

International Admission and Tier 4 Sponsorship Policy

This policy defines how international student admissions will be handled to ensure compliance with UK Home Office immigration rules. This includes instances where students will require Tier 4 visa support, and the checks that are in place to ensure eligibility before CAS issuance.

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1. General Information

- 1.1 The University of Gloucestershire (UoG) can only accept students who have valid permission to study in the UK. There are various types of leave which permit study, the main category of student leave being Tier 4. The University is licensed under Tier 4 of the Points Based System to admit students requiring a Tier 4 (General) student visa onto its courses.
- 1.2 Eligible students requiring Tier 4 visa sponsorship will be issued with a CAS Number when they are made an unconditional offer and after all necessary CAS documentation checks have been satisfied. The CAS will be issued to the student not longer than 3 months before the start of the course, and cannot be used as part of a visa application until 3 months before the course start date, as per Home Office guidance.
- 1.3 Eligible continuing students requiring a visa extension should complete a CAS Request form and disclaimer and submit this to the Immigration Compliance Team. In all cases, the student must attend a visa extension workshop and have their application checked for validity prior to the CAS being issued.
- 1.4 Students who intend to enrol under another visa category will need to provide evidence that they hold a visa which permits study at the admissions stage. This must then be verified in person at enrolment.
- 1.5 Students who have evidenced that they have leave under another visa category will not be subject to the various Tier 4 checks listed in this policy.

2. Admission Process Overview

	Action	Person Responsible
Step 1	Student submits an application and supporting documents	Student
Step 2	Student record created If Tier 4 visa support is needed, the student is contacted to provide additional information and documentation required to determine Tier 4 visa eligibility. Some initial checks are of eligibility are conducted at this stage. If Short-Term-Student visa support is needed, the student is contacted to provide additional information and documentation required to determine eligibility for a STS visa support letter. If the student already holds leave under another immigration category, a copy of this will be requested during admission and then verified at enrolment.	Administrator (Admissions & Enrolment) Secondary checks made by Immigration Compliance Team
Step 3	English language certification verified online where possible. All English language documentation must be in accord with the University's English Language Policy for International Student Admission	Administrator (Admissions & Enrolment)
Step 4	Application referred to Admissions tutor as necessary. Some courses require interview or submission of portfolio	Admissions Tutor (in Faculty)
Step 5	Conditional offer issued, or application rejected	Administrator (Admissions & Enrolment)
Step 6	Student satisfies conditions of academic offer and pays £3000 deposit	Student
Step 7	Unconditional offer issued Conditions of enrolment are published online via the Applicant Portal	Administrator (Admissions & Enrolment)
Step 8	Full Tier 4/STS support eligibility checked and CAS/STS letter issued if successful	Immigration Compliance Team

3. Course Eligibility for Tier 4

3.1 Students requiring a Tier 4 visa can only be admitted onto courses which satisfy the following criteria:

- The course level must be at NQF 3/CEFR B2 or above
- The course must be full-time
- The course must lead to an approved qualification as detailed in the Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance Document 2
- The course can be a short-term Study Abroad programme in the UK as part of the Tier 4 (General) student's qualification at an overseas university, as long as the qualification is confirmed as being at the same level as a UK degree by UK NARIC
- The course cannot be studied via distance learning (except in the case of postgraduate research students)
- With the exception of work placements and field trips, all study must take place at Park Campus, FCH Campus, Hardwick Campus or Oxstalls Campus
- Any work placement must not exceed 50% of the course unless there is a statutory requirement requiring it to be higher than 50%

3.2 Tier 4 visa sponsorship will only be given to students admitted onto UoG validated programmes and taught on a UoG site.

