

## **The Glasgow School of Art**

### **UKVI Student Visa Policy**

#### **Context and General Approach**

This policy establishes the GSA approach to Home Office UK Visa and Immigration compliance requirements and regulations. UK Government, Home Office and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) policies are not superseded by this policy (see <https://www.gov.uk/topic/immigration-operational-guidance>).

In order to recruit students who, require a student visa to study full-time in the UK, GSA must hold a valid Student Sponsor Licence which is issued and approved by UKVI under the direction of the Home Office and UK Government.

GSA must apply to renew its Student Sponsor Licence every four years. It must ensure compliance with the UKVI regulations and that the responsibilities of being a sponsor are being upheld. Moreover, it must be able to provide evidence of compliance if requested to do so by UKVI by way of a visit or audit. Failure to prove compliance to UKVI in event of a visit or audit can result in the immediate suspension or revocation of the Sponsor Licence.

#### **Precepts and Procedures**

##### **1.1 GSA Contact with UKVI**

Communication with UKVI should only be made by the Glasgow School of Art's UKVI Authorising Officer or nominee, key contacts and staff authorised to use the premium service.

##### **1.2 Responsible Persons**

A Responsible Person is defined as the member of GSA staff, normally the Programme Leader or Head of Department that is responsible for the selection and attendance/engagement monitoring for Student Visa holders on their programme of study. In the case of postgraduate research students, the Responsible Person is the Head of Doctoral Studies. Changes to the Responsible Person for a programme must be made in consultation with the Authorising Officer.

GSA will deliver an annual UKVI Staff Briefing Sessions run by Academic Registry (Student Visa) for the Responsible Persons. The briefings are mandatory for Responsible Persons with other relevant staff members being encouraged to attend.

##### **1.3 Student Recruitment**

The Responsible Persons must ensure that when making an offer of study, the applicant meets the following UKVI requirements:

- Academic Suitability
- Academic Progression (if the student has previously studied in the UK)
- English Language Proficiency

Academic Registry will provide guidance on this at the annual briefing and are available to provide advice upon request.

#### 1.4 Issuing of Certificates of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)

Before a student can apply for permission to enter or remain in the UK on a Student Visa, GSA must assign a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). This confirms that the student has been given an unconditional offer of a place on a programme of study with a licensed Student Sponsor and is required by the student for their visa application.

Academic Registry will undertake additional checks on offers made to applicants in order to ensure UKVI compliance. On receipt of an unconditional acceptance of an offer and the £1,000 non-refundable deposit, Academic Registry will issue via email, a CAS to the student for their visa application.

#### 1.5 Student Welfare

Student Welfare support students and prospective students with advice and information regarding Student visa requirements. They also provide support to continuing students with advice concerning visa extensions and the impact of taking a leave of absence/changing programme whilst studying on a student visa.

#### 1.6 Enrolment and document checks

New students enrolling at the start of the Academic Session will normally have to have the documents used in their visa application verified.

Academic Registry will identify and check the validity of the following original documents of all sponsored students. Key documents are:

- Passport
- Visa (Biometric Residence Permit and 30-Day Vignette) / online visa status (for EU students)
- Academic evidence as stated on their CAS
- English language evidence as stated on their CAS (if applicable)

A copy of all documents will be made and held for five years (or the duration of studies of the student, if longer) on the student's file for audit purposes. Failure to produce the original documents may result in a student not being allowed to enrol. Students who attempt to enrol with a student visa sponsored by another institution will be required to apply for a student visa sponsored by The Glasgow School of Art prior to being allowed to enrol.

In addition to the document check taking place at for new students at the start of the Academic Session, all Student Visa holders will normally be asked to attend a session in Semester 2 in order to ensure BRP cards and passports remain valid.

#### 1.7 Attendance and Engagement Monitoring

In addition to the original document checks, Academic Registry will issue monthly requests to the Responsible Person for confirmation of student attendance/engagement with their studies. This is normally requested in the first week of each month. It is the duty of the Responsible Person for each programme to confirm attendance and sign off the sheet returning it within 5 working days. The attendance monitoring spreadsheets will be held on a central UKVI record by Academic Registry for audit purposes.

The Responsible Person should retain all evidence used to monitor attendance/engagement as UKVI, Registry or an internal audit may request to see these. All evidence used to monitor attendance should be retained locally in a convenient format for **five** years and Schools must have mechanisms in place to have this information accessible at all times.

Where possible, Schools are expected to be able to evidence which points of engagement they are using to monitor attendance and it is recommended that this should be done weekly. For students undertaking stage 3 of their Master's programme it is acceptable to evidence confirmation of attendance/engagement on a fortnightly basis.

The Responsible persons for students studying at PhD level should be able to evidence student attendance/engagement at least every 14 days.

### **Acceptable evidence**

Acceptable evidence is intended to ensure a student's academic participation with their programme at a scheduled teaching event or meeting whether in-person or through remote means is satisfactory and meets the UKVI requirements.

Types of acceptable evidence include:

- Logging on to an online learning portal
- Online submission of coursework (i.e. via Turnitin/Canvas etc.)
- Evidence of attendance at virtual lectures, seminars and tutorials
- Confirmation of an academic meeting from personal tutor/departmental tutor/course tutor
- Confirmation of an academic meeting from the student's Primary or Secondary Supervisor
- Annual progress reviews
- Viva
- Evidence of Skype or email engagement.

