

CAS Issuance Policy

Introduction

The University welcomes diversity across its community and the admission of international students is key to the University's internationalisation strategy. Students may need sponsorship from the University to obtain or extend a visa to study in the UK and this policy outlines the circumstances in which the University can assign a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number for continuing students.

Purpose

This policy sets out requirements that must be met to enable the University to remain compliant to its duties as a sponsor licence holder by ensuring that a CAS number is only assigned where appropriate.

This policy aims to provide guidance to students who request a CAS and will outline the requirements that must be met.

This policy outlines the circumstances in which the University will confirm a student is eligible for the Graduate Immigration Route.

This policy provides a framework for students to submit an appeal where they are refused a CAS, or where the University decides not to confirm their eligibility for the Graduate Immigration Route.

The Immigration Rules and Student Sponsor guidance will supersede the contents of this policy as they are subject to change on a frequent basis.

New Students

The International Admissions team is responsible for issuing CAS to applicants starting a new course at the University.

The International Admissions team may also issue CAS to applicants who need to apply for the Student visa route after enrolling on their course.

Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that an applicant will be successful in securing a visa. The University is not responsible for any decisions made by the UKVI and cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK.

The University may, on occasion, process CAS request forms submitted after the advertised deadline. Requests submitted after the deadline will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In such circumstances, the University is not responsible for any decisions made by the UKVI and cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK. The University will also not accept liability if sponsorship is subsequently withdrawn because the applicant has failed to meet the enrolment deadline as a result of requesting a CAS after the deadline.

Course Offer

The University will make reasonable efforts to ensure that offers are only made to applicants who are likely to be eligible for a CAS.

However, an offer is not a guarantee that the University will issue a CAS.

The University is not legally obliged to issue a CAS and will always exercise caution when doing so, to ensure adherence to its obligations of its sponsor license.

A CAS will only be issued after a full assessment, including consideration of the applicant's previous UK study (if applicable), assessment of academic progression and assessment of genuine intention to study.

- In the event that the applicant has previously completed a qualification in the UK of the same RQF level as their new proposed course of study, they may be required to provide a satisfactory progression statement to meet UKVI academic progression requirements.
- If a statement is not provided, or is not deemed to be satisfactory, a CAS will not be issued for the applicant to make a further visa application from inside the UK as they will not have met UKVI academic progression requirements.
- In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to request a refund of any tuition fee deposit they have paid.

CAS Request Form and Preview

All applicants are required to complete a CAS request form (accessed via the OneUni system) and provide all supporting documents requested by the University's International Admissions team.

All communication regarding the CAS process will be administered via OneUni, the University's Student Management System. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure they check their emails and OneUni account for updated communications on a regular basis when working through the CAS process.

All applicants are required to carefully check and approve their CAS preview in their OneUni account before their CAS is issued.

The CAS preview must be checked and returned to the International Admissions OneUni account within 5- working days of the preview being sent to the applicant.

- If the CAS preview is not returned within 5 working days, it will be assumed that the applicant no longer requires their CAS and the CAS request form may be cancelled.
- In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to request a refund of any tuition fee deposit they have paid.
- If the applicant still requires a CAS, they will be required to submit a new CAS request form.

A CAS will not be issued if the steps detailed above have not been completed.

The University is not responsible for any errors identified after an applicant has approved their CAS preview and cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK.

Pre-CAS Checks

The International Admissions team may carry out additional checks before determining whether a CAS can be issued. These checks include, but are not limited to:

