**BU Immigration and Visa Student Handbook:**

**Explaining BU policy and UKVI policy**

**This is for students who have been granted a Student Visa or are in the UK with a CAS**

This handbook is intended to give you an overview of how the UKVI’s student immigration route rules and guidance apply to you while you are studying at Bournemouth University (BU). It will also inform you about other BU policies that have an impact on your student visa.

This is not a formal policy document but will refer to our policies and procedures where appropriate. All BU’s published policies are available here [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/important-information](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/important-information)

**Immigration advice and compliance at BU**

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) state that only designated and trained members of staff may give immigration advice. At BU the only advisers who can provide this advice are in our Immigration Advice and Compliance Team who provide this service for free. If you have any questions about your student visa you will be directed to a member of this team.

If you require immigration advice on any other visa routes or if our trained advisors are unavailable, you can search for a trained advisor on [www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser](http://www.gov.uk/find-an-immigration-adviser). Please note these advisors may charge a fee.

Bournemouth University is a Higher Education Provider (HEP) with a track record of compliance which allows us to sponsor international students. Our Immigration Advice and Compliance Team work very hard to retain this status as there are many benefits to you that come from us holding this status, such as: the ability to make our own assessment of your English, no requirement to submit qualifications with your application and the eligibility to switch to after study work routes inside the UK e.g., Graduate Route and Skilled Worker.

As your student visa sponsor our responsibility for you begins when we issue your CAS and for as long as you study with us on the course your CAS was issued for. This means that we must report any changes in your circumstances to the Home Office to ensure we remain compliant with their rules.

**Starting your course**

The UKVI only allow students to hold a student visa if they are being taught in the UK on our premises. For this reason, BU is only offering an on-campus teaching experience to student visa holders, and you are expected to be regularly attending classes in person.

**Entering the UK on your BU sponsored student visa for the first time:**

When you arrive in the UK you will have to go through immigration control and have your visa validated by a Border Force Officer. If your passport allows you to use e-gates, then you will be able to enter the UK through these as well.

Regardless of the above everyone must carry and be prepared to show the following additional documents to a Border Force Officer:

* Your offer letter from BU and the documents that your offer was based on (qualifications etc.)
* Your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) statement
* Information about your finances to prove you still have sufficient funds for your time in the UK
* Documents showing where you are going to stay when you arrive in the UK (this can be temporary accommodation)
* Any other documents that your own country or embassy requires you to carry.

These can be in an electronic format on your mobile phone/tablet or paper copies.

When you enter the UK, the Border Force Officer must be satisfied that you speak English to the required level. They are not expected to give you a test, however, they will pay attention to your English proficiency as they speak to you.

**If you are already inside the UK:**

You may already be in the UK on a valid visa that allows you to switch[[1]](#footnote-1) or extend[[2]](#footnote-2) to a BU sponsored student visa within the UK. However, you can only do this if the BU course starts less than 28 days from the expiration date of your current visa. If you are in the UK on a student visa you must also have successfully completed your previous course.

**Arrival times:**

It is important that you plan to arrive at BU by the course start date as late arrival can have an adverse impact on your academic induction and social aspects of your life at BU. If you think that you will not be able to arrive by the course start date, or may not be able to arrive on time, you need to let us know as soon as possible. We will then let you know whether a late arrival can be agreed (this will depend on a range of factors, including your course). If late arrival is agreed, we will give you a final arrival deadline and you must arrive by this date. **You must not travel to the UK if you do not have a late arrival authorised or if the authorised date has passed, even if you have your visa as we are required to withdraw our sponsorship of your visa once this date has passed.** Further information about late arrival, including how to contact us about it, can be found on the BU [late arrivals webpage](https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/important-information/late-arrival-information-new-students-starting-their-course-bu).

**Your visa documents**

The UKVI issues various types of visa documents to student visa holders. What type of document you get depends on your circumstances.

You could have:

* A digital status (called an eVisa)
* An Entry Clearance Vignette PLUS a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) (collected once you arrive in the UK)
* A digital status PLUS a BRP

An Entry Clearance Vignette to enter the UK will only be valid for 90 days and you can only enter the UK within these 90 days.

