

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
STUDENT IMMIGRATION SPONSORSHIP POLICY (FOR CONTINUING STUDENTS)
FEBRUARY 2026

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1. The Immigration Sponsorship Policy ('the Policy') supports the University's obligations as a holder of a licence to sponsor international students to study in the UK in line with the Home Office Guidance: [Document 1: Applying for a Student sponsor licence](#), [Home Office Sponsor Guidance - Document 2: Sponsorship Duties](#) and [Student sponsor guidance: document 3, student sponsor compliance](#). This Policy outlines the arrangements relating to immigration sponsorship for students who are enrolled at the University, including where a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study ('CAS') is required by a student for additional immigration permission.
2. Sponsorship eligibility for applicants who wish to undertake study at the University is not covered by this policy and is handled via the University admissions policy and processes.
3. The University's Sponsor Licence Number ('SLN') is THHCP1YV6, which must appear on a student's Student visa to enable them to study at Essex.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

4. The **Academic Registrar** is the Authorising Officer for the University's licence to sponsor international students and is ultimately responsible for the oversight and effective operation of the Policy.
5. The **International Services Team** reports to the Academic Registrar and is responsible for supporting the University's compliance with its duties as a Student Sponsor. The team also supports students enrolled at the University with immigration permission to maintain their immigration status through provision of immigration advice. The team assesses eligibility for immigration sponsorship for enrolled students who wish to extend their immigration permission to continue and complete their studies in the UK, or for students who are switching from a non-sponsored immigration route to the Student route during their studies. Once a student has received a successful Student visa, the team oversees other areas, including right to study, attendance and engagement, and Home Office reporting for all Student visa holders for the duration of their studies.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/professional-services/academic-section>

6. **Students** with sponsored immigration permission have responsibilities to both the University and the Home Office for the duration of their studies and are responsible for ensuring they understand their obligations in full and adhere to them. Students are expected to attend all teaching events and engage fully with their course to ensure continued academic progression. Failure to adhere to the conditions of their Student visa, and/or University regulations may result in withdrawal of immigration sponsorship by the University.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/your-responsibilities>

ISSUING A CAS FOR FURTHER IMMIGRATION SPONSORSHIP

7. The International Services Team will consider further immigration sponsorship in circumstances where it is no longer possible for a student to complete their studies within their current valid extant leave. This could include a student returning from a period of intermission, changing to a longer course at the same level of study, an extension for a student studying a PhD or where a student cannot proceed into their next year of study due to reassessment for one or more modules or a full-repeat year. Other circumstances may also

be considered. In each case, eligibility for further sponsorship is determined in line with the Student Immigration Rules and Student Sponsor Guidance as amended from time to time.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/international/immigration-and-visas/uk-immigration-rules-and-guidance>

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/changes-to-your-course>

8. Where a student is permitted to make a Student Route application from within the UK, they must make the application before their current visa expires. The Student visa application links can be found here: [Student visa : Overview - GOV.UK](#)
9. Students who make an application for immigration permission from within the UK must supply the International Services Team with a full copy of their visa application. Failure to supply a copy of an in-time visa application can result in further action as outlined in the General Regulations. Students must ensure they update the International Services Team once they receive an outcome on their visa application.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/general-regulations.pdf>

10. Where a PhD student under examination wishes to extend their Student leave to remain in the UK, the International Services Team will seek written confirmation from their Supervisor that additional time is required and that effective monitoring will remain in place for the extended period until such time as the student has undertaken their Viva and completed any required corrections. It is expected that effective monitoring will include in-person contact points and that the University can continue to meet its sponsor obligations during this time. If this is not agreed by a supervisor and if they confirm that the student can complete their study from overseas, sponsorship will not be agreed. The PhD Sponsorship table can be found in Appendix A.
11. The University will not issue a CAS for further sponsorship where the student is unable to demonstrate they meet the eligibility criteria as determined by the Student Immigration Rules and Student Sponsor Guidance. This includes but is not limited to the following circumstances:
 - Where the programme of study is not eligible for sponsorship under the Student Route
 - If there is any reason to believe the student would not comply with the conditions of their Student visa
 - If the new period of immigration sponsorship would exceed the study cap outlined in the UK Immigration Rules
 - If the student is unable to make a Priority or Super Priority application and the University does not believe the student has enough time to obtain a visa and commence their studies within the required timescales
 - Where the student has submitted a Fee Waiver application or alternative immigration route just for the purpose of extending their stay in the UK
 - If the student has failed to adequately attend and engage in-person with their studies as required during a previous period of Student leave
 - If the student does not have any further in-person attendance requirements
 - If a student is in debt to the University
 - If a student intends to make their Student Route application from overseas and is unable to provide the financial documents to evidence they hold the required funds
 - If a student has overstayed in the UK during a previous period of immigration permission
 - If a student has used deception as part of a previous application
 - If a student is deemed to be high risk by the University
 - Where a student is undertaking re-assessment which can be completed within their existing Student leave, even if their results won't be published until after the expiry date of said Student leave.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/international/immigration-and-visas/uk-immigration-rules-and-guidance>