4. Admissions Documentation for Tier 4

4.1 Copies of the following documents are required prior to an unconditional offer being issued for Tier 4 students:

- Academic Qualifications
- English language Qualifications
- 2 x references
- Personal statement demonstrating intent to study
- Passport (personal details page and any stamps)
- All previous student visas & visas under Tier 4 and student rules prior to 31 March 2009 (if applicable)
- Details of courses previously studied in the UK (if applicable)
- If the student is under 18, parental consent will be required.
- A copy of the students ATAS certificate (if required)
- Any other documents which the University deems pertinent to the student's application

4.2 Tier 4 visa sponsorship will only be given to students who have satisfied UoG Admissions entry criteria. Students must be able to show final, conferred results and must have a copy of the official final certificate or transcript when applying for Tier 4. Provisional results will not be accepted, per UK Home Office immigration rules. At the University's discretion, a portfolio of work, previous work experience, references and interviews may be used to assess academic capability on the course. All admission documentation, including academic certificates, transcripts and English language qualifications must be provided for verification during enrolment. Failure to supply this documentation within a reasonable timeframe, or any indication of fraud, may result in withdrawal from the course.

5. English Language Requirements

5.1 Students must demonstrate that their English language ability is sufficient to successfully complete the intended course of study. Tier 4 applicants must be at CEFR B2 or above (unless studying a pre-sessional English course, where the requirement is CEFR B1). A list of acceptable English language qualifications and the level that must be obtained is published on the University's Pre-Arrivals website.

6. Deposit and Fees

6.1 In all cases, students must pay international fees, except where there is documented proof that they are entitled to pay the home fee rate. Tier 4 students will be expected to pay a £3000 deposit prior to CAS issuance. 50% of the remaining fee (what is left after the CAS deposit payment) will be due at enrolment. The second half of the fee must be paid when due part way through the academic year. The University does not generally allow payment plans. It is expected that Tier 4 students will be using the finances evidenced for their CAS to pay for their tuition and maintenance in the UK. Failure to pay tuition fees when due may result in being blocked from enrolment and/or withdrawal from the course.

6.2 Students must clear all debts to the university before any new or further visa sponsorship is given.

7. Tier 4 Academic Progression for Tier 4

7.1 Students who have already studied in the UK can only be admitted onto a new course when academic progression (as defined by the UK Home Office Tier 4 sponsor guidance) can be demonstrated. Academic progression is normally shown where the new course is at a higher NQF Level than the previous course e.g. Bachelors degree (NQF 6) to Masters degree (NQF 7). Study at the same level may in some instances be allowed, but only at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Manager.

7.2 A CAS will normally be issued when:

- a student has no previous UK study; or
- a student has applied to study a course that is at a higher NQF level than their previous completed UK course. For example, a student progressing from a previously completed Bachelor degree level course (NQF6) to a Master's degree (NQF7); or
- the student is continuing their studies with the University of Gloucestershire on the same course and needs to extend their visa. For example, this could be for the purposes of repeating failed modules/levels; or
- the student has applied for a course that is complementary to previous study (in the same discipline¹, agreed by Admissions/Immigration Compliance) at the same NQF level where the previous course was not failed. For example, the student could be mid-way through a Business degree course (NQF6) at another HEI and wishes to transfer studies to the University of Gloucestershire in order to continue study at NQF6 on one of our own NQF6 Business courses.

7.3 Any applications for a CAS that fall outside the scope of the scenarios listed above will be considered by the Immigration Compliance Manager, who will ascertain if the University can justify academic progression to the UKVI. This will only be possible if there is a reasonable argument for academic progression that does not contradict the academic progression guidance.

"If a student has failed to successfully complete their previous course or is not applying to progress from the lower to higher level of an integrated Masters course or integrated Masters and PhD programme, or an intercalating student, they will not be able to demonstrate academic progress and will have to apply from overseas if they wish to make a Tier 4 application to study a new course. A student who has been studying A-Levels, and achieves a qualification in at least one of the subjects they have been studying, will be considered to have successfully completed their course." – Tier 4 Guidance for Sponsors Document 2: Sponsorship Duties

¹ Discipline in this context refers to a subject area. For example, if the student is wishing to study on a Business degree program, previous study in the UK should have been on another Business-related course.