If the expiry date on your BRP is 31/12/2024 but your course end date is later than this, please note this is not an error and the rest of your visa will be on a digital status which the UKVI will arrange later.

If you are granted an eVisa you must ensure that your passport details are up to date with the Home Office as your visa will be linked to the passport you used in your visa application. If you renew your passport after your visa is granted you must confirm your details here [www.gov.uk/update-uk-visas-immigration-account-details](http://www.gov.uk/update-uk-visas-immigration-account-details). If you also hold a BRP then this does not apply to you.

You should make a note of your visa expiry date when you first receive it as it is vital you do not overstay your visa.

**Visa errors**

Once your visa is granted you should check all the details of your visa. You should check the spelling of your name, the type of visa granted and the conditions and length of your visa. If you find any error(s) on your digital status or vignette you should try and get these corrected before you travel to the UK wherever possible.

If you find an error on your BRP after you have arrived in the UK and collected it, you should report this error to the UKVI within 10 days. We can advise you on the correction process if you contact AskBU.

If you find an error on an eVisa you must contact AskBU for advice on how to resolve the error.

**BRP collection**

**ACL**

Bournemouth University is registered as an Alternative Collection Location (ACL) which means you can choose to collect your BRP and those of your dependants directly from us. To do this you and all your dependants must enter our ACL code 2HE577 during your visa applications.

If you are travelling with dependants and are using our ACL service, you must tell us your dependants’ full names and dates of births by emailing migrantreporting@bournemouth.ac.uk.

We will contact all students whose BRP arrive at BU via their registered email address (remember to check your junk/spam folders) to advise when the BRP can be collected. You should wait to receive our email however if you have not heard from us within 10 days of your arrival in the UK you should contact us at the above email. If we identify any errors or discrepancies on your BRP this may mean, we are unable to give your BRP to you. We will contact you if this is the case.

Although your Home Office letter says you should collect your BRP from us within 10 days of arriving, this is not always possible, and you will not be adversely affected if you collect it later.

**Post Office**

If you do not choose to use our ACL service, you will need to collect your BRP from a post office. When completing your online application, the closest post office that offers BRP collection will be offered to you.

If you are using this service, you should collect your BRP as soon as possible, no later than 10 days after arriving. If after 10 days your BRP is not available to collect or you need to collect from a different Post Office to the one stated on your visa grant letter, you must raise this directly with your selected Post Office.

**Enrolling**

Enrolling at BU is done in 2 stages, first you must complete Online Registration where you will check your personal details, agree to BU’s terms and conditions, and confirm your fee and payment method. Please note that you must ensure your contact details including your personal email address are accurate and up to date as we can only contact you on your registered addresses. If an agent assisted you with your application, please ensure that the contact details we hold are for you and not them. You must include a UK postal address of where you will be staying during your studies (you should use a temporary address here if you have not yet found long term accommodation).

 Once you have completed this you will then need to complete your Online Enrolment, part of this may include having your ID/immigration documents checked at an in-person document checking event. Only once both stages are complete are you considered to be fully enrolled.

You will only be able to complete Online Enrolment once you are in the UK. The reason for this is we need to hold evidence that you either entered the UK on a visa that allows study at BU or have extended or are going to extend your visa in the UK using BU’s CAS. This is to verify your right to study at BU. We are also required as part of our sponsor licence duties to maintain accurate and up to date records of your passport details, visa, and address/contact details in the UK. These are all taken and verified during your enrolment.

