

Visa Sponsored Students Guide on requesting course changes

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This Procedure is available in accessible formats on request from the International team. Please contact: international.admissions@lsbu.ac.uk

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Visa Sponsored students Guide on requesting Course Changes

The Tier 4 route has been replaced with the Student route as of 9am on 5 October 2020. All references to Visa Sponsored Students in this document are to be read as including students with leave under Tier 4 (General).

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Your Student visa is issued to study a particular course within a specific timeframe. The Home Office has regulations which describe if you are permitted to change courses, taking into account whether you are academically suitable for the course and whether your Student visa will allow it.
- 1.2. From a Visa Sponsored Student perspective, a 'course change' is when you are currently studying a course which you have not completed yet and you decide that you want to transfer to another course. If you have completed a course and wish to start a new course, this is not considered to be a course change.
- 1.3. This guide should be read in conjunction with the LSBU Changing Courses Procedure which can be found here: <https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/policies-regulations-procedures> and <https://my.lsbu.ac.uk/my/applicant/Current-Applicants/Regulations>
- 1.4. This Guide has been developed in line with the latest Student Policy Guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/points-based-system-student-route>
- 1.5. This Guide will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with the Student Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules which are subject to change by the Home Office. The current version of this document supersedes any previous versions.
- 1.6. Please note that LSBU's Changing Courses Procedure is only an application to change course. You must not start attending classes on the new course until the change has been authorised by the Immigration and International Student Advice team. You will be informed if your application to change course is successful.

2. Scope – who is covered by this procedure?

- 2.1. Students who have been assigned a CAS and who wish to change courses prior to enrolment.

- 2.2. Currently enrolled Visa Sponsored Students who wish to change courses post enrolment.
- 2.3. Currently enrolled Visa Sponsored Students who wish to add a work placement, sandwich year or study abroad programme to their current course.

3. Who is responsible for this procedure?

- 3.1. The Chief Customer Officer has the overall responsibility for this Guide but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for overseeing its implementation to the staff identified in this procedure. All relevant members of staff have been made aware of the procedure and have received appropriate training.
- 3.2. If you have any questions in relation to this Guide, please contact the International Advice team at international.advice@lsbu.ac.uk

4. Changing courses prior to enrolment

- 4.1. If you have been assigned a CAS but now wish to change courses prior to completing enrolment:
 - 4.1.1. You must contact the International Admissions Team to see if you meet the academic entry requirements of the new course: international.admissions@lsbu.ac.uk
 - 4.1.2. If your CAS has been issued but you have not yet submitted a visa application, you may be required to repeat elements of the Pre-CAS Process, e.g. submit a new personal statement or undertake another interview, before a new CAS can be assigned. A new CAS will be conditional on the requirements of the **Student Sponsorship and the issuing of Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) Policy 2020/21** being met.
 - 4.1.3. If you have already submitted your visa application and your visa has been granted, your request will be considered in line with paragraph 5 *Rules for students who applied for their current Student permission* below).
 - 4.1.4. If you have submitted your application and subsequently withdraw the application ahead of a decision being made, we will withdraw the CAS because that visa application will be refused.

5. Changing courses post enrolment: Rules for Visa Sponsored Students:

- 5.1. In all cases:
 - 5.1.1. the new course is at degree level or above;

- 5.1.2. the course change must have academic and immigration approval in accordance with LSBU's course change procedure; and
 - 5.1.3. the new course must be related to the previous course for which you were granted permission as a Student (meaning that it is either connected to the previous course, part of the same subject group or involves deeper specialisation); or
 - 5.1.4. the previous course and the new course in combination support your genuine career aspirations.
- 5.2. The new course is at the same degree level (e.g. RQF Level 6 to RQF Level 6):
- 5.2.1. **If the new course is shorter** (and so can be completed before your current Student visa expires), you are permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. LSBU will report your course change to the Home Office as a change in circumstances. You will be notified by the Immigration Compliance Team when this report has been made. When you have completed your course, LSBU will report to the Home Office that you completed earlier than expected and sponsorship of your Student visa will be withdrawn. Your visa will be subject to curtailment so that the expiry date is in line with your amended course end date and relevant wrap-up period. The Home Office will contact you directly to notify you of your amended visa end date.
 - 5.2.2. **If the new course is the same length** (and so can be completed before your current Student visa expires), for example, RQF Level 7 MSc Applied Accounting to RQF Level 7 MSc Accounting and Finance, you are permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. LSBU will report your course change to the Home Office as a change in circumstances. You will be notified by the Immigration Compliance Team when this report has been made.
 - 5.2.3. **If the new course is longer** (and so cannot be completed before your current Student visa expires), for example, RQF Level 7 MSc Business Management to RQF Level 7 MSc International Marketing (with placement), you are not permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. The new Student application must be made from overseas, as you will not meet the academic progression rules for applying from within the UK; (applicants must have successfully completed their previous course to meet the academic progression rules). You should not return home during a period of study or assessment as this will affect your studies. You should apply for a new visa during a vacation period.