7.4 Students who have failed to complete the previous course for which they were granted Tier 4 leave are required to return home and apply to the University of Gloucestershire Immigration Compliance Team for a CAS. The Immigration Compliance Team will then make a credibility assessment of the student's application to ensure the student would not be refused on credibility grounds. To satisfy the credibility assessment, the student should adhere to the previously mentioned academic progression rules.

7.5 A CAS will not be issued when:

- A student has failed, withdrawn or otherwise not completed a course under the Tier 4 sponsorship of another HEI and has not yet left the UK and provided evidence of doing so.
- A student has previously studied (not necessarily completed) a course under Tier 4 in the UK and now wishes to study at the same level another on another course in an unrelated discipline.
- A student has previously studied (not necessarily completed) a course under Tier 4 in the UK and now wishes to study another course at the same level and the University cannot confirm the new and previous course combined support the students genuine career aspirations.
- A student has applied for a course at a lower level than previously studied under tier 4.

7.6 Ultimately it is the Home Office's decision as to whether the progression justification given on a CAS statement is sufficient for the approval of a Tier 4 student visa. The University of Gloucestershire does not have control over these decisions. This means that any application where the course is at the same level of study poses a risk of visa refusal which would be detrimental to the student, as well as a risk to the University's status as a registered Tier 4 sponsor.

8. Previous Study in the UK for Tier 4

8.1 The amount of time that Tier 4 students can spend studying in the UK is limited. Admission cannot be offered to any student who would exceed this limit by the end of the normal duration of the course. Students are required to provide evidence of all previous study in the UK in order for the permitted duration of study to be assessed.

8.2 The time limit is related to the type of study, as follows:

- **Study below degree level** - Students above 18 years of age can study in the UK for a maximum of 2 years on a Tier 4 visa on a course leading to an award at NQF 5 or lower. Any study on a non-Tier 4 visa (e.g. Student Visitor or Student) will not count towards this limit.
- **Study at degree level or above (BA, BSc, LLB, MA, MSc, MBA, LLM)** - Students can study in the UK for a maximum of 5 years on a course leading to an award at NQF 6 or NQF 7. This includes any study undertaken under Tier 4 or the student rules that were in place prior to 31 March 2009. The only exception to this rule is where a student has completed a 4 or 5-year undergraduate degree at an HEI. In this situation, the limit will be 6 years instead of 5 years.
- **Study at research degree level (MPhil, MSc(Res), DBA, DEng, PhD)** - Students can study in the UK for a maximum of 8 years on a course leading to an award at NQF 7 (MPhil and MSc(Res) only) or NQF 8. This includes any study undertaken under Tier 4 or the student rules that were in place prior to 31 March 2009.

9. Intent to Study

9.1 Students must demonstrate that they have a genuine intent to study. This is normally assessed via the personal statement contained within the application form. Students should detail their interest in the course and why they wish to study in the UK. Generic statements will not be accepted. This assessment will be ongoing throughout the students Tier 4 sponsorship. If the University have reason to believe that a student does not have a genuine intent to study, then Tier 4 visa sponsorship may be withdrawn.

10. Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

10.1 Any students who require ATAS will be identified by Admissions during their initial application. Any students who need to extend their visa to study in the UK will be identified as requiring ATAS when CAS/Immigration checks are being conducted. The University will not issue a CAS to any student who requires ATAS and is unable to provide a valid clearance certificate. ATAS for non-Tier 4 students are also being monitored and kept on file.

11. Length of Tier 4 Visa Sponsorship

11.1 Students will be issued with a CAS Statement up to 6 months prior to, and no later than 3 weeks before the start date of their course.

11.2 Visa sponsorship will be given as follows:

- Undergraduate – Until the last day of semester 2 in the year of graduation
- Postgraduate taught – For 12 months, until 30th September or 30th January as appropriate
- Research degrees – For 3 years and 2 months. This is to cover your viva plus any corrections you may have.
- Advanced entry Masters courses – Until the dissertation submission date (20 weeks)

11.3 This length of leave assumes the student will be starting at the beginning of the course. Applications starting part-way through the course will be given leave in line with their expected course completion date.