**Documents required to enrol**

Your passport or travel document AND one of the following:

* Your Entry Clearance Vignette date stamped at your point of entry to the UK (if applicable)
	+ If you can use an e-gate we will require evidence of the date of entry to the UK such as your boarding pass or travel ticket.
* If you hold an eVisa you will need to provide a share code and evidence of entry to the UK as above.
* If you currently hold a BU sponsored student visa *for a course which you have successfully completed* you can also enrol on your old BU visa as long as you apply for the new visa within 6 weeks of starting the new course or before your current visa expires, whichever is sooner. Please note enrolling like this is done so at your own risk. If for any reason you fail to apply for the visa on time or the visa application is refused, you may need to leave your course.
* Proof of a valid pending permission to stay (this is an application made inside the UK) application to study at BU. Please note any enrolment made using a pending visa application is done so at your own risk and if for any reason the visa application is refused you may need to leave your course.
* A valid ‘leave to remain’ BRP with BU’s sponsor licence number on issued for the course you are enrolling on.

If you have your BRP and you did not collect it from us we will take a copy at this event as well or you can upload it once you have received it by logging into your MyHub (coming October 2023).

Once you have provided us with your BRP details we strongly recommend that you DO NOT carry it with you at all. You should put it in a safe place, that you can remember, and only take it out if requested to do so by relevant authorities for example BU, UKVI, Police, NHS, or a prospective employer. You should not use it as proof of age or ID. Replacing a lost or stolen BRP can take many weeks and cause travel complications. This is also a very expensive process.

**On your course**

**Record keeping**

Once you have enrolled on your course it is your responsibility to update us if any of your personal details or documents change from what we record at enrolment. You must tell us if you:

* Receive a new passport,
* Apply for a new visa,
* Update your contact details including your address in the UK, UK phone number or email address, or
* Legally change your name.

You can update all this information on myHub (feature launching October 2023). You should also ensure that you keep these details up to date with the UKVI via [Update your UK Visas and Immigration account details: Overview - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/update-uk-visas-immigration-account-details) if you hold any visa other than a BRP or Vignette or [Report a change of circumstances if you have a visa or BRP: You're in the UK and have a BRP - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp) if your visa has been granted as a BRP or Vignette.

**Lost, stolen or damaged BRP**

If you think you have lost your BRP you should first make sure that you have thoroughly searched for it. You should not report it lost to the UKVI immediately as the UKVI will deactivate your BRP within 24 hours of this report and this cannot be undone if you later find your BRP. If the card is definitely lost, then you must contact AskBU as soon as possible to report the loss to BU and we can provide you information on how to seek a replacement. You must report and apply to replace your BRP within 3 months of losing it.

If your BRP is stolen, you should report the theft to the police as soon as possible. You must also contact AskBU to report the theft to BU and we will provide information on how to report this to the UKVI. You must report and apply to replace your BRP within 3 months of it being stolen.

If your BRP is damaged, please contact AskBU for information on how to replace the card.

If you lose or have your BRP stolen while you are outside the UK, or if you need to leave and re-enter the UK whilst not holding your BRP you must apply for a ‘replacement BRP visa’ whilst overseas. This will let you re-enter the UK once only. Once you are back in the UK you should contact AskBU to inform us and receive information.

When you get your replacement BRP you must let us know and upload a copy to myHub as soon as you receive it.

**If your passport is lost, stolen or expires**

You must let AskBU know if the passport you used at enrolment is lost, stolen, expires or is replaced for any reason. We are unable to assist with replacing your passport as this is issued by your government so you should contact them directly.

When you get your replacement passport you must let us know and upload a copy to myHub as soon as you receive it.

**Change of visa category**

If you are thinking of switching your student visa to any other visa before your course ends, we must first verify if study will be permitted on the visa you wish to switch to. You should contact immigration@bournemouth.ac.uk to find this out, but note we are only able to give advice on the Student and the Dependant of a Student visa route.

If you successfully switch visa category, we will require a copy of the new visa to report the change to the UKVI and to remove our sponsorship duties from you. We may also require other documentation to ensure you can study on the new visa, *e.g.* a letter of consent from an employer if you switch to the Skilled Worker route.

**Monitoring your own visa**

When your student visa is granted, you should note the expiry date and set a reminder for it. We recommend setting this reminder 4 months before the visa expires. If you have not completed your course by the time this date occurs, please contact immigration@bournemouth.ac.uk to find out if you can extend your visa unless we have already contacted you to tell you this.