- Home Office immigration history check.
 - By agreeing to the CAS request form declaration, an applicant is confirming that they give their consent for the University to carry out a Home Office immigration check, if this is deemed necessary as part of pre-CAS checks.
- Verification of academic documents.
 - If verification of academic documents is deemed necessary as part of pre-CAS checks, the applicant will be asked to provide their consent to the check.
 - The preferred method of verification is via QCAS (www.qualificationcheck.com), however, a request for verification may also be made directly to the applicant's previous institution in certain circumstances.
 - If the result of the verification check is that the documents are found to be genuine, the International Admissions team will continue with pre-CAS assessment before determining whether a CAS can be issued.
 - If the result of the verification check is that the documents are found to be fraudulent, a CAS will not be issued. The offer of study will also be withdrawn.
 - As per the University's Admissions Terms and Conditions (section 2.1 and 2.2) in such circumstances, any tuition fee deposit paid by the applicant will be retained by the University.
 - If the applicant does not wish to consent to the verification check, a CAS will not be issued, and the offer of study will be withdrawn.
 - In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to request a refund of any tuition fee deposit they have paid.
- Verification of English language proficiency documents.
 - The majority of test providers have online verification sites. Verification using these sites does not require applicant consent.
- Verification of financial documents, including bank statements and sponsorship letters.
 - The University reserves the right to carry out verification of financial documents provided by an applicant in support of their CAS request.
 - Applicants will be asked to provide consent before such checks are carried out.
 - If the result of the verification check is that the documents are found to be genuine and to meet Home Office requirements, the International Admissions team will continue with pre-CAS assessment before determining whether a CAS can be issued.

- If the result of the verification check is that the documents are found to be fraudulent, a CAS will not be issued. The offer of study will also be withdrawn.
 - As per the University's Admissions Terms and Conditions (section 2.1 and 2.2) in such circumstances, any tuition fee deposit paid by the applicant will be retained by the University.
- If the applicant does not wish to consent to the verification check, a CAS will not be issued, and the offer of study will be withdrawn.
 - In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to request a refund of any tuition fee deposit they have paid.
- In checking financial documents, the University is not guaranteeing that the documents will be accepted by the UKVI and cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK.

Pre-CAS Interview

In addition to the checks detailed above, an applicant may be selected for pre-CAS interview. The result of this interview, along with any additional checks carried out, will determine whether a CAS can be issued.

- If an applicant declines to attend a pre-CAS interview, a CAS will not be issued, and their offer will be withdrawn.
- In such circumstances, the applicant will be entitled to request a refund of any tuition fee deposit they have paid.
- A successful Pre-CAS interview does not guarantee that an applicant's visa application will be successful and the University cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK.

CAS Issuance Requirements

A CAS may be issued to an applicant if they have:

- firmly accepted an unconditional offer of study; and
- paid a tuition fee deposit, where applicable; and
- completed the CAS request form satisfactorily; and
- provided all requested academic and visa-related documentation; and
 - provided a valid, correct ATAS certificate, if this is required; and
 - provided a completed Parental Consent proforma, if this is required; and
- passed pre-CAS checks, if this is required; and
- passed pre-CAS interview, if this is required.

If an applicant has not fulfilled these requirements, the University may refuse to issue a CAS.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide any additional information or documentation requested by the University upon receipt of a CAS request form, and to meet any deadlines provided. Failure to meet these requirements will result in the University being unable to issue a CAS to the applicant.

Withdrawal of CAS

The University reserves the right to withdraw a CAS if it is subsequently found that an applicant does not meet any of the requirements listed in the section above, or if there are concerns that the applicant is no longer able to meet the requirements of the Student Visa route. This may include, but is not limited to:

- concerns regarding the genuineness and/or credibility of an applicant;
- financial reasons;
- incorrect or invalid information on the CAS that cannot be corrected by sponsor note and therefore requires that a new CAS be issued;
- where the University believes its sponsor license would be at risk.

Declining a CAS Request Form

The University will not issue a CAS under the following circumstances:

- the applicant has supplied fraudulent documents as part of their application, or documents that cannot be verified;
- the applicant has omitted material information from their application. For example, information regarding previous UK study or their immigration history which may affect the University's decision to act as sponsor for their Student visa;
- the applicant has failed pre-CAS checks or refused to consent to the checks. This includes pre-CAS interview;
- the applicant does not have an appropriate Secure English Language Test (SELT), if this is a Home Office requirement for the course they have applied for;
- the applicant does not meet the University's, or Home Office, English language requirements;
- the applicant has a negative immigration history, including a history of visa refusals;
- the applicant has failed to declare previous visa refusals at the point of application when applying for a postgraduate course within the School of Health and Social Care;
- there is reason to believe that the applicant cannot meet the requirements of the Student Visa route (for example, maintenance or academic progression requirements);
- there is reason to believe that the applicant will not be able to meet the University's enrolment deadline;
- there is reason to doubt that the applicant is a genuine student with the genuine intention to study;

