

# Student Visa Sponsorship Policy

## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The policy sets out the Queen Mary University of London (QMUL, the University) position on sponsoring students to study under the University's Sponsor Licence (Student Route) and set out the responsibilities of the University regarding sponsor licence compliance under rules as set out by the UK Visa & Immigration Directorate of the Home Office (UKVI).

## 2. Legislative context

- 2.1. QMUL holds a sponsor licence, issued by UKVI to sponsor international students admitted to programmes of study at the university.
- 2.2. The University is required to comply with immigration rules and guidance as set out by UKVI.
- 2.3. This policy reflects Home Office rules. Home Office rules are subject to frequent change and the University is required to adhere to these as specified.
- 2.4. The University will collect and retain information about its applicants and students as is necessary for the purposes of complying with its sponsor duties, examples of which are listed in 5.2.

### 3. Scope

3.1. This policy applies to:

- a) Applicants and students of programmes delivered on QMUL UK premises, subject to immigration control.

3.2. This policy does not apply to:

- a) Employees of the University, except where students are also employed by QMUL. Students who are also employees are required to ensure they also follow the relevant UKVI requirements for employment.
- b) Applicants and students of programmes delivered outside the UK.
- c) Applicants and students of programmes delivered via distance-learning.

### 4. Definitions

4.1. **Student:** Students of QMUL as described in University [Ordinances](#).

4.2. **Sponsored Student:** A QMUL student who currently holds a Student Route visa.

4.3. **CAS:** A Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies, which is a unique digital reference number that is assigned by the University as the Sponsor and is required for a Student Route visa application.

4.4. **BRP:** Biometric Residence Permit.

4.5. **eVisa:** Electronic visa.

4.6. **ETA:** Electronic Travel Authorisation.

4.7. **SMS:** Sponsorship Management System, the portal used by the University to liaise with UKVI in relation to the student sponsor licence and sponsored students.

4.8. **Teaching Site:** all sites that the University use to teach sponsored students, including any teaching hospitals.

- 4.9. **Teaching Partnership:** all teaching partnerships that the University uses to teach sponsored students.
- 4.10. **Exceptional Arrangement:** all arrangements that the University uses to teach sponsored students that do not fall under 'Teaching Partnerships'.

## 5. Roles and responsibilities

- 5.1. The **Director of Registry Services** is Authorising Officer and has overall responsibility of the student sponsor licence.
- 5.2. The **Head of Student Immigration Compliance** is Key Contact and is responsible for ensuring that the University complies with UKVI requirements as outlined in this policy.
- 5.3. The **Immigration Compliance Officer** is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of this policy and any accompanying procedures.
- 5.4. The **Student** is responsible for complying with the conditions of their visa and responding to all reasonable requests for information in relation to UKVI compliance.
- 5.5. All University staff must ensure that this policy is understood and that concerns regarding UKVI compliance are raised via the appropriate channels.

## 6. Sponsorship Duties

- 6.1. The University shall allow access to UKVI staff for the purposes of auditing and monitoring compliance; to apply their guidance; to respond to all reasonable requests for data; use the UKVI Student Management System (SMS) and strive to ensure that the University's sponsored students arrive in the UK, enrol and

complete their studies.

6.2. In line with paragraph 2.5 of [Sponsorship Duties](#), the University will keep up-to-date copies of the following for all sponsored students:

- passport (specific pages),
- visa (BRP/eVisa),
- evidence of date of UK entry,
- contact details including UK address, phone number and email address,
- attendance and engagement data,
- Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance certificate, where relevant,
- parental consent letter, where the student is under the age of 18,
- key documents supporting their application to study at QMUL.

6.3. The University will report withdrawal of visa sponsorship to the UKVI, as required by UKVI rules, including where:

- A student fails to enrol onto their programme of study.
- A student fails to re-enrol onto the next year of their programme.
- A student ceases engagement, as per the Student Learning Engagement Policy, an up-to-date version of which can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).
- A student interrupts studies for more than 60 days (unless exceptional circumstances as defined in [Sponsorship Duties](#)).
- A postgraduate research student wishes to 'write-up' their thesis from outside the UK.
- A student chooses to deregister from studies or is deregistered from their studies by QMUL and ceases to be a student at the University.
- A student changes immigration category.
- A student completes their course early.
- A student confirms their visa has been refused.

- There is evidence (or reasonable suspicion) of a fraudulent application.
- There is evidence a student has breached the conditions of their visa.

6.4. The University will report the following changes of circumstance, where withdrawal of visa sponsorship is not required:

- Programme transfers, where a new Student visa is not required.
- Industrial/work placement.
- Study abroad.
- Change of study location (e.g., PhD fieldwork)

6.5. Where a change of circumstance or withdrawal of visa sponsorship is reported to UKVI, this will be clearly communicated to the student via email.

