

Higher Education

International Admissions Policy

From 2024 entry until next revision

Effective for HE students and potential students, staff, volunteers, governors and employers

Relevant to students studying a Higher National Certificates (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND) with Pearson or an Open University validated award

Students studying on a programme validated by University Centre Somerset please refer to the UCS International Admissions Policy.

Students enrolled with any other partner university should refer to that university's policy.

Background

Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC) is a registered sponsor with the Home Office (UK and Visa Immigration) and has a Track Record of Compliance concerning International Student Visas.

Scope

This policy applies to all international applicants to University Centre Somerset, part of Bridgwater and Taunton College (UCS). All staff working with international applicants or enrolled students should be aware of the contents of the policy.

Intent

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all Higher Education (HE) international enrolments to UCS meet the Home Office requirements for Student Visas and that all procedures for such enrolments are compliant.

Responsibilities

The College will identify a Senior Postholder to be the **Lead Officer** for International Student Recruitment compliance. At the time of this policy, this role is held by the Assistant Principal, Student Experience.

BTC will ensure a dedicated and trained **international team** is in place to examine applications for study to ensure international applicants' legal eligibility to study; the team will also provide advice. Documents will be kept for evidence of compliance, immigration status and record keeping.

The Team reserves the right to monitor the immigration status of an international student at any time during the duration of the course to check compliance and update records.

All staff will be made aware that full compliance is required for international student recruitment and that the advice of the International Team is essential and must be followed when dealing with an international applicant or student on course.

Admission Procedure

Applicants will be asked to apply online via UCAS. Once the UCAS application is received, applicants will be notified, as part of the Home Office Rules and Regulations, to send copies of the necessary documents to the International team prior to an application being reviewed and progressed to interview if academic entry requirements are met. HE students will also need meet the individual course entry criteria, provide an Academic reference and the quality of their personal statement will also be considered, as is the case with all HE applications to UCS. In the case of international qualifications, it is incumbent on the applicant to provide suitable evidence and a UK ENIC statement of comparability where necessary, to prove eligibility in line with the course entry criteria.

Appendix One lists the necessary documents to obtain a CAS (Certificate of Acceptance of Studies). Appendix Two lists the necessary documents we require for an International application. We have the right to request further documentation i.e. Immigration status for dependents must also show the dependent's proof of nationality, immigration status and their relationship together. Please refer to the Record retention and disposal policy for the duration of time evidence will be held with the College.

The International Team will contact applicants to confirm whether the application is being progressed. All HE applications from students needing a CAS will require an interview. According to an applicant's immigration status and country of origin, and the type, level and duration of a course there may be some restrictions on entitlements such as the entitlement to work. Applicants on a Skilled Worker visa may not be eligible to apply for the HE courses that involve block full time work placements (such as Nursing) as this could breach their current visa conditions. The International Team will be able to provide more information about individual cases.

If a student's immigration status expires when they are currently enrolled on a course, the International team will notify the student 3 months prior to the expiration date. The student is then required to send a copy of their new immigration status, if the International team do not receive any new documentation they have the right to withdraw the enrolment.

Prospective Student Visas

The College has the right to refuse any CAS applicant who does not meet the Home Office criteria. This can include insufficient qualifications or funds, any deceiving information, or an unclear career/study plan for the future. A CAS may also be refused because the student does not meet the course entry criteria or if their personal statement and / or academic reference are considered below the expected admissions standard.

UCS will advise International Applicants requiring a Student Visa to study in the UK to apply a minimum of three months prior to the course start date to allow time for the College to process your application. A Secure English Language Test (SELT) such as IELTS may be required. HE students will need to secure an Unconditional Offer via UCAS in order for a CAS to be issued.

A CAS (Certificate of Acceptance of Studies) student will be made aware of specific Home Office requirements once they have enrolled on the course.

English qualifications

CAS students are required to obtain an IELTS for UKVI Academic qualification. The exam results are valid up to 2 years prior to the CAS submission. While HE students must have a minimum of B2 on CEFR results. Requirements may vary from course to course and the Registrar – HE admissions can advise applicants accordingly.

Courses

An HE CAS applicant is only eligible to apply for Level 4 RQF minimum. Applications should demonstrate appropriate academic progression from existing qualifications held by the applicant (as outlined in the Home Office Student Sponsor Guidance Document: Sponsorship Duties. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance/sponsorship-duties-accessible>).

Fees policy

A student will either be considered Home Fees or Overseas Fees according to the immigration status.

Tuition Fee status is determined by immigration status, nationality, age and the country where an applicant is ordinarily resident.

1. Tuition fees must be paid in full, either in advance or on enrolment. The College do not accept a payment plan for fees. Students will not be able to enrol or attend courses until full fees have been received by the College. If a CAS is required we ask for the full fees before we assign the CAS. A CAS can only be issued once the requested fees have been cleared in the College finance account.

2. For CAS applicants, the fees will be charged for each of the year of studies. An additional charge of £3,000 per year of study will be charged for each CAS applicant on top of the published course fees.