12. Latest CAS Request Receipt Dates for Tier 4

12.1 The University must ensure that CAS are only issued to students who are reasonably able to submit a Tier 4 general application in time for the student to arrive before the latest permitted enrolment date for the course. To ensure this, the University must consider CAS request processing times (up to two working days), visa application submission, appointment booking (when applicable), document submission, visa application processing times, time for documentation and entry clearance vignette to be received and travel. Considering these areas, the University must receive notification that a CAS is being requested for an overseas visa application generally five weeks prior to the latest acceptance date. A list of latest dates for receipt of a CAS request can be found here:

<http://www.glos.ac.uk/docs/download/International/requesting-a-cas.pdf>

12.2 The student must submit a CAS Request Form (as found on the above link), as well as ALL necessary supporting documentation and have an unconditional offer which is firmly accepted, before the latest date of CAS request receipt. If any necessary documentation is not submitted at this time, then a CAS request may not be issued.

12.3 Students who are willing to submit a priority Tier 4 visa application (where possible) will be permitted to submit all of the above up to four weeks prior to the course start date. A priority visa application is expected to have a decision within 10 days. Students who are willing to submit a super-priority may be permitted further time to submit the above at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Manager.

12.4 Students submitting visa applications from within the UK must do so via an appointment with the University's Visa Advice Service. To ensure availability before the latest course start date, this appointment (and CAS request submission) should be made at least two weeks before the latest enrolment date for the course.

13. CAS Issuance for Tier 4

13.1 Before assigning and issuing a CAS, the University must be satisfied that:

- a) the course the applicant intend to study complies with Tier 4 requirements as detailed in the UK immigration rules and guidance; and
- b) the applicants visa application is likely to be successful (while the university makes this assessment for CAS issuance purposes, there is no guarantee that your visa application will be successful. Only the UK Home Office can make this decision); and
- c) the applicant will comply with the conditions of their Tier 4 leave (e.g. in relation to any work restriction); and
- d) the supporting documents submitted with the course application and CAS request are genuine; and
- e) where clearance under the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is required, the applicant possess such clearance; and
- f) the applicant has not exceeded, or will not exceed by the end of your course, the maximum amount of time permitted for study under UK Home Office immigration rules and (where relevant) permitted by the University's academic regulations; and
- g) the course the applicant has applied for represents academic progression from the last course studied on a Tier 4 Visa; and
- h) the applicant has sufficient time to submit a Tier 4 application, travel to the UK, and complete enrolment before the enrolment formalities (including payment of requisite fees) prior to the enrolment deadline.

14. Enrolment

14.1 All international (non-EU/EAA) students will be blocked from enrolment until their passport and visa has been checked by a member of the Immigration Compliance Team. New students holding a visa valid to study at the university will be permitted to enroll after their documents have been checked and copied. The enrolment block will only be removed once the legal right to study in the UK can be established.

14.2 The following visa categories are valid for full-time study at UoG:

- Tier 4 (General) [under University of Gloucestershire sponsorship, SLN: 8DHV1QR87]
- Short-Term Student visa
- Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) (for part-time courses)
- Dependant [any category]
- Discretionary Leave to Remain
- Family Member of an EEA National
- Family Reunion
- Indefinite Leave to Enter or Remain
- Right of Permanent Residence
- Other (at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Manager)

14.3 Students who have submitted a Tier 4 (General) visa extension application under University of Gloucestershire sponsorship, or an application under another category valid for study, prior to the start of the course will be permitted to enroll providing they show copies of their passport and previous visa and the original letter from the Home Office confirming receipt of the application. The student **must** show the original visa to the Immigration Compliance Team within 10 days of it being issued

14.4 Students who fail to produce their original passport and valid visa will not be permitted to enroll (except where these documents are with the Home Office as above). Such students will not be permitted to attend their course, and will be reported to the Home Office where appropriate.

14.5 Students holding a visa that is not valid for study at the university, or who do not have current leave to remain in the UK will not be permitted to enroll. The following visa categories are not valid for study at the University of Gloucestershire:

- Visitor (any category except Student Visitor. General Visitor may be allowed in very rare instances, at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Manager).
- Work permit
- Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)
- “3C leave” i.e. those who have outstanding applications, under any category, with the Home Office – (exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Manager)
- Those with an outstanding FLR application (this must have a successful decision before enrolment or switching to Tier 4 leave would be granted).