6.6. The University will ensure that all Teaching Sites, Teaching Partnerships and Exceptional Arrangements are added to the sponsor licence.

6.7. On an annual basis, the University will report details of recruitment agents used in the recruitment of sponsored students.

## **7. Specific Responsibilities at Queen Mary University of London**

7.1. CAS Assignment

<b>UKVI Requirement</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
Issue CAS to new students (applicants)	Admissions
Issue CAS to continuing or returning students	Immigration Compliance Team

7.2. Record Keeping

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
Copies of relevant passport pages, visas (BRP/eVisa) and all relevant documents and information as per paragraph 2.5 of the <a href="#">student sponsor guidance</a> .	Immigration Compliance Team
Attendance and Engagement records	Faculty
Evidence used for CAS	Admissions

### 7.3. Reporting Duties

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
All SMS reporting	Immigration Compliance Team

### 7.4. Immigration Advice

UKVI Requirement	Responsibility
Providing advice and guidance about Student related categories to applicants, students and recent graduates in line with the IAA ministerial exemptions	Advice and Counselling Service

## 8. Recruitment and Admissions

- 8.1. For courses with a duration of more than 6 months, students who require a Student Route visa to study their chosen programme at QMUL, must request a CAS from the admissions team. Please refer to the Admissions Student Immigration Policy, an up-to-date version of which can be in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).
- 8.2. For courses with duration of 6 months or less, including Study Abroad Associate programmes, a CAS will not normally be provided as students will be expected to enrol onto the programme with a Standard Visitor Visa/ETA.

- a) A CAS will be provided to those who are coming to undertake a programme with an internship included as an integral and assessed part of the programme.
- 8.3. A CAS may be provided on an exceptional basis for programmes less than 6 months in duration, but this is at the discretion of the Immigration Compliance Team.
- 8.4. The University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship under the Student Route to any applicant. Where such action is taken, the University will clearly explain reasons for this refusal to the student.

## **9. Right to Study Checks and Enrolment**

- 9.1. All QMUL students studying a programme delivered in the UK must ensure they have the Right to Study for the duration of their programme, whether sponsored or unsponsored.
- 9.2. All students must complete a Right to Study visa check before being permitted to enrol onto their programme at QMUL. QMUL reserves the right to request any documentation to satisfy the Right to Study. Students who are unable to evidence their Right to Study, will not be permitted to enrol onto their programme.
- 9.3. Checks determine:
  - a) that the student has the valid and correct documentation and;
  - b) ensures the University retains copies of documentation on the student record as per the requirements detailed in paragraph 2.5 of the [student sponsor guidance](#).
- 9.4. Un-sponsored students must provide evidence of Right to Study before being permitted to enrol, but it does not have to cover the entire programme of study at the point of enrolment. However, if a student's immigration permission expires

before the end of their course, it is the student's responsibility to ensure one of the following:

- They request a CAS to apply for a Student visa, although there is no guarantee that this will be provided by the University or that they will be eligible for visa sponsorship.
- They apply to extend their current visa, or apply for alternative immigration permission which allows study in the UK, and provide evidence of this to the University before their current visa expires.

9.5. If an unsponsored student is unable to provide further evidence of their Right to Study before the end of their programme of study, the student will be deregistered from QMUL and will cease to be a student at the University.

## **10. Engagement Monitoring**

10.1. Monitoring engagement is a statutory requirement for students sponsored by QMUL under the Student Route and is defined in the Student Learning Engagement Policy, an up-to-date version of which can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).

## **11. Re-sits and Returning/Continuing Students**

11.1. These students may continue to be sponsored, provided their continued participation is required. If no participation or attendance is required for more than 60 days, sponsorship will be withdrawn, but the student may continue to be registered at the University.

11.2. There is no automatic right to a visa extension. If a student is due to re-sit or repeat modules, or has already re-sat or retaken modules, and requires a new CAS for the purpose of a visa extension, this will normally be provided by the University, except



where:

- The re-sit is outside the official university examination or re-sit period as defined by the University calendar, an up-to-date version of which can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).
- The sole purpose of visa extension is to provide extra time to apply for a Graduate Route visa where there is no further in-person attendance required.
- There are tuition fee debts.
- There is evidence of fraudulence or reasonable suspicion of fraudulence.
- The student has previously breached the conditions of their visa (e.g., overstaying).

11.3. Where a CAS will be provided for the purpose of re-sitting, the CAS is normally only provided for each individual official university examination or re-sit period.

11.4. Where a student commences an industrial/work or study abroad placement and requires further permission to stay in the UK on a Student visa, a CAS will normally be provided no earlier than 3 months before the expiry of the student's current visa.

11.5. Where a student is extending their visa from within the UK and a CAS is provided for this, it is the responsibility of the student to ensure an in-time visa application is submitted. If a student is unable to provide evidence of an in-time visa application submission when requested, they are liable to be deregistered from their programme and will cease to be a student at the University.

