FACTSHEET – Changing your course (Student visa holders)

If you are changing your course, you may require a new Student visa due to the academic progression requirements set by the Home Office. A change of course could mean studying a different course of same or shorter duration or academic (RQF) level of study. Possible consequences of changing your course could include:

- You may need to withdraw from your current course and obtain a new Student visa from overseas before you can start the new course.
- If you are an undergraduate student, the Home Office’s time limit may apply to you, which means the University may not be able to sponsor you for a longer course.

The University is required to report all course changes to the Home Office. This process is completed by the Immigration & Compliance team in the International Office who will check the Student visa rules in force at the time and will provide you with relevant immigration advice.

Before you decide to change your course, you should read the information provided below.

**ATAS Clearance**

If your course is subject to ATAS clearance, you must check with your school if your new course requires ATAS clearance. If so, you must obtain fresh ATAS clearance certificate before you can start studying your new course. Similarly, if you are required to make a new Student visa application because of the course change, you will need a fresh ATAS clearance as part of your CAS and visa application.

**Changing to a longer course**

Examples:
- Switching from a 3 year BEng to a 4 year MEng
- Switching from MPhil to PhD
- Switching from a one year Masters to a longer Masters course
- Switching courses as trailing modules and/or academic failure
- Switching to a longer UG course having previously studied part of another UG course

Under the Home Office’s academic progression rule, you cannot change to a longer course and continue to study with your current visa. You must withdraw from your current course and obtain a new visa for the new course from overseas before you can start studying the new course.

**Exception:** If you are adding a work placement to the course you are studying, you will be exempt from demonstrating academic progression, which means you can apply for visa extension in the UK to complete your course after you have completed the placement year. The placement however must be an assessed part of your course that you are studying.

**Changing to shorter course at a lower level**

You cannot continue to study with your current visa if you change course to a lower academic level e.g. PhD to MPhil, MEng to BEng. Due to the Home Office’s academic progression rule, the University may not be able to issue you with a CAS for a lower level course. Instead you may need to use the Standard Visitor visa route to complete your new course.
Changing to a shorter course at the same level

Examples
- Switching from a 4 year to 3 year UG course (e.g. not doing work placement)
- Switching from an 18 month to a 12 month Masters course

It is usually possible to switch to a shorter course at the same level and continue to study on your existing visa. When you complete this course the University will inform the Home Office confirming that you have completed your course early. You will also get an email confirming this. The Home Office will then curtail (shorten) your Student visa and provide you with a new visa expiry date.

Changing to a course of same level and duration

Examples
- Switching from a 3 year UG degree to different 3 year UG degree
- Switching from 1 year Masters to a different 1 year Masters course

This is usually possible if you are able to complete it within your current visa duration. However, if you have previously studied in the UK or if you are switching to a completely unrelated subject area, the University may not permit you to switch course, alternatively you would be advised to provide a fresh personal statement explaining the reasons for switching courses. The new personal statement must be in view of the following academic progression requirement:

a) The new/proposed course is related to your previous course i.e. same subject group, or
b) The previous and new course in combination support your genuine career aspirations.

Changing your mode of study

Examples:
- Changing to distance learning and/or part-time
- Changing to assessment/exam-only

You cannot study on a Student visa as it is for fulltime study, you will therefore be required to return home to finish your course. The University will inform the Home Office confirming that you are finishing the remainder of your course from overseas. The Home Office will then curtail (shorten) your Student visa and provide you with a new visa expiry date. If you are academically required to visit the University, you can opt for the Standard Visitor visa route to do so.

Change of course process

You should contact your school in the first instance. During the process you will be advised of the further steps, which may include providing a personal statement and/or withdraw from the old course. When your change of course process has finalised, the Immigration & Compliance Team will send a report to the Home Office confirming details of your new course. If you are required to apply for a new visa from overseas, the Admission team in the International Office will proceed with issuing you with a new CAS.

Immigration advice available at the University

For further advice, attend one of the term-time Immigration Drop-in Sessions (Mon & Wed 1200-1300 and Fri 1100-1200). For out of term advice, please email immigration@hud.ac.uk for an appointment.

Related links

Student route guidance