### **Non-Engagement**

GSA is required to demonstrate to UKVI that non-engagement is acted on swiftly and effectively. As such students should make every effort to ensure they engage with all scheduled teaching events/meetings. Any student visa holder who fails to engage with their scheduled classes or meetings, without authorised absence or extenuating circumstances, risks their Student Visa being withdrawn. Students should therefore contact their department if they are not able to attend scheduled teaching events or meetings.

The UKVI requirement is for the reporting of non-attendance once 10 contact points are missed. Contact points are scheduled and regular formal contacts which contain an academic element (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials, project supervision meetings, practical classes or workshops, supervised time in studio or workshop) as defined and noted locally by each Responsible Person. Scheduled formal contacts must be at least fortnightly in frequency. Unconfirmed sign-in sheets

should not be used. If a student cannot attend a scheduled defined formal contact point as a result of an extended field trip, this should be recorded as an authorised absence with fortnightly contact being maintained via email or video call.

When a student fails to regularly attend, standard GSA academic practice requires internal action to be taken in a shorter timescale than that prescribed by UKVI. However, to ensure UKVI compliance, 10 contact points must not be breached.

Registry must also be notified by the Responsible Person when they have any information that may suggest that a student visa holder may be engaging in terrorism or other criminal activity.

### ***Joint Programmes***

Where programmes are run jointly with other institutions, the lead institution must provide in writing the arrangements in place for monitoring the attendance of those on student visas. Programme Leaders at each institution are required to separately monitor and report the attendance of all students on visas and keep each other informed of their findings and/or concerns. Any information provided to the lead institution must be made in a timely fashion to allow it to comply with UKVI reporting requirements.

### ***Work Placements (or equivalent) or studying elsewhere as part of your studies.***

If a sponsored student is on a work placement (or equivalent) or studying elsewhere, as part of their studies at GSA, for a period greater than two weeks, the Responsible Person must seek and receive confirmation of attendance from the employer or hosting institution at least fortnightly. Correspondence between the Responsible Person and the employer/hosting institution should be retained for audit purposes. The sponsored student must not be part of the communication process or this may be perceived as not being a sufficiently robust process.

Academic Registry must be notified immediately by the Responsible Person if confirmation of attendance is not received. In addition, the Responsible Person must ensure that the employer is aware that they must report unauthorised non-attendance to GSA immediately.

Students who are required as part of their professional qualification to participate in a Professional Practice Year Out (PPYO) will not be sponsored by GSA on a Student Visa for this purpose. If the student finds suitable work in the UK, it is the responsibility of the employer to sponsor them to remain in the UK during this time. If the student is unable to find suitable employment in the UK, they will be expected to return home once their existing leave to remain expires. GSA will resume sponsorship duties by issuing a CAS to apply for a new Student Visa when the student returns to continue their studies.

## **Student Responsibilities**

2.1 All students who successfully apply and are issued with a Student Visa sponsored by GSA must:

- Arrive in the UK not more than 30 days prior to the start of their programme of study.
- Attend all enrolment sessions as requested and provide their passport, visa along with academic and English language evidence as stated on their CAS.
- Maintain an acceptable level of attendance on their programme.
- Notify Registry immediately of any change to their contact details or circumstances.
- Not work more than 20 hours per week during term time or as stated in their BRP.
- The above responsibilities will be monitored by each Responsible Person and Academic Registry as noted in this guidance.
- Not engage in terrorism or other criminal activity.

## **UKVI Requirements and Definitions**

### 3.1 Contact Details

A history of all students' contact details (U K residential address, and telephone number) must be retained and updated immediately it changes by contacting Academic Registry.

### 3.2 Working on a Student Visa

All those on a Student Visa at GSA who are studying on a degree level programme or above are allowed to:

- work for up to 20 hours per week during term time
- work full-time during vacations
- do a work placement as part of their course (i.e. learning in a working environment for a period of two weeks or more)
- work as a Student Union sabbatical officer for up to 2 years

### 3.3 Academic Progression

Academic Progression is when a student undertakes a course of study in the UK at a higher QCF/SCQF level from their previous course of study in the UK. GSA will not make an offer of study to a student who does not satisfy the Academic Progression without clear justification and confirmation that immigration rules are being followed. Where a Responsible Person/Academic Selector is aware of previous study in the UK by an applicant and it is not indicated on the application, it is their responsibility to inform Academic Registry.

### 3.4 English Language Proficiency

English language proficiency is normally evidenced by a UKVI approved SELT (Secure English Language Test) at the required level for entry. Please check with Academic Registry for the current list of acceptable alternative English Language qualifications.

### 3.5 Maximum Duration of Study

Students are limited to a maximum of 5 years in the UK studying at degree level or above when being sponsored. There are however notable exceptions, which are:

- An undergraduate degree which is four or five years long and the student wishes to study a Master's degree at a higher education institution (recognised body or institution in receipt of public funding)
- The student wishes to study a PhD at a higher education institution
- The student is studying on an exempt course: architecture, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine and science, law, music studied at a conservatoire

### 3.6 Maintenance Funds

All students being sponsored to study in the UK must be able to evidence to UKVI when applying for their visa that they have sufficient funds for payment of their full tuition fee and nine months of living costs. currently set at £1,023 per month for students studying outside London.

If a student has dependants, an additional £680 per month for each dependant (up to nine months) must for evidenced.

All students are required to evidence that they have adequate funds in their bank accounts for the 28-day period required by UKVI in order to obtain a Student Visa.

If a student is unsuccessful in their application for a visa due to insufficient funds, GSA will require the student to evidence that they have the required funds in an accepted bank account prior to issuing a new CAS.

Janet Allison, Academic Registrar  
Barrie Leith, Registry Team Leader (Admissions)  
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