



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POLICY

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### **Related procedures**

- Attendance Monitoring and Reporting procedure
- Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Marketing, recruitment and the admission of international students procedure
- Agent recruitment and management procedure

Note: Hyperlinks have been provided for ease of reference. For other Bucks documents (italicised) please see the Policies page on the main University website (<http://bucks.ac.uk/about-us/governance-and-policies/policies>) or visit the Academic Advice webpages (<http://bucks.ac.uk/students/academicadvice>).

## Background

- 1 The Buckinghamshire New University (Bucks) *Strategic Plan 2010-2015* identified the University's developing international ambitions as being to provide international students with focused professional and creative higher education as well as broadening the horizons of our students. The new Strategic Plan 2016-2021 makes similar commitments.
- 2 Our Recruitment & Outreach Plan sets out Bucks' intention to recruit international students on a prudent and limited basis and to achieve modest growth.
- 3 The University is committed to equality and diversity, which is underpinned by the University's values.
- 4 This policy has been developed in accordance with the following documents:
  - [Supporting and Enhancing the Experience of International Students in the UK](#), QAA June 2015
  - [Tier 4 of the Points Based System: Guidance for Sponsors](#), published by the Home Office
  - [The UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), QAA

## Purpose Statement

- 5 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Bucks can assure and enhance the quality of the learning experience for all its Tier 4 international students, which is comparable with that provided for its EEA students.
- 6 This policy and procedures related to it are also intended to ensure that the University meets its immigration responsibilities and duties as a holder of a Tier 4 Sponsor license. This includes its responsibilities from first contact with an applying student until:
  - Sponsorship is withdrawn from the student by the University;
  - The student leaves the UK, or,
  - The student is given permission to stay in the UK with a different sponsor or in another immigration category.

## Applicability and Scope

- 7 This policy applies to all students who are sponsored under the Bucks New University Tier 4 Licence, whether delivery of the course is provided by or at the University or at a registered teaching site of the University.
- 8 This policy applies to all University employees who are involved in the support of international students' experiences and anyone contracted to work with international students, including Marketing & Student Recruitment staff and other Professional Service Employees, members of academic staff, quality assurance practitioners, student services managers and other senior managers.

- 9 The scope of this policy covers all aspects of the international 'student journey' from enquiry and application through to student achievement and graduation. It should be read in accordance with other University documents many of which are directly referenced and which can be located on the University website. The University Compliance and Administration Manager will be able to advise on the applicability of these documents to international students.
- 10 Bucks New University recognises its responsibility for meeting legislative and other regulatory requirements, particularly in context of meeting its sponsorship duties as a Tier 4 Licence holder (paragraph 6 above). These duties are under continual review by the Home Office; UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). While the University will endeavour to ensure that this policy and its related procedures remain current and accord to UK legislation, this policy will be superseded by any legislative or Home Office / UKVI policy requirements.
- 11 The University reviews its policies and procedures on a cyclical basis and seeks to ensure that these are applicable to all students, including international students. Where any University policy is found to conflict with the University's reporting requirements and Sponsor duties, this policy and UK legislation will take precedence.

## Responsibilities

- 12 Ownership of this policy lies with the Marketing and Student Recruitment (MSR) Directorate at Bucks New University, who will be responsible for monitoring and reviewing the document to reflect good practice, research and changes to relevant legislation and guidance of relevant regulatory bodies.
- 13 International Tier 4 students are responsible for ensuring that they act in accordance with their duties as a Tier 4 student.
- 14 All inquiries in relation to this Policy and related Procedures should be directed to the University Compliance and Administration Manager in the first instance.

## Definitions

- 15 In the context of this policy an **international Tier 4 student** is defined as a student who comes to Bucks from a country outside the European Union (EU), European Economic Area (EEA), or Switzerland to study on a Bucks course and who requires a Tier 4 visa.

