**Student Visa Sponsorship and CAS Issuing Policy**

1. **Purpose**
	1. This document sets out St George’s, University of London (SGUL) policy regarding issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to sponsor prospective and existing students from outside of the United Kingdom (UK) who require a Student visa to study in the UK.
	2. For the purposes of this policy, references to students include applicants/prospective students as well as current students of the university.

1.3 SGUL is a licensed sponsor under the Student visa route of the Points Based System. This policy is specific to the University and does not set out the full requirements of the [Immigration Rules; Appendix Student](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/immigration-rules/appendix-student) or [Student Sponsor guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance). The Immigration Rules and sponsor guidance override the content of this Sponsorship and CAS policy.

1.4 **An offer of study is not a guarantee of Student visa sponsorship** and SGUL is under no legal obligation to issue a CAS and will always exercise caution when doing so, to ensure compliance with all duties under its sponsorship licence in order to prevent risk to its status as a Student sponsor

1.5 Student sponsors have immigration responsibilities in respect of their sponsored students from the moment they assign a CAS to the student until:

* they withdraw sponsorship from the student;
* the student leaves the UK; or
* the student is given permission to stay in the UK with a different sponsor or in another immigration category.

*(*[*Student Sponsor Guidance, Document 2: Sponsorship Duties, para. 2.2*](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-sponsor-guidance)*)*

1.6 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with Student Sponsor Guidance and the Immigration Rules.

1. **Key Responsibilities**

2.1 The responsibility for the management and implementation of this policy, and any accompanying procedures, lies with the Academic Registrar who is SGUL’s Student Sponsor’s Authorising Officer and Key Contact, with the assistance of the Senior Compliance Officer.

2.2 All SGUL staff working with non-UK students requiring a Student visa, must ensure that this policy is adhered to.

1. **Student Sponsorship and CAS Assignment**
	1. The International Advising Team is responsible for issuing CAS to:
* applicants starting a new programme at SGUL;
* existing SGUL students who want to extend their visa in order to complete their programme, this includes (but is not limited to) students returning from an interruption of studies;
* existing SGUL students who want to switch programme or start a new programme;
* existing SGUL students who want to switch to a Student visa from another immigration category.

3.2 SGUL will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that an offer of admission is only made to students who are likely to be eligible for a CAS.

3.3 CAS are only issued to those students who have met all conditions of their offer, including payment of the tuition fee deposit (where applicable), and the conditions of this policy.

3.4 **An offer of study on a course is not a guarantee that SGUL will issue a CAS;** a full assessment of a student’s previous UK immigration history, and any additional checks, including financial, will be undertaken to ensure that sponsorship is only provided to those who it deems to be genuine students who have a realistic prospect of obtaining a Student visa. A CAS will not be issued to a student who is unable or unwilling to provide the necessary information for checks to be carried out within a given timeframe.

3.5 Additional checks include:

* an immigration history check or right to study check with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)
* a review of the financial documents that will be used to support the visa application
* a review of CAS statements relating to previous periods of stay in the UK
* any other checks the University deems appropriate in the circumstances

3.6 Consent from a student will be obtained prior to any checks being undertaken with UKVI.

3.7 The CAS is valid for six months from the date it is issued and can be used to support one application during this period.

3.8 **Issuing a CAS does not guarantee that the student will be successful in securing a Student visa.** SGUL is not responsible for any decisions made by the Home Office and will not accept liability for any student failing to obtain a visa and for any losses incurred.

3.9 It is the student’s responsibility to check all the information given in the CAS is accurate and up-to-date before a visa application is made. This includes any payments made by a student towards course fees or accommodation after the CAS was issued.

3.10 A CAS will not be issued more than 3 months before the official course start date. For those returning from an interruption, a CAS will be assigned no more than 3 months prior to the return start date. For continuing students, a CAS will be assigned no more than 3 months before their current visa expiry date. CASs that are requested earlier are assigned at the discretion of the International Advising Team, and only after all checks have been completed.

3.11 When the student is already in the UK, SGUL will carry out relevant checks to ensure the student is eligible to extend their Student visa from inside the UK. When a student is not eligible, a CAS will not be issued until evidence has been received which shows that the student has left the UK, such as a flight boarding ticket.

