

Graduate Route visa FAQs Feb 2023

This is a working document please ensure you are [accessing](#) the most recent version.

1. Can I book an appointment with Student Advice Service about the Graduate Route?

We currently do not offer one to one appointments regarding Graduate Route or other post study visa options as the focus of our advice work is assisting students and applicants with queries relating to their Student visa.

2. How early can I apply?

You should only apply once you are certain you meet the eligibility criteria and you've received an email from SOAS Student Visa Compliance confirming they have reported your successful course completion to UKVI. Please note that you're responsible for checking that you meet all the eligibility criteria before submitting your Graduate route application. Application fees are not always refundable if an application is submitted in error.

3. When will I know that my successful course completion has been reported to UKVI?

Confirmed results will be released via [Online Student Services](#) following review and ratification by the School Board of Exams and Assessment. This normally happens twice a year, visit the Exams and Assessments [webpage](#) for details on results. SOAS Student Visa Compliance will then send reports to UKVI and email you from compliance@soas.ac.uk to confirm that your successful course completion has been reported to UKVI.

4. How much does the Graduate route cost?

£715 application fee plus the [Immigration Health Surcharge \(IHS\)](#)

5. Are there any work restrictions on the Graduate route visa?

The only restriction is a prohibition on working as a professional sports person or coach.

6. Can I remain in the UK whilst my application is being decided and my Tier 4/Student visa has expired?

If you submit a valid application before your Tier 4/Student visa has expired, you will be protected by 3C leave. Section 3C of the Immigration Act 1971 protects applicants from becoming overstayers if the Home Office has not decided their application by the time their current immigration permission expires. It extends that permission and the conditions attached to it beyond the date of expiry until a decision has been made on the applicant's visa application.

7. Can I work whilst my application is being decided?

If you've made a valid application before your current visa has expired, you will be able to work but subject to the Tier 4/Student visa [work restrictions](#). However, if you made your Student visa application on or after 6 April 2022, you will be able to take up a permanent position whilst your Graduate Route application is pending. If you currently hold a Tier 4 or Student visa to study a part-time course, you cannot work until you receive a successful decision on your Graduate visa application.

8. When will my Graduate visa begin if I'm successful?

Your Graduate Route visa will be valid from the date it is granted by a UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) caseworker. It will immediately supersede your Tier 4 or Student visa. Visa processing times are advertised as taking 8 weeks but may be decided more quickly than this.

9. What happens if I don't successfully complete my programme before my Student or Tier 4 visa expires?

You should seek advice if you will not successfully complete your programme by the expected course end date listed on your CAS. If you need to submit outstanding work, a deferred dissertation, or sit exams after your official course end date, your visa is likely to expire before your results are ratified by the School Board of Exams and Assessment. The school boards meet twice a year, once in Summer and once in Winter in Term 1. As you will not hold a valid Tier 4 or Student visa by the time the school boards meet to ratify your results, you will not meet the eligibility criteria for the Graduate Route.

It's also important to understand that the Student sponsor rules do not allow SOAS to sponsor you for a Student visa extension unless your active engagement on your course is required. If you're not required to enrol and take part in classes such as repeating modules but only submit outstanding coursework, a deferred dissertation or sit exams, this would not meet the rules for visa sponsorship and so you could not extend your Student visa.

10. I'm a Master's student who has deferred their dissertation submission to 24 March 2023. Can I extend my Student visa so I can apply to the Graduate Route?

If you decide to defer your dissertation to March 2023, you will not be able to apply for the Graduate Route. This is because you will not have a valid Tier 4/Student visa by the time your resubmission is due and results are ratified by the School Board of Exams and Assessment. The school boards meet twice a year, once in Summer and once in Winter in Term 1.

Unfortunately, the Student sponsor rules do not allow SOAS to sponsor you for a visa extension unless your active engagement on your course is required after the date your visa expires. If you're not required to engage and take part in classes or by contact but only submit coursework, a deferred dissertation or sit an exam, this would not meet the rules for visa sponsorship.

11. I took a leave of absence and there was a break in my Tier 4/Student immigration permission, will I be eligible for Graduate Route?

[UKVI Guidance](#) states that the caseworker should count all periods of Student or Tier 4 permission which were granted to study the eligible qualification that you later successfully completed. You may wish to seek our advice if you are in this situation to assess your eligibility.

12. How do absences like short authorised absences or fieldwork outside the UK affect my eligibility for Graduate Route?

One of the requirements of the Graduate Route is that you have studied in the UK for at least 12 months whilst holding a valid Student visa. Under the temporary [Covid-19 concessions](#), you can count any time spent studying outside the UK between 24 January 2020 and 30 June 2022 as time spent studying in the UK. If you left the UK during weekends or outside of term-time this will count as studying in the UK.

