



Policy for issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to applicants and students

1. Purpose

This document sets out the University of Sheffield's (hereafter, the University) policy on the issuance of Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) statements to applicants and registered students, designed to ensure that the University remains compliant with the Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration's (UKVI) Student Route Sponsor guidance at all times.

Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that an applicant or student will successfully secure a Student visa and/or obtain further leave to remain. The University is not responsible for any decisions made by the Home Office/UKVI and cannot accept liability for any student failing to obtain a visa and/or consequent losses (financial or otherwise) of such failure. If a student has failed to meet any of the conditions necessary for a CAS to be issued, the University will not be liable for any consequences of declining to issue the student with a CAS.

Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that an applicant or student will be permitted to register or continue on their course. Applicants and students are still required to meet all other academic and non-academic requirements of the course in order to study at the University.

The policy will also provide a framework for students who wish to submit an appeal where they are refused a CAS, and confirm the University's responsibilities in respect of the Graduate immigration route visa.

The Immigration Rules (www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules) and UKVI Student Sponsor guidance (www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance) inform the content of this policy. As a Student Sponsor, we reserve the right to assess where CAS will be issued in line with University policy.

2. Key responsibilities

The Admissions Service and International Student Support Advice and Compliance (ISSAC) are responsible for the management and implementation of this policy. The Admissions Service is responsible for applicants and ISSAC for registered students. Where points within this policy impact both applicants and students this will be clearly stated.

The University will only issue CAS for specific courses where the following prerequisites are met:

- i. The course is full-time;
- ii. The location of study is predominantly within the UK. Students may be permitted to be located overseas for periods of their course in specific circumstances;
- iii. The course will predominantly take place in-person. Students may be permitted to study remotely for specific, short periods of time; and
- iv. The course otherwise meets the requirements needed for Student visa sponsorship as laid out by UKVI.

Any queries related to CAS eligibility for either an individual or a course should be raised with the Admissions Service for applicants (www.sheffield.ac.uk/contact/study) and ISSAC for students (www.sheffield.ac.uk/new-students/immigration/student-visa-application/contact-us). All University staff working with applicants and/or students who require a Student visa must ensure that this policy is adhered to.

3. Applicants

3.1 For the purposes of this policy, an applicant is defined as an individual who has applied to study a degree course or an English language course at the University, and has not yet registered on that course.

3.2 CAS issuance for applicants

The following criteria must be met before an applicant can be issued a CAS by the University:

- 3.2.1 The applicant has accepted an Unconditional offer to study at the University;
- 3.2.2 It is four months or less before the start date of the course;
- 3.2.3 Where necessary, the applicant has paid a tuition fee deposit (www.sheffield.ac.uk/fees/fee-deposits). This is applicable to applicants to postgraduate taught courses, unless the applicant is financially sponsored by a University-recognised sponsor;
- 3.2.4 Where requested, the applicant has verified their academic qualifications with the Qualification Check service; and
- 3.2.5 If the applicant is coming to study a pre-sessional English or English as a foreign language course, they have provided a secure English language test (SELT) that confirms they have achieved at least B1 in all four components.

Applicants must complete and submit a CAS application form as part of their pre-registration tasks, providing the evidence required. This includes the applicant confirming that they have read and understood the information related to the financial requirements of both the University and UKVI (www.gov.uk/guidance/financial-evidence-for-student-and-child-student-route-applicants).

It is the responsibility of the applicant to check and confirm the information within the CAS is correct and accurate. This includes identifying any errors within the CAS document, such as incorrect or absent scholarship information. If an applicant identifies any errors in their information they should contact the Admissions Service immediately by emailing pbsapply@sheffield.ac.uk, quoting their name and UCAS ID or Sheffield applicant number.

