

Doctoral Extension Scheme (Tier 4 Policy)

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| Operational Owner: | Student Advice Manager (Money and International) |
| Executive Owner: | Chief Student Officer |
| Effective date: | 11 September 2020 |
| Review date: | April 2021 unless guided otherwise by legislation or good practice |
| Related documents: | 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 V.10/2019 (p.23) |

Approval History

| Version | Reviewed by | Brief reason for review | Approved by | Date |
|---------|----------------|--|------------------------|------------|
| 1 | PBS Group & DC | Added in a Covid exception 2.1.4 and 3.2.4 | Sponsor License Holder | 23/08/2020 |
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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

- 1.1.1 The University runs the Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) in conjunction with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The 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
- 1.1.2 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.
- 1.1.3 The Immigration Rules and associated UKVI guidance documents will remain the main source of the University's obligations.

1.2 Scope

- 1.2.1 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.
- 1.2.2 In order to be able to sponsor students on the DES, the University is required to comply with the terms of the Immigration Rules part 6A: the points-based system (paragraphs 245AAA to 245ZZE) and the Tier 4 (Student) Guidance.

1.3 Definitions

- 1.3.1 **PhD:** For the purposes of the DES, PhD means a Doctor of Philosophy qualification or one of the doctorate qualifications listed at Annex 3 of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance. This does not include Research Master's Degrees.
- 1.3.2 **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.
- 1.3.3 **Award date:** The actual date that the student is awarded the PhD qualification.

2 Policy Principles

2.1 Policies: Eligibility

- 2.1.1 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.
- 2.1.2 The applicant must hold a valid Tier 4 (General) student visa at the time of making the DES application.
- 2.1.3 If an applicant has had any previous extensions to their previous Visa in order to complete their

PhD, they will not be eligible for DES. Students can apply for DES if they have had an extension to their registration end date, as long they submit their final thesis within their original visa dates.

- 2.1.4 An exception to 2.1.3 will be made if a student has been affected by Covid-19 by being unable to complete their degree within their course dates and has received a visa extension, their case will be brought to the PBS Group and assessed on a case by case basis.
- 2.1.5 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.
- 2.1.6 The applicant cannot apply after completion of their PhD (the award date).
- 2.1.7 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.
- 2.1.8 The applicant is required to undertake the viva voce examination and submit the final copy of their thesis before their current visa expires.
- 2.1.9 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.
- 2.1.10 The applicant must be applying no more than 60 days before the expected course end date specified on their new CAS.
- 2.1.11 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.
- 2.1.12 The University will only assign a CAS to an applicant if they:
 - Have read the Conditions of Service and signed the Client Care Letter
 - 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

2.2 Procedures: DES Visa Application Process

- 2.2.1 It is recommended that the applicant submits their DES application through the International Student Support. Applicants 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.
- 2.2.2 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 **internationalsupport@surrey.ac.uk** or MySurrey Hive reception desk.

2.2.3 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.

2.2.4 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

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

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

2.2.7 All applicants must show evidence to International Student Support that they have made an in-time application and thereafter that the application was successful by providing a colour scan of the front and back of their BRP.

2.2.8 The applicant's record will be updated with the new visa information by MySurey Hive staff.

2.3 Codes and Protocols

2.3.1 Responsibilities of a DES visa holder are as follows:

- Adhere to previous visa conditions until the new visa is granted
- Provide International Student Support with a copy of the new DES visa once granted
- 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
- Keep up-to-date personal and current contact details via International Student Support
- Adhere/comply to the conditions of the DES visa at all times

2.3.2 Refusals: 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.

2.4 Guidelines

2.4.1 Monitoring Procedure: 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.

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

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

- 2.4.4 Visa Compliance will report the DES visa holder to UK Visas and Immigration, resulting in a visa curtailment.
- 2.4.5 Visa Support: All DES visa related queries are managed by International Student Support. 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. The student will be required to sign a Client Care Letter if they access advice from International Student Support.
- 2.4.6 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 sportsperson (including coaches).
- 2.4.7 Expiring Visas and Overstayers: The University considers that the responsibility for visa validity remains solely with DES visa holder. If the visa is about to expire, it is their responsibility to ensure contact is made with International Student Support for guidance/ advice.

3 Governance Requirements

3.1 Implementation / Communication Plan

3.1.1 Details of the DES will be communicated at various times and in various way:

- Via Admissions and Recruitment at recruitment stage
- Via MySurrey Visa and Immigration Hub
- Via social media tools
- Via 'Information Sessions' throughout the year, including key campaigns such as International Student Employability Week

3.1.2 Visa conditions and the University's obligations to report to UK Visas and Immigration will also be communicated via the channels above. This policy will be communicated to academic and administrative staff via signposts to appropriate web pages and International Student Support outreach projects.

3.2 Exceptions to this Policy

3.2.1 The issue of a CAS by the University does not necessarily mean that a student's application for a DES visa will be successful. The University shall not be liable if any visa applications are refused by UKVI.

3.2.2 The University reserves the right to not issue a CAS to any DES applicant that:

- Does not meet Home Office requirements
- The university deems has a negative immigration history
- Has had a previous visa refusal

3.2.3 Visa refusals will be reviewed on a case by case basis by Visa Compliance.

3.2.4 DES applications where the student declares they have had a visa extension due to Covid will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the PBS Group.

3.4 Review and Update

- 3.4.1 Head of Student Data and Records convenes a fortnightly operations group which oversees activities and monitoring relating to non – EEA students. Members of this group include the Student Advice Manager (Money and International), Visa Compliance Manager, International Student Support Team Leader and Admissions Manager (FEPS and PGR).
- 3.4.2 This policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure it remains compliant with Sponsor Guidance, Immigration Rules and good sector practice. If the Home Office put forward changes outside their usual cycle, this policy will immediately be reviewed.
- 3.4.3 Any changes made to DES policy requires approval from the Sponsor License Holder (which is the Chief Student Officer), the Doctoral College and members of the PBS Group.

3.5 Legislative context

- 3.5.1 Sponsorship duties for the DES are described in: [Document 2 - Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for Sponsors V. 10/2019 \(p.23\)](#)

3.6 Stakeholder Statements

- 3.6.1 Equality: N/A
- 3.6.2 Health & Safety: N/A
- 3.6.3 Other: N/A