



UK Visas & Immigration

UKVI Student Visa Campaign - USA Key messages and FAQ

This document is for internal use and should not be shared externally in its entirety. Key messages can be shared externally, and the FAQ can be used to respond to external enquiries.

June 2024

Key messages (proactive use)

- As soon as you have your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from your chosen university & the required supporting documents, **apply for your UK Student visa now!** Don't risk missing out on the beginning of your academic journey in the UK.
- **Start Your Student Visa Application Now!** Once you have your CAS and supporting documents, start filling out your Student visa application. Remember you need to give enough time in case UKVI need to contact you for additional information.
- **If your bank statement shows unclear source of funds or large deposits, consider including a cover letter to provide explanations with your Student visa application.** This will reduce the need for UKVI to contact you for additional information which may cause delays.
- **Start your UK Student visa journey with the right documentation.** Watch this video and start your application now!
- Do you have gaps in your studies? It may be helpful to **include a supporting letter with your Student visa application to explain any gaps in your study.**
- Don't wait until closer to your course start date to apply for your Student visa. Remember paying for **Priority service or Super priority service does not guarantee success and some applications can take longer to consider.**
- **UKVI may contact your bank to verify the financial documents you submitted.** Consider informing your bank that you are applying for a UK Student visa, to help reduce delays.
- Are you applying for a UK Student visa? **UKVI has a list of countries which require a Tuberculosis test from an approved TB clinic if you've lived there in the last 6 months, for 6 months or more.**
- **Avoid visa delays by making sure to regularly check your registered email including the junk folder** as we may write to you for more information.
- **Check if you need an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) before you apply** - If you intend to study or research at postgraduate level in certain sensitive subjects, you may also need to apply for an ATAS certificate. You must do this before you apply for a UK Student visa.
- **Important Reminder: Do not travel to the UK without your Student visa or before the issue date of your Student permission.** It's essential to have your Student visa approved in your passport or issued electronically before you travel to the UK.

Reactive lines (Reactive use)

- Summer is the peak period for Student visa applications. UKVI is currently experiencing high global demand so there may be delays to receiving a decision. The latest visa processing times can be found on: [gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times)
- We are aware a small number of applications are taking longer to process. Your visa application may take longer if:
 - the information in your application is not accurate or requires further consideration.
 - you need to provide further evidence, for example evidence of funds.
 - your supporting documents need to be verified.
 - you need to attend an interview.
 - further information is required on your personal circumstances (for example if you have a criminal conviction)
- You will be contacted by letter or email if we need more information on your visa application or if your application is complex.
- If you have provided the contact email for a representative or agent when you applied, please check with them to see if they've received any correspondence on your behalf.
- If you are waiting for a decision on your application, you do not need to go to the VAC to inquire until your passport is ready for collection. You will receive an email once a decision is made and your passport is ready for collection.
- We aim to ensure there are available appointments at the VAC within 5 working days. However, it is possible that the most convenient timeslots for you are unavailable when you book your appointment. This may lead to delays in meeting our target timescales.
- The introduction of eVisa is on the way! The UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) are currently in process of rolling out a digital immigration system. This means we are replacing physical documents with an online record of your immigration status. For further information please visit [gov.uk/guidance/online-immigration-status-evisa](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/online-immigration-status-evisa)

Student visa application process

1. Check if you need a UK Student visa for your intended studies on the [Gov.uk website](https://www.gov.uk)
2. Read our specific online guidance on applying for a UK visa from the United States on [UK visa in the USA](#)

3. Check your eligibility and prepare your supporting documents.

Submit your completed Student visa application with the correct supporting documents. Your decision can take longer to be assessed if you do not do this.

You **will** need:

- Passport or travel document
- Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from your course provider

You **may** also need:

- Proof of English language proficiency: ([Student visa – knowledge of English](#))

- Proof of finances: ([Student visa – money you need](#))
- Parental or guardian consent (for students under 18): ([Student visa – documents you need to apply](#))
- TB test certificate: ([If necessary](#))
- ATAS certificate – if your course requires one: ([Academic Technology Approval Scheme](#))

4. Submit your Student visa application at gov.uk/student-visa/apply-online

5. Provide your biometric information Once you have completed your online application you will be prompted to select one of the following services to provide your biometric information (fingerprints and digital photograph):

- Standard service at a Department of Homeland Security Application Support Center (ASC). If you choose this option you will need to send your application form, passport and supporting documents to VFS Global, New York - along with a fully addressed UPS prepaid electronic shipping label.