11.6. The University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship under the Student Route, by way of refusing to assign any additional CAS for the purpose of visa extension, to any student. Where such action is taken, the University will clearly explain reasons for this refusal to the student.

11.7. If a student requires a CAS for the purpose of a visa extension due to exceptional circumstances, this will normally be provided by the University.

## **12. Interrupting Students**

- 12.1. Sponsored students interrupting for 60 days or more, will have withdrawal of visa sponsorship reported to the UKVI as per sponsorship duties.
- 12.2. Where there are exceptional circumstances (as defined in [Sponsorship Duties](#)), sponsored students wishing to interrupt for 60 days or more may still be exceptionally sponsored. However, this must be agreed in writing by Head of Student Immigration Compliance and evidence will be retained.
- 12.3. Interrupted students requiring a Student visa to return to studies, must request a new CAS from the Immigration Compliance Team, before they can return to studies.

## **13. Course Transfers**

- 13.1. Course transfers will be dealt with as set out in the Student Transfer Policy, an up-to-date version can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#). However, additional requirements for sponsored students are as follows:
- 13.2. If a sponsored student wishes to change their programme of study after enrolling at QMUL, they must also seek permission from Immigration Compliance Team before the request is approved.
  - a) Sponsored students wishing to change their programme of study after enrolling at QMUL must not start their new programme of study until it has either been reported to UKVI or a new Student visa has been granted, where applicable.
  - b) QMUL reserves the right to refuse a change of programme request on UKVI compliance grounds. Where such action is taken, the University will clearly explain reasons for this refusal to the student.

## **14. Graduate Route**

- 14.1. Students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria to be reported for 'Successful Completion', will be reported to the UKVI by the Immigration Compliance Team, once the degree award has been confirmed at Board.
- 14.2. 'Successful Completion' will be reported to the UKVI where:
- Eligible qualification has been awarded and;
  - The requirement for studying in the UK has been met and;
  - The student holds valid Student visa permission.
- 14.3. Once 'Successful Completion' has been reported to UKVI, this will be clearly communicated to the student via email.
- 14.4. Reporting 'Successful Completion' does not guarantee a successful Graduate visa application.

## **15. Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)**

- 15.1. It is the responsibility of the applicant/student to ensure they obtain the appropriate ATAS clearance, where applicable, before submission of any Student visa application. A CAS will not be assigned until confirmation of approved ATAS clearance has been received.
- 15.2. A new ATAS clearance must be sought, including where it was not required previously, if:
- the content of your programme / thesis changes.
  - your primary supervisor changes.
  - your financial sponsor or conditions for financial sponsorship change at any

time during your study or research.

- 15.3. On an exceptional basis, returning/continuing students may be assigned a CAS for the purpose of a visa extension where:
  - 15.4. Evidence of submitted ATAS application has been provided and the student confirms they are aware of the risk that their ATAS may be refused, at which point, the CAS will be withdrawn.
- 15.5. All students subject to immigration control may be required to obtain ATAS clearance and copies of this can be requested by QMUL at any point.
- 15.6. Where ATAS clearance is a requirement to permit study, if a student is unable to provide ATAS clearance when requested, they are liable to be deregistered and where they are sponsored, visa sponsorship will be withdrawn.

## **16. Appeals and complaints**

- 16.1. A student who wishes to appeal a decision made under this policy may do so under the Queen Mary Administrative Appeals Policy, an up-to-date version of which can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).
- 16.2. Complaints about the service provided to students will be dealt with in line with the Student Complaints Policy, an up-to-date version of which can be found in the QMUL [Policy Zone](#).

## **17. Review**

- 17.1. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years or as required to ensure

compliance with changes to the immigration regime set by government.

- 17.2. Minor updates to this policy that do not affect the rules, principles or intent of this policy may be approved by Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary.

## **18. Appendix 1 – Compliance Requirements**

- 18.1. Compliance requirements are outlined in:

- a) [Sponsorship duties](#)
- b) [Immigration Rules: Appendix Student](#)
- c) [Immigration Rules: Appendix English Language](#)
- d) [Immigration Rules: Appendix Finance](#)

## Policy Information and Document Control

<b>Policy title</b>	Visa Sponsorship Policy
<b>Version number</b>	v1
<b>Related policies and procedures</b>	Admissions Policy on Student Immigration Student Learning Engagement Policy Student Complaints Procedure Student Transfer Policy Administrative Appeals Policy <a href="#">The latest version of all the above policies can be found here: policies-by-category.</a>
<b>Superseded policies</b>	N/A
<b>Approval level</b>	SET
<b>Approval date</b>	24 June 2025
<b>Effective date</b>	September 2025
<b>Next review due</b>	July 2028
<b>Policy owner</b>	Amy Simcock
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## Version Control

Version	Date	Reason for updates/Summary of key changes
<b>1</b>	June 2025	New policy developed.