- there is reason to doubt that the applicant will meet Home Office requirements in terms of study caps and/or academic progression;
- there is evidence that the applicant failed to follow the conditions of any previous leave in the UK;
- if a current University of Lincoln student applies for a further course of study and has outstanding debts to the University;

Decisions to refuse a CAS request are taken on a case-by-case basis, based on all the available information at that time.

Joint CAS

In accordance with Home Office policy, a joint CAS can be issued to cover an applicant's pre-sessional English course and main course in the following circumstances:

1. Where an applicant has an unconditional offer for their main course of study and has also applied for the University's 5- or 10-week pre-sessional English course; or
2. Where an applicant's only offer condition for their main course is English proficiency equivalent to CEFR B2 in all 4 elements and they have applied for the University's 5- or 10-week pre-sessional English course to meet the condition of their main course offer.

The applicant has demonstrated English proficiency of at least CEFR B1 by providing a satisfactory SELT and the University is satisfied that, upon completion of the pre-sessional English course, the applicant will have the required B2 level to proceed to their main course.

The University will be required to withdraw sponsorship if the applicant has not reached B2 level upon completion of the pre-sessional English course.

The ability to issue a joint CAS relates only to pre-sessional English and main course study as detailed above and is subject to change, dependent upon changes to Home Office policy.

In all other cases, a separate CAS must be issued for each course of study.

- This includes where an applicant's main course offer is conditional upon them achieving English proficiency equivalent to CEFR C1 or above.

CAS Updates

All applicants are required to carefully check and approve their CAS preview before their CAS is issued.

The University is not responsible for any errors identified after an applicant has approved their CAS preview and cannot accept any liability in an applicant failing to obtain a valid visa, or the associated costs or consequences of any failure to secure leave to enter/remain in the UK.

If an applicant discovers an error in their CAS after approving their CAS preview and receiving their CAS statement, they must notify the International Admissions Team immediately and are advised not to make their visa application until the error has been resolved.

Most minor errors can be resolved by adding a sponsor note to the CAS on the Home Office's SMS. This sponsor note will not be visible on the applicant's CAS statement.

In certain circumstances, a sponsor note may not be appropriate to resolve the error. The CAS may need to be withdrawn and the applicant will be required to submit a new CAS request form before a second CAS can be issued.

- A second CAS will only be issued if the applicant is able to meet the University's enrolment deadline.

If an applicant pays further fees after their CAS has been issued, the CAS will not usually be updated. Instead, the applicant is advised to submit official proof of their payment with their visa application.

Deposit

The majority of applicants will be required to pay a tuition fee deposit in order to receive their CAS. Applicants should not submit a CAS request form until they have paid this deposit.

- If the deposit payment is not reflected on the payments report within 5 working days from when the CAS request form was submitted, it will be assumed that the applicant no longer requires their CAS and the CAS request form may be cancelled.
- If the applicant still requires a CAS, they will be required to submit a new CAS request form after ensuring their payment has been cleared the University's account.

Sponsorship letters

When issuing a CAS to an applicant who has submitted a sponsorship letter with their application documents, the sponsorship letter will not be referenced in the offer evidence section of the CAS unless sponsorship is provided directly by the University.

University of Lincoln Scholarships

Any University scholarship awarded to an applicant will be reflected in the 'course fee for first year' field of the CAS.

For example:

| | |
|--|---------|
| Course fee: | £15,000 |
| University scholarship: | £2,000 |
| Amount input in 'Course fee for first year' field: | £13,000 |

Deferrals

Applicants who require a Student visa will not usually be permitted to defer their course offer, however they may re-apply to the University for the relevant academic session.