14.6 Where there is any doubt over the validity of a visa for study, this will be passed to the Immigration Compliance Team for inspection. If necessary, the Home Office will be consulted. Where doubt remains, the student will not be allowed to enroll.

14.7 Students who have overstayed their visa will not be permitted to enroll.

15. Latest Enrolment Date

15.1 All international students on a Tier 4 (General) Student visa must arrive at the University of Gloucestershire and enrol onto their course by the published enrolment deadline. This is normally two weeks after the first day of the course. Any student who does not complete enrolment by the published deadline will not be permitted to start/resume their course.

- **New students** will have their offer to study withdrawn and a report will be made to the Home Office which will cancel the sponsorship of their Tier 4 visa. A new offer to study will only be given where the student has not yet travelled to the UK or where there are serious and compelling circumstances for non-enrolment.
- **Continuing students** will be deferred and eventually withdrawn from their course. A report will be made to the UK Home Office which will suspend the sponsorship of the Tier 4 visa. Students will only be permitted to resume studies at an appropriate point and when they satisfy the conditions of enrolment.

16. Document Check

16.1 Both new and continuing students must have their passport and visa checked by a member of the Immigration Compliance Team before they are given access to online enrolment. This check is repeated annually. During the initial check, a copy of these documents will be taken and attached to the student's record. All Tier 4 student passport and visas are to be scanned and saved electronically onto the corresponding screens on the university's Student Records database. Important information such as numbers and expiry dates are then manually entered for reporting and monitoring purposes.

16.2 In addition, new students must present the original copies of documents relating to their admission, as listed on the CAS Statement. These documents will include educational certificates, evidence of English language competence and ATAS certification, if required. If these documents cannot be provided at enrolment, students must ensure these are evidenced to the Immigration Compliance Team within 60 days of enrolment. Failure to provide these documents for verification will result in deferral, and eventually withdrawal from the course.

17. Confirming Personal Details

17.1 After the document check is completed and enrolment block has been removed, the student is now able to enrol online. All students must provide address, contact number and email address information for both their home country and the UK. The student is made aware that they must keep this information updated throughout the year. Failure to keep this information up to date may result in the student not receiving important communications from the university.

18. Progress on the Course while on Tier 4

18.1 Tier 4 students must continue to make satisfactory academic progress on the course. This will be monitored via the University's attendance and engagement monitoring process. The University reserves the right to withdraw and revoke visa support from students who do not make satisfactory progress, or who breach the University's attendance and engagement policy.

19. Procedure for Tier 4 Visa Extensions

19.1 All students are required to complete a CAS Request Form and disclaimer before they are given visa support. This must be verified by the Visa and Immigration Officer before a CAS is generated.

19.2 Students can choose whether to make their extension application through the standard process via the UoG Visa Advice Service, at a PEO, or in their home country. Students are not permitted to submit an application inside the UK without using the UoG Visa Advice Service.

19.3 All students are required to attend a visa extension workshop to have their application checked by the Visa and Immigration Officer before a CAS is requested. Visa support will not be given where the Visa and Immigration Officer believes the application is likely to be refused. In this case, advice will be given to improve the application. If necessary, the student should return home and request visa support once his/her application is in order.

19.4 Where a student attends a PEO, appointment booking details must be given on the CAS Request Form. Students are required to present their new visa to the Immigration Compliance Team within 10 days of the appointment date.

19.5 New visas will be copied for the student's file and data added to the student record system (SITS). All documents and correspondence relating to the visa application will be held in the student's file.

20. Student Charter

20.1 Tier 4 students must adhere to the rules of the university and the Student Charter. The university will revoke visa sponsorship from students who contravene these rules. Any misrepresentation to the university on the part of the student, including use of fraudulent documents, will render the student ineligible for visa sponsorship with immediate effect.