Visa Compliance Team

Guide for International Students: protecting your student visa

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**Student Visas (formerly Tier 4) – a guide for all students**

This guide is for all international students, to help protect your student status in the UK. This applies to all students on a Student Visa, including work placements that are integral to your course of study.

Students must meet the expectations and conditions set out in this guide to comply with UKVI and University requirements, including regular engagement with Canvas/SEAtS, attending scheduled meetings, with Personal Tutor/equivalent and maintain accurate contact details on OSIS. This is an essential requirement for the purpose of UKVI engagement monitoring.

# 1 Canvas/SEAtS Engagement Monitoring

The University has an obligation to check that our students are engaged in their studies. We monitor your engagement using SEAtS and Canvas activities. If you are not attending classes, you must contact us immediately. If you miss multiple timetabled activities, you will be contacted by the Visa Compliance Team with actionable consequences that may lead to the curtailment of your student visa sponsorship.

Please make sure you:

# activate SEAtS (with KU ID card or app) at every timetabled class you attend

# access Canvas daily during term time

# keep contact details up to date

# regularly check your KU email

# notify the faculty office or StudentHUB if you will be absent

#

# 2 Changing / transferring your course

*You must seek advice from the Student Life Advisor (Immigration) before requesting a transfer by contacting* *immigrationadvice@kingston.ac.uk*

If the course change is permitted under Student Visa regulations, the visa compliance team will inform the Home Office of this change within 10 working days.

 Depending upon the change of circumstances, this may affect the length of leave on your visa and in some cases; the visa may be curtailed to 60 days from the end date of your course.

If the new end date is after the Student Visa expiry date, you will need to request a new CAS to extend your visa.

# *IMPORTANT* – Student Visa holders cannot transfer to part-time study.

# 3 Authorised Absence (AA) letter

* If you need to be absent during term time, you must request an Authorised Absence letter from your faculty. The relevant academic member of staff must approve the request and letters will then be prepared by the faculty student office. Note that if you are travelling for a holiday, you can only travel during official vacation periods.
* Any request for authorised absence must not affect your studies or become the reason for a further visa extension. Absence requests should be short and for a period of up to two weeks at any one time with a maximum of six weeks for the academic year, subject to Faculty/School approval.
* If the time you are away becomes longer than the agreed period, we may suggest and place you on a break from studies and your student visa will be curtailed.
*
* It is important that you have the Authorised Absence letter with you when travelling back to the UK. If you do not have written permission with you, you may be detained for questioning whilst the Home Office verify your absence with the university.

# Absence Letter for overseas field work

If you need to leave the UK to undertake essential work as part of your course, you must obtain a letter from your faculty. This would be applicable for:

* conducting research for your dissertation
* studying abroad for a short period
* working abroad for a short period

You can present this letter as evidence of permission to be overseas during term time (e.g. to Border Force).

# Undergraduate and Postgraduate students returning home to complete studies

If you request permission to leave the UK and complete your course/submit work remotely, this could affect your student visa sponsorship. It may not be possible to retain your student visa permission and your remaining student leave curtailed by UKVI.

***IMPORTANT*** – You should only intend to leave the UK if you do not need to return to meet supervisors/access resources/complete any outstanding academic work.

# 4 Work Placement

You can work full time on a work placement provided that:

* you will not spend more than 50% of your course doing a work placement/s,
* it is an **assessed part** of the course, and can take place at any point during your studies,
* the employer will monitor your attendance in conjunction with the faculty and remain responsible for you during the work placement

***NOTE* – Part-time employment is permitted during the work placement period.**

# 5 PhD students’ holiday period

As a PhD candidate, you may request a holiday period if you want to take time off, as this is not automatically granted. Any holiday period must be agreed with the PhD supervisor in advance and formally authorised in writing. During an approved holiday period, you can work full-time.

# 6 Pregnancy/Maternity PhD/research students only – see guidance below

PhD students can take up to one year of maternity leave, this is allowed by the Postgraduate Research Regulations. You will need to take a break from your programme and leave the UK. To return, you will need to request a new CAS and begin the visa application process again.

If you wish to take a shorter period of leave (*up to six weeks*) to cover the birth of your baby, you must request an Authorised Absence (see Authorised Absence p.3).

For full details, please refer to the University’s Pregnancy and Maternity Policy for Student Visa Holders: [AP2 Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy 2017/18](http://cdn.kingston.ac.uk/documents/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/policiesandregulations/documents/2017-18_AP02_Student_Pregnancy_and_Maternity_Policy_vs1.pdf).

# 7 Other changes you must tell us about

To protect your student and immigration status you must inform us if you:

* complete your course early
* defer or taking a break (more than 60 days) from your studies
* are not engaging with the course
* you switch to a different visa category and your immigration status changes
* will have a period of 60 days of inactivity during term time
* are suspended or withdraw from your course
* claim/are awarded mitigating circumstances\*

In all cases, you must speak to your Faculty/School in the first instance. The visa compliance team will take the appropriate action and liaise with the faculty and UKVI as necessary. If you have any questions about a course change and how it may affect your visa status, email UKVI@kingston.ac.uk

\*Please note: award of mitigating circumstances does not guarantee that you will be eligible for further sponsorship under the Student Route visa .

# 8 Contacts:

For further information/advice, please use the contact details below:

**UKVI Compliance**

UKVI@kingston.ac.uk

**SEAtS/check-in queries**
KUCheckIn@kingston.ac.uk

**Immigration Advice**

*immigrationadvice@kingston.ac.uk*