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/international/immigration-and-visas/student-route-finances>

12. A student applying for a CAS may be required to submit any of the following documents to the International Services Team to support our eligibility checks (this list is not exhaustive):
- Current valid Passport or travel document
 - Evidence of payment of tuition fees for the current or forthcoming academic year
 - Tuberculosis (TB) Test Certificate
 - Evidence of English Language proficiency
 - Financial evidence demonstrating the necessary funds are held as required by the Home Office for a minimum period of 28 consecutive days
 - Financial sponsorship letter issued by the relevant Government/organisation
13. Where a current student requires a CAS to make a new Student route application to continue their studies in the UK, the International Services Team will use the following models to determine the course start and end dates for use on the CAS (subject to the Home Office Rules and Guidance in place at the relevant time):

Course Start dates:

- Where a student has a current visa, but their course end date has been extended, the start date should be the day after their current visa expires
- Where a student is returning from intermission, the start date should be the first day of the term they are returning to their studies
- Where a student is returning for re-sit examinations, the start date should be the first day of the relevant exams period
- Where a student is making an overseas application due to academic progression rules, the start date should be the first day of the term they are returning to their studies

Course End dates:

The International Services Team will consider this date whilst having regard to when the student is expected to have completed all academic elements of the course – taught sessions, examinations including meetings with examination boards, assessments, including oral assessments and other formal assessments, and writing and submitting dissertations or theses. In the case of PhD students, academic elements include writing and correcting theses and oral (viva) examinations, provided the University is satisfied that it can continue to meet sponsor duties for the student.

14. Students who require an Academic Technology Approval Scheme ('ATAS') certificate due to the nature of the research they are undertaking must have received the ATAS certificate before a CAS is issued. Where the student's circumstances change and a new ATAS is required as set out in the Home Office Guidance and Rules, as applicable, the student must obtain a new ATAS certificate before these changes can be processed.

<https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

WITHDRAWAL OF IMMIGRATION SPONSORSHIP

Academic Engagement (Attendance and Engagement)

15. The University expects all taught students with sponsored immigration permission to attend their timetabled teaching events and all postgraduate research students to meet in-person with their academic supervisor each month, as determined in accordance with 7.22-7.29 of the General Regulations, Academic Conduct (Immigration Status Requirements and extraordinary removal of University (Immigration) Sponsorship), and in line with the University's obligations as a Student sponsor.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/about/governance/general-regulations.pdf>

16. Attendance for sponsored students is monitored carefully by the International Services Team. If a student falls below expected attendance and engagement expectations, the University will act in line with its sponsor duties. Where a student does not engage with their studies for 60 days, the University will withdraw immigration sponsorship unless exceptional circumstances apply.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/your-responsibilities>
<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/attendance-and-engagement>

17. The University remains responsible for monitoring the attendance and engagement of Students' Union Sabbatical Officers with sponsored immigration permission during their period of employment with the Students' Union. An agreement is in place between the University and the Students' Union to support the monitoring arrangements. Where a Sabbatical Officer leaves their post, the University will withdraw sponsorship. Further information about sponsorship of the Sabbatical Officers can be found in the Home Office Sponsorship Guidance Document 2: Sponsorship duties paragraphs 4.39 to 4.42.