A deferral request may be exceptionally considered where an applicant has firmly accepted an unconditional offer and paid the CAS deposit by the stipulated deadline. In such cases, the deposit must have reached the University's account by the advertised CAS request deadline.

If an applicant makes a deferral request after being issued with a CAS, and the CAS has been Used, the request will not be considered without evidence of the outcome of their visa application.

A deferral, and subsequently a second CAS, will not usually be issued if an applicant has received a visa refusal due to credibility or providing fraudulent documents.

An exception may be made if the applicant has successfully appealed the refusal decision.

Part-time Study

The University will not usually issue a CAS to an applicant for part-time study. This is due to the immigration restrictions placed on applicants who will be applying via the Student Visa route for part-time study.

Previous Visa Refusals

Applicants are required to declare if they have received a visa refusal, for any country, when submitting an application. They are also asked to provide a copy of the visa refusal document.

A second request for information regarding previous visa refusals is made on the CAS request form.

If an applicant is unable to provide a copy of their visa refusal document, the University reserves the right to refuse their CAS request.

The grounds given for the visa refusal will determine whether the University will be able to issue a CAS.

If a visa was refused on grounds of credibility (genuine student rule) or fraud, it is unlikely that the University will be able to issue the applicant with a CAS.

An exception may be made if the applicant is able to provide evidence that they successfully appealed the decision.

Visa Refusal with University of Lincoln CAS

The University will only consider assigning one additional CAS following a visa refusal, and only if the applicant can provide evidence to show there is little or no chance of their visa being refused a subsequent time.

A second CAS will not usually be issued if an applicant has received a visa refusal due to credibility or providing fraudulent documents.

A second CAS will not be issued if there is reason to believe that the applicant will be unable to meet the University's enrolment deadline.

If a visa is refused a second time, the University will not usually issue a further CAS.

The University is required to report all refusals to the Home Office in line with Home Office procedures.

Any applicant with a visa refusal must provide all pages of their Home Office refusal notice to the University regardless of whether they wish to be issued with a subsequent CAS, or request a refund of their tuition fee deposit.

The University reserves the right to not issue a CAS to any applicant who has had their visa refused.

Continuing Students

The assessment procedure to issue a CAS to a continuing student may be different to the requirements outlined for an applicant. For the purposes of this policy a continuing student is defined as the following:

- i) An enrolled student who is requesting a CAS to continue on the same programme of study

- ii) An interrupted student who is requesting a CAS to resume study on the same programme of study

There are some cases where an enrolled student may not meet the 'continuing student' definition and would be assessed as an applicant. These criteria include the following:

- i) An enrolled student is applying to study a new programme. This includes where a student is moving from a pre-sessional English programme to a degree programme, for example.
- ii) A student enrolled via distance learning and is requesting the first CAS for that programme to come to the UK.
- iii) An enrolled student who previously held immigration permission in another category and is requesting a CAS for the first time.

The University wishes to support all students to complete their studies successfully and will look to issue a CAS to facilitate this, where possible. The Student Visa Compliance team is responsible for assessing requests and assigning CAS to continuing students.

The University will only assign a CAS to a student if they meet all of the conditions of the Student Sponsor Guidance, as well as the conditions of this policy.

For continuing students there is no set period prior to the visa expiry date in which a student must apply for an extension; however, CASs will only be issued in a reasonable timeframe which align with the student's programme of study and where a new end date can be clearly defined.

The University will make appropriate checks to ensure a student is eligible to receive a CAS. This may include an Immigration History check or a financial document check, for example.

Instances where a CAS will not be issued

The University reserves the right not to issue a CAS where to do so would be against its sponsor licence duties, against the immigration rules or does not meet the conditions of this policy. The University must use reasonable judgement to ensure a student being sponsored intends to follow the programme of study in line with the conditions of a student visa. Instances where the University will not assign a CAS to a student include but are not limited to:

- i) There are concerns with a student's attendance or engagement on their course, including where this is being delivered remotely. Where a student is subject to the engagement intervention process further CAS issuance may be placed on hold until the matter is resolved, either by withdrawal from studies or re-engagement to a satisfactory level.
- ii) A student has previously had their sponsorship withdrawn due to non-compliance with their visa conditions.
- iii) A student has outstanding tuition fee debt.
- iv) A student has no further study to complete. This includes where a student may be awaiting the outcome of a Board of Examiners or Extenuating Circumstances Panel.