Any CAS issued will reflect the information relating to the course for which the applicant has accepted an Unconditional offer. Some applicants may be eligible for a Combined CAS (one CAS to cover both a pre-sessional English language course and the academic course). To be eligible for a Combined CAS, applicants must meet the above criteria as well as additional requirements, which will vary depending on the applicant's desired English language course. The full requirements for Combined CAS eligibility are listed on our webpages at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/international/after-you-apply/arriving-sheffield/cas-application/combined-cas

Once the CAS application form has been submitted, it will usually take a maximum of five working days for the application to be assessed and processed by the Admissions Service and for the CAS to be assigned by UKVI. Once a CAS has been assigned, the University will issue the CAS to the applicant. While the Admissions Service aims to process CAS applications within the above timescale, this cannot be guaranteed. Examples of delays to CAS issuance include, but are not limited to:

- i. where the University is required to discuss, clarify or amend CAS application information with an applicant during the assessment of a submitted CAS application; or
- ii. disruption caused by internal or external systems temporarily preventing a CAS from being assigned.

3.3 Urgent cases for applicants

It is the responsibility of an applicant to inform the Admissions Service directly of any urgent requirement for a CAS, and to do so with more than five working days' notice. The University will generally only consider a CAS request to be urgent where an applicant is in the UK, their current visa is due to expire and the Immigration Rules allow them to apply for a Student visa from within the UK. If it is not possible to issue the CAS before the visa expires, the applicant must leave the UK before that date. Applicants can contact the Admissions Service to inform them of urgent cases via pbsapply@sheffield.ac.uk, including their name, applicant number and evidence that their current visa will expire imminently.

3.4 Student visa sponsorship for applicants

The University will issue a CAS to an applicant in line with the formal start and end dates of the course as they relate to internal studies (in attendance) within the UK and as recorded at the admissions stage. Applicants for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses beginning in September will be issued a start date on their CAS of two weeks prior to the formal start date, to allow attendance at the University's Orientation and Welcome Weeks. The end date will differ depending on the level of study and can be defined as follows:

- For undergraduate study, the CAS will be issued to cover the full duration of the course until the end of the examination period in the final year
- For postgraduate taught study, the CAS will be issued to cover the full duration of the course until the end of the dissertation or project period (12 months for a standard masters course)
- For postgraduate research study, the CAS will be issued to cover the full duration of the course as expected at the point of admission (4 years for a standard PhD course encompassing thesis submission and an estimated viva period)

The sponsorship duration may differ from and end earlier than the timelines indicated above where the student's period of study in the UK ends before their registration end date. If so, the course end date listed on the CAS will be issued in line with the date their studies in the UK finish.

3.5 Credibility interviews

As a Student Sponsor for the Student visa route, it is essential that the University does not issue CAS to non-genuine students, in order to protect our Student Sponsor Licence and to minimise the risk of an applicant having their Student visa application refused.

Credibility interviews are required for certain applicants who need a CAS to study an English language course at the University's English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). These applicants will not be issued a CAS until the interview process is complete and the University deems that the outcome of the interview is satisfactory.

Applicants who require an interview are identified after an offer is issued to them. Credibility interviews are routinely required where applicants to ELTC courses:

- i. are a national of a country which is not listed on UKVI's differential evidence requirement list. This list is found under point ST 22.1 within Appendix Student of the UK Immigration Rules (www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-student);
- ii. do not have an association with a University-approved agent; and
- iii. are self-funding their studies.

We will also require applicants to any course to complete a credibility interview where:

- iv. a recognisable pattern or patterns of fraudulent activity are identified which pose a risk to our Student Sponsor Licence.

3.5.1 Process (pre-interview)

The following information is gathered by Admissions Service staff from applicants who require a credibility interview:

- i. A copy of the applicant's passport;
- ii. A statement outlining the reasons the applicant has applied for the English language course specifically at the University of Sheffield. This statement should also include information regarding the applicant's future study and career aspirations after the English language course;
- iii. Evidence of the applicant's qualifications that meet the entry requirements for the further study the applicant intends to pursue after completion of the English language course;
- iv. Information regarding how the applicant intends to fund the English language course, further study and accommodation, including financial evidence;
- v. Written consent from the applicant to contact their previous education provider to verify their qualifications certificates; and
- vi. Verification of the applicant's academic qualifications via Qualification Check.

These documents will be assessed by the Admissions Service. Successful applicants will proceed to the interview stage. Applicants who fail to respond to the request for documents or fail to provide suitable documents will not be issued a CAS and their offer(s) of a study place will be withdrawn.

