



Home Office

2025 Spring Rules: Student Policy Changes

Introduction

From 9 April, changes will come into effect for the Introduction to the Immigration Rules, Appendix Short-term Student, Appendix Student and Appendix Graduate of the Immigration Rules. From 29 May, changes will also come into effect for Appendix Child Student of the Immigration Rules. You can find a copy of the statement of changes to the Immigration Rules and the explanatory memorandum, which were both laid in Parliament today, here: [Statement of changes to the Immigration Rules: HC 733, 12 March 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Changes coming into effect from 9 April

Appendix Short-term Student (English Language) – *Genuine student rule*

A genuine Short-term Student rule will be added to enable caseworkers to refuse applications where they are not satisfied the applicant has a genuine intention to study the course listed on their application and/or to leave the UK at the end of their course.

Appendix Student

PhD students following their academic supervisor to a new institution

A change will be made to Appendix Student to exempt PhD students from Academic Progress requirements if they are following their academic supervisor to another education sponsor to complete their studies. This change will allow the PhD student to apply for further permission from inside the UK to complete their course, rather than having to leave the country to do so.

Removal of post graduate doctor/dentist provisions

Changes have been made to remove the provision in Appendix Student for Health Education England (HEE) to sponsor students following recognised foundation programmes as Doctors or Dentists in training.

This provision is no longer required as HEE have decided to stop sponsoring users of their foundation programmes in this way and have subsequently surrendered their student sponsor licence. Access to these programmes is now provided via the Skilled Worker route, where HEE continue to provide sponsorship as a work sponsor.

As a result, the PGDD provision in the student rules is no longer required and we are now removing it from the rules, including references in the Graduate route and Immigration Rules Introduction

Changes coming into effect from 29 May

Appendix Child Student – *Safeguarding*

The Child Student immigration route is for children between the ages 14 to 17 who wish to study at an independent school in the UK. A number of changes will be made to improve safeguarding on this route:

- Carers of international students for periods lasting less than 28 days (nominated guardians) will have to meet the same requirements as those for close relatives and private foster carers, including a requirement to provide a letter of undertaking.
- A new list of permitted living arrangement categories has been created. Applicants must specify which arrangement they will be entering into. The financial requirements section has also been updated to align with this new list.
- Caseworkers will also be given broader powers to refuse Child Student applications where the Child Student's carer in the UK has committed a relevant criminal offence, or they pose a safeguarding risk to the applicant once they are in the UK.

In the student sponsor guidance, we will also be introducing an additional duty on Child Student sponsors, requiring them to make reasonable endeavours to collect information on travel arrangements for students with a nominated guardian. Sponsors will have to:

- keep records of when the child is arriving,
- record details of the person collecting the child,
- record where the child will be staying if they are not proceeding directly to school, and
- report to the relevant authority if the child does not enrol at school.

Please note: we recognise it won't always be possible to collect this information due to circumstances outside of the sponsor's control but sponsors should keep a record of their reasonable attempts to do so.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Q&A

Genuine student rule in Appendix Short-term Student (English Language)

Why are you introducing a genuine student rule?

We have increasing concerns that this visa route is being abused by those without the genuine intention to study or leave the UK at the end of their course. The rule change will give strengthened powers for caseworkers to refuse visa applications that are suspected of being non-genuine.

It will also align the route with the Student and Child Student routes which already have a genuine student rule.

Are additional documents required to support a Short-term Student visa application in order to pass the genuine Short-term Student requirement?

There are no additional mandatory documents required for the route in light of the changes. However, the onus continues to remain on the applicant to show they meet the eligibility requirements of the Short-term Student route, including the genuine Short-term Student requirement. Short-term Students should provide sufficient evidence of their personal circumstances for caseworkers to be able to assess the credibility and genuineness of their application.

Updated Short-term Student guidance will be published in line with the new immigration rules detailing how Short-term Student applications will be considered against the new genuine Short-term Student requirement.

PhD Students following their academic supervisor to a new institution

Why are you making this change?

PhD students wishing to follow their supervisor to another institution have experienced interruption to their studies and carried additional expenses by having to leave the UK to apply for new permission. This rule change allows the student to experience a smooth transition from one sponsor to another with minimal interruption to their education. It recognises the fact that PhD supervisors are often chosen for their specialist knowledge and expertise in the student's research area, and other members of staff at the same institution may not hold that specialist knowledge.

How can the student and sponsor demonstrate that a student is following their supervisor?

The new sponsor will need to make a note on the CAS stating the student is following their supervisor and will be continuing their PhD programme. The student can then submit their Leave to Remain (LTR) application from inside the UK.

Will the student and sponsor need to do anything differently during the visa application process?

No, there are no changes to the visa application process. The rules now allow PhD students following supervisors to another institution to apply for new permission from inside the UK instead of leaving the UK to apply for new permission. The rest of the application process remains the same.

