

Institutional Policy and Procedures: Doctorate Extension Scheme

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1. Background

This policy applies to current international (non EEA) University of Surrey students in their final year of PhD programme of up to 12 months who are subject to immigration control.

In order to be able to sponsor students on the Doctorate Extension Scheme, the University is required to comply with the terms of the Immigration Rules part 6A: the points-based system, Points-based system (paragraphs 245AAA to 245ZZE) and Tier 4 (Student) Guidance.

The University runs the Doctorate Extension Scheme in conjunction with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

The Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) provides students who have almost finished their UK PhD or other doctorate qualification an opportunity to look for and start work in the UK for a maximum period of 12 months.

This policy is specific to the University of Surrey and does not necessarily set out the full requirements of the Immigration Rules. The University is entitled to revise its policies or procedures relating to compliance with its Tier 4 sponsor duties at any time and will usually do so where there have been any applicable changes to sponsorship requirements made by UKVI.

This policy should be read alongside:

- [Tier 4 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance](#)
- [Immigration Rules part 6A](#)
- [Document 2 - Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for Sponsors \(p.23\)](#)

The Immigration Rules and associated UKVI guidance documents will remain the main source of the University's obligations.

2. Definitions of Terms Used

PhD: For the purposes of the DES, PhD means a Doctor of Philosophy qualification or one of the doctorate qualifications listed at Annex 4 of the [Tier 4 Policy Guidance](#). This does not include Research Master's Degrees.

The expected end date: It is defined by the Home Office Immigration Rules as the date the PhD is expected to be formally confirmed by the Tier 4 sponsor as completed to the standard required for the award of the PhD.

Award date: The actual date that the student is awarded the PhD qualification.

3. Eligibility for the Doctorate Extension Scheme

- a. The applicant must have current immigration permission to stay as a Tier 4 (General) student or as a student under the old rules, to study a course that leads to the award of a PhD qualification.
- b. The applicant must hold a valid Tier 4 (General) student visa at the time of making the DES application.
- c. If an applicant has had any previous extensions to their previous PhD registration they will not be eligible for DES.
- d. In the event a student's current Tier 4 leave expires before their award date and the University doesn't require the student's continued attendance, the University will not issue a CAS to extend existing leave if the University cannot meet its sponsorship duties with respect to the student.
- e. The applicant cannot apply after completion of their PhD (the award date).
- f. The applicant can only apply for the DES if they are in the UK when they make their application. Evidence of this maybe required before issuing a CAS.
- g. The applicant is required to undertake the viva voce examination and submit the final copy of their thesis before their current visa expires.
- h. The applicant must have a CAS from the University of Surrey confirming that they are expected to complete their course on the stated expected course end date and that the University of Surrey will sponsor them during the 12 months they are on the DES.
- i. The applicant must be applying no more than 60 days before the expected course end date specified on their new CAS.
- j. The applicant must satisfy the current Home Office maintenance requirements as provided by the Tier 4 policy guidance. If the applicant has been financially supported by a government or an international scholarship agency during their studies and sponsorship has been stopped less than 12 months before making the DES application, they must provide the unconditional written consent of their financial sponsor for the DES.
- k. The University will only assign a CAS to an applicant if they:
 - have paid all outstanding tuition fees;

- have provided evidence of their up to date Police Registration Certificate (where applicable);
 - hold a valid Tier 4 (General) visa at the time of requesting a CAS.
- l. The award date can be set within the validity of the current visa or after the visa expiry date.
 - m. The University may make any additional checks to ensure it only assigns CAS to applicants who have a realistic prospect of obtaining a Tier 4 visa under DES. These checks may include reviewing financial documents or any other checks the University feels appropriate in the circumstances.
 - n. The University will not assign CAS if there is any reason to believe an applicant will not comply with the conditions of their visa if granted.
 - o. Applications for DES are considered on an individual basis and a CAS will only be assigned to applicants who meet the criteria for DES.