3.5.2 Process (interview)

Upon completing the pre-interview assessment by the Admissions Service, successful applicants are invited via email to a credibility interview. Applicants who fail to respond to the interview invitation by the given deadline will have the interview cancelled and their offer(s) withdrawn. Interviews are conducted online via the Google Meet platform and take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Applicants are informed that for their interview they will need to have:

- i. a suitable device that has video and audio capabilities (mobile phones are not acceptable);
- ii. stable internet access;
- iii. a quiet room where they will not be distracted. Applicants must attend credibility interviews on their own;
- iv. their passport available to them; and
- v. included in their email response to the invitation their consent to their interview being recorded.

Without all these requirements being met, the interview will not commence. If any of these requirements are found not to have been met during the interview, the interview will be terminated and the applicant will have failed. If technical difficulties are encountered during an interview, the University will consider a second interview on a case-by-case basis. To maintain the integrity of the immigration system, credibility interviews will not be rearranged and applicants will not be offered multiple attempts.

Applicants who need support or amendments to their credibility interview due to disabilities should contact the Admissions Service, where it will be considered if any reasonable adjustments can be made. Reasonable adjustments will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

During the credibility interview, the Admissions Service will assess the applicant's ability, knowledge and intent with regard to a range of issues including but not limited to:

- i. their knowledge of the English language course and any future academic course they hold an offer for;
- ii. their knowledge of the city of Sheffield and the University of Sheffield, and their ability to explain why they specifically chose the course at University of Sheffield;
- iii. their ability to explain their future study and/or career aspirations and how the English language course and any future academic course will help them achieve these;
- iv. whether they can convince the Admissions Service that they genuinely wish to study the English language course and/or any future courses;
- v. whether they can explain how they will fund their studies; and
- vi. whether their English language ability aligns with their submitted English language test score.

A credibility interview will be terminated if at any point during the interview the interviewee's performance makes clear that they are not a genuine student. This may include applicants reading from a script, having limited or no English language ability, or having others in the room either instructing them or responding to questions for them.

Applicants who have not joined their interview by five minutes after the scheduled start time will have their interview terminated. Applicants who have their interview terminated will not be issued a CAS and their offer(s) will be withdrawn.

Applicants whose credibility interview satisfies the Admissions Service that they are a genuine applicant will be notified and given access to their CAS application.

Documentation, records, and other evidence obtained for and during the credibility interview may be retained and provided to UKVI during an audit.

The University reserves the right to amend, adapt or expand our credibility interview processes if it is necessary to identify non-genuine students and/or protect our Student Sponsor Licence.

4. Registered students

4.1 The assessment criteria for issuing a CAS to a registered student may differ from the criteria that is used for applicants. For the purposes of this policy, a registered student for CAS purposes is defined as a student with a valid and ongoing registration status at the University or a student sabbatical officer.

4.2 CAS issuance for registered students

International Student Support Advice and Compliance will arrange a CAS for a registered student:

- 4.2.1 who requires new or further Student visa sponsorship following a change to their course or dates of study; or
- 4.2.2 who held immigration permission in another category and is requesting a CAS for the first time; or
- 4.2.3 who is undertaking the role of student sabbatical officer, or who is returning to their studies after undertaking the role of student sabbatical officer.

The following criteria must be met before a student can be issued a CAS by the University:

Students who require a new CAS for one of the reasons set out in 4.2.1, 4.2.2 or 4.2.3 must apply online by completing the CAS Request form found at:
https://shef.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_56bHtuQ7VZYREj4

Students may be required to provide a range of supporting documentation before their CAS can be issued, depending on individual circumstances. This can include (but is not limited to) financial evidence, updated travel documents, proof of exit from the UK or proof of fitness to resume studies. In such cases students will be contacted by ISSAC as required. Further information can be found via: www.sheffield.ac.uk/new-students/immigration/student-visa-application/cas

A CAS will only be issued a maximum of 3 months prior to the start date that will be recorded on it. This start date will differ for each specific scenario, but will generally be determined by either the student's current visa expiry date or the date they require their new Student visa sponsorship to start.