**Changes to your course**

Your visa is tied to Bournemouth University and the specific course named on your CAS. Any changes to your studies therefore must first be authorised before those can happen.

You will need to speak to your faculty about any changes you wish to make to your course. They will refer your case to us for immigration advice. We will check if you can make the change to your course under the relevant immigration rules on your current visa or if you will need to apply for a new visa before you can make the change.

Change in this context could be:

* Adding a placement
* Switching to another course

If you are on, or switching to, a course that requires an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate, you may also need to update this. Please contact us for more information on this.

**Engagement with your course**

The UKVI view being in the UK as a vital requirement of your student visa. BU also requires that all students attend in person for the full duration of their course.

BU is required to monitor all academic engagement of student visa holders as part of our sponsorship duties including while on placement. We do this by monitoring various aspects of your engagement on the course including but not limited to attendance in lectures/seminars, submission of work, access to online resources and attendance to exams.

Any periods of absence over 60 days from your course (excluding any official vacations, which are set by each individual faculty) will be reported to the Home Office as they state this is the maximum period you can be absent from your course and retain your visa. This is likely to result in you needing to leave the UK as the Home Office will cancel your visa once we report the absence.

If you do not need/want to be in the UK, then you do not require a visa. This means that you are unable to leave the UK to undertake a substantial period of remote study as BU and the UKVI do not normally allow this. For example, if you wish to complete part of your course (e.g. your dissertation/project) from your home country. This must be approved by your faculty in advance, and you will not be able to retain your student visa during this period as we are required to withdraw our sponsorship of your visa and the UKVI will cancel it. This may affect your eligibility for the Graduate Route.

There are some exemptions to this which would allow you to keep your student visa whilst not in the UK. These are: an authorised work placement taking place outside the UK, required field work/research outside the UK or an official exchange program. These all must be approved by your faculty in advance of you leaving the UK.

During any official school vacation there are no restrictions on leaving the UK.

If you have a family emergency or extenuating circumstances, such as illness or pregnancy, that mean that you need a break from your course, you must speak to your faculty. Any absence will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

If the request is for more than 60 days this usually will require you to interrupt your studies and we are required to report this to the UKVI. It is then up to the UKVI’s discretion whether they will cancel your visa or not and you may be asked to provide further evidence. BU has no influence on this decision and if they decide there is no valid reason not to cancel your visa you must leave the UK. See section cancellation.

If your faculty determine that your attendance is not satisfactory, they will follow BU’s engagement monitoring and withdrawal procedure. If you are withdrawn due to non-engagement, we will report this to the UKVI, and your visa will be curtailed. See section withdrawal.

**Progressing on your course**

Your visa will have been issued for the length of your course as stated in you offer letter and CAS. The expectation from both BU and the Home Office is that all students will progress through the course as expected and complete within their visa.

If anything happens during your studies that means you cannot progress as expected or complete the course within your original visa, then your visa sponsorship may be affected.

If you need more time to complete your course, your faculty will inform you of this. If this goes beyond your current visa, then we will assess if we can issue you a further CAS to apply for a new visa. See section Extending your visa.

If there is anything (E.G. repeats/submissions) that causes a gap in your studies of 60 days or more (excluding official vacations) then your academic faculty will interrupt your enrolment on the course. We are then required to report this to the UKVI who will cancel your visa. See section cancelation.

You should be aware that there are limits on the amount of time from both BU and the UKVI to study your course. The Home Office have a strict study limit of 5 years for undergraduate study, and this will be assessed by us before any CAS are issued. Please see section Extending your visa.

**Withdrawing from BU**

If you choose to withdraw from BU, we will report this to the UKVI and our sponsorship of your visa will be withdrawn. Please see section cancellation.

In certain circumstances BU may need to withdraw students from their course, e.g. academic failure, non-engagement, breach of visa conditions, breach of BU regulations etc. should this happen BU will communicate with you to explain the implications on your visa.

Should you wish to change to a new course at BU we will need to assess if this is possible on your current visa. Please see section changing your course.

