Who are ISVAT?

ISVAT is the International Student Visa Advice Team at LSE. We are responsible for providing immigration advice to international students, including EU/EEA/Swiss nationals, about study-related immigration in the UK.

- International Student Visa Advice Manager: Bethan Ovens
- Senior International Student Visa Adviser: John Kayan (maternity cover until 30 April 2019)
- Senior International Student Visa Adviser: Laura Blenkiron (returning from maternity leave 29 April 2019)
- Senior International Student Visa Adviser: Emerald Southern-Darbar

I have a question about visas, how can I get advice?

We recommend that you check the ISVAT webpages first. They contain detailed guidance about a range of immigration issues such as applying for a Tier 4 visa and working in the UK. If your questions are not answered within our guidance, please contact ISVAT.

How do I contact ISVAT?

The best way to contact us is via our online query form. If you are on campus and would like to talk to a member of the team, you can attend a drop-in session. You can book a time slot in advance. Places are limited and time restricted.

I would like an appointment, how do I book?

- You can book a drop-in appointment at the Student Services Centre in Old Building.
- If you are a PhD Student, you must book an appointment at the PhD Academy drop-in only.
- If you are attending the sessions for questions about working during or after your studies, you must book via CareerHub.

Why is it called ‘drop-in’ if appointments are booked in advance?

It is possible to drop-in subject to availability. At peak periods, most appointments are booked in advance due to high demand. It is possible to get advice without pre-booking an appointment for the majority of the year.

When and where is drop-in?

- SSC 1:30pm to 2:30pm weekdays during term-time. 1:30pm to 2:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays during vacation.
- For PhD students, drop-in is in the PhD Academy on Mondays from 11:00am to 12:00 noon and Thursdays from 3:00pm to 4:00pm during term-time. In vacation, there is only the Thursday drop-in.
- For working on a Tier 4 visa queries, drop-in is in LSE Careers on Mondays from 3:00pm to 4:00pm.

The drop-in appointments are only short and I think that my query will take longer, what do I do?

Contact ISVAT (either using the online query form, or by attending drop-in) to discuss your circumstances. If a longer appointment is deemed necessary, it will be arranged on a case by case basis.

What can ISVAT help me with?

ISVAT can help international students with immigration issues relating to studies in the UK. We offer advice about subjects like applying for a Tier 4 visa, working in the UK, change of circumstances, visa errors, lost/stolen visas, etc.

Why do ISVAT keep telling me to read their guidance first, rather than just answering my questions?

ISVAT are a small team and we are reliant on students reading our guidance in the first instance. Much of our guidance is based on feedback and FAQs from students so it is likely that you will find the answer to your question there. If the guidance doesn’t answer your question, contact ISVAT at that point.

I don’t understand the guidance, what do I do?

We will always refer you to our written guidance in the first instance. If something is unclear or if you still have questions which were not answered within the guidance on the ISVAT webpages, you can contact ISVAT for assistance.

Can you advise my parents/employer/friend/relative/Study Abroad adviser instead of me?

Unfortunately not. We are only able to advise you directly as you are the visa holder.
My query is urgent. How quickly will you reply to me?

Our standard response time is 3 working days. Urgent cases will be prioritised, but ISVAT assesses the urgency based on other cases. We understand that every query is important and we always reply as soon as we can. Sending multiple queries or chasing up a response will not speed it up (it actually delays our response times to you and others). Your patience in awaiting a reply would be appreciated.

Can I contact ISVAT staff members directly?

The ISVAT email account (where the online query forms are received) is monitored closely therefore you should contact ISVAT there rather than individual staff email accounts to ensure you receive the quickest possible reply. If you have already been in contact with ISVAT, the same staff member will continue to advise you except when unavailable, or the case is escalated to the manager, in which case another staff member will take over so that you receive a timely reply to your query.

I want to receive advice by telephone, what is the number?

ISVAT do not publicise a number as we prefer not to provide advice over the telephone. The primary reason being that important information can be misinterpreted and it can also be difficult to verify identity over the phone. We do not offer advice via Skype or social media.

Will ISVAT prepare, submit and send my Tier 4 visa application form for me?

It is not possible for us to offer this service. We have detailed guidance on our webpage about applying for a Tier 4 visa. We rely on students using the guidance to prepare a Tier 4 visa application in the first instance. We also have presentations and other resources over the peak period. If you have questions which have not been answered within our guidance, please contact ISVAT for advice.

Can ISVAT check my documentation and application form before I apply if I am overseas?

We cannot check overseas applications and supporting document. If you have specific questions or concerns, please contact ISVAT for advice about your circumstances.

Where is my CAS?

ISVAT do not issue CASs. Contact the relevant Admissions Team if you are a new student or Visa Compliance if you are a continuing student with CAS related questions.

I’d like a letter for visa purposes; can ISVAT do this for me?

ISVAT do not routinely issue documentation for visa purposes. If you have a complex case that ISVAT have been assisting with, ISVAT will provide a bespoke letter outlining the rules for your specific needs when necessary. However if you require a letter for travel or employment purposes, a Certificate of Registration should suffice.

Do ISVAT keep a record of advice?

We keep all emails and a drop-in log with notes of the enquiry and advice. We are required to keep these records under the OISC guidelines.

Will my enquiry be treated confidentially?

Yes. We are bound by OISC regulations and also the Data Protection Act. Our drop-in sessions take place in a public space. Please contact ISVAT if you require a confidential space to discuss a specific issue.

Can you give me advice about applying for a visa to another country?

We can only provide immigration advice for study-specific immigration in the UK. We are not qualified to advise on visas for other countries.

I’m a Tier 4 visa holder. Can ISVAT give me advice about permanent residency or settlement in the UK?

Regrettably, we are only able to provide advice relating to study-specific immigration. If you require advice about this or another non-study related immigration permission, you can find external advisors at:

- OISC
- ILPA

I’m an EU national; can ISVAT help me with immigration related applications?

Due to Brexit, ISVAT now have detailed advice for EU/EEA/Swiss nationals. You can find this here: https://info.lse.ac.uk/current-students/immigration-advice/eea-eea-nationals

How do I know if the advice is correct?

ISVAT are regulated to give immigration advice under the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) guidelines. This involves continued professional development (training) and keeping up to date with changes in immigration.

What if I have a complaint?

If you are given incorrect advice, there is a formal complaints procedure at LSE and also through the OISC.

- LSE Complaints procedure
- OISC Complaints procedure

We expect all users of our service to follow the Student Charter and the School’s anti-harassment and anti-bullying policy.

Can I give feedback about the service ISVAT provide?

Yes, there is a feedback form on our webpage: https://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/ISVAT/secure/ISVAT-feedback.aspx. You can choose whether you would like to provide your details or remain anonymous.

I still have questions, who can I contact for advice?

You can contact ISVAT.