3. In the case of a visa refusal, the fee will only be refunded upon receipt of the visa refusal notice from the Home Office and the original offer letter. If the Home Office report that fraudulent documents have been used or lack of funding on account have been noticed in the visa application, the College reserves the right to refuse the refund. The College may also offer to retain the fee on behalf of the student in the case of deferred or future applications.

4. The full fee will be refunded to the student if the College withdraws from a course within six weeks of commencement, provided that the student is not offered a course which the College deems to be a suitable and acceptable alternative.

5. If a student chooses not to attend the College and to accept an offer at another institution, after payment there will be no refund of that fee. The College reserves the right to pass on all relevant costs to the applicant.

Refunds

1. All refunds are discretionary and will be agreed by the International Office. Any monies refunded will be subject at a minimum to the deduction of all relevant costs including any commission payments made to one of the College's accredited agents.

2. Pro-rata refunds of tuition fees will be considered up to four weeks after commencement of the course. Thereafter refund requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances for reasons which are, in the opinion of the College, both compelling and beyond the control of the student. Such requests will need to be made in writing, to the International Office, before a student ceases to attend the course. In cases where a refund is found to be appropriate, the maximum refund which will be considered will be the tuition fee applicable on a pro-rata basis to the number of complete terms during which the student will not be in attendance.

3. In the event that a decision is made not to refund monies to the student, those fees may be held by the College on behalf of the student in case the student becomes able to return to the College within the next two years to complete the course.

4. Students who choose not to complete a course upon which they have embarked, or who fail to attend required classes, shall not on that account be entitled to any refund or reduction of the tuition fees for the course.

5. No tuition fees paid will be transferred on behalf of the student to other institutions at any stage.

6. No tuition fees will be refunded where a student is excluded, suspended or otherwise removed from the College and the course as a consequence of the student's unreasonable behaviour or as a consequence of the student failing to comply with the College's terms and conditions of enrolment.

7. No refunds will be made to third parties, except College accredited agents where appropriate.

8. In all cases, any other debt owing to the College will be deducted from any refund of fees or such fees which are held on behalf of the student.

9. Fee Assessment in exceptional cases where a student has been incorrectly assessed for fees purposes, and has enrolled and paid fees on this basis, the fee quoted to the student originally may be honoured for the first year of study. Fees for subsequent years may revert to the appropriate fee rate.

10. Change of Course in exceptional cases where a student has been quoted a fee for a course and then is subsequently advised post arrival at the College that an alternative, but possibly more expensive, course might be more appropriate, the originally quoted lower fee may apply for the first year of study. The correct fee may be charged for any subsequent years.

Work experience or paid work

Depending on the immigration status a student holds, they may be allowed to participate in work experience or paid work. This follows the guidelines in place by the Home Office and the track record status we currently hold as a College.

HE CAS students are allowed to participate in work experience or paid work with the limitations below:

- College term time – up to 20 hours per week (Monday – Sunday)
- College holidays – up to 37 hours per week (Monday – Sunday)

Level 7 qualifications are unable to participate in any work experience or paid work.

HE CAS students can undertake work placement as part of their course providing it complies with the Home Office regulations as set out in the Sponsorship Duties Guidance.

Attendance

A CAS student is expected to have a minimum of 85% attendance on the course, all tutors must notify the International team when a student is absent, alongside documenting this into Pro Solution.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or more frequently where Home Office requirements change.

This policy should not be read in isolation and should be cross-referenced to other relevant College policies and documents, including:

- The HE Student Engagement Policy
- The Admissions Policy for FE Learners
- The UCS Tuition Fees Policy
- The Record Retention and Disposal Policy

Appendix One

Documents required to obtain a Student Visa:

- Evidence of length of time you have been resident in the UK
- Copies of the relevant pages of your passport (photo, personal details, passport number and validity dates)
- Copy of your visa / latest entry stamp to the UK / any other evidence of immigration status
- If you are a “dependent “you will also need to provide a copy of the passport you are the dependent of.
- Copies of exam certificates, school reports (translated into English)
- HE students will be required to provide an official academic reference on Headed Paper
- Details of previous studies in the UK
- Copies of English language qualifications
- If under 18 you will need consent to study from your parents, guardian or carer
- If you do not have a passport because you may be an Asylum seeker or a Refugee, please provide a letter from the Home Office confirming your immigration status. Your case may be pending with the Local Authorities which will have to confirm by official letter your immigration status, the details of your allocated officer who will keep in touch with the college of any related development with the Home Office.
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- Evidence of the maintenance fund may be required: £1023 x 9 months should be in a registered bank account at least 28 days prior to an application of CAS.
- Proof of payment for the IHS (Immigration Health Surcharge)
- Notify the International team of their arrival into the UK and departure of UK
- Notify the International team of their accommodation in the UK
- Once entered the country the BRP must be applied for at the local Post Office within 14 days of arrival.

Appendix Two

Documents required for an International applicant, which may include some of Appendix One.

Proof of Nationality

- Passport
- Birth Certificate

Proof of Immigration Status

- BRP – Biometric Residency Permit
- Government Share Code (beginning with S only)
- Any Home Office official documentation

Proof of 3 years residency in the UK/EEA

- Declaration upon application
- Utility or Council tax bill
- Salary slips or tax credits
- GP registration
- Education certificates