Course Withdrawal

18. Where a sponsored student chooses to withdraw from their course or are withdrawn by the University, the University will report this change of circumstance to the Home Office via SMS. The International Services Team will notify a student via email once a report has been made. This will trigger the Home Office sending a curtailment letter to the student and once received, the student will usually have 60 days to leave the UK.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/changes-to-your-course>

CHANGE OF COURSE

19. Where a change of course request is submitted by a student that results in a requirement for further sponsorship and a new CAS, depending on eligibility the student may need to make an out-of-country visa application. Under these circumstances, the student will be given advice by the International Services Team as part of the Change of Course process.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/changes-to-your-course>

WORK PLACEMENTS & YEAR ABROAD

20. The University may continue to sponsor a student during a period of study abroad or work placement in cases where the student will be returning to continue their study at the University once their study abroad or work placement has finished.
21. Where a student has two years of study in the UK with a final year of study overseas, sponsorship will only be given for the first two years of study.
22. The University does not usually permit Student visa holders to undertake fully remote work placements in the UK unless the student also has a monthly in-person academic engagement requirement running alongside the placement period.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/changes-to-your-course>

INTERMISSION

23. Students with immigration permission who wish to intermit are required to leave the UK as they will not be meeting the requirements and conditions of their Student visa.

24. The University will report any period of intermission to the Home Office. This will trigger the Home Office sending a curtailment letter to the student and, once received, the student will usually have 60 days to leave the UK. The International Services Team will notify a student via email once a report has been made.
25. Once a visa has been cancelled, it is not valid for re-entry to the UK. In order to return to the UK and resume their studies, a student will need to request a new CAS to make a new Student visa application from overseas.
26. Students may request a new CAS up to six months before they are due to return to their studies. It's not guaranteed that a student will receive a CAS again and the student must still meet all eligibility criteria.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/immigration-and-visas/changes-to-your-course>

VISA REFUSALS

27. In the event a student receives a refusal or rejection of their Student route application, they should contact the International Services Team and provide them with a copy of the outcome so that appropriate immigration advice can be provided.
28. The University does not guarantee that it can provide sponsorship for a student who has previously received a refusal for a Student route application.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/international/immigration-and-visas/student-route-outcome>

CONTACTS FROM UKVI AND BORDER FORCE POST-SPONSORSHIP

29. Where the University receives contact either via email or telephone from UKVI and/or Border Force in relation to a student sponsored by the University, steps will be taken to ensure the validity of the source of the request to maintain compliance with GDPR. The University will aim to provide a prompt and accurate answer to any questions posed and a copy of the correspondence will be uploaded to the student's Electronic Casework File.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/my-essex/privacy-notice-students>

DISSATISFACTION WITH A SPONSORSHIP DECISION

30. The University's decision in relation to sponsorship is final. Where a student is dissatisfied with their interaction with the University and the outcome of their case, they are advised to submit a complaint via the Student Concerns and Complaints Procedure.

<https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/voice/complaints>

IMMIGRATION ADVICE AUTHORITY

31. Immigration advice and services are regulated by the Immigration Advice Authority (IAA), and the University is required to operate in line with their Code of Standards. The IAA has the power to investigate complaints made about immigration advice and services provided by an institution.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/immigration-advice-authority>

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis unless changes to the UK Immigration Rules necessitate a change to this policy during an academic year.

February 2026

APPENDIX A

Student visa Sponsorship Policy – full time PhD students

Where a PhD student needs to extend their Student visa, the International Services team will undertake various eligibility checks in line with the UK Immigration Rules in place at the time the request is made.

The table below sets-out the additional periods of immigration sponsorship that eligible PhD students will receive.

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| 'Course start date' | The date of enrolment in person, or induction on the course, whichever is the earlier |
| 'Course end date' | The date by which the prospective student is expected to have completed all academic elements of the course – taught sessions, examinations including meetings with examination boards, assessments, including oral assessments and other formal assessments, and writing and submitting dissertations or theses. In the case of PhD students, academic elements include writing and correcting theses and oral (viva) examinations, provided the sponsor is satisfied that they can continue to carry out their sponsor duties for the student. |
| 'Distance Learning Course' | A course being undertaken at a UK Accredited Institution by a person who is overseas, and which does not require the person to be physically present in the UK for the majority of the course. |
| 'Remote Delivery' | Timetabled delivery of learning where there is no need for the student to attend the premises of the student sponsor or 23 partner institution which would otherwise take place live in person at the sponsor or partner institution site. |
| 'Face-to-face Delivery' | Timetabled learning that takes place in-person and on the premises of the student sponsor or a partner institution. |

| Stage | At University | Away |
|-----------------|--|---|
| PHD (full time) | Sponsor until maximum end date Standard PhD would have sponsorship for 4 years (3 years plus completion year) Integrate PhD would have sponsorship for 5 years (4 years plus completion year) | Distance learners are not eligible for Student visa sponsorship. Can request letter to study for up to six months in the UK as a Visitor (however Graduate Route implications). |