OR

- You can attend a [VFS Premium Application Centre](#) (PAC) to provide your biometric information. If you choose this option, you will need to pay for a Premium Service. Visit [VFS Global website](#) for details on the student services on offer, including the Student Special.

6. Wait for your decision: Your application will be sent to UKVI to assess. UKVI will complete biometric, criminal and travel history checks. You may also be called for an interview.

7. Wait for your passport. If you provided your biometrics at an ASC, your passport will be returned to you using the UPS prepaid electronic shipping label you provided. If you provided your biometrics at a VFS Premium Application Centre your passport will be couriered to you, or you may be able to collect in person.

Your passport will be returned with a visa vignette (sticker) stuck inside. Your visa will be valid for travel for 3 months from the start date of your visa. The visa vignette may not be valid for the full duration of your stay in the UK. You will collect a Biometric Residence Permit to cover the full length of your stay once you are in the UK.

Please do not travel to the UK without the Student visa in your passport.

Top tips to avoid delays when applying for your Student visa

- Check that you have applied for the correct visa (Student visa/Child Student visa).
- Check that your CAS is for the correct visa (Student/Child Student visa).
- Include all necessary documents with your application.
- Include official translations of your documents.
- Include a supporting letter to explain any gaps in your study – for example, periods of employment.
- For financial transparency, provide a supporting letter to explain any unclear funds in your bank statement.
- Disclose your full travel history - including visas refused.
- Disclose any forms of criminality – including minor offences.

- Include your birth certificate and parental consent letter if you are under 18 or funded by your parents.
- Check you have paid the correct amount of Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) - for the full period of your visa.
- Consider informing your bank that you are applying for a UK Student visa and that UKVI may contact them to verify bank documents submitted.

Frequently asked questions

General

1. How long will my Student visa take?

The UK aims to process Student visa applications within 15 working days. The latest global decision waiting times can be found on [gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/visa-processing-times)

2. My university has not issued my CAS reference number yet; can I apply for my visa?

You must have your CAS reference number from your educational sponsor to be able to apply for a Student visa. If you have not yet received your CAS, speak to your educational institution about what you need to do.

3. Will you give me a refund if you take too long to make a decision on my application?

We aim to process all applications as soon as possible. Some applications can take longer to process if made during busy periods where there is global demand, or if it is a complex case. We are unable to offer refunds for visa fees once you have visited the Visa Application Centre and submitted your biometrics. For more information on refunds, please visit [gov.uk/cancel-visa/get-refund](https://www.gov.uk/cancel-visa/get-refund)

4. When can I get a refund and how long does it take?

You can ask to cancel (withdraw) your Student visa application. You will get a refund of the immigration health surcharge if you cancel before a decision has been made about your application. You may get a refund of the application fee. This depends on what stage your application is at when you cancel. It can take up to 28 days to get your refund. For more information on refunds, please visit [gov.uk/cancel-visa/get-refund](https://www.gov.uk/cancel-visa/get-refund)

5. What happens if I have an urgent or compassionate reason to travel?

Where there are extremely compassionate or compelling circumstances, we may consider speeding up certain cases. However, the bar for this is very high and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Customers should make these circumstances known at the visa application centre or by contacting [gov.uk/contact-ukvi](https://www.gov.uk/contact-ukvi)

6. How can I get a faster decision on?

If your application is urgent, you may opt for a priority service available for an additional fee. You could receive a decision within 5 working days using Priority service or by the end of the next working day using the Super Priority service. Remember that once you have submitted your biometrics at the VAC you will not be able to change to a priority or super priority visa service. For more information, visit [gov.uk/faster-decision-visa](https://www.gov.uk/faster-decision-visa)

Financial evidence

7. Can I help with bank verifications if I provide a letter confirming contact details for my bank?

Yes, you can provide a letter confirming contact details for your bank to assist with verifications. However, it's important to note that each case will be reviewed individually, and there's no guarantee of approval. We might not be able to use personal or local branch contact details, and documents will typically be verified with the financial institution's main office.