**Changing your course**

Your CAS and Visa are tied to the specific course you applied for at BU. After your visa has been granted changing your course, including changing the course start date, is restricted by the Immigration Rules. This may mean that you need to apply for a new visa before starting the new course and this will more than likely need to be applied for from outside the UK.

* If you have not fully enrolled on your course, you should speak to International Admissions to discuss your options.
* If you have fully enrolled on your course you should speak to your Programme Support Officer to discuss your academic options, they will contact us to see if your visa will allow the change.

**Cancellation**

Cancelation of your visa will happen when you withdraw from your course or if you have a gap of over 60 days with no study.

When we report to the UKVI that we have withdrawn our sponsorship of your visa they will then take action to cancel your visa. We will tell you when we have done this and give you basic information on what happens next.

BU will not be notified by the UKVI when they cancel your visa. The UKVI will contact you directly via email, so you must make sure that you update your [contact details](https://www.gov.uk/update-uk-visas-immigration-account-details) with them. Usually, they will leave you 60 days to leave the UK or apply for another visa. If you are out of the UK when the UKVI cancel your visa you will not be able to return to the UK on this visa.

The full rules on how and when the UKVI will cancel your visa are published here [www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-immigration-status-and-deciding-enforcement-action](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/considering-immigration-status-and-deciding-enforcement-action)

Until the UKVI cancel your visa it will remain valid, and you are legally allowed to remain in the UK and/or switch your visa to another category that you may be eligible for. Your right to work will have to be re-assessed by your employer. We are unable to verify your right to work as this is your employer’s responsibility.

**Extending your visa or returning from interruption**

If for any reason your current visa is not long enough for you to complete your studies, then you may need a new CAS to apply for a new visa.

As soon as you become aware you need to extend your visa you must contact immigration@bournemouth.ac.uk. You will be sent a CAS request form for you to complete and submit with the required documents for us to assess your eligibility We will then tell you if you can extend your visa and if you can apply in the UK or not.

The earliest we will issue your new CAS is 3 months before you are required to apply for your visa.

If you are returning from interruption, then you must follow the instructions given to you when your interruption was reported to the UKVI and submit a CAS request form to us. If you have less than 6 months remaining on your course, you may be able to return on a Standard Visitor visa.

**Working conditions**

BU Full time degree students on a student visa should have 20 hours per week during term time (your dissertation/project is still classed as term time) where they can work. If your visa does not state this, then please contact us.

Working beyond the 20 hour limit is only possible during official vacations, on an official authorised work placement (in that specific role only) and in the period after your official course end date (as it appears on your student record) you can work full time. Students enrolled on Post Graduate Research programmes do not have set vacation periods, instead you can use your annual leave allocation to work beyond the 20-hour limit.

Whilst you hold your student visa you must not fulfil a permanent full time job or work in restricted fields:

* + Professional sportsperson
	+ Entertainer
	+ Be self-employed (this includes freelancing <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/blog/6257/a-working-definition>)

We are your student visa sponsor and our responsibilities are only regarding your studies, we are not legally permitted to verify your rights to work to employers. We can and will provide confirmation of your term dates for your employer to carry out their “right to work” check. To request this please visit our website [www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/letter-requests](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/letter-requests).

**Volunteering**

Volunteering at a registered charity voluntary organisation or public sector organisation will not count towards the 20-hour limit on your visa. These roles are not paid, though you can receive reasonable travel and living costs. Unpaid work (sometimes referred to as voluntary work) does count towards the 20 hour limit.

**Breaches**

We are legally obliged to report any suspicion of a breach of visa conditions. This means that if we become aware that any student could have worked beyond the term time limit or in a restricted field, we will inform the UKVI and our sponsorship of your visa may be cancelled and your place at the university withdrawn.

**Placements**

Many of our courses have a placement option included. When you first applied you should have been able to choose this option if it exists for your course. If you chose this, then your visa will cover the length of your course plus the work placement. If you did not, it will only cover the taught part of the course. If you do not have the placement included on your offer but wish to undertake one you may be able to do this.