## International Student Journey

- 16 The University commits to provide excellent customer experience for international Tier 4 students through quality support and guidance, provided by the relevant professional areas – both prior to joining and during their time at the University.
- 17 Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate will:
  - Provide information, advice, and support to applicants, assess applications and make offers in liaison with and on behalf of academic departments;

- Liaise with the Home Office, UKVI and other immigration bodies in relation to the University's status as a Tier 4 Licence holder, including the discharge of its specific reporting duties for international Tier 4 students;
  - Maintain specific records for all international Tier 4 students as required by immigration regulations and comply with the University's Tier 4 duties regarding record keeping and reporting
  - Assist applicants from initial inquiry through to their pre-arrival and induction;
  - Advise academic and professional service staff on the University's responsibilities as a Tier 4 Licence holder;
- 18 Student Services will:
- Facilitate international Tier 4 student welcome meetings to enable orientation and socialisation;
  - Refer students on to specialist support as and when appropriate, e.g. the Disability and Counselling Service;
  - Ensure that students are fully aware of all University services which can enhance their progress and success during the course of their studies;
  - Promote the integration and inclusion of international Tier 4 students in all aspects of university life;
  - Provide opportunities for international Tier 4 students to experience and engage with UK culture;
  - Provide regular feedback opportunities to identify and address concerns and problems faced by international Tier 4 students.
- 19 The University Compliance and Administration Manager will seek to ensure that students are notified in a timely manner of any changes to UKVI requirements and of their impact.
- 20 In advising international students and staff and in discharging their professional functions, University staff will seek to act in accordance with the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and Association for International Student Advisers (AISA) [Code of Ethics](#).
- 21 Professional Service Employees in the University with the above outlined responsibilities will be expected to attend conferences and training sessions organised by external bodies such as University and College Admissions Service (UCAS), National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), the British Council, the Home Office, UKVI, British Universities International Liaison Association (BUILA) and UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), in order to remain fully cognisant with and up to speed on any changes or amendments to the existing immigration legislation, guidance or regulations. A number of staff in the University, including within the Marketing and Student Recruitment Directorate are OISC Level 1 trained.

## Marketing, recruitment, and admission

This section should be read in conjunction with the University's *Admissions Policy and Procedures* and the *Marketing, recruitment and the admission of international students procedure*

- 22 All marketing and recruitment activities should be strategic, planned in advance, within budget directed by Marketing and Student Recruitment and guided by the *Recruitment and Outreach Plan*.
- 23 The University will endeavour to support international Tier 4 students through the admissions process, including providing support for such students with visa requirements and procedures.
- 24 The University will comply with all aspects of the Immigration Rules and sponsor guidance, and support immigration control, taking appropriate steps to ensure that every student registered on a Bucks course at the University or one of its registered teaching sites has permission to study in the UK throughout the whole period of their study and can meet the financial and other obligations necessary.
- 25 The University is committed to giving full and fair consideration to all international qualifications and will assess these on a case by case basis. The University utilises UK NARIC which provides information, advice and opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from all over the world.
- 26 The University may also consider students who have significant work experience but who may not necessarily meet the published academic requirements. In such cases, evidence must be received to demonstrate the nature, length and proficiency of such work. In each case, however, international Tier 4 students must satisfy the Home Office, UKVI's requirements as amended from time to time in order for the University to issue them with a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS).
- 27 International Tier 4 students will be required to meet minimum standard in English language proficiency to ensure that they are able to cope with the academic demands of their chosen programme. Language requirements for all students are specified in the *Admissions Policy and Procedures*, in summary our standards for English language can be demonstrated through a UKVI approved secure English language test (SELT) or approved equivalent; preferably via a verified IELTS qualification and further evidenced as part of our intent/credibility interview process (the Admissions Interview).
- 28 Other requirements considered prior to issuing a CAS and as part of the consideration of an International Tier 4 student application are; ensuring academic progression from previous study levels, checks to ensure student does not exceed time limit to study and satisfactory passing of an admissions interview. More details can be found in the *Marketing, recruitment and admission of international students procedure*.
- 29 During the application and admissions process checks are undertaken to determine a student's fees and visa status, and all offers are under terms and conditions which requires the student evidencing these at enrolment with original documentation.

- 30 Notwithstanding its legal responsibilities, the University is committed to providing a fair, consistent, transparent, effective and professional admissions service, which is consistent with good practice.