- v) A student will not be required to engage in study during term time for a period of 60 calendar days.
- vi) A student is waiting to hear the outcome of an appeal against a withdrawal from studies.
- vii) A student is requesting a CAS to apply for a visa to attend a graduation ceremony.
- viii) A student has, or will exceed the maximum registration period for their level of study.
- ix) A student has overstayed their previous immigration permission. (Unless there were exceptional circumstances)
- x) A student is unable to demonstrate they meet any requirements of the Student Route application, including but not limited to meeting the financial requirements.
- xi) The University reasonably believe that a student has not previously complied with the conditions of their visa, for example by breaching their work conditions.

Where a continuing student cannot be issued with a further CAS and their leave to be in the UK expires they will be subject to Part N of the University General Regulations.

In cases where a student cannot obtain further leave to remain in the UK it will be at the relevant School's discretion as to whether the student can complete the course remotely. Where a student is unable to complete the course remotely and cannot obtain permission to study in the UK they must either interrupt their studies or they will be withdrawn from the programme.

Overstaying

The University will not normally issue a CAS to a student who has overstayed their previous immigration permission unless there were exceptional circumstances which prevented them from making an in-time application. The University applies a high threshold for what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. For example:

- i) A serious illness or emergency hospitalisation which prevents the student from being able to submit an in-time application (supported by appropriate medical documentation)
- ii) The student submitted a CAS request in a timely manner and met all requirements but a CAS was not promptly issued by the University.

Where a CAS is issued to a student that has overstayed their leave the student must submit the visa application no more than 13 working days from the date their leave expired.

Whilst the application is under assessment by the UKVI the student shall be temporarily suspended from studies until the outcome has been reached.

Visa Refusal

The University will only consider assigning one additional CAS following a visa refusal in cases where the student can evidentially demonstrate that there is a minimal chance of a further visa refusal.

A further CAS will not be assigned where a student has been refused by the UKVI under the genuine student rule following a credibility interview.

Where a student cannot be issued with a further CAS resulting from a visa refusal they will be temporarily suspended from study. In most cases the student will be withdrawn from the programme unless the student is exceptionally permitted to complete the course remotely from outside of the UK, or successfully applies for alternative immigration permission.

Where a student successfully applies for administrative review further CAS issuance can be re-considered.

Length of Sponsorship

Where a CAS is issued to a student the course end date on the CAS will be aligned to the date the student will submit their final piece of work. This date will be different dependent of the level of study and can be defined as the following:

- i) For an undergraduate student this will usually be the last day of the examination period unless the visa extension is to complete resits in which case the end date will be the final resit date.
- ii) For a postgraduate taught student this will usually be the thesis submission date unless the visa extension is to complete resits in which case the end date will be the final resit date.
- iii) For PGR students the course end date will be dependent on the stage the student is at in their studies.

If the student has not submitted their thesis pre-viva the end date will be the new submission date plus three months to allow for the viva to be arranged.

If the student has submitted their thesis pre-viva the end date will be the viva date.

If the student has amendments post viva the end date will be the new thesis submission date.

Resits, Retakes and Extensions

The University will issue a CAS to a student who has resits where they meet the conditions laid out in the Student Sponsor Guidance and this policy. The University will not issue a CAS to a student who has resits in the following circumstances:

- i) A student is enrolled on a 'retake year' and has not yet passed the current academic year. The CAS Request will be placed on hold until the Board of Examiners has confirmed the student's progression following their retake year.
- ii) A student is due to resit without attendance, unless the School has confirmed that the student is eligible to resit with attendance and that this will be monitored in line with

other students.

