



Recruitment and Skilled Worker visa sponsorship policy for Professional Services roles

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the School's approach to Skilled Worker visa sponsorship for Professional Services roles. It is intended for use by recruiting managers, and the HR Division when considering the possibility of employment sponsorship for relevant roles.

The purpose of this policy is to help managers and staff understand how sponsorship decisions are approached for Professional Services roles at LSE, including when sponsorship will normally be considered, when it will not be available, and what steps should be followed where an exception may be justified.

It also supports clearer recruitment planning by helping managers identify sponsorship issues early, manage applicant expectations transparently, and ensure that decisions are evidence-based and applied consistently.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Professional Services roles at LSE, including new vacancies, replacement posts and fixed-term roles. It also applies where an existing member of staff is not eligible to extend their current visa under the relevant visa rules and may therefore require Skilled Worker visa sponsorship to continue in their current role.

This policy applies only to decisions about whether LSE will consider or support Skilled Worker visa sponsorship. It does not replace the School's recruitment and selection procedures, nor does it determine whether a role or individual meets the requirements of the Skilled Worker visa route, which must be assessed separately.

3. Policy Principles

LSE will ordinarily consider Skilled Worker visa sponsorship for Professional Services roles at Band 6 and above, subject to the role and candidate meeting the sponsorship rules and the School being satisfied that sponsorship is appropriate in the circumstances.

For Professional Services roles below Band 6, sponsorship will not be available, unless a permitted exception applies. This reflects the School's view that these roles are less likely, overall, to meet the Skilled Worker visa sponsorship rules and would normally be expected to attract suitable candidates who already have the right to work in the UK.

Skilled Worker visa sponsorship should not be treated as the default route for establishing right to work. Where an individual already has, or may be able to obtain, another form of permission to work in the UK, that option should be explored first. Sponsorship should only be considered where it is necessary, appropriate and consistent with this policy and the applicable Skilled Worker requirements.



4. Roles that cannot be sponsored

Some roles are not eligible for Skilled Worker visa sponsorship at all. The [Home Office list of Skilled Worker eligible occupations and codes](#) identifies each occupation code as Higher Skilled, Medium Skilled or Ineligible. Where the relevant occupation code is clearly marked as Ineligible, LSE cannot sponsor the role, regardless of grade or the preferred candidate's circumstances.

Examples of roles that may not be eligible for sponsorship include certain catering and hospitality roles, library assistants, and some administrative, clerical, routine operational or support roles. Eligibility will depend on the duties of the role and the relevant occupation code.

Managers should not rely on job title alone when considering whether a role is eligible. Consideration will be given to the actual duties and responsibilities of the post to identify the most appropriate occupation code. If the relevant code is ineligible, the advert should make clear that Skilled Worker visa sponsorship is not available for the vacancy so that applicants can make an informed decision before applying.

5. Sponsorship criteria

Before sponsorship can be supported, the role and the individual must meet the applicable Skilled Worker requirements. The fact that a role falls within the School's normal sponsorship threshold does not mean that sponsorship will automatically be available.

5.1 Skills threshold

Graduate-level requirement

For most new Skilled Worker visa applications, the role must be at graduate level, equivalent to RQF Level 6, unless a specific transitional or other permitted exception applies under the immigration rules. From a sponsorship perspective, this means the role must be more than routine administrative, operational or process-based work. It must require duties and responsibilities at a level that can properly support Skilled Worker sponsorship.

For the purposes of this policy, a graduate-level role is expected to involve the application of specialist knowledge, analytical judgement, problem-solving, professional expertise or a comparable level of technical capability. The role should normally involve a degree of autonomy, accountability and decision-making that goes beyond providing administrative support or process delivery.

Evidence in the job description and person specification

The job description and person specification must clearly evidence that the role meets this level. This should be apparent from the role purpose, main duties and responsibilities, and essential criteria, which should demonstrate the complexity of the work, the level of judgement and problem-solving required, and the specialist knowledge, skills and experience needed to perform the role.

Requiring a degree qualification does not automatically mean that a role is graduate level. The assessment will consider the overall nature of the role, including its duties, responsibilities, complexity, level of judgement and specialist knowledge requirements, as well as any qualification requirements.



Where the job description or person specification does not clearly evidence that the role is graduate level, HR may determine that the role cannot be supported for Skilled Worker visa sponsorship. Managers may be asked to clarify the duties or requirements of the role where needed, but the case for sponsorship must be supported by the role documentation itself.