Once the CAS application form has been completed and submitted by the student, a CAS will usually take five working days to be issued. Whilst ISSAC aims to issue CAS within this timescale, this cannot be guaranteed. Examples of delays to CAS issuance include, but are not limited to:

- i. where the University is required to discuss, clarify or amend CAS application information with a student after a CAS application has been submitted; or

- ii. disruption caused by internal or external systems temporarily preventing a CAS from being assigned.

4.3 Urgent cases for registered students

It is the responsibility of a student to inform ISSAC directly of any urgent requirement for a CAS, and to do so with more than five working days' notice. The University will generally only consider a CAS request to be urgent where an applicant is in the UK, their current visa is due to expire and the Immigration Rules allow them to apply for a Student visa from within the UK. If it is not possible to issue the CAS before the visa expires (for instance because this relies on the student record being updated first or insufficient time has been provided), the applicant must leave the UK before that date. Students can contact ISSAC to inform them of urgent cases via casenquiries@sheffield.ac.uk, including their name, registration number and evidence that their current visa will expire imminently.

4.4 Student visa sponsorship for registered students

A CAS will be issued with a course end date in line with the expected end date on the student record at the time of issue, as it relates to internal studies (in attendance) in the UK. As such there may be some cases where an alternative date is used which more accurately reflects the student's active and internal study period in the UK. Examples of different sponsorship duration and CAS end dates include the following:

- i. Where the student's period of study within the UK ends before their registration end date, the CAS will be issued to end in line with the date their studies in the UK finish.
- ii. Where the student is repeating or extending studies and will submit all their work before their registration end date, the CAS will be issued to end in line with the final date of submission.
- iii. Where the student is registered to repeat internally (in attendance), the CAS will be issued in line with the internal study period only. For example, if the student is registered to internally repeat spring semester modules the CAS will be issued with the start and end dates of the spring semester only.
- iv. Where the student has been registered as external for the full academic year but will have invigilated exams in the UK for the Spring exam period or the August resit period, a CAS can be issued for the duration of the exam period only (where the student is in their final year of study) or from the start of the exam period until the expected course end date (where the student is expected to progress to a subsequent academic year).
- v. Where the student has been registered as external for the full academic year but will have invigilated exams in the UK for the Autumn exam period, a CAS will not be issued and the student is expected to use an alternate visa.
- vi. Where the student is repeating the same academic year for a second time or more, and is registered externally for the latest repeat period, any new CAS will be subject to them passing their repeat year.
- vii. Where a student is awaiting their viva examination details or results (thesis corrections) at the time they require a CAS, the CAS will be issued in line with either the known viva date or estimated viva period (10 weeks), or an estimated corrections period (3 months), whichever is the most relevant. Where a placeholder date is required, it is the student's responsibility to inform ISSAC if their course end date is subsequently updated. In such cases the CAS end date may be amended via Sponsor Note.

The University will not issue a CAS to a student that is registered to repeat or resit their module(s) as an external candidate unless one of the above criteria is met.

5. Visa refusal

In cases where an applicant or student has had a visa application refused and a new CAS is required, the Admissions Service or ISSAC would request a copy of the visa refusal notice from the student so that staff in ISSAC can make an assessment of whether there would be further compliance risks associated with issuing a new CAS. Additional evidence from the student (for example financial or credibility evidence) may be requested to help determine the decision. The University reserves the right not to issue another CAS if evidence provided suggests a further visa application would be refused.

6. Instances where a CAS may not be issued

The University reserves the right not to issue a CAS to an applicant or a student (with no liability to the applicant or student) if doing so would put the University's Student Sponsor Licence at risk, it would breach the Immigration Rules, or it does not meet the terms of this policy. The University must be satisfied that the student being sponsored intends to follow the programme of study and comply with the Immigration Rules and with the conditions of their visa.

