



University of
St Andrews

Policy on Certificate of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) issuing

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Purpose	This policy sets out the governance for the issue of certificate of acceptance of studies (CAS).

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.5	Policy updated for 2025/2026	Published	Heather McNeill, Deputy Academic Registrar	10/03/2025

1. Purpose of Document

- 1.1. This document sets out the University of St Andrews' ("the University") policy regarding the sponsorship and issuing of Confirmation of Acceptance to Study (CAS) statements to international applicants and students who require a Student visa.
- 1.2. In this document the word "Sponsor" refers to the University of St Andrews, as the University holds a Student Sponsor licence. A Student Sponsor licence is required to enrol students from outside the United Kingdom. A Student Sponsor is an education provider that offers courses of study to full time students within the UK.
- 1.3. This policy is specific to the University and does not necessarily set out the full requirements of UK Visas and Immigration. The University can revise its policies and procedures relating to its duties as a Sponsor of Student visas at any time.

2. University Responsibilities

- 2.1. The University has responsibilities in respect of Student visa holders from the moment it assigns a CAS to the student until:
 - The University withdraws sponsorship from the student;
 - The student leaves the UK; or
 - The student is given permission to stay in the UK with a different sponsor or in another immigration category.
- 2.2. A CAS is issued in line with UKVI rules to applicants who hold an unconditional offer, or to existing students, who have met the conditions of this Policy.
- 2.3. The University has designated members of staff, based within Academic Registry, who are responsible for the implementation of the CAS process and issuance of CAS numbers. A CAS can only be assigned by a person who is suitably trained and has access to relevant UKVI systems.
- 2.4. The University has a responsibility to minimise visa refusals and ensure a CAS is issued only to those who are genuine students. In considering whether a CAS can be issued to an applicant or student, the University may request previous CAS information from previous institutions; an immigration history check with UKVI; bank statements; proof of course completion; or proof of exiting the UK.
- 2.5. The University will monitor the applicant/ student's application, enrolment, study and completion of studies in line with UKVI rules and University policy. Details of the ways in which the University will ensure compliance with UKVI requirements and the action that will be taken if the University identifies any potential breaches of the UKVI's requirements are set out in the [UK Visas and Immigration Student Visa Compliance Statement](#) and [Monitoring Student Visas for UKVI Compliance Purposes: Principles of Engagement Management](#).
- 2.6. All the information entered will be electronically stored in the University SITS System, for the duration of a student's studies plus six years or until an audit has been undertaken by the UKVI.
- 2.7. The University will not issue a CAS to anyone who does not meet the requirements set out in this policy, or in UKVI legislation. As a sponsor, the University of St Andrews will only assign a CAS where it reasonably believes the student will meet the requirements

for the visa or permission to extend their stay, and that the student will comply with the conditions of their permission to stay in the UK.

- 2.8. Assigning a CAS does not guarantee that the applicant/ student will succeed in being granted entry clearance or leave to remain in the UK. The applicant/ student must meet all the criteria for the Student leave they are applying for, and it is the applicant/ student's responsibility to check that all Home Office requirements are met before submitting a visa application.

