

STUDENT VISA IMMIGRATION REGULATIONS & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. This guidance has been created as a means of ensuring that UK Home Office policies and expectations, the University's sponsorship requirements and the requirements of student visa holders at the University are all aligned.
2. Although this policy forms a part of the University's regulations, it is underpinned by the UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) policies published at <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>.
3. Please note that visa application requirements may differ from country to country, but a student applying to the University is expected to apply under 1 of the 2 visa categories, Student Route Visa or Standard Visitor Visa.
4. At the University we have 2 categories of student: a study abroad student (students visiting from one of our partner institutions usually studying one or two semesters at the University) or as an Undergraduate or Postgraduate degree student (studying their whole programme at the University)
5. Study Abroad students coming for one semester or summer/J-term will apply for a Standard Visitor Visa for their stay in the UK. This allows them to:
 - a. stay for up to 6 months
 - b. study on a programme shorter than 6 months or a suite of courses
 - c. travel

This visa does NOT allow students to:

- a. work in any capacity including voluntary work or unpaid internships
- b. access public funding
- c. access NHS medical care

The University strongly recommends travel insurance to all students on Standard Visitor Visas.

6. Undergraduate or Postgraduate degree students or year-long visiting students are issued with a Student Route Visa for their stay in the UK. This allows for them to:
 - a. stay for the length of their programme, usually with an additional 1 to 4-months wrap up period at the end
 - b. study on programmes longer than 6 months travel
 - c. work up to 20 hours per week during term time and full time outside of term time
 - d. access NHS medical care (as an NHS surcharge is paid at the point of application)

This visa does NOT allow students to:

- e. work full time during published term dates
- f. access public funding

7. In both cases (whether on a Standard Visitor Visa or Student Route Visa) the student is expected to engage fully with their programme of study.
8. The University expects all students to adhere to the University's [Attendance and Engagement policy](#). For Students on a Student Route Visa, they are also required to adhere to the [Attendance Monitoring Policy for Student Visa for Student Visa Holders](#). All students are expected to attend all taught classes in person and engage with the academic programme on which they are enrolled. Student engagement is defined as actions taken by the student to be actively involved in their programme of study. The University expects students to engage with their courses by attending their classes, submitting relevant set work, registering for each semester, seeking support from relevant faculty and staff if required, alerting University staff to any issues that may prevent them attending or engaging with their studies. Student engagement also includes attendance at one-to-one tutorials with faculty instructors, attendance or engagement with group study meetings, attendance or engagement at academic advising appointments, attendance at appointments during office hours or other person to person meetings.
9. Students who have mitigating circumstances for not engaging in their programme for a period of time should contact the UKVI Visa Compliance Team within Student Affairs to discuss their personal circumstances. The University can offer support and guidance for re-engaging with classes after a period of time away and/or offer further support for taking a Leave of Absence (LoA) if this becomes necessary.
10. Students who are sponsored on a student visa in the UK are required by UKVI to engage with their programme regularly. As the student's sponsor, the University is legally required to report lack of attendance and engagement to the Home Office. This can result in a student's visa being curtailed if s/he fails to engage with their programme.
11. For the benefit of doubt, every sponsored student must:
 - a. Complete courses and earn credits consistently through their period of study:
 - i. It is expected that an undergraduate student sponsored on a visa should earn a minimum of 12 US credits per semester or 24 US credits per year.
 - ii. It is expected that a postgraduate student sponsored on a visa should earn a minimum of 8 US credits per semester, totalling 36 US credits over the programme.
 - iii. If a student is unable to achieve the minimum credit threshold, their progress will be reviewed by the Academic Progress Committee (APC) and an intervention will follow to try to get the student back on track academically.
 - iv. If the student is consistently unable to progress after measures are put in place, the University Exam Board may choose to academically dismiss the student
which will trigger the University's obligation to report the end of sponsorship to the UK Home Office
 - b. Maintain good academic standing each semester:
 - i. Undergraduate students are expected to achieve a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 throughout their studies at the University. If a student falls below this average, s/he will be placed on academic probation and will be limited to 16 US credit hours per semester.

- ii. Postgraduate students are expected to achieve a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 through out their studies at the University. If a student falls below this average, s/he will be placed on academic probation and will be unable to progress to the thesis/internship stage of the programme. This may mean that the student will need to repeat courses to raise their GPA.
 - iii. Failure to maintain good academic standing may delay a student's progress and cause the student to be unable to complete his/her programme in the allotted timeframe. As above, the University Exam Board may choose to academically dismiss the student which will trigger the University's obligation to report the end of sponsorship to the UK Home Office.
- c. Complete the programme within the allotted time frame of the visa:
 - i. At the start of the programme, the student will be issued with a visa for the duration of his/her studies.
 - ii. In rare cases, the student may not be able to complete his/her programme within the allocated time frame. If this is the case, and there is evidence of good academic progress and achievement, the University may decide to support the student with a new visa application.
 - iii. Please note that any new visa application must be within the 5-year cap for undergraduate degrees
 - iv. If the student has not made good progress and/or has not achieved a minimum standard of work, the University can decide to end sponsorship when the visa expires.
- d. Keep the University (his/her sponsor) up to date with a local living address, mobile telephone number and any other relevant contact details. This can be done during enrolment and through the University's self-service portal.
- e. Keep the University informed of personal circumstances that might keep the student from engaging with his/her programme
 - i. If a student's personal circumstances change such as an illness, bereavement, financial difficulty or other issue, the student must contact the University to explain their circumstances. The University offers comprehensive support and guidance for all of its students and students should contact studentaffairs@richmond.ac.uk
- 12. Please note that any violation of the terms of a student visa including working without authorisation, activity that constitutes fraud or any criminal act committed while sponsored by the University may result in immediate dismissal and a report to the UK Home Office as required.
- 13. Should a student be unhappy with the University's decision on visa sponsorship (such as non-academic dismissal, visa curtailment or refusal to sponsor a new application), they should initially consult the University's Non-Academic Complaints Policy submit an informal complaint to studentaffairs@richmond.ac.uk

For more detailed information about attendance monitoring, please see [Attendance Monitoring Policy for Student Visa Holders](#)

VERSION MANAGEMENT

Responsible Department: Admissions			
Approving body: Academic Board			
Version no.	Key Changes	Date of approval	Date of effect
001		24 July 2018	20 September 2018
002	Students at partner institutions should refer to their internal procedures	August 2020	
003	Tier 4 updated to Student Route, inclusion of pre-CAS credibility interview	June 2022	01 September 2022
004	Added Attendance Monitoring	August 2024	01 September 2024
005	Changed names of visas and some benefits related to policy changes	June 2025	01 September 2025
		Restricted access? Tick as appropriate ☐ Yes ☒ No	

