

Student Visa responsibilities 2023-24

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DISCLAIMER

This document has been created in order to provide students of Aberystwyth University with an overview of their Student Visa responsibilities. The guidance in this document applies to students holding Student Visas and those holding Tier 4 Visas. Tier 4 terminology was replaced with Student Visa from October 2020.

This document should not be considered as a FULL representation of the legal requirements concerning compliance with the student visa regulations and/or relied upon in a specific student's case.

Student visas are the responsibility of the visa holder. Aberystwyth University will not be held responsible for a student's lack of compliance with the regulations set out by UK Visas and Immigration.

Please note that the following information is correct at the time of publishing and Aberystwyth University reserves the right to revise its policies and procedures concerning compliance with its Home Office sponsor duties at any point during the academic year. Aberystwyth University will not be held responsible for any omission or for any loss or damage arising from the use of this handbook.

Please ensure you access the most up to date copy of the Student Visa Responsibilities handbook throughout your studies at Aberystwyth University by visiting <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/compliance-information/>. It is your responsibility to ensure that, in order to protect your immigration status, you fully understand the immigration rules and monitor any changes to legislation and immigration rules while you are in the UK. Please note that the Home Office may revise their policies and that immigration law is subject to change.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aberystwyth University is recognised as a 'sponsor' under the Points Based System and must comply with its sponsorship duties as specified by UK Visas & Immigration. If Aberystwyth University fails to comply then it could lose its license to recruit and sponsor international students.

As a visa holder you have responsibilities which you must take seriously. If you do not take your responsibilities seriously, this could lead to Aberystwyth University reporting you to UK Visas & Immigration which would have implications for your visa.

This handbook explains the reporting and record-keeping responsibilities of

Aberystwyth University as your immigration sponsor under the Points Based System. It also states the responsibilities of students holding a Student Visa based on regulations set out by the Home Office. Student Visa holders must comply with these regulations in order to protect their immigration status and their right to legally remain in the UK as a student.

By enrolling at Aberystwyth University, you agree to comply with the responsibilities listed in this document. Failure to comply with any of the responsibilities mentioned in this booklet may affect your visa status and your right to study in the UK.

You are also advised to see the advice provided by the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) regarding the protection of your visa status at www.ukcisa.org.uk/.

Changes to your student status are reported to the Home Office using your Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) number through the UK Visas & Immigration Sponsorship Management System (SMS).

You must respond to any emails sent to you by the University promptly and especially to any emails relating to your visa.

2. BEFORE REGISTRATION

Aberystwyth University is required to keep:

- a copy of your entry vignette (if applicable)
- a copy of your current passport
- a copy of your current visa (Biometric Residence Permit BRP or digital visa)
- copies of any previous visas in the UK (if applicable)
- copies of academic transcripts / certificates (if applicable)
- copy of English Language proficiency (if applicable)
- copy of ATAS certificate (if applicable)

Your responsibility:

2.1. New Students

As a new student of Aberystwyth University, you will be required to attend an International Students Pre-enrolment Document Check taking place at the beginning of the academic year prior to registration.

International Students Pre-Enrolment Check

The UKVI Compliance Office will send you details of how to book an appointment for a Pre-Enrolment Check. These sessions are compulsory and every student holding a Student visa must attend. You will need to bring the following documents with you:

- your current passport
- your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) (if applicable)
- academic transcripts / certificates (if applicable)
- copy of English Language proficiency (if applicable)
- copy of ATAS certificate (if applicable)
- Students NOT in university accommodation need to bring proof of address in the form of a signed contract with a private provider

You should make every effort to arrive in Aberystwyth by the course start date (see website for details on [dates of term](#)).

Early / late arrivals

Students who arrive before or after the course start date (who are unable to attend a Pre-enrolment check) will be provided with information about how to book an appointment for a Pre-enrolment check with the UKVI Compliance Office on alternative dates.

Please note that you will not be able to register until you have attended an in-person Pre-enrolment check.

If you are going to arrive after your start date you must inform the UKVI Compliance Office as soon as possible. If you have not arrived in time to meet the latest registration date noted on your CAS we have a responsibility to inform the Home Office and to withdraw sponsorship of your visa. Your visa will be curtailed. If you are not in the UK, you will not be able to travel to and enter the UK. If you are in the UK, you must leave immediately to return to your Home Country so as not to become an overstayer. Overstaying will have serious consequences for any future immigration applications that you make, including applications for countries other than the UK. For further advice on overstaying please see UKCISA's website:

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Protecting-your-Student-status>

2.2. Returning Students

If you are a returning student who has failed to provide a copy of your updated passport and/or visa, you will not be able to take part in the online registration and you will also need to attend a Pre-enrolment Check. Once you present your up-to-date immigration documents, you will then be allowed to register for the continuation of your course. Failure to show any requested documents will prevent you from continuing with your course and you will only be allowed to return to your studies once you can present the appropriate immigration documents that show that you have a legal right to stay and study in the UK.