3. CAS Assignment

- 3.1. The University of St Andrews will issue a CAS for study at the University to applicants/ students that are eligible in line with this Policy and UKVI requirements, as follows:
- 3.1.1. **Applicants (Incoming students):** A CAS will be assigned to those who hold an Unconditional Offer to study at the University of St Andrews. The CAS will be assigned no more than 6 months before the start date of the course (i.e. for courses starting in September, the CAS process can begin no earlier than March).
- 3.1.2. **Existing/ returning students including students that have completed a pre-session programme:** A CAS will be assigned no more than 3 months before the date you intend to resume/ continue your studies.
- 3.2. Prior to issuing a CAS, the status of the visa applicant will be checked by Registry to ensure they meet the conditions outlined in this Policy.
- 3.3. The University will send CAS details electronically. New students check and access their CAS information via the 'My Visa Matters' tab in the MySaint portal. Existing/returning students check and access their CAS information via email correspondence.
- 3.4. All CAS information must be checked and confirmed by the applicant/ student before a CAS can be issued. It is the applicant/ student's responsibility to notify the University of any amendments.
- 3.5. The University will check to ensure any applicant/ student already in the UK has valid permission to be in the country and can apply from the UK prior to issuing a CAS. This may include requesting a letter of likely completion from a current institution or conducting an Immigration History Check through the UKVI. If it is found that an applicant/ student does not have valid leave to be in the UK then the University may request evidence from individuals to ensure that they are no longer in the UK (boarding pass/ passport stamp, etc.) before a CAS will be issued. The University will also note on the CAS that an entry clearance application is required.
- 3.6. The University will not sponsor applicants/ students in the following circumstances:
- The programme does not comply with Student route requirements (e.g. the programme is a distance learning programme, or there is no requirement to engage in attendance).
 - The programme is part-time.
 - An applicant/ student has not submitted a valid ATAS certificate for programmes that require one.

- The University has reason to believe that the applicant/ student will not be successful in line with UKVI regulations (i.e. financial documents do not meet the requirements).
- There is no realistic prospect that the applicant/ student will arrive in time for the programme's latest start date.
- The applicant/ student has outstanding debt with the University and/or the University has concerns about the student's ability to pay tuition and accommodation fees.
- The applicant/ student has submitted documents which are suspected or proven to be fraudulent.
- The applicant/ student is actively studying at another UK institution on a programme that is not linked to the programme for which they are requesting sponsorship.
- Any further sponsorship would result in the applicant/ student exceeding the maximum allowable time studying as a student visa holder (unless there are acceptable extenuating circumstances).
- The University believes sponsoring an applicant or student will put its sponsor licence at risk or has concerns about the applicant/ student's genuine intention to study.
- There is any reason to believe that an applicant or student will not comply with the conditions of their Student leave (e.g. an intention to work, or past history of working more than 20 hours per week) or if a student is known to be in breach of their visa conditions.

4. Student responsibilities

- 4.1. When a CAS has been issued, students must protect their immigration status by ensuring they understand the conditions attached to their student permission. These conditions are listed on the UKVI visa decision letter emailed to all visa holders. Conditions include working restrictions (including types of work/ working hours) and access to public funds.
- 4.2. Students must ensure that they are familiar with the responsibilities required by the University in respect of their visa, which are stated in the University's [UK Visas and Immigration Student Visa Compliance Statement](#).
- 4.3. Students must note that they are prohibited from accessing 'public funds' when sponsored via a Student visa. This includes certain specific welfare benefits and local authority housing.
- 4.4. It is the student's responsibility to ensure they have valid UKVI Student Route leave to complete their studies at the University, and check with the Student Immigration Service whether any changes to the course will impact their visa.
- 4.5. It is good practice for the student to make copies of all documentation relating to their visa and travel in and out of the UK, for example UKVI applications, payment receipts, postal receipts, boarding passes showing entry to the country, current passport photo page, and Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)/ e-Visa information, and retain these indefinitely.