### Information for students

- 31 The University aims to recruit students who have clear potential and strong motivation to meet the demands of their chosen programme and who will fully engage with, and benefit from, studying at the University.
- 32 As such, the University will provide sufficient information to enable international Tier 4 students to make an informed choice with regard to their programme of study.
- a Information provided to applicants will be clear, concise, detailed and regularly updated, and is intended to support students throughout the admissions process.
  - b Information provided will clearly differentiate between the admissions processes for international Tier4 and UK/EEA applicants where such differences exist;
  - c Information will be provided in multiple formats and across multiple channels and media – including an International Guide, regularly updated webpages, promotional material and email communications – recognising and ensuring access for applicants from different geographical areas and / or with disabilities.
  - d Detailed information will be provided on admissions processes, application deadlines, tuition fees, financial information required and payment schedules. International applicants will also be made aware of any fee discounts, bursaries or scholarships for which they may be eligible.
- 33 The University will support immigration legislation by providing appropriate information to students on their obligations to successfully obtain and maintain their visa.

### Use of education agents

See *Agent recruitment and management Procedure*

- 34 The University recognises the need for or desire by some applicants to use Education Agents to assist them with the application process. The University will make appropriate use of such agents who will be expected to work closely with the Recruitment and Outreach Team.
- 35 In developing procedures for the recruitment and management of agents, Bucks commits to work in line with the British Council [Guide to Good Practice for Education Agents](#). The University also supports the seven principles for ethical international student recruitment, known as the "[London Statement](#)".
- 36 The Recruitment and Outreach Team will seek to ensure that it only works with education agents who will represent Bucks honestly and accurately at all times, and will add value to the application process. The evaluation and review of agent performance includes monitoring in relation to UKVI basic assessment criteria.
- 37 Applications will only be accepted from approved and contracted agents and will be subject to the same requirements and checks as those submitted directly. An up-to-date list of approved agents will be maintained and made publicly available via the University website.

- 38 The Recruitment and Outreach Team will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its agents are fully informed about all aspects of the University's provision so that they can accurately counsel prospective students. The University will support activities to train and update its agents on their duties and responsibilities.
- 39 The Recruitment and Outreach Team will also take all reasonable steps to ensure that its agents give accurate visa advice where required. To support this, the University will ensure that the information it supplies on its website and in agent communications remains current and accurate.
- 40 The Recruitment and Outreach Team will regularly review the list of education agents with which it works to ensure that all appointments remain fit in terms of their geographic location, size and track record, and / or their potential to work in partnership with Bucks.

## **Arrival, orientation, and induction**

### **Pre-arrival information**

- 41 Prior to arrival, international Tier 4 students will receive the following information:
  - Advice on documentation required for presentation at the point of entry into the UK;
  - Enrolment requirements;
  - Bucks and student responsibilities, including in respect of immigration and registration;
  - Details of orientation and induction programmes available;
  - Campus maps;
  - Learning resources services;
  - Student services, including the Accommodation Service, Student Centre, Multi-faith Chaplaincy, Counselling and Disability Services;
  - Bucks Students' Union services and activities;
  - Financial support and information, student support packages, and payment methods;
  - Answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).

### **Enrolment and registration**

- 42 On arrival students will be formally enrolled as a student of Bucks New University and will be registered on their chosen programme.
- 43 International Tier 4 students will follow the enrolment process to ensure due attention is taken when checking and verifying documents; including visas and eligibility for study with Bucks. Attendance at enrolment and registration sessions is compulsory.
- 44 At enrolment the student's identification and other documentation (as listed on the CAS) will be checked. Details of the students' passport and visa are recorded on the student file and copies taken.
- 45 By enrolling, students will gain access to University facilities and campuses, enabling them to attend lectures, seminars and workshops.

- 46 All Bucks New University students are required to provide evidence of their right to study in the UK, where anything other than a British or EEA passport (or a full birth/adoption certificate issued in the UK in partnership with National Insurance number documentation issued by a UK government agency or employer and a photo ID, for British Citizens without a passport) is supplied, all visa or travel document information is recorded on the Student Record System, including reference numbers and expiry dates.
- 47 Students will be issued with a Bucks student ID card once they are enrolled.
- 48 Students will need to re-enrol on their course at the beginning of each year of study. Physical attendance at re-enrolment sessions is compulsory for international Tier 4 students.