Home Office skill categories

The [Home Office eligible occupations and codes list](#) identifies occupation codes as Higher Skilled, Medium Skilled or Ineligible. In broad terms, Higher Skilled roles are those that meet the current skill level for new Skilled Worker visa sponsorship, provided the other route requirements are also met.

Medium Skilled roles

A Medium Skilled role is an occupation that remains on the Home Office list of eligible occupations but does not meet the current skill threshold for most new Skilled Worker visa sponsorship applications. Unlike a Higher Skilled role, a Medium Skilled role will not normally be eligible for sponsorship for a new recruit or for an employee who requires Skilled Worker visa sponsorship for the first time.

Sponsorship may still be possible in limited transitional circumstances where the individual was already sponsored before 22 July 2025 in the same occupation code. This might include, for example, an individual continuing in the same role or moving to LSE from another employer into a role in the same occupation code.

Where a role is identified as Medium Skilled, managers should not assume that sponsorship will be available. The HR Division will confirm whether any transitional provisions apply and whether the role and individual meet the relevant Skilled Worker requirements.

5.2 Salary threshold

General minimum salary

For most new Skilled Worker visa applications, the proposed salary must meet the higher of the normal minimum salary threshold, currently £41,700 per year, and the relevant standard [occupation-code going rate](#). Managers should normally work on the basis that the standard going rate applies, as lower going rates shown for some occupation codes generally only apply under transitional arrangements, such as where an individual was already sponsored in a role before 4 April 2024.

Discounted thresholds

In some cases, a lower salary threshold may apply where the individual qualifies for a permitted discount under the Skilled Worker visa rules. This may include, for example, a new entrant discount, where the individual meets the [Home Office criteria for being treated as a new entrant](#). Where a discounted threshold applies, HR will confirm the relevant salary requirement, including any applicable hourly rate, before sponsorship is supported.

New entrant eligibility may apply in different circumstances, including where the individual is under the age of 26 at the time of applying for the visa or has recently held a Student or Graduate visa. This may be relevant where a manager wishes to recruit a former student or recent graduate who has returned overseas since completing their studies. HR will confirm whether the new entrant provisions can be applied in each case.



For practical purposes, the normal minimum salary threshold of £41,700 is broadly equivalent to Band 5, step 23.5 on the LSE salary scales from August 2026. This means that some Band 5 roles, including Research Assistant posts, may need closer salary checking where the individual does not qualify for the new entrant rate, because the normal minimum salary threshold will then apply.

Occupation-code going rate

The salary must also meet the standard going rate for the relevant occupation code, which may be higher than the general threshold. The going rate is set by the Home Office for each occupation code and is based on a 37.5-hour working week. Each occupation code has a Home Office going rate. The relevant going rate must be considered alongside the general minimum salary threshold when assessing whether Skilled Worker visa sponsorship can be supported.

Working hours and pro-rating

Salary eligibility involves two separate checks: the general minimum salary threshold and the occupation-code going rate. The role must meet whichever requirement is higher.

The Home Office occupation-code going rates are based on a 37.5-hour working week. Where the role is contracted for a different working pattern, such as LSE's standard 35-hour week, the occupation-code going rate may be adjusted to reflect the contracted weekly hours.

This does not mean that the general minimum salary threshold is reduced. Where the normal minimum salary threshold applies, the actual annual salary for the role must still be at least £41,700,¹ unless the individual qualifies for a permitted discounted threshold, such as the new entrant rate.

The same principle applies to part-time roles. A part-time salary cannot usually be pro-rated below the applicable minimum salary threshold. For example, a role at 17.5 hours per week would still need to meet the relevant annual salary threshold, unless a discounted threshold applies.

Fixed-term appointments should be considered separately. The salary threshold is assessed by reference to the annual salary rate for the role, rather than the total amount the individual will receive during the fixed-term contract.

Final assessment

The HR Division will assess the applicable occupation code, skill level, salary threshold, going rate, working hours, any new entrant or transitional provisions, and any other Skilled Worker requirements before confirming whether sponsorship can be supported.

6. Recruitment process and advert wording for new vacancies

6.1 Default advert position where sponsorship will not be considered

For roles at Band 5 and below, the default position is that the School will not consider Skilled Worker sponsorship unless an exception has been requested and agreed before advertising. Where the default position applies, the advert must include the following wording:

¹ Normal minimum salary threshold correct as of July 2025.



"LSE is unable to consider Skilled Worker visa sponsorship for this role. Any offer of employment will be subject to confirmation that the successful candidate has the right to work in the UK."

This wording must not be removed or amended unless the HR Division has confirmed that the vacancy may be advertised on a basis that allows Skilled Worker sponsorship to be considered.