Students who are on the one-year Master's programme are in term-time from April 24 2023 until the end of the programme date listed on your CAS. As your Student/Tier 4 visa sponsor, SOAS Student Visa Compliance team can authorise your absence during term-time and give permission to spend time overseas doing fieldwork or deal with emergency personal situations.

This is allowed under the Student route in certain circumstances but the Graduate route is a separate visa with its own set of eligibility criteria.

The Home Office [Graduate Route guidance](#) does not provide information about whether authorised absences or fieldwork during term-time that take place outside the UK will count as time spent studying in the UK. Therefore, it is not possible for us to advise with 100% certainty on how these absences will be interpreted by a UKVI caseworker processing your Graduate Route application. The Graduate Route application form asks you to enter information about your time spent outside the UK and your world travel history. As it is your Graduate visa application, it is ultimately your decision to take authorised absence during term-time or not. In the absence of clear guidance being available, you may wish to consider remaining in the UK until the end of your course (as listed on your CAS) if this is a cause for concern. PhD candidates will normally spend at least 12 months studying inside the UK with your Student visa so will meet the study in the UK requirement even if you do complete fieldwork overseas during your programme.

13. Will I be eligible for Graduate route if I transfer to a different programme from the programme that my CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) was issued for?

Normally you must have completed your programme during your current period of Tier 4 or Student permission, and it must be the same programme for which your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) was assigned. There are some exceptions:

- If you were allowed by SOAS to switch to a different programme without applying for new Tier 4 or Student permission.
- If SOAS changed the name of your programme without changing the content, or if you added an assessed work placement or study abroad programme.
- Your last period of Tier 4 or Student permission was granted to work as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer, and you are applying based on a qualification that was gained during a previous recent period of Student or Tier 4 permission

Please contact us for advice if you're unsure if you fall into one of these exceptions.

14. Can I extend my Graduate visa?

No, the Graduate visa is granted only once and cannot be extended.

15. Will I be able to study on the Graduate visa?

You can only study with a Graduate visa if your chosen course is not eligible for a [Student](#) visa or the place of study is not a Student visa sponsor.

16. Can I apply for the Graduate route a second time?

No, you can only apply for the Graduate route once.

17. Will I be able to switch into another visa type like the Skilled Worker?

You can switch from Graduate Route to Skilled Worker route in the UK if you find a job where the company can sponsor you. You may be able to switch to Skilled Worker visa when your Graduate visa is ending but you can only be a 'new entrant' for a maximum of 4 years worth of permission under Graduate Route, Tier 2 and Skilled Worker. This is explained further on the [UKCISA](#) website. Please note that SOAS Student Advice Service does not advise on Skilled Worker route but can provide general information only. Your Skilled Worker visa sponsor would be your main point of contact for advice.

18. Can I leave the UK whilst I'm waiting for a decision on my Graduate application?

If you leave the Common Travel Area (UK, Republic of Ireland, Bailiwick of Jersey, Bailiwick of Guernsey and the Isle of Man), your visa application will be considered automatically withdrawn so you should not leave the CTA until you receive your decision and BRP (Biometric Residence Permit) (if eligible to receive a BRP).

19. Can SOAS Student Advice Service help me with making a Graduate Route application?

We can provide general advice and guidance but as with other non-Student routes, we do not offer one to one appointments to help you with submitting your application. You can read guidance on the SOAS website and external organisations such as [UKCISA](#). We also deliver Graduate route workshops and webinars throughout the year which are advertised in SOAS email newsletters.

20. I'm financially sponsored for my course or programme; do I need any documents from my sponsor?

If in the past 12 months you've been awarded full financial sponsorship for both your tuition fees and maintenance by a government or an international scholarship agency, you will need to supply a letter of consent from your sponsor. The letter should confirm they consent to your Graduate Route application and is a validity requirement for the visa application.

21. Can I leave the UK after my programme is finished and then return to the UK to submit my Graduate Route application?

Yes, if you return to the UK before your Tier 4 or Student visa expires. At the border, you may be asked why you're returning to the UK. You should explain to a Border Force Officer that you're returning to apply for the Graduate Route visa.

22. Can I apply for a visa that is less than the standard 2 or 3 year duration?

No, UKVI will only grant the standard amount you are entitled to. You can't ask for a shorter visa duration.

23. Can I apply for settlement after Graduate Route?

Graduate Route is not a direct route to settlement after 5 years but may count toward the long residence provision where there has been 10 years of continuous leave held. You should seek advice from an external immigration adviser if you have questions about settlement or ILR as SOAS Student Advice Service cannot advise on this. You can find specialist immigration advice via the [Immigration Law Practitioners website](#).

24. Can I bring my family members (dependents) to the UK on the Graduate Route?

Only dependents that are currently in the UK as your Tier 4 or Student dependent can apply as your dependent under the Graduate Route. [UKCISA](#) provides further information about dependents.