

SOAS Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Issuance Policy

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1. Guiding Principles

- 1.1.** Individuals who require a visa to undertake study in the UK for more than 6 months will normally be required to obtain a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) before applying for immigration permission under the Student route (previously Tier 4). Anyone requesting a CAS from SOAS University of London must satisfy SOAS that they meet the Home Office/UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and SOAS's requirements before a CAS will be issued.
- 1.2.** Only relevant staff who are Level 1 or 2 users on the institution's sponsor licence are authorised to issue CASs, to students starting a new course at SOAS as well as existing students switching into the Student route during their studies. CASs assigned to Student route students currently studying at SOAS who wish to further extend their leave to complete a course are normally issued by the UKVI Student Compliance team or nominee. All CASs should be issued in line with the principles set out within this policy.
- 1.3.** As part of its responsibilities as a Student sponsor SOAS will only issue a CAS to a student who to the best of its knowledge meet the requirements under the Student route and will be able to make a successful Student visa application. Authorised staff may require an applicant/student requesting a CAS to provide further information and documentary evidence to enable SOAS to effectively evaluate the case and fulfil its sponsor duties before issuing the CAS.
- 1.4.** Authorised staff will normally issue a CAS to an applicant who:
 - has met all conditions for the course they intend to study at SOAS.
 - has paid any required deposit (unless exempt) and/or provided proof of financial sponsorship and ability to meet the financial requirements for their Student visa application;
 - is seeking to study a course that is deemed to be 'progression' from previous study in accordance with published UKVI guidance, unless exempt.
 - has demonstrated that they are a genuine student; and
 - has provided SOAS with all required documents and information required for CAS issuance.
- 1.5.** SOAS will not normally issue a third CAS to a student for the same programme of study unless in exceptional circumstances. Request for a third must be reviewed by the Student Visa Compliance Manager in consultation with the Academic Registrar or their nominee.

2. Issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CASs)

- 2.1.** Authorised staff should refer to relevant UKVI and internal guidance before issuing a CAS.

- 2.2.** Only applicants who have been given and formally accepted an unconditional offer for a place to study on an approved course at SOAS and have submitted all outstanding required documentation including a completed a CAS request form and paid any relevant deposit (unless exempt) are eligible to receive a CAS.

The CAS will be issued no more than six months prior to the course start date.

- 2.3.** All documents (academic, financial, etc) required for CAS issuance must be submitted in English, where the applicant's/student's documents have not been issued in English they must provide SOAS with a copy of the original along with a fully certified translation prepared by a professional translator or translation company.
- 2.4.** Applicants holding an unconditional offer who have opted to attend a pre-sessional English language, course, which is not a requirement of their offer, may be issued a single CAS to cover both the pre-sessional and the main course of study (degree programme) if appropriate.
- 2.5.** Applicants' with CEFR B1 English language ability in 1 or more of the four sub-components of language learning may be assigned a separate CAS to enable them to attend the English language pre-sessional course. If at the end of the pre-sessional course the student successfully achieves English Language CEFR level B2 in each component or provide us with an IELTS or equivalent English language qualification demonstrating CEFR B2 level in each component SOAS shall assign a second CAS for their main academic course of study, providing they continue to meet all the relevant eligibility requirements for the Student route visa.
- 2.6.** Receipt of an academic admission offer from SOAS does not guarantee that a CAS will be assigned to the applicant. The applicant's immigration history, previous UK study and status will be assessed in accordance with the relevant Student route and other UK Immigration Rules.
- 2.7.** SOAS reserves the right to refuse to issue a CAS even if the applicant meets all its academic entry requirements. Where an applicant/ student has been declined a CAS the applicant/student may seek a review of this decision. The decision to refuse the CAS will be reviewed by the Academic Registrar (or their nominee) in consultation with Student Visa Compliance Manager. Appeals should be sent within 10 days of being informed that they will not be issued a CAS.
- 2.8.** SOAS may make any additional checks deemed necessary to ensure it only sponsors genuine students who are likely to make a successful visa application. These checks may include, but are not limited to, reviewing bank statements and financial documents, or requesting previous immigration history (from the individual and UKVI) and CASs from previous institutions of study.