Will students be eligible to claim a refund of overlapping payments for the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)?

Periods of overlapping IHS payments will be refunded automatically when the leave to remain application has been granted.

Can students begin studying at the new sponsor whilst the application is being considered?

Yes, students can begin studying at the new sponsor when they have submitted their LTR application.

Will the student need a new ATAS if their course requires it?

Yes, a new ATAS certificate will be needed before the student can begin studying at the new sponsor.

Removal of the Postgraduate Doctor and Dentist provision

Why are you removing the PGDD provision from the student route?

Health Education England (HEE) have surrendered their student sponsor licence in favour of concentrating their sponsorship activities as a work sponsor. As they are the only sponsor able to sponsor Postgraduate Doctors or Dentists via the Student route, the surrender of their licence means the provisions in Appendix Student of the Immigration Rules for this cohort are now surplus to requirements.

Can international students still use the student route for medical and dentistry degrees?

Yes, these changes do not affect such students. A PGDD means a student undertaking a recognised Foundation Programme with HEE following completion of a recognised degree in medicine or dentistry in the UK.

Does this limit access to the UK for international medical and dentistry graduates?

No, the provisions are being removed from Appendix Student as they are effectively obsolete. HEE is already able to sponsor the postgraduate doctors/dentists through the skilled worker route, where they already hold a licence.

Will the requirement to have previously been granted permission as a Student, for at least two academic years, which must include the final year, of their UK bachelor's degree or above in medicine or dentistry apply to applications on the Skilled Worker route?

No, this requirement doesn't exist on the Skilled Worker route and there aren't any plans to add it. Whilst the Student route was only open to postgraduate doctors/dentists who had come through UK universities, the Skilled Worker route caters equally for those who studied overseas.

Does removal of foundation programmes in Medicine or Dentistry from the list of relevant qualifications mean that Doctors and Dentists aren't able to use the Graduate route?

No, this reference is being removed as it is obsolete once the provision is removed to follow these programmes on the Student route. Graduates of medical or dentistry degrees remain eligible to access the Graduate route via GR 5.1.

Safeguarding on the Child Student route

Why are you making these changes?

These changes are designed to strengthen safeguarding measures on the route and ensure Child Students are placed into appropriate living arrangements.

What is a nominated guardian?

A nominated guardian will be defined in the immigration rules as:

A person aged 18 years old or over who is appointed by the Child Student's parent, legal guardian, or school as the Child Student's carer in the UK outside of term-time for less than 28 days and/or is the school's emergency contact in the UK for the Child Student.

The person cannot be:

- a private foster carer
- a close relative the Child Student is living with during term-time
- the Child Student's parent or legal guardian who has permission as a Parent of a Child Student

What is a letter of undertaking?

This is a letter provided by the Child Student's intended carer in the UK which confirms they have agreed to undertake the care, as well as confirming details such as their

address and contact number. The full list of details can be found in the statement of changes.

What are the permitted living arrangements?

- Full boarding at a residential independent school during term time, and outside of term time living with a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a nominated guardian (for a period of less than 28 days)
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative
- Weekly boarding at a residential independent school during term time, and at weekends and outside of term time living with a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative
- Flexi boarding at a residential independent school and also being cared for by a person who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK and either:
 - a private foster carer
 - a close relative
- Living with a private foster carer or close relative who is a British Citizen or settled in the UK
- Living with a parent or legal guardian who has permission as a Parent of a Child Student
- Aged 16 or 17 and living independently.

What will be considered a relevant criminal offence/how will you assess safeguarding risk?

An example of a relevant criminal offence is one in the UK or overseas for which the person has received a custodial sentence of 12 months or more. Caseworkers will also have the power to refuse applications where they are not satisfied there are appropriate care, living and, where applicable, guardianship arrangements in place for the applicant's safety whilst in the UK.

You can find the full list of relevant criminal offences in the statement of changes. The Student and Child Student caseworker guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Why are these changes being made at a later date than the rest of the student rules?

Amendments to our internal IT systems and the application forms were needed which meant more time was required.

Will the sponsor need to provide details of the living arrangement on the CAS?

Sponsors will have to confirm the living arrangement category the Child will enter into in the UK.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance and SMS CAS guide will be updated with further information on 29 May.

Why is the sponsor duty only required for children with a nominated guardian?

We believe sponsors should have more oversight of these arrangements as nominated guardians are not within local government's safeguarding remit in the way that private foster carers are.

What happens if the sponsor cannot obtain details of travel arrangements?

Sponsors should make reasonable efforts to obtain details of travel arrangements for those on the Child Student route with a nominated guardian. Where this is not possible, they should retain records of their endeavours to collect the information, and where it is necessary, report this to the relevant authority.

The Student Sponsor Duties guidance will be updated with further information on 29 May.