Where a vacancy has been advertised on the basis that Skilled Worker sponsorship will not be considered, sponsorship will not be considered during that recruitment exercise. If the recruiting manager subsequently wishes sponsorship to be considered, HR will review the position and confirm whether the vacancy would need to be re-advertised with the correct sponsorship position clearly stated.

6.2 Requests to consider sponsorship before advertising

If the recruiting manager believes there may be a case for sponsorship to be considered for a role where this is not the default position, they must raise this with their HR Adviser at the first fund check stage and before the vacancy is advertised. HR can then advise on the appropriate advert wording and whether the request falls within the normal policy position or needs to be considered as an exception.

For roles at Band 6 and above, any decision to sponsor will still be considered at appointment stage and will depend on the role, candidate, salary, occupation code and any other immigration requirements in force at the time. A full assessment of Skilled Worker eligibility will usually only be carried out if the preferred candidate requires sponsorship.

Agreement to advertise a vacancy on a basis that allows Skilled Worker sponsorship to be considered does not mean that sponsorship has been approved. If the successful candidate requires Skilled Worker sponsorship, the recruiting manager must make a formal request to sponsor at appointment stage. The HR Division will then assess the role, candidate, salary, occupation code and any other relevant immigration requirements before confirming whether sponsorship can be supported.

Managers and departments must not confirm or imply to a candidate that Skilled Worker sponsorship will be provided until the formal request to sponsor process has been completed and the HR Division have confirmed that sponsorship can be supported.

Where the preferred candidate requires Skilled Worker sponsorship and sponsorship cannot be supported, employment cannot commence unless the candidate can demonstrate another valid right to work in the UK.

6.3 Recruitment evidence where sponsorship may be pursued

For roles at Band 5 and below, where the default position is followed and the vacancy is advertised on the basis that Skilled Worker sponsorship will not be considered, HR will not retain advert screenshots or other advert evidence for sponsorship purposes. Advert evidence will only be retained for sponsorship purposes where an exception has been agreed before advertising and the vacancy has been advertised on a basis that could support Skilled Worker sponsorship.

Where sponsorship is considered or agreed, the recruiting manager must ensure that the selection process is fully documented. All candidates must be shortlisted against the person



specification criteria, and the manager must complete a shortlisting grid that records clear reasons for shortlisting or not shortlisting each candidate.

The recruiting manager must also complete an interview summary sheet for each interviewed candidate, recording the outcome of the interview and the reasons for the decision. This paperwork will be required where sponsorship is pursued and may be needed to demonstrate that the School has recruited to a genuine vacancy through a fair and evidence-based selection process.

7. Existing staff

This policy also applies where an existing member of Professional Services staff may need Skilled Worker sponsorship to continue working at LSE. This may include, for example, an employee whose current visa route cannot be extended, such as a Graduate visa, and who does not have another available right-to-work route.

Any request must be assessed against the relevant Skilled Worker visa requirements, including the skills threshold, salary threshold, occupation code and any other applicable sponsorship rules. The fact that the individual is already employed by LSE does not mean that sponsorship will automatically be supported.

Where a request relates to an existing member of staff, the focus should be on the role and the requirements of Skilled Worker visa sponsorship, rather than on the manager's general desire to retain the individual. The purpose of the request is to explain why Skilled Worker visa sponsorship may be necessary for the role and to provide the information needed for the HR Division to assess whether the role and salary meet the applicable requirements. Service continuity, specialist knowledge or role-specific expertise may provide useful context, but these factors cannot override the Skilled Worker visa requirements.

7.1 Process for existing staff requests

Where a manager wishes to request Skilled Worker visa sponsorship for an existing member of staff, they must complete the request to sponsor process. This involves completing a Request to Sponsor form, which sets out the information needed to consider the case. The request should provide the information needed for HR to review the role against the Skilled Worker visa sponsorship criteria.

The manager must provide a completed request to sponsor form, the current job description, the person specification and an organisation chart showing how the role fits within the team. HR may request further information where this is needed to understand the duties, level, salary or business context of the role.

Where the employee is already working in the role and will continue to do the same role, it may be possible to consider a switch into the Skilled Worker visa route without re-advertising the post, subject to the role and salary meeting the relevant sponsorship requirements. If the role has changed materially, or the employee will move into a different role, for example following promotion, a new visa assessment may be required and the role may need to be advertised and recruited to through the usual recruitment process.



Where the role is Band 6 or above, HR will consider whether sponsorship can be supported, subject to the role and individual meeting the applicable Skilled Worker requirements and the School being satisfied that sponsorship is appropriate.