3. CENSUS

Aberystwyth University holds Census events each academic year. These are compulsory events. All non-first year Student Visa holders will be required to attend a census event in semester 1 and you will be sent details of this at the start of semester 1 if you are required to attend. Additional census events may be held at other times of year for different groups of Student Visa holders. You will be sent details in good time if you are required to attend.

You will need to bring the following documents with you to the Census event:

- AU Student Card
- current Passport,
- current Student visa / BRP (if you have a digital visa, you will not have this)

You will also be asked to confirm your current term-time address and other contact details.

4. UPDATING CONTACT DETAILS

Aberystwyth University is required to keep up to date contact details for you. You must ensure that your contact details are up to date on your Student Record.

Your responsibility:

4.1. Updating the University

You must ensure that the contact details held on your Student Record are up to date. You must record on your Student Record a valid Home Address, Home telephone number, your current Term address and UK mobile/phone number.

What is a Home address?

Your Home address is the address at which you are staying in your Home Country. A Home address cannot be an address based in the UK if you are a Visa Student.

What is a Term address?

Your Term address is the address at which you are currently staying while studying at Aberystwyth University. A Term address must be an address in Aberystwyth or within 30 miles of Aberystwyth. If in doubt please contact compliance@aber.ac.uk.

You should inform the University of any changes to your contact details by updating your Student Record as soon as the change occurs. You will also be asked to confirm up-to-date details during a Census event.

The Compliance Office is automatically informed of any changes you make to your Student Record. If there are any issues with the details you provide on your Student Record, you may be contacted to provide clarification.

4.2. Updating the Home Office

You are required to inform the Home Office of any changes to your contact details during your studies. This includes your phone number, email address and your temporary address if you are likely to stay there for more than six months.

You must also report changes to your personal details or circumstances in order for your right to remain and study in the UK to be protected.

Please note that the way in which you will need to update the Home Office varies depending on whether you would like to do so from outside the UK, whether you are in the UK and hold a valid BRP or whether you are in the UK but do not have a BRP.

For more information, please visit www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp.

If you lose your BRP or if your BRP is stolen, you must inform the Home Office as soon as possible. If your lost or stolen BRP was about to expire, you must apply for a replacement. (<https://www.gov.uk/replace-brp>). The International Student Adviser (immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk) can assist you with this.

5. UPDATING IMMIGRATION STATUS

Aberystwyth University is required to keep up to date evidence of your immigration status including a copy of your UK Biometric card.

Your responsibility:

If you extend your visa in the UK you will receive a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or a digital visa from the Home Office. You must present your BRP / digital visa to either the International Student Adviser or the UKVI Compliance Office so that your Student Record can be updated accordingly.

Failure to provide up to date evidence of your entitlement to remain and study in the UK will put the continuation of your studies at risk.

If, during your studies at Aberystwyth University, you need to apply for a new passport or for a visa extension, it is your responsibility to do so in a timely manner and before the expiry date.

If your passport and/or visa is due to expire you will receive e-mail notifications from the University's International Student Adviser. The email notification will ask you to present your new passport and/or make provision to apply for a visa extension well before your visa expires. Please treat such e-mails as very important and urgent and reply to them immediately.

Please note that it is your responsibility to update Aberystwyth University's UKVI Compliance Office (compliance@aber.ac.uk) of any change to your immigration status.

The International Student Adviser is also able to provide you with advice and information and you are welcome to contact them at immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk.

6. CHANGE OF IMMIGRATION CATEGORY

Aberystwyth University is required to report to the Home Office any changes to your immigration category and update your student record accordingly.

Following changes by the Home Office which came into effect from 17 July 2023, Visa Students will no longer be able to switch out of the student route until they have completed their course, except for PhD students who are permitted to switch into the Skilled Worker route after they have completed 24 months towards their PhD.

Your responsibility:

If you have changed immigration category you must inform the UKVI Compliance Office by e-mailing compliance@aber.ac.uk. You will need to present original proof of the change, by bringing your new visa / other immigration documentation to the UKVI Compliance Office.