- iii) A student is outside of the UK and has been granted resits that can be completed remotely. In the event a student's continued participation is required the University may consider issuing a CAS. These requests should be submitted to visaextension@lincoln.ac.uk and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. If a student meets the eligibility requirements for a Standard Visitor visa this option will be offered in place of CAS sponsorship.
- iv) A student has been granted an extension on their resit submission date. In these cases the original submission date will be used to assess whether a student is eligible to receive a CAS.
- v) At a Board of Examiners it has been determined that a student will continue for an intermediate award.
- vi) A student will have a gap of study for more than 60 calendar days. For example, where a student is retaking modules across semester A and will not have study to complete in semester B or vice versa.

Writing up, Vivas and Amendments

The University issue PhD level applicants with a CAS length of four years and three months to allow for the submission of a thesis and for a viva to be arranged. During the period between thesis submission and the viva in order to continue sponsorship of a student's CAS their engagement must be monitored on a monthly basis.

In cases where a student will not complete their viva within their period of leave a CAS will only be issued in exceptional circumstances, usually upheld by the Extenuating Circumstances process. A CAS will only be issued on the condition that the student's continued engagement is required and monitored, which must be endorsed and facilitated by the relevant School.

Where a student is overseas and intends to return to the UK to complete their viva, in most cases, a CAS will not be issued and the student should apply for a Standard Visitor visa.

In cases where a student has had their viva and it has been formally communicated that they have a period of amendments that will exceed their visa expiry date an assessment will be made of their eligibility to receive a CAS.

Where the student is overseas the University will not normally issue a CAS unless the student's continued participation and use of University facilities on campus is required. In these cases a CAS will only be issued where the student's continued engagement is required and monitored, which must be endorsed and facilitated by the relevant School.

Right of Appeal

In any instance where a student is refused a further CAS they shall have a right of appeal.

All appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision made, and prior to a visa expiring. A statement and any applicable evidence should be sent to visaextension@lincoln.ac.uk and all appeals will be assessed by the Student Visa Compliance Manager (or suitable nominee).

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the student within 10 working days of it being submitted.

Temporary concessions due to Covid-19

The University recognise that the Covid-19 pandemic has been a difficult and unprecedented time that has led to students experiencing difficulties.

UKVI have set out a number of [temporary concessions for students overseas, from within the UK](#) and for [Student Visa Sponsors](#).

Where possible, the University will look to facilitate the use of these concessions to support students for as long as they are valid.

Graduate Immigration Route

The Graduate Immigration Route allows students to apply for a visa to live and work in the UK for two or three years after successful completion of their study.

Students who wish to apply for the route should only submit their application to the Home Office after their official results are released, following a Board of Examiners.

The Home Office will only grant a Graduate Route visa where a student meets all eligibility criteria and the University reports to the Home Office that the student has 'successfully completed' their course of study.

In most cases, if a student meets the academic eligibility requirements the University will report this to the Home Office within two weeks of a student's results being released and will inform the student once this has been done.

Where a student's visa will expire before this point, the student should still submit the Graduate Route Application to the Home Office and should inform the Student Visa Compliance team by email at girvisa@lincoln.ac.uk

The University will not confirm 'successful completion' to the Home Office in the following cases:

- i) 'Successful completion' will not be confirmed on the basis of provisional results. An assessment of a student's eligibility will only be made based on a formal Board of Examiners or Chair's Action outcome.
- ii) From 25th September 2021, 'successful completion' will not be confirmed where a student has outstanding tuition fee debt. This is in line with Part H, 6.6 of the [University General Regulations](#).
- iii) Where a student's leave expires prior to their results release date.

- iv) Where any other eligibility criteria within 'Appendix Graduate' of the Immigration Rules are not met.

Right of Appeal

In cases where the University will not confirm a student's 'successful completion' with the Home Office it will make that student ineligible to apply for the Graduate Immigration Route visa. A student shall have a right of appeal against this decision.

All appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the decision made, and prior to a visa expiring. A statement and any applicable evidence should be sent to GIRVisa@lincoln.ac.uk and all appeals will be assessed by the Student Visa Compliance Manager (or suitable nominee).

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the student within 10 working days of it being submitted.