa:

The University will stop sponsoring students under a Student visa and report this to UKVI under the following circumstances:

- Withdrawal from programme for academic or person reasons
- Interruption (the Student's decision) or Suspension (the University's decision)
- Where the University cannot meet its sponsorship duties in terms of attendance or other factors
- Poor attendance
- Failure to respond to immigration related instructions i.e. to supply contact details, to supply immigration documents in a timely manner
- Academic failure
- Tuition fee debts
- Breaching conditions of the Student visa
- Failure to obtain required new leave for their programme when instructed to do so
- Failure to enrol
- Where no academic engagement is required in the next 60 day period
- Changing mode of study or immigration route
- Withdrawal 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.

Student visa responsibilities:

All students at the University of Plymouth and University of Plymouth International College should be aware of their Student visa 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>

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