5. CAS Processing Times

- 5.1. **Applicants (Incoming students):** The applicant will be contacted and asked to provide preliminary CAS information 24 hours after they have received confirmation that they have met their offer conditions and been transferred to a new entrant status. The University will send the official CAS number as an electronic document within five working days after the applicant has met all conditions (including payment of relevant deposits), and after the applicant has uploaded and confirmed all required preliminary CAS information.
- 5.2. **Existing/ returning students:** The Student Immigration International Advice Team will send the official CAS number as an electronic document within five working days after the student has had their return/extension confirmed, and after the student has provided all documents requested and confirmed the preliminary CAS information.
- 5.3. Applicants/ students must submit a visa application in plenty of time to receive their visa and travel to St Andrews for the programme start date, or the latest date of entry as listed on the CAS. The UKVI's standard decision timescale is stated as 15 working days, but that does not include time taken to attend biometrics and visa printing (where required) and document collection. In all, it may take 4 – 6 weeks to go through the full standard process.
- 5.4. In some countries, the UKVI offers a Priority service (5 working day decision) and a Super Priority service (1 working day decision), which are available for additional processing fees set by UKVI. Applicants/ students must be aware that these services are not available in every country and are **not** guaranteed timescales. Decisions on Priority/ Super Priority visas can take longer if the UKVI deems there is a non-standard aspect to the application.
- 5.5. The University does not have any control or ability to influence the decision timescales associated with any visa application routes (Standard, Priority and Super Priority) as these services are run by UKVI and their chosen operating partners.
- 5.6. The University will continue to issue CAS to applicants/ students while the University deems there is sufficient time for a Priority/ Super Priority service application to be made and for students to travel to St Andrews to commence their studies by the latest start date. The decision to apply for a Priority/ Super Priority service application is the choice of the applicant/ student and they are responsible for any costs incurred. Students requesting a CAS close to the start of an academic session may be asked to confirm they will be applying for an expedited visa decision before a CAS will be issued to them.
- 5.7. The University does not accept responsibility or liability for any costs incurred if a visa does not arrive in time for the student to travel to St Andrews to commence their studies.
- 5.8. Any applicants/ students unable to matriculate by the latest start date as stated on their CAS will not be able to study, and their CAS will be withdrawn. The applicant/ student will need to pay again for a new visa application when it is required. Applicants should familiarise themselves with the [UKVI's Immigration and Nationality Refunds Policy](#), noting that refunds are not always available depending on the status of the application/ decision.

6. Length of Sponsorship

- 6.1. The University will issue a CAS for the duration of a student's course (as recorded within the University's SITS system), with the exception of PhD students seeking a visa extension who may be given an additional 6-month duration to take into account time for the viva and potential minimal corrections. The course end date given on the CAS is the date of which the student should have completed all academic elements of the course, including teaching/ research periods, examinations, assessments, and writing and submitting dissertations, projects or theses. The end date excludes any additional reassessment periods.
- 6.2. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) use the course end date on the CAS to determine when the working hours restriction associated with the Student visa ends after course completion. Working more than the hours per week stipulated in the Student's visa conditions is only allowed during the validity period of a Student visa if the course is complete, the course end date on the CAS has passed, and it is no longer term time.

7. Withdrawal of Sponsorship

- 7.1. The University will withdraw a CAS if information subsequently received falls into any of the categories where a CAS would not normally be issued, or if sponsorship becomes inappropriate, or where an applicant/ student is no longer able to meet the requirements of the Student route.
- 7.2. The University reserves the right to withdraw a CAS at any time and does not accept responsibility for any visa refusals or associated costs due to CAS withdrawal.
- 7.3. Upon withdrawal of sponsorship, the University will notify the Home Office within 10 days, and the applicant will not be able to study at the University. Where sponsorship is withdrawn, students will be required to exit University accommodation and must not attend classes or assessments.

8. Visa Refusal

- 8.1. Any applicant/ student who receives a visa refusal must immediately send a copy of the full refusal notice to the Student Immigration International Advice Team (advint@st-andrews.ac.uk) when the refusal is received. The University will only assign a new CAS once the University is satisfied there is little/ no risk of a second visa refusal. Where a visa is likely to be refused, the University reserves the right to withhold issuing a new CAS. Once the reasons for the initial refusal have been established, the International Advice Team will ask for documentary evidence to determine whether a second CAS should be issued. This applies even if the national is from a country deemed by UKVI to be low-risk.
- 8.2. The University will not normally assign a further CAS if there is a second visa refusal.
- 8.3. Where a visa application has been refused, the applicant/ student may be able to request a review of the decision by the Home Office; this is known as an 'administrative review'. If the applicant/ student is considering submitting an administrative review request, they must inform the University's Student Immigration International Advice Team (advint@st-andrews.ac.uk). Where an applicant/ student has submitted an administrative review request, the University will not issue a further CAS until the Home Office has confirmed the outcome of its review.

