

Research Degrees: Guidance notes series

9. STUDENTS STUDYING UNDER A TIER 4 STUDENT VISA

Author Graduate Studies

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Key Principles

1. All students seeking advice relating to visas should contact the International Support Team in the first instance by either contacting internationalsupport@solent.ac.uk or visiting the Student Hub, located in the Andrews Building.
2. The final decision regarding extension of a visa is at the discretion of Graduate Studies with the advice of the Hub, Admissions Manager and International Support Team.
3. Support from the University for a visa application does not guarantee the approval of a visa application from the Home Office.

Admission

4. Upon acceptance of an offer to study, students requiring a Tier 4 student visa to study in the UK are asked to pay a deposit of £2000 before Graduate Studies can raise a CAS number (Confirmation of Acceptance to Study). Graduate Studies will ask for confirmation of payment from the Income Team before starting the process.
5. Raising a CAS number can take up to three working days. Copies of all original documentation are required before raising a CAS; the original documents will need to be verified at registration.
6. The course start date will be at least four weeks after the CAS has been raised.
7. Students **must** meet with Graduate Studies on their exact start date to complete their registration. Failure to do so will result in their CAS number being cancelled.
8. Students may register and commence their studies with the University whilst their Tier 4 visa application is pending with the Home Office. However, they must show evidence that they have a current application with the Home Office and sign the 'Tier 4 visa disclaimer form' as requested by Graduate Studies.
9. Students are strongly advised to apply for their Tier 4 student visa through the University batch scheme available from the International Support Team.
10. If a student's visa application is later refused by the Home Office, their registration at the University is terminated immediately.

Changes to registration status

11. The University informs the Home Office of all suspended or withdrawn international students holding a Tier 4 visa. Students with an illness exceeding a consistent six week period would be required to suspend their registration. For further information on Home Office Tier 4 Policy, students are advised to visit Southampton Solent University's International Team pages on the Portal. They may also contact internationalsupport@solent.ac.uk for further information.

Attendance Monitoring

12. The University is legally required to monitor the attendance of Tier 4 visa-sponsored students. In alignment with this requirement, research students must visit Graduate Studies at each contact point throughout the year, of which there are ten. Details of these contact points are provided to students at the beginning of each academic session.
13. Where a student is unable to attend a contact point, students must seek approval for their absence from a member of their supervisory team using the **RD11HA** form and they must have the request logged in by Graduate Studies in advance.
14. Students who fail to attend a contact point without a satisfactory reason approved by a member of their supervisory team and recorded on their **RD11HA** form, must report to Graduate Studies in person on the next working day.
15. **Failure to attend on the next working day will result in the initiation of a staged withdrawal process** resulting in the student being withdrawn from their programme of study and reported to the Home Office.
16. Students and supervisors are expected to meet on a regular basis and are required to keep a written record of all of their supervisory meetings. Students and supervisors must be able to show such records to Graduate Studies upon request.
17. Supervisors who are concerned by a student's lack of engagement with their research should contact Graduate Studies immediately.

Applications for visa extensions

18. Students who may need to apply to extend their student visa should seek advice at the earliest possible opportunity.
19. The University calculates end of registration dates on CAS applications by the thesis submission date plus three months to take into account time for the viva examination.
20. If students foresee a problem in submitting their thesis on time, in addition to seeking advice from their supervisory team, they should contact Graduate Studies and the International Support Team to seek advice immediately with regards to the implications this will have on their visa.
21. A student may need to apply to extend their visa once the outcome of their viva examination is known. However, students must be aware of the following:
 - a) Students given minor amendments are not permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa
 - b) Students given substantive amendments may be permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa
 - c) Students given a resubmission of their thesis may be permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa
 - d) Students awarded an MPhil are not permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa
 - e) Students failing without the right to resubmit are not permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa

Following the student's viva examination where they may be permitted to extend their Tier 4 student visa (20 b and c), the Director of Studies and Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator must confirm to Graduate Studies in writing whether or not the student needs to remain in the UK to carry out the required amendments. If the Hub Postgraduate Research Coordinator deems it unnecessary for the Tier 4 student to remain in the UK, then the visa will not be extended.