Instances where the University will not issue a CAS include, but are not limited to:

- 6.1 The University believes that issuing a CAS would pose a risk to its Student Sponsor Licence. Student Sponsor Guidance states that issuing a CAS to students meeting specific UKVI criteria is not permitted.
- 6.2 The University identifies that information or evidence the applicant or student will be providing as part of the Student visa application, or any other factors affecting their eligibility for a Student visa, would lead to the application being refused. This would include, but is not limited to, insufficient funds meaning the financial requirement will not be met, or where the student is in the UK and academic progression and/or Student visa time limits cannot be met.
- 6.3 The University identifies that false or incorrect information has been provided as part of the application for a study place, studies at the University, or CAS application, including but not limited to falsifying academic or English language qualifications.
- 6.4 The applicant or student is unable to provide a valid and approved ATAS certificate (where required).
- 6.5 The latest possible start date of the course has passed.
- 6.6 The course end date has passed (as defined in 4.4).
- 6.7 It is less than 3 weeks before the latest possible start date of the course and the applicant or student is not in the UK. Any exception to this would be at the University's discretion and the student would need to meet the following conditions:
 - i. It is 1 week or more before the latest possible start date; and

- ii. The applicant or student confirms they are eligible to apply for a Student visa using the priority service.
- 6.8 The applicant or student has previously breached visa conditions, for example exceeding the working hours restriction.
- 6.9 The applicant or student has previously breached University regulations or policies, for example in respect of attendance, and as such poses a visa compliance risk.
- 6.10 The applicant or student has previously overstayed their immigration permission.
- 6.11 The student is externally registered and is not required to study or submit coursework in the UK.
- 6.12 The student is not required to be in attendance in Sheffield due to part of the course being taught overseas.
- 6.13 The student has taken the decision to complete the remainder of their studies from overseas and is no longer required to attend teaching in the UK.
- 6.14 The course end date is after the student's current visa expiry date but the student has submitted all coursework before the current visa expiry date and therefore has no more active studies.
- 6.15 The University is not satisfied that the applicant or student has a genuine intention to begin or complete their course of study.
- 6.16 The applicant or student has had a previous visa refusal including credibility interview.
- 6.17 The course is part-time or distance learning, or the applicant or student will be 'majority off campus' and an alternate visa for attendance in Sheffield is deemed more appropriate.
- 6.18 The course of study/time spent in Sheffield studying is 6 months or less.
- 6.19 The University has issued an offer of a study place to an applicant in error.
- 6.20 The applicant or student fails to meet a deadline issued by the University to supply necessary information or take appropriate action in order for a CAS to be issued.
- 6.21 The student is awaiting the formal results or confirmation of award, or has an outstanding complaint or appeal.
- 6.22 As an outcome of the credibility interview process outlined in point 3.5.
- 6.23 The applicant or student is excluded for applying for a visa according to special criteria set by UKVI from time to time, for example the 'visa brake' applied to nationals of Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar or Sudan applying for a Student visa from outside the UK.

Where the University states that they will not issue a CAS to an applicant who requires a Student visa to study in the UK, any offer(s) issued to the applicant will be withdrawn on the grounds that the applicant does not have suitable immigration permission to study in the UK, in accordance with paragraph 6.4 of the Terms and Conditions upon Acceptance of an Offer (www.sheffield.ac.uk/study/policies/terms).

Where a registered student cannot be issued a new CAS and subsequent Student visa, the student would be expected to obtain alternate legal leave to remain in the UK. If this is not possible, and the University is unable to support remote delivery of the remainder of the course, the University may be required to terminate the registration of the student under section 36 of Regulation XIII: General University Regulations (www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar).

7. Instances where the University may withdraw a CAS

The University reserves the right to withdraw a CAS. Instances of where a CAS will be withdrawn include, but are not limited to:

- 7.1 The University identifies a significant error or multiple errors in the information detailed within the CAS and cannot rectify it with a sponsor note. Where appropriate, a new CAS may be issued to rectify these errors. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the appropriate CAS issuing team.
- 7.2 The University has reason to believe that it would cause risk to its Student Sponsor Licence if the CAS is used.
- 7.3 The University has reason to believe that the applicant or student no longer meets the requirements of the Student visa route and the application may be refused.
- 7.4 The applicant or student does not have a valid and approved ATAS certificate, including if the University identifies that the applicant/student has entered false or incorrect information as part of their ATAS application thereby invalidating an approved ATAS certificate.
- 7.5 The University becomes aware of false or incorrect information on the applicant or student's academic or CAS application.
- 7.6 The University is informed that the applicant or student is no longer able to arrive in the UK and register in time for the latest registration date for the course. The University will withdraw any CAS with an assigned status where the latest possible start date has passed. Applicants/students will be contacted about the withdrawal to avoid possible visa refusal.
- 7.7 The University has issued an offer of a study place to an applicant in error.
- 7.8 Any other reason listed under section 6 of this policy.