## Orientation

- 49 The University will provide all new international Tier 4 students with an informative orientation and induction programme, which is intended to prepare them for study at Bucks as well as living in the UK. Activities may include:
- Welcome events;
  - Day trips;
  - Informative emails throughout the year, directing to wider student activities;
  - Social media;
- 50 Compliance and Administration (MSR) will support immigration rules by taking all reasonable steps to ensure that students are aware of their visa responsibilities and the penalties for failing to comply with immigration regulations relating to their visa.

## Academic Induction

- 51 All students will receive a Programme Handbook which contains specific details of the programme on which they have enrolled, including details of academic requirements of the programme, the programme team, facilities available, study support available, and guidance on academic referencing to assist them in meeting the requirements of UK higher education.
- 52 All students will be allocated a personal tutor on admission to their course. Personal tutors will be responsible for supporting students' academic development and wellbeing. See the University's *Personal Tutoring Policy* for more information.

## Attendance Monitoring and Reporting

See *Attendance monitoring and reporting procedure*

- 53 To prevent abuse of the Tier 4 Visa system and in accordance with its duties as a Tier 4 licence holder, the University will monitor both attendances and absences of its international Tier 4 students and submit reports to the UKVI as required.
- 54 The University will retain records of its international Tier 4 students as required by the UKVI and make these available for inspection by the UKVI at any time.

- 55 In line with the UKVI Tier 4 reporting duties, the University will notify the UKVI if an international Tier 4 student:
- receives a visa refusal
  - does not enrol as expected
  - changes their course
  - defers after the Tier 4 visa has been granted
  - discontinues their studies
  - completes their studies earlier than indicated on their CAS
  - is not complying with the conditions of the Tier 4 visa
  - is subject to any other significant change in circumstances.

### **Record keeping**

- 56 Records for each international Tier 4 student will be maintained as outlined in the *Attendance monitoring and reporting procedure*.

### **Visa expiry date monitoring**

- 57 Where a student holds a visa to remain in the UK (this includes all non UK or EEA not just Tier 4 sponsored students), all data will be added to the University Student Records System. Within three months of a visa expiring the Compliance and Administration Manager will be informed and liaise with the student to ensure new leave is obtained or action is taken if the course completion date is after the visa expiry date. For Tier 4 sponsored students this will also include passport expiry monitoring. Should a student not comply with these requests the university will take action to withdraw the student and in the case of international Tier 4 students, also inform the UKVI in line with the University's reporting duties.

## **Learning, teaching, and enabling student development and achievement**

See *Learning Partnership Agreement*

- 58 The University's *Learning Partnership Agreement* has been jointly created by the University, Students' Union and the wider student body to encourage the commitment of all staff and students to the principle of partnership and to make clearer the basis on which that partnership rests.
- 59 The Bucks *Learning Partnership Agreement* expects all members of the University to treat each other with courtesy and respect. It outlines the University, student and Student's Union's respective commitments under the partnership.

### **Learning and teaching**

- 60 Learning and teaching at the University is supported by the Learning and Teaching Directorate whose work includes support for curriculum development. The Directorate has developed the Bucks CPD framework which is aligned to the [UK Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\)](#) and promotes respect for individual learners and diverse learning communities.

- 61 The Learning and Teaching Directorate works with course teams to ensure that the needs of international students are considered as part of curriculum development.
- 62 The Learning and Teaching Directorate supports frontline teaching staff and personal tutors to assist them with the development of inclusive teaching practices to support the needs of international students.
- 63 A number of study opportunities are available to international students who have a Tier 4 visa but are subject to (1) their being able to obtain a visa for the relevant country if required and (2) if they remain sponsored by the University for Tier 4 purposes during the period of external study opportunity, their ongoing compliance with Tier 4 requirements:
- The University will seek to ensure that all international Tier 4 students on work placement are appropriately supported and attendance is monitored, and will seek to ensure that their educational and cultural needs are understood by placement providers whether in the UK or overseas;
  - The University places great emphasis on the vocational nature of its courses. As such courses will often arrange study tours or trips for their students;
  - The University participates in the EU Erasmus+ exchange programme, which is open to anyone who is studying full or part-time towards a degree. Alongside Erasmus+, the University also operates a number of bi-lateral arrangements for students to study and work abroad as part of their degree.

The University Erasmus co-ordinator will be able to provide guidance on eligibility and other requirements.