Where the role is below Band 6, sponsorship will not be supported, unless a permitted exception applies. Any exception must be agreed before sponsorship can be considered, and the role must still meet the relevant Skilled Worker requirements, including the graduate-level skills threshold and applicable salary requirements. Managers should discuss any such case with HR as early as possible, particularly where there may be a risk to continuity of employment, service delivery or the retention of specialist skills.

8. Exceptions

Exceptions may be considered for roles below Band 6 where there is a clear objective rationale. An exception will not be granted solely because a preferred candidate requires sponsorship. The rationale must relate to the role, business need, skills requirements or workforce context.

Examples of circumstances that may support an exception include:

- The role is a Band 5 Research Assistant post where the duties are clearly research-focused and are likely to meet the graduate-level skills threshold, provided the salary also meets the relevant Skilled Worker salary threshold;
- The role requires highly specialised or niche knowledge that is not commonly available in the labour market;
- There is evidence that the role has been difficult to fill through previous recruitment activity;
- An existing employee is already working in a role on a visa that is due to expire which they cannot renew, and they require sponsorship to continue working in that role. In these circumstances the job description and person specification must clearly demonstrate that the role meets the graduate skill level, and their salary meets the minimum threshold.

Managers requesting an exception must provide a brief written rationale setting out the evidence relied upon. HR will review the rationale and may request further information before confirming whether sponsorship can be considered.

9. Roles and responsibilities

Recruiting managers are responsible for identifying at the outset whether they wish sponsorship to be considered for a role, discussing this with the HR Division before any commitment is made to a candidate or employee, providing any required rationale for exceptions, and ensuring that recruitment decisions are based on the advertised criteria and the needs of the role.

Where sponsorship is considered or agreed, recruiting managers are also responsible for completing and retaining the required recruitment paperwork, including the shortlisting grid and interview summary sheet, with clear reasons for decisions at each stage.

The HR Division is responsible for advising managers on the application of this policy, confirming appropriate advert wording, coordinating any internal review required before sponsorship is considered, and ensuring that decisions are recorded consistently.

The HR Division will also ensure that any sponsorship position agreed before advertising is reflected accurately in the vacancy information and that managers understand what information is needed if sponsorship is requested at appointment stage.

The HR Division will provide guidance on the Skilled Worker visa sponsorship requirements, including occupation code considerations, salary thresholds, sponsorship process requirements and sponsor compliance obligations. The HR Division is unable to provide personal immigration advice to individuals.

Any costs associated with Skilled Worker visa sponsorship will be considered only after the HR Division has confirmed that sponsorship can be supported in principle. Cost arrangements do not determine whether sponsorship is available and should not be treated as a reason to request, approve or decline sponsorship. Managers must not confirm or imply to a candidate or employee that Skilled Worker visa sponsorship will be provided, or that LSE will meet sponsorship-related costs, unless this has first been confirmed through the appropriate School process.

10. Decision-making and records

Decisions under this policy should be recorded clearly and proportionately. Records should include the grade of the role, whether sponsorship was considered and, where relevant, why the role was considered ineligible for sponsorship or the rationale for treating it as an exception.

Where an exception is approved or declined, the HR Division should retain a brief note of the reasons for the decision. Exception decisions should be recorded in the relevant HR recruitment or sponsorship record, together with the manager's rationale and HR's decision note. This is important to support consistency, transparency and future review of the policy.

11. Review

This policy should be reviewed every 12 months, to ensure that it remains proportionate, evidence-based and aligned with recruitment conditions, application volumes, legal advice, Home Office guidance and the School's operational needs.

12. Useful Links

Reference	Link
Home Office eligible occupations and codes	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skilled-worker-visa-eligible-occupations/skilled-worker-visa-eligible-occupations-and-codes
Home Office Skilled Worker going rates	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skilled-worker-visa-going-rates-for-eligible-occupations/skilled-worker-visa-going-rates-for-eligible-occupation-codes
Skilled Worker visa: When you can be paid less	https://www.gov.uk/skilled-worker-visa/when-you-can-be-paid-less
Request to Sponsor form -new staff	Make a request to sponsor a new PSS employee

Request to Sponsor form -existing staff

[Make a request to sponsor an existing PSS employee](#)

13. Contacts

Position	Email	Notes
HR Immigration Compliance team	hr.visas@lse.ac.uk	For Skilled Worker visa sponsorship queries and role/candidate eligibility advice.

Document Control

Policy owner:	<i>Human Resources Division</i>
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Communications and Training

Will this document be publicised through Internal Communications?	Yes
Will training needs arise from this policy?	Yes
If Yes, please give details:	Briefing/guidance for users