2.9. SOAS will not issue a CAS in the following situations:

- Where the course the applicant/student intends to study will not comply with the Student route requirements.
- If there is any reason to believe that the individual will not comply with the conditions of their Student route visa
- The applicant/student is unable to demonstrate that they meet the requirements for a visa under the Student route or is in breach of any of SOAS's regulations.
- If an applicant/student has submitted documents which are proven or suspected to be fraudulent.
- Where a student has outstanding tuition or other debts with SOAS and / or SOAS has concerns about the student's ability to pay tuition and/or other fees.
- If the duration of an applicant/student's course will result in them exceeding any study cap under the Student route.
- If SOAS decides that sponsoring an applicant/student will put its sponsor licence at risk or has concerns about the applicant's/student's intention to study and genuineness.
- The student is not making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with SOAS's Academic Regulations or has failed to engage with their course during their studies at SOAS.
- The course does not represent academic progression in accordance with the Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules.
- Where sponsorship has been withdrawn by SOAS previously and the student has remained in the UK but it unable under the prevailing Immigration Rules to apply for a Student visa inside the UK.

2.10. SOAS reserves the right to not issue a CAS if there are reasonable grounds to believe that an applicant/student's application for a Student visa will be unsuccessful due to:

- A history of visa refusals.
- Insufficient funds (tuition and maintenance).
- Criminal convictions or involvement with terrorist activity.
- Any behaviour or evidence which would lead SOAS to believe the applicant/student is not a genuine student.
- Any evidence to suggest an applicant/a student has broken immigration laws or conditions of any previously held UK immigration permission.
- The applicant/student has overstayed their UK immigration permission as defined in the Immigration Rules.
- The applicant/student is in the UK and does not hold valid UK immigration permission to be in the country or they are in the UK in an immigration

category, which does permit switching into the Student route.

- The applicant/student's course does not represent academic progression and they are not exempt from the requirement.
- if the applicant has failed a course of study at another institution in the UK, unless due to medical conditional or serious personal circumstance (to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis).
- Poor English language ability.
- The applicant/student has provided false information to the SOAS or presented fraudulent documentation.
- There are less than 10 working days before the latest start date for an applicant's course. This requirement may be waived by the Academic Registrar in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.
- An applicant/a student will not arrive in time for their course's latest start date. This requirement may be waived by the Academic Registrar in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.

3. Financial documentary requirements (exemptions)

- 3.1.** SOAS does not currently require evidence of meeting financial requirements prior to CAS issuance however by requesting a CAS a student confirms that they are aware of the financial requirements for the Student route visa as set out by UKVI and have the required amount of funds/money to cover their tuition (less any CAS deposit paid) and maintenance (covering 9 months) in place before submitting their Student visa application. SOAS reserves the right to request documentation demonstrating that the applicant/student meets the UKVI financial requirements.

4. Students requiring Student visa extensions

- 4.1.** SOAS will assess the academic performance/progression for any applicant/student who has previously held or currently holds Student/Tier 4 permission and has studied in the UK. To receive a CAS an applicant/student must normally be applying for a course which is at a higher RQF level than the previous course studied under Student/Tier 4 (General) route. Where an applicant/student has previously studied on a course in the UK at the same level as the course they intend to study at SOAS, SOAS will only consider issuing a for an CAS for a visa extension inside the UK if:
- The new course is connected to, is part of the same subject group as, or involves deeper specialisation of the previous course for which a Student visa was granted; or
 - The previous course and new course together support a student's genuine career aspirations; and
 - The applicant is otherwise exempt from showing academic progression.

Students will be asked to provide a statement on how they meet the new programme meets the above requirements to enable us to assess their eligibility for a CAS.

If a student is unable to meet the requirements for a Student permission extension as set out in the Immigration Rules they will normally be advised to leave the UK to make an out of country application before a CAS is issued to them. Student will be asked to provide evidence of their departure from the UK.