The University will contact the respective applicant, student or their agent via the email address provided to the University as part of the CAS application and/or their official University email address (if applicable) to confirm that a CAS has been withdrawn.

Withdrawing a CAS means that the associated reference number will no longer be valid, therefore any Student visa application made with that number will be refused by UKVI.

8. Graduate Immigration Route

Following the completion of studies, the University will inform UKVI of students who meet the Graduate

Immigration Route eligibility rules, where they also continue to hold valid Student visa permission in the UK.

In order for a student to be reported by the University as eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route visa they must meet the following criteria:

- 8.1 The student must have successfully completed their course. This means the student's record must have been updated to show their final completion status following the relevant exam boards or confirmation of award;
- 8.2 The student must have completed a UK bachelors degree, a UK postgraduate degree, PGCE, PGDE, Law conversion, Legal or Bar Practice courses, or a relevant qualification listed in point GR 5.2 of the UK government's Immigration Rules Appendix Graduate (www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/immigration-rules-appendix-graduate);
- 8.3 The student must have a valid Student visa at the time of course completion; and
- 8.4 If the student has been on a course of more than 12 months they must be in receipt of a visa which is valid for at least 12 months and all study during that period must have taken place in the UK; if the student has been on a course of 12 months or less then all study must have taken place in the UK.

When assessing the requirement to have studied in the UK, as in 8.4 above, students will still meet this rule where they have studied overseas as a formal part of their course (for instance on placement or study abroad) or where they have had short periods overseas where visa sponsorship has been maintained.

The University will send a confirmation to student email addresses once they have been reported to UKVI as eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route.

- For standard undergraduate students this occurs after formal results are released in July each year
- For standard postgraduate taught students this occurs in the last week of November each year
- For postgraduate research students, and any students who receive results outside of the standard timeframes, this occurs as and when the student record has been updated to show their final results

Where students have not received their Graduate Route email confirmation more than two weeks after the timeframes above they should email graduateroute@sheffield.ac.uk.

The University will report all eligible students to UKVI within five working days of the student receiving their final published results confirming their formal award, providing all criteria have been met.

The University is unable to report any student as eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route visa if the student record is not updated and/or does not demonstrate that the student has met the eligibility or validity criteria, irrespective of when the student's Student visa expires.

9. Appeals and complaints

9.1 Applicants

Applicants have the right to appeal a decision to refuse to issue or to withdraw a CAS. All appeals by applicants must be submitted via the Appeals and Complaints Procedure for Applicants. If an applicant wishes to submit a formal complaint, the Appeals and Complaints Procedure for

Applicants should also be followed. Details of the Appeals and Complaints Procedure for Applicants, including the appropriate form, can be found at:
www.sheffield.ac.uk/study/policies/appeals-complaints-applicants

9.2 Students

Where ISSAC have not been able to issue a CAS to a student under any of the points above and the student disagrees with the decision, the student has the right to submit an informal complaint to the ISSAC Section Lead in the first instance. Should the student wish to submit a formal complaint after receiving the outcome of the initial complaint, they can do so. The student should follow the procedure for 'How to make a formal complaint' at: www.sheffield.ac.uk/study/policies/appeals-complaints-current-students/complaints-procedure#Make%20a%20formal%20complaint

10. Disclaimer

This policy is accurate at the time of writing. This policy will be amended and revised in line with any changes or updates to UKVI or University rules, policy or guidance. CAS issuing or withdrawal will be dependent on any changes to UKVI or University rules, policy or guidance. The University cannot be held responsible for systems failings at either the University or UKVI which may lead to a CAS not being issued to a student.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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