Please refer to the *University Placement Learning Guide* for further information.

## Student support

See *International Student Journey* section, above, for details of how they support international students.

- 64 The University is committed to increasing the level of support – both specific and generic – that is available to international students.
- 65 All Bucks New University enrolled students, including international Tier 4 students, have the right to complain to the University and to have their complaint taken seriously. See the *Student Complaints Procedure* for more information on how to raise a complaint.
- 66 All Bucks New University enrolled students, including international Tier 4 students, have the right to appeal against an academic decision made in the context of their academic progress. The grounds for appeals and the process for submitting an appeal are established in the *Academic Appeals Process*.

## Careers and employability

See *Careers and Employability Policy*

- 67 The Careers and Employability Service is mindful of the needs of all students, including international Tier 4 students when seeking part-time and temporary work and

exploring other entrepreneurial opportunities. International Tier 4 students should be aware of restrictions on their right to work under the terms of their visas.

- 68 BucksTemps is a facility which offers opportunities for temporary roles within the University. The Careers and Employability Service monitors the rate of applications and places students into vacancies. They also offer support and guidance in relation to students seeking employment, taking into consideration a student's visa status in the UK.
- 69 The University alumni service is administered by the Careers and Employability Service and is open to all students. Employment opportunities and advice on seeking employment is regularly posted on the Alumni LinkedIn pages, which we encourage alumni to sign up to. The University will use this information to identify potential influencers for our existing students and alumni.
- 70 The Careers and Employability Service does not work directly with overseas companies but it does work with a number of multinational companies and develops opportunities for students to access these employers by means of on-site recruitment activities and engagement with Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce events. Academic departments also facilitate work-related opportunities with a range of overseas and multi-national companies as appropriate to the course.
- 71 Wherever possible, advice will be tailored to students to ensure that the most appropriate support is provided. This may include delivery of specific workshops to selected courses.
- 72 Careers and Employability Service staff undertake regular training on a range of issues to ensure the currency of support being offered to students.

## Graduation and departure

See: *Certification and Transcript Procedure*

- 73 On successful completion of their studies and following confirmation by the Board of Examiners, all students will receive a letter confirming their award together with a degree transcript which contains details and marks of the individual components studied.
- 74 All students will be invited to attend the relevant graduation ceremony where their degree will be conferred. Graduation ceremonies will normally take place in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire in the September following completion of their studies and publication of their results.
- 75 Where the gap between the completion of studies and the students graduation ceremony exceeds the extra time allowed by the UKVI at the end of their course (normally up to four months), students will be required to return home and reapply for a Standard visitor visa to attend their graduation ceremony unless they have right to remain in the UK in another immigration category.
- 76 Attendance by the graduating student will be free, but the University will charge guests who wish to attend the ceremony. Where requested, the University will issue letters of support for visa applications by guests from the student's home country to attend graduation.

- 77 During the graduation ceremony, the student will normally receive a degree certificate confirming the full title and level of their award. Students receiving their award 'in absentia' will receive their degree certificate at their registered home address shortly after the degree ceremony has taken place.

## **Review**

- 78 This policy will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure continued alignment to any legislative changes introduced during the previous academic year.
- 79 This policy also refers to material on the Bucks website. This material will be reviewed on a more regular basis to ensure web-based content remains as accurate and current as possible.
- 80 For the avoidance of doubt, where either this policy or web-based material is found not to align to UK legislation, these will be superseded by the legislative requirements.

## Appendix 1: Abbreviations and Glossary

Abbreviation	Explanation
AISA	Association for International Student Advisers
BUILA	British Universities International Liaison Association
CAS	Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies
EEA	European Economic Area
EU	European Union
NARIC / UK NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centre UK NARIC is the designated National Agency responsible for providing information advice and expert opinion on qualifications worldwide.
OISC	The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
SMS	The Sponsor Management System, an online tool provided by the Home Office; UKVI to all sponsor holders. The SMS is the primary source of information about the University's sponsor licence.
SELT	Secure English Language Test
UCAS	The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UKCISA	UK Council for International Student Affairs
UKPSF	UK Professional Standards Framework
UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration, the department of the Home Office responsible for issuing Tier 4 visas and ensuring Sponsors remain compliant.