4. Sponsorship Duties under Tier 4 and Doctorate Extension Scheme

4.1 The University's duties as a Tier 4 Sponsor under Doctor Extension Scheme are described in:

- [Tier 4 of the Points Based System – Policy Guidance](#)
- [Immigration Rules part 6A](#)
- [Document 2 - Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for Sponsors](#)

4.2 The University's duties are as follows:

- a. To ensure that the University keeps all personal details up to date
- b. To ensure that DES visa details and a copy of the new DES visa is added to the record
- c. To keep evidence of the DES approval process
- d. To ensure the University has at least three points of contact with the DES holder whilst their visa is valid to ensure that the DES holder is adhering to the conditions of their visa.
- e. To ensure that the University reports to the Home Office:
 - If the DES holder fails their course or is awarded a qualification lower than doctoral level
 - If the DES holder misses a scheduled contact with the University and fails to provide an adequate explanation for doing so
 - If the University has reason to believe the DES holder is breaching the conditions of their leave

- If the DES holder is no longer participating in the scheme
- If there is evidence that the DES holder is no longer in the UK or no longer under the DES Visa
- If the University withdraws its sponsorship

5. Responsibilities of a DES visa holder

The responsibilities of a DES visa holder are as follows:

- a. Adhere to previous visa conditions until the new visa is granted
- b. Provide International Student Support with a copy of the new DES visa once granted
- c. The DES holder is required to respond to the University email within 10 calendar days. The University will withdraw sponsorship if the DES holder misses these contacts without reasonable explanation.
- d. Keep up-to-date personal and current contact details via International Student Support
- e. Adhere/comply to the conditions of the DES visa at all times

6. DES visa application process

It is recommended that the applicant submits their DES application through the International Student Support Office. Students who make their application independently are required to send an email with a scanned copy of their visa to the internationalsupport@surrey.ac.uk and visa-compliance@surrey.ac.uk as soon as they obtain their visa.

6.1 The applicant should bring a completed Expression of Interest form to International Student Support once they submit their soft bound thesis (before month 48 and ideally by the 40th month of registration). The form can be obtained from the Student Services Centre reception desk or online.

6.2 In order to obtain a CAS, the applicant is responsible for obtaining the approval of final thesis by an Examiner and a confirmation email from the Research Degrees Office confirming the expected award date. An email must be provided to International Student Support.

6.3 The applicant should submit the following documents to International Student Support:

- A valid passport
- A Biometric Residence Permit card
- A valid bank statement showing the required amount of funds
- Police Registration Certificate (if applicable)
- Printout of the email from the Research Degrees Office confirming the expected award date
- 2 photographs (this is required for visa application)

6.4 The applicant will be required to complete a CAS request form and the DES agreement form.

6.5 The CAS will normally be issued within two working days.

6.6 The issued visa and supporting documents will be returned by the Home Office to International Student Support within the eight week service limit and the applicant will be notified by email to collect the documents from the Student Services Centre.

6.7 The applicant's record will be updated with the new visa information by Student Services staff.

7. Monitoring Procedure

7.1 In order to meet engagement monitoring requirements, the DES visa holder will be contacted by International Student Support at three monthly intervals commencing from the visa start date.

7.2 The DES holder is required to respond to the University email within 10 calendar days.

7.3 If there is no response, the University will start the process of withdrawing Tier 4 sponsorship.

7.4 Visa Compliance will report the DES visa holder to UK Visas and Immigration, resulting in a visa curtailment.

8. Employment

There will be no restrictions on the type of employment the DES visa holder may take except for as a Doctor or Dentist in training or a sports person (including coaches).

9. Visa Support

All DES visa related queries are managed by International Student Support. The support offered by International Student Support must be viewed as guidance only and not as legal advice.

It is the responsibility of the applicant/ DES visa holder to ensure that they possess the correct and valid visa, ensuring that its conditions are adhered to at all times.

10. Communication

Applicants that are refused a DES visa from UK Visas and Immigration are required to email all refusal documentation to International Student Support.

If grounds for the visa refusal are valid, International Student Support will inform Visa Compliance who exercise discretion in deciding whether the applicant can be supported with a new CAS.

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

This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure it remains compliant with Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance, Immigration Rules and good sector practice.

11. Managerial Oversight and Review

Version	Amended By
March 2018	Anes Kaczor, Visa Compliance Manager Claire Lind, Senior Administrative Officer (Visa Compliance) Maria Luisa Haijima, Student Advice Manager- Money, Housing, International Adriana Crear, International Student Support Officer and Team Leader