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|---|--|--|
| | <p>Continue to sponsor if maximum course date extended prior to thesis submission. (Contact PGRE for date if extension has not yet been updated on ESIS).</p> | <p>Up to 12 months study/research away mid-course</p> <p>Continue to sponsor provided Supervisor confirms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly supervision via skype/zoom arrangements are in place. • Date student expected to return. • Extension to this, when needed for further research, down to Manager's discretion. <p>Completion year overseas</p> <p>Withdraw sponsorship.</p> <p>Student can request letter to return for viva as a Visitor. It may be possible to Sponsor for a Student visa if there is justification for the student needing to be in the UK.</p> <p>More than 12 months away</p> <p>Withdraw sponsorship.</p> <p>Student to request further sponsorship before returning to complete PhD.</p> |
| <p>PHD extended, thesis not yet submitted</p> | <p>Thesis not submitted & Student visa expires prior to Submission date.</p> <p>If student has not yet submitted their thesis, then the CAS end date should be submission date plus 6 months.</p> <p>Students who submit corrections before CAS end date would be reported to the Home Office as an early finish.</p> | <p>Sponsor for extension provided:</p> <p>Student had previous Student visa sponsorship Supervisor confirms that they will continue to supervise in person monthly (refer to 'at University' column)</p> |
| <p>Course extended – Student visa sponsorship expires before the end of the course</p> | | |
| <p>Under Exam - Submitted Thesis and is awaiting Viva</p> | <p>If date of viva is known then continue to sponsor for viva date plus 3 months, provided:</p> <p>Supervisor confirms that they will continue to supervise monthly. If no viva date is available – viva should be held within 3</p> | <p>Student can return on Visitor visa for viva and/or corrections or apply for further Student leave</p> <p>Sponsor to return for viva provided:</p> <p>Had previous Student visa sponsorship Supervisor confirms that they will continue to supervise in person monthly (refer to 'at University' column)</p> |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | <p>months of submission date so we would continue to sponsor for 6 months from date of submission (3 months to allow for viva plus 3 months). Student leave expires 4 months after CAS end date so would cover the following outcomes:</p> <p>Pass Minor corrections (3 months) Major corrections (6 months) Students who submit corrections before CAS end date would be reported to the Home Office as an early finish.</p> | |
| Post Viva | <p>Continue to sponsor until submission date for corrections, provided: Supervisor confirms that they will continue to supervise in person monthly. PGRE to copy IST into email to student confirming outcome and submission date for corrections. CAS end date should be the submission deadline date for corrections if known. If date not yet known wait for corrections outcome or use 3 months from VIVA date if students visa expires imminently.</p> | <p>Student can either apply for new Student leave or can possibly return with a Visitor visa for viva and corrections if less than 6 months is needed.</p> <p>Sponsor to return for viva provided: Had previous Student visa sponsorship Supervisor confirms they will continue to supervise in person monthly meetings (refer to 'at University' column)</p> |
| Revisions complete but final thesis not submitted | Not likely to be eligible for further sponsorship but would assess the need for in-person engagement | Not likely to be eligible for further sponsorship but would assess the need for in-person engagement |
| Break in studies | | |
| Leave of Absence | <p>Continue to sponsor for period of up to 6 weeks (in line with PGR regulations)</p> <p>(Student visa Policy Guidance allows maximum absence of 60 days)</p> | <p>Continue to sponsor for period of up to 6-weeks (in line with PGR regulations)</p> <p>(Student visa Policy Guidance allows maximum absence of 60 days)</p> |
| Intermission One term or more | <p>Withdraw sponsorship Student to request sponsorship before returning to continue their PhD. (Student visa Policy Guidance allows maximum absence of 60 days)</p> | <p>Withdraw sponsorship Student to request sponsorship before returning to continue their PhD. (Student visa Policy Guidance allows maximum absence of 60 days)</p> |