5.3. The new course is at a higher degree level (e.g. RQF Level 6 to RQF Level 7):

5.3.1. **If the new course is shorter**, (and so can be completed before your current Student visa expires), you are permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. LSBU will report your course change to the Home Office as a change in circumstances. You will be notified by the Immigration Compliance Team when this report has been made. When you have completed your course, LSBU will report to the Home Office that you completed earlier than expected and sponsorship of your Student visa will be withdrawn. Your visa will be subject to curtailment so that the expiry date is in line with your amended course end date and relevant wrap-up period. The Home Office will contact you directly to notify you of your amended visa end date.

5.3.2. **If the new course is the same length** (and so can be completed before your current Student visa expires), you are permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. LSBU will report your course change to the Home Office as a change in circumstances. You will be notified by the Immigration Compliance Team when this report has been made.

5.3.3. **If the new course is longer** (and so cannot be completed before your current Student visa expires), you are not permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. The new Student application must be made from overseas, as you will not meet the academic progression rules for applying from within the UK; (applicants must have successfully completed their previous course to meet the academic progression rules). You should not return home during a period of study or assessment as this will affect your studies. You should apply for a new visa during a vacation period.

5.4. The new course is at a lower level (e.g. RQF Level 7 to RQF Level 6):

5.4.1. You are not permitted to change to the new course without obtaining a new Student visa. The new Student application must be made from overseas, as you will not meet the academic progression rules for applying from within the UK; (applicants must have successfully completed their previous course and the new course must not be at a lower level than the previous course to meet the academic progression rules).

6. Changing courses post enrolment: Rules for students who applied for their current Student permission before 6 April 2016:

6.1. Different rules than those listed above apply to students who applied for their current Tier 4 leave before 6 April 2016. You should contact

the International Student Advice Team for specific advice before requesting a change of course: international.advice@lsbu.ac.uk

7. Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

- 7.1. An ATAS Clearance Certificate is issued for a specific course and covers the length of that course from the course start date to the course end date given on the CAS, plus up to an additional three calendar months of study. The certificate remains valid as long as the course details do not change.
- 7.2. If your new course requires an ATAS clearance certificate and you are not exempt, you will need to apply and be granted ATAS clearance before you will be permitted to switch course. This applies even if you already have ATAS clearance for your previous course.
- 7.3. If you need to extend your permission of stay in order to complete your existing course, you may need to apply for ATAS clearance again.
- 7.4. Please send us a copy of your new ATAS certificate as soon as you receive it. There is more guidance in our How to Guide 'Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)':
<https://my.lsbu.ac.uk/my/applicant/Current-Applicants/International-students/How-toGuides>

8. Adding a work placement, sandwich year or study abroad programme

- 8.1. If you wish to add a work placement or study abroad programme to your current course (for which you were granted your current Student permission), you will need to follow LSBU's Changing Courses Procedure: <https://www.lsbu.ac.uk/about-us/policies-regulations-procedures>.
- 8.2. As part of the procedure, your School will ensure that your course has a work placement component that is eligible for Student visa holders and that you meet the academic requirements, and the Immigration and International Student Advice Team will then check that you meet the requirements for extending your Student permission of stay. Please note, you cannot begin your work placement until it has been authorised by the Immigration and International Student Advice team. You will be informed if your application is successful.
- 8.3. Subject to academic and immigration approval in accordance with LSBU's Changing Courses Procedure, you will be exempt from demonstrating academic progression. You are able to make a further permission of stay application, so that you can extend your Student permission from within the UK. However, this additional period of study must be connected to your current course and not part of a new course.

- 8.4. You will be able to apply for your additional permission of stay either before the work placement or study abroad programme starts, or after you have completed it. Depending on your circumstances, the International Student Advice Team will advise you on the best time to apply.
- 8.5. If you wish to apply for your additional permission of stay before your work placement or study abroad programme starts, you must ensure you have sufficient time to do so. If you are travelling abroad, you must receive a decision on your Student permission of stay application before your intended date of travel as you will not be able to travel if your application is still pending. Leaving the UK will result in the application being treated as withdrawn by the Home Office.
- 8.6. If you are not leaving the UK to undertake a work placement, you should still refrain from applying for additional permission of stay once your placement has started. If you do not have time to apply before your work placement starts, you can apply when it has finished and you have returned to your studies.

9. Immigration and International Student Advice Team

- 9.1. You should contact our Immigration and International Student Advice Team if you require any advice about changing course:
<http://www.lsbu.ac.uk/international/visas-and-immigration/advice-team>