- 4.2. SOAS will only provide a CAS to an existing SOAS student to enable them to extend their leave if it is satisfied the student intends to and is able to follow the course of study as evidenced by previous academic performance.
- 4.3. For the purposes of applying for a visa extension in the UK, a CAS will only be issued to an applicant/student whose current visa permits for an extension or switching into the Student category.
- 4.4. Any student wishing to extend their leave under the Student route category must complete CAS request form (extension), which should be received at least 10 working days before the expiry date of their current Student visa. A CAS extension will be considered once an applicant/student has signed and submitted these documents as well as any other required documentation.
- 4.5. The CAS will be issued no more than three months prior to the course start date

5. Sponsorship and Length of Sponsorship

- 5.1. SOAS will sponsor a student for the duration of their programme, subject to any compliance requirements of the University or UKVI. SOAS may withdraw sponsorship if it is not necessary to continue sponsorship or if the University cannot comply with its sponsor duties.
- 5.2. The duration of a CAS will correspond with the programme start and end date on the student's registration taking into consideration date of registration, course induction and the date by which an applicant or student has completed all academic elements of the course including taught sessions, examinations, assessments and writing and submitting dissertations and thesis unless these can be completed from overseas and there is no substantial reason to remain on campus/in the UK.
- 5.3. If a student meets the conditions to have their leave extended to continue their course, SOAS will only assign a CAS for the remaining duration of the course.
- 5.4. The course end date for PhD courses will be 4 years from the course start date. This covers the 3-year registration period where the student is undertaking full-time study plus the 1-year period of continuation. If additional time is required and this

has been approved by the Doctoral School an extension CAS will be issued, provided the student continues to meet UKVI requirements.

- 5.5. Regardless of the student's level of study, the length of sponsorship will also consider any study limits regulations in place at the time (e.g., 2-year study limit for below degree level courses/five-years for study at degree level)

6. Student visa refusals

- 6.1. If an incoming student's visa application is refused, SOAS may consider issuing **only one** additional CAS during the academic year, unless the refusal was due to an administrative error by SOAS staff. Students requesting a CAS following a visa refusal will be required to provide evidence to show there is minimal chance of their visa being refused a subsequent time. Students deferring their place on a course due to a visa refusal will be permitted to defer their place for one academic year only.
- 6.2. Further CASs will not normally be assigned where an incoming student/current student has had a refusal due to failing a credibility interview.
- 6.3. Any incoming/current student whose application for a Student visa or where an administrative review request was refused will be reported to UKVI and Student sponsorship will be withdrawn.
- 6.4. Any incoming/current student whose Student visa is refused by UKVI and requires a new CAS from SOAS must provide a full copy of their Home Office/UKVI refusal notice and any other relevant information (e.g. evidence of meeting the UKVI financial requirements) and will need to consent to UKVI sharing information with SOAS about their Student visa application.
- 6.5. Provided the above conditions are met, SOAS may issue one additional CAS to a student following the refusal of a Student visa application. However, if the applicant/student's visa application is refused a second time SOAS will not issue a further CAS.
- 6.6. SOAS reserves the right to not issue a CAS to any incoming/current student who has had their Student visa application refused, particularly if it was due to them failing a UKVI credibility interview.

7. Deferrals and CAS issuance

- 7.1. Incoming Students who are unable to enrol by the agreed enrolment deadline and wish to defer their place on the course for longer than the stipulated late enrolment period allowed must contact the Admissions /UKVI Student Compliance teams as soon as possible for further guidance.

8. Sending a CAS to a Student

- 8.1.** A CAS will normally be provided directly to an incoming/returning student. A CAS should not be sent to any other party without the student's written consent. In all cases where a student has provided consent to send their CAS to a third party, such as an Agent, the student must be copied into the correspondence.
- 8.2.** SOAS will provide the student with details of their CAS number, qualifications and other relevant information that was used for the admissions offer and CAS issuance. The student should be asked to confirm/identify any errors immediately upon receipt of their CAS details.

9. Leave of Absence, Re-sits and Repeats

- 9.1.** When a student wishes to return to their studies following a period of approved leave of absence, SOAS will only sponsor the student if they meet the relevant conditions for CAS issuance as detailed in this policy including:
- meeting the requirement to provide valid documentary evidence of English language ability at CEFR level B2 for courses at RQF 6 and above in accordance with UKVI's requirement and SOAS's English language policy, unless exempt;
 - obtaining the relevant academic/Registry approval for extending their programme;
 - demonstrating academic progression in accordance with published Home Office/UKVI Rules and SOAS's institutional requirements including attendance and engagement with their course.
 - the extension will not cause them to exceed the maximum period of study permitted by SOAS regulations or UK Immigration Rules/UKVI policy;
 - has no outstanding financial obligations to the SOAS, whether for tuition or other fees;
 - has not breached any UK Immigration Rules during their studies and/or during the period of their deferral/intermission; and
 - providing SOAS with any documentation requested such as updated immigration history details, evidence of departure from the UK and evidence of finances etc. The UKVI Compliance team may require returning students requesting a CAS to provide further information and documentary evidence to enable SOAS to effectively evaluate the case and fulfil its sponsor duties before issuing a CAS.