3.12 The issuing of a CAS is at the University’s discretion and SGUL reserves the right not to issue a CAS under certain circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to:

* insufficient time to make a successful Student visa application before our latest course start date
* the course is not appropriate for a Student visa, for example, a blended or distance learning programme
* incorrect or insufficient funds to meet the UKVI maintenance requirements
* not able to meet the UKVI academic progression requirements set out in the Student Sponsor Guidance
* if documents submitted are proven or suspected to be fraudulent
* the student has exceeded (or will exceed by the end of their course) the maximum time allowed on a Student visa
* it is reasonably believed that issuing a CAS would put SGUL student sponsor licence at risk, for example, where there are concerns about the student’s intention to study and overall genuineness;
* the student has not obtained an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate when required
* the student has a negative immigration history or has withheld information regarding their study or immigration history
* the student has outstanding debt with SGUL, such as tuition or accommodation fees
* the student has not yet received successful progression to the next academic year
* the student is on interruption or resitting status, for example, assessment-only year
* the student has failed to respond to immigration related instructions, for e.g. to supply contact details, to supply immigration documents in a timely manner

3.13 SGUL will not sponsor a student who is in the UK as an overstayer unless there are exceptional circumstances which prevented an in-time application being made. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Academic Registrar with the assistance of the Senior Compliance Officer.

3.14 Continuing SGUL students must apply for a new CAS using the CAS Request Form. Once the form and any additional documents are submitted, the International Advising Team aim to issue the CAS in 10 working days, subject to the checks set out in this policy and confirmation from the programme team that there is an academic reason for their studies to continue, usually as a result of an Award Board decision.

1. **Academic Progression**
	1. SGUL will only sponsor students who meet the UKVI academic progression requirements set out in the Student Sponsor Guidance, this is regardless of where the student intends to apply for the Student visa.
	2. If the Academic Registrar, in consultation with the Senior Compliance Officer, do not consider academic progression can be justified then SGUL will not issue a CAS.
	3. Details about how academic progression has been satisfied will be included on the CAS statement.
	4. SGUL will not normally issue a CAS to a student who has failed to successfully complete a programme of study in the UK unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances.
2. **Length of Sponsorship**

5.1 SGUL will sponsor a student for the duration of their course, subject to any UKVI or university compliance requirements which would result in sponsorship being withdrawn.

5.2 SGUL may withdraw sponsorship if it is not necessary to continue sponsorship or it cannot comply with its sponsor duties.

5.3 The duration of a CAS will correspond with the programme start and end date.

5.4 The course end date on the CAS is the date by which a student has completed all academic elements of the course including taught sessions, examinations, assessments, writing and submitting dissertations/projects/theses and the Examination Board ratifying final results.

5.5 The course end date for full-time PhD course will be 4 years from the course start date and covers the transfer from MPhil to PhD, the writing-up period, viva and corrections period. Any request for an extension must be in writing and may need approval from the Research Degree Committee. Sponsorship will be withdrawn if a student successfully obtains their award earlier than expected on the CAS.

5.6 If a student meets SGUL and UKVI conditions to have their leave extended to continue their course, SGUL will only sponsor the student for the remaining duration of the course. Continued participation and contact by the student is required.

6. **Re-sits, Repeats and Interruptions**

6.1 Students who are returning from a period of interruption will only be assigned a CAS if they meet the conditions of this policy and there is confirmation from the programme team that there is an academic reason for their studies to continue, usually as a result of an Award Board decision.

6.2 A CAS will not be issued to a student whose registration status is not fully enrolled, for example, a student who is on an interruption of studies, or who is re-sitting and is on an ‘assessment only year’.

6.3 If a student requires sponsorship to repeat modules, a CAS will only be assigned if continued participation is required within 60 days of the start of the next academic period. For example, if a student is required to repeat in term 1 only and sit exams in May, then a withdrawal of sponsorship report will be made to UKVI at the end of term 1. The student would be required to leave the UK after term 1 and return for their exams in May on a standard visitor visa.