To be able to undertake a work placement it must be an assessed and integral part of your course and it must not be longer than one half of the total length of your course. The way we ensure that your placement meets these requirements is through the authorisation process, you must not start any work placement until it has been authorised by your Placement Coordinator. There is a deadline for getting placements authorised, your Placement Coordinator will inform you of this deadline during your course. If you do not secure an authorised placement before this deadline, you will not be able to undertake the placement option and your faculty will advise you of your options.

Our academic regulations will set the length that must be completed, there are no restrictions from the UKVI on if this is undertaken at one or more providers. If you do need/want to do multiple placements or change placement provider this must be authorised in advance by your Placement Coordinator.

Placements can also be undertaken outside the UK, providing it is authorised your visa will not be affected by this. We can only advise on visas for the UK, if you choose to go to another country, it your responsibility to comply with that countries immigration rules and secure the correct immigration permission, your placement provider in that country should be your first point of contact for this.

Adding a placement after you start your course may be possible. You will then you will need to extend your visa to be able to undertake the placement. You must secure your placement before we will issue a CAS and you must not start your placement until you apply to extend your visa.

If the placement was on your offer and you received a visa to cover it, but you decide you do not wish to undertake the placement then once you have successfully completed your taught studies, we will report this to the UKVI, please see section earl completion.

If you withdraw from the placement completely after starting it your visa may be affected, please contact your Placement Coordinator before you make any decision.

**Completion of your course**

You will only have completed your course once an academic board has ratified your final award and the official results have been published. This date is usually after your official course end date as it appears on your student record.

 Your visa will have been issued with an expiration date based on the expected course end date (this is noted on your most recent CAS) when you applied for your current visa. If for any reason you complete your course more than 30 days earlier than this date, we are required to report this to the UKVI.

We will notify you when we have reported your ‘early completion’ to the UKVI. After our report the UKVI will cancel your BU student visa, but they should give you a new visa expiry date of usually 4 months from your new course completion date. Your course completion date will be the date your results were published, not your official course end date on your student record.

It is very important to note that when the UKVI serves you their notification to cancel your visa, you cannot use that visa to return to the UK anymore. Therefore if you wish to remain in the UK after your studies, we highly recommend that you are in the UK by the time your final results are published, and you are granted further permission to stay in the UK before any further travel out of the UK.

**Graduate route**

The Graduate route visa (GR) is a visa that student visa holders who successfully complete an [eligible graduate level course](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa/course-you-studied) and meet the requirements of the visa can apply for. It will allow the holder to stay and work in the UK for 2 further years (3 if PhD).

For this, “successful completion” means you have achieved the full award of the qualification your visa was issued for (or were authorised to switch to). For example, if your visa was issued for a Master’s degree then a PG Cert or PG Dip from BU is not eligible for the GR.

Another condition you must meet is that your student visa must still be valid at the point you apply, and you must be in the UK when you apply. If you finished the course earlier than expected, you must apply within 4 months of your results being published to avoid losing eligibility for the GR.

Please first note that you must not submit your Graduate Route (GR) visa application until the Immigration Advice and Compliance Team have emailed you that successful completion of your course has been reported to the Home Office. Without this happening first you are not actually eligible to apply for the visa and could even receive a refusal on an application.

We will report your successful completion to the Home Office within 10 working days of you receiving your final official results. If you do not receive our email about the report in 10 working days, please contact [**AskBU**](https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/askbu-contact-us)**.**

For the full set of rules and for the most up-to-date information, you should always visit the [**GOV.UK website**](https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa). You will also find further, BU specific information relevant to Graduate Route on [**this BU webpage**](https://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/students/help-advice/international-students/immigration-visas/working-after-your-studies/graduate-route-visa).

As Graduate Route is not a sponsored route like the Student Route, the BU Immigration Advice and Compliance Team is not permitted to advise on a Graduate Route visa application beyond reporting your completion. If you require assistance with submitting your application, you will need to find [**immigration adviser externally**](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Student-immigration-the-basics#other-places-to-seek-advice).

1. [Student visa : Switch to this visa - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/switch-to-this-visa) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Student visa : Extend your visa - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/student-visa/extend-your-visa) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)