While not mandatory, providing further details about the source of funds, especially if the source isn't clear (like large deposits in a short time), can help the decision-making process. If there are concerns about whether the money is genuinely available for use in the UK, you may be asked for more information.

Dependants

8. Can I bring my partner and children with me?

Your partner, or children aged under 18, may be able to come to the UK providing you are:

- Studying for a course of study which the provider has confirmed is a PhD, other doctoral qualification, or a research-based higher degree.
- Financially sponsored by the UK or an Overseas Government.

Undergraduate students are not normally permitted to bring dependants, and this has not changed. You must provide proof of your relationship and proof of finances to fund their maintenance. This is in addition to the proof of finances that you will show as part of your own application. For further information visit: gov.uk/student-visa/family-members

9. What do you mean by a research-based higher degree?

A research-based higher degree means a postgraduate program comprising a research component (including a requirement to produce original work) that is larger than any accompanying taught component when measured by student effort.

10. What about 2-year integrated programmes with an integrated premaster and research master programme?

These students will still be able to bring dependants. The course level on the CAS must reflect the exit qualification.

11. Can dependants of students who have started their course in Autumn 2023, come into the UK after January 2024?

The changes will affect students who are starting their courses from 1 January 2024 onwards.

These changes will not affect dependants of overseas students where the student is already in the UK on their course of study. For further information, please visit gov.uk/student-visa/family-members

12. Can dependants remain in the UK if a Graduate visa holder switches back to the student route on or after 1 January 2024?

Dependants that are already in the UK are permitted to apply for further leave to remain. If family members do not already have a Dependant visa, the student will need to meet the eligibility criteria to bring dependants into the UK.

13. What type of scholarships qualify for the dependant's exemption?

To be eligible to bring dependants on a scholarship it must be:

- A Government funded scholarship.

- From a central Government department
- Covering all fees and living costs for the student

If a scholarship does not cover dependant living costs, then they need to provide separate financial evidence to cover them.

14. Will there be a concession for disabled students to be able to bring carers?

There are currently no concessions for disabled students to bring carers and this will continue to be the case until further notice.

Graduate route

15. Is the Graduate route still available?

Yes, currently there is no change to the Graduate route. For more information on Graduate visa, including cost and eligibility, go to www.gov.uk/graduate-visa.

1. What were the key findings of the MAC review regarding the Graduate Route?

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) has recommended that the Graduate Route should be retained in its current form. The review found no significant evidence of misuse and highlighted the positive contributions of international graduates to the UK economy and higher education sector. For more information, please visit <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/graduate-route-rapid-review>

16. Why don't you allow individuals to bring dependants on the Graduate route unless they were already in the UK as a Student dependant?

The Graduate route is a light touch route with minimal requirements, and we do not assess financial circumstances, therefore it would not be appropriate for new dependants to be given permission to stay in the UK without a guarantee that they can support themselves and not rely on public funds.

Graduates have the option of switching to the Skilled Worker route, where they meet the requirements, which allows new dependants and is also a route to settlement.

Switching visa routes

17. What changes are being made to the rules on switching?

Students will no longer be able to switch out of the student route until they have completed their course.

The only exception is for PhD students who will be permitted to switch into the Skilled Worker route after they have completed 24 months towards their PhD.

18. Why are you stopping students switching to the Skilled Worker route part way through their course?

The main purpose of the student route is to enable applicants to undertake a course of study within the UK. We want to ensure that applicants are coming to the UK to study rather than to work. There are other routes available for those whose primary focus is to work.

Immigration health surcharge (IHS)

19. Why do I have to pay IHS?

You will need to pay a healthcare surcharge as part of your immigration application if you are applying for a stay of more than 6 months in the UK. This payment of the IHS entitles customers to access the NHS on broadly the same basis as a permanent UK resident for the duration of their visa, without the need to pay for treatment.

20. How much is the immigration health Surcharge (IHS) for students?

The cost of the IHS varies depending on the duration of the visa granted. It is important to note that the visa duration might exceed the length of your course. As of February 6th, 2024, the discounted rate for students, their dependants, and under 18s has increased from £470 to £776 per person per year. For more information, please visit [gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application](https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application)