It is the responsibility of the returning student to provide any required information and to fulfil any conditions set by SOAS.

- 9.2.** If a Student route/Tier 4 student is outside the UK and is required to only re-sit an exam (s)SOAS will not normally assign a CAS to that student if there is no further

participation or intention to study after the exam. The student will normally be expected to enter the UK as a Standard Visitor to re-sit their exam(s)

- 9.3. If a student is required to repeat modules, then a CAS may be assigned where there will be genuine attendance and/or academic engagement/contact, or a demonstrated requirement for the student to remain in the UK to repeat the module(s).
- 9.4. Where a student is completing assessment only without repeating module(s) in full, SOAS will not normally issue a CAS, but requests for a CAS will be reviewed and assessed for eligibility on a case-by-case basis.
- 9.5. If a student's continued participation on campus is not required within 60 days of the start of the next academic period and or/their current Student route/Tier 4 visa will expire, a student will normally be required to leave the UK and apply for a new Student visa under the Student route from overseas.

10. Research degree vivas and corrections

- 10.1. The normal expectation is that research students will submit their thesis and complete their viva within the standard permitted period of enrolment and therefore the end date of their Student visa. SOAS will not normally issue a CAS to a research postgraduate student who has submitted their thesis and have only the viva to complete. In such instances, if the viva cannot be held remotely, a visitor visa will be required to attend the viva unless there is a valid reason for an extension CAS to be given. Such requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 10.2. Following the viva, where a student has minor corrections to complete (as defined in the Regulations) a CAS will not normally be issued. Request for an additional CAS for minor corrections will be reviewed on a case by case to assess eligibility. Students and the Doctorial School/Academic supervisor will be asked to provide a statement to support such requests.
- 10.3. Following the viva, where a student is required to make major corrections, and their continued participation on campus and use of SOAS facilities is required, a CAS, may be issued, provided SOAS can continue to meet its sponsorship duties. For example, a student may require the use of specialist equipment or resources for the purpose of completing major revisions. SOAS will consider requests on a case-by-case basis and reserves the right to refuse any request to issue a CAS to a student in such circumstances.
- 10.4. If a postgraduate student is currently outside the UK and is required to return to campus to attend their final presentation/viva, SOAS will not normally assign a CAS and will expect the student to obtain a visitor visa.

11. Pre-sessional courses and Foundation to degree course progression

- 11.1.** SOAS will issue a combined/single CAS to cover a pre-sessional course and main course of study if the incoming student has received an unconditional offer for their main course of study **OR** a conditional offer where the only condition is that the student achieves B2 English language competency at the end of the pre-sessional course and the UKVI requirements are met.
- 11.2.** If an Applicant does not meet the above requirements, they will be assigned a separate CAS to enable them to attend the English language pre-sessional course. Before a CAS can be issued, they must provide SOAS with a SELT confirming that they are at least at CEFR B1 level in each component of language learning (reading writing, speaking, and listening).
- 11.3.** If an incoming student will be studying a course on a stand-alone Foundation Education programme which is different from four-year degree course with a foundation (year zero) year, SOAS will issue a combined CAS to cover the year for the foundation course. Progression to any degree course and the issue of any further CAS is subject to the satisfactory completion of the Foundation Education programme and any specific conditions of undergraduate entry as required by SOAS.

12. Appeals

- 12.1.** Where an applicant/ student has been declined a CAS the applicant/student may seek a review of this decision by the Academic Registrar or their nominee in consultation with the Student Visa Compliance Manager.
- 12.2.** Appeals should be sent within 10 days of being informed of the refusal to compliance@soas.ac.uk, with the subject line 'appealing CAS request refusal' and should set out the reason(s) why they believe they should be given a CAS as well as any supporting documentation.

13. Key CAS contacts

Name	Contact Details	Area of Work
Admissions Team	CASrequest@soas.ac.uk UG_admissions@soas.ac.uk PG: mastersadmissions@soas.ac.uk	for admissions and CAS queries from prospective students and offer holders.
Student Visa Compliance team	compliance@soas.ac.uk studentadvice@soas.ac.uk	for queries related to CAS issuance for current /returning SOAS students and other visa matters.