9. Pre-Sessional Students

- 9.1. The University will only assign one CAS for both the pre-sessional and main course of study if the applicant has obtained an unconditional offer for their main course of study, where the level of English meets the main course requirement.
- 9.2. In other circumstances, a separate CAS will be issued for the pre-sessional course and a new CAS will be assigned for the main programme of study where the applicant demonstrates that they have successfully passed the pre-sessional programme, met the conditions of their offer, and all the conditions set out in this Policy. Applications must be made for the visa extension before students will be allowed to matriculate to study on their main course.

10. Repeat assessments, repeating credits in full, and writing-up dissertations

- 10.1. Sponsorship will not be provided to those repeating assessments on an exam-only basis. Students completing assessments can enter as a visitor to repeat the assessments. Students must refer to UKVI guidance on whether a visitor visa is required prior to travelling.
- 10.2. If a student is required to repeat credits in full, then a CAS will be assigned if continued participation is required within 60 days of the start of the next academic period. The CAS will only be assigned for the period that requires in-person attendance. For example, if a student is required to repeat 60 credits in Semester 1 and only undertake exam-only assessments in Semester 2 which do not require attendance, the University's sponsorship would stop after Semester 1. The student would be required to leave the UK at the end of Semester 1 and return for their exams in Semester 2.
- 10.3. If a student is writing up their dissertation of thesis overseas, the University will withdraw sponsorship of the student, as the University cannot sponsor students who are studying remotely. In this instance, if the student cannot submit their thesis while overseas and needs to return to the UK to hand in their dissertation, the University will issue the student with a Standard Visitor visa supporting letter upon the student's request so they can submit their final piece of work in the UK.

11. Leave of Absence, Compulsory/ Mandatory Leave of Absence, and Suspension

- 11.1. Where a student takes a leave of absence, the University will normally withdraw sponsorship for the period of the leave of absence and the student will need to request a new CAS and apply for a new visa to return to their studies.
- 11.2. Where a student is required to take a compulsory or mandatory leave of absence, or is suspended from their studies, the University will withdraw sponsorship for the period of leave/ suspension. The student will need to request a new CAS and apply for a new visa to return to their studies.

12. Writing-Up, Vivas and Amendments

- 12.1. The University will only issue a CAS if the student meets the conditions of this Policy and needs to extend their visa because they are writing up inside the UK, or awaiting viva in the UK, or in their correction/ re-examination period.
- 12.2. If a postgraduate research student is outside of the UK and no longer has a Student visa, and is required to return to the University to attend their viva, the University will not usually assign a CAS, as the student can travel for this purpose using a visitor visa. The

student should check UKVI guidance on whether a visitor visa is required prior to travelling. Further advice can be obtained from the International Advice Team.

- 12.3. If a student is required to undertake reassessment in their dissertation/ project/ thesis and there is no requirement for them to be in the UK to complete this, a CAS will not be issued for a Student visa extension.

13. Appealing a decision not to issue a CAS

- 13.1. Where the University takes a decision not to issue a CAS, it does so to comply with its responsibilities as a Sponsor of students, as required by UKVI. The decision not to issue a CAS, and the reasons for this, will be communicated in writing to the applicant/ student.
- 13.2. Appeals must be submitted by the applicant/ student by email within ten working days of the date of the communication informing them that the University will not issue a CAS. Appeals will only be considered where there is evidence of irregular procedure, improper conduct, or lack of due diligence in the decision-making process which led to the withdrawal of sponsorship.
- 13.3. The University's Key Contact (or their delegate) will be responsible for hearing appeals to decisions. Where the Key Contact has been involved in the decision-making process not to issue a CAS, the University's Authorising Officer (or their delegate) will hear the appeal.
- 13.4. The University's Key Contact is currently the Academic Registrar (registrar@st-andrews.ac.uk).

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	Current policy placed into Governance Zone template.	Published	Heather Dudek, Unit Administrator, Registry	21/04/21
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