6.4 SGUL will not issue a CAS if, in its judgement, the University would be unable to meet its sponsorship duties, for example, if a student is repeating a small number of credits, there is little, or no participation required. The University will assess this on a case-by-case basis and take into consideration if the work can be completed from overseas.

6.5 SGUL will not issue a CAS to a continuing student who has a poor record of attendance /engagement (exceptions might be made where extenuating circumstances have been upheld).

7. **Deferred Dissertation**

7.1 A student who has deferred their dissertation is eligible to receive a CAS to extend their Student visa so they can complete their studies in the UK, provided the academic team confirm that they will continue to monitor the student’s engagement throughout the sponsorship.

8. **Students’ Union Sabbatical Officers**

8.1 A sponsored student who has been elected as a SGUL Students’ Union Sabbatical Officer can be issued with a CAS to allow them to extend their Student visa to take up the position, or to complete their studies afterwards. The student’s relevant manager must confirm regular engagement with the International Advising Team to fulfil SGUL’s compliance duties.

9. **Part-time Student Visa**

9.1 The requirements and application for a part-time Student visa are the same as for full-time studies but the visa is more restrictive, for example, a student cannot undertake any work in the UK, including placements or voluntary work.

9.2 Only certain SGUL postgraduate programmes can be considered for part-time Student visa sponsorship, this depends upon the attendance requirements and programme structure. The same considerations will apply if a current student applies to switch mode of study from full-time to part-time.

9.3 Students on a part-time course longer than 6 months where the majority of the time is spent outside the UK and attendance at SGUL is only required for short teaching sessions can be supported under the visitor immigration route.

9.4 Student visa sponsorship will only be considered when attendance at SGUL is required regularly and for extended periods. A student would usually be residing in the UK for the majority of their study.

9.5 Student visa sponsorship will not be considered for any courses that require a student to undertake a work placement as work is prohibited under a part-time Student visa.

**10.Visa Refusals**

10.1 SGUL reserves the right to not issue a CAS to any student who has received a visa application refusal.

10.2 Any student with a visa refusal who requests a new CAS must provide SGUL with all pages of the refusal notice and will be reported to UKVI.

10.3 SGUL will not normally issue another CAS where a student has had a refusal based on credibility or has not requested an administrative review of the decision. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Academic Registrar with the assistance of the Senior Compliance Officer.

10.4 Subject to 10.3, SGUL will only consider issuing one additional CAS following a visa refusal and only if the student can provide evidence to show there is minimal risk of a subsequent visa refusal. To obtain a new CAS, the student is required to submit new supporting documents to the International Advising Team which will be assessed for their eligibility to meet Student visa requirements.

10.5 SGUL will not issue a further CAS following a second visa refusal.

11. **Overstaying**

11.1 Any student who is eligible to apply to extend their Student visa from within the UK, must ensure that they submit the application before the expiry of their current visa. Failure to submit an in- time application, will result in the student becoming an overstayer, which is a criminal offence.

11.2 A student who becomes an overstayer, will need to depart the UK immediately and provide evidence of this to the International Advising Team. SGUL may require the student to interrupt their studies whilst the case is investigated.

11.3 SGUL will not normally provide sponsorship to a student who has overstayed their visa, unless there were exceptional circumstances which prevented the student from making an-time visa application. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Academic Registrar with the assistance of the Senior Compliance Officer.

12. **Switching Immigration Categories**

12.1 Any student who wishes to switch to a Student visa from another immigration category, must have their eligibility assessed by the International Advising Team in line with this policy, before a CAS can be issued.

12.2 Depending upon the circumstances, it may be necessary for the student to apply from overseas. The student will need to provide evidence of their departure from the UK to the International Advising Team before a CAS will be issued.

13. **Terms and Conditions**

13.1 To maintain Student visa sponsorship, students are required to meet the terms and conditions of their visa. UKVI requirements change frequently, and students are advised to check the UKVI website and the University’s International and EU Support webpages for the most up-to-date information.

**14. Appeal**

14.1 If a student is dissatisfied with a decision not to issue a CAS, then they must submit an appeal in writing to the Academic Registrar.