If your circumstances change and you are no longer subject to immigration control, you must inform the UKVI Compliance Office immediately and provide proof of your new status.

If you have questions about changing immigration status please contact the International Student Advisor at immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk.

7. ATAS CERTIFICATE

Aberystwyth University is required to keep a copy of your Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate where applicable.

What is an ATAS certificate?

It is a compulsory entry clearance requirement for those wishing to study as Postgraduate students towards a PhD or a Master's degree in certain subjects. For further information on the scheme and the subjects that require an ATAS certificate please see www.gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme

Your responsibility:

You are required to check whether you need an ATAS certificate. After receiving an ATAS Certificate from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, you must submit a copy to the UKVI Compliance Office by e-mailing compliance@aber.ac.uk.

If you are changing course and are not sure whether you need an ATAS certificate for your new course, please contact immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk for further guidance.

8. FAILURE TO ENROL, RE-REGISTER OR CONTINUE WITH STUDIES

Aberystwyth University is required to inform the Home Office of any student, who failed to enrol on their course within 10 days of the latest registration date.

Your responsibility:

8.1 Permanent Withdrawal: When you no longer wish to continue studying at AU

If you have decided not to continue your degree at Aberystwyth University, you will need to complete an online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form. This can be found on your Student Record under the title 'Academic Record'.

Please ensure that before making the final decision about discontinuing your studies and **before** completing the online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form you have contacted your academic department and the International Student Adviser (immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk) so that you can receive advice about the implications for your visa of a possible withdrawal.

Once you have submitted the online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form you have 3 days to cancel your withdrawal request. After that period, once your withdrawal request has been processed by central registry, we will inform the Home Office and withdraw sponsorship. The Home Office will curtail your visa and, as you will no longer have the right to remain and study in the UK, you must leave the UK. If you fail to do so, you could risk becoming an overstayer. Overstaying is a criminal offence and can have serious implications for any future immigration applications you make in the UK and in other countries.

If you have decided to study (transfer) or work elsewhere in the UK, you will need to provide us with details of your new university or employer.

We are required by the UKVI to report a change in immigration category or a change to another visa sponsor (university).

8.2 Temporary Withdrawal: You wish to have a break from your course

If you decide to take a break from your studies but want to return to complete your course at Aberystwyth University at a later date you will need to complete the online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form requesting a Temporary Withdrawal. This can be found on your Student Record under the title 'Academic Record'.

Before making the final decision and **before** completing the online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form you should contact your academic department and the International Student Adviser (immigrationadvice@aber.c.uk) so that you can receive advice about the visa implications of a possible withdrawal.

Once you have submitted the online 'Notification of Withdrawal' form you have 3 days to cancel your withdrawal request. After that period, once your withdrawal has been processed by central registry, we will inform the Home Office and withdraw sponsorship. The Home

Office will curtail your visa and, as you will no longer have the right to remain and study in the UK, you must leave the UK. If you fail to do so, you could risk becoming an overstayer. Overstaying is a criminal offence and can have serious implications for any future immigration applications you make in the UK and in other countries. If you are not in the UK when you decide to temporarily withdraw, please note that you will not be able to enter the UK.

When you decide to return to your studies you will need to apply for a new Student Visa and you will need a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS).

Please contact the International Student Adviser (immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk) at least 3 months prior to returning to your studies.

8.3 Failing your coursework / exams

In the event that you are not able to progress on your course, the University is required to inform the Home Office and withdraw its sponsorship, as your course will have finished earlier than planned. Once this has been reported to the Home Office, your visa will be curtailed, you will have to return to your Home Country. If you have decided to transfer to another university in the UK, you will need to provide details to the UKVI Compliance Office as this can impact on your right to remain in the UK.

It is very important that you submit coursework and attend your exams as this can affect your academic progress. You must inform your department (please see the list of the Departmental Compliance Contacts on the compliance web pages here) immediately if you are unable to meet a coursework deadline or attend an exam.

8.4 Arriving late

If you are going to arrive late when you start your course, or following a vacation period, you must inform the UKVI Compliance Office as soon as possible. If the delay is caused by a genuine reason, the University will inform the Home Office of the circumstances.

If you fail to enrol on your course at Aberystwyth University, we have a responsibility to inform the Home Office and to withdraw sponsorship of your visa. Your visa will be curtailed. If you are not in the UK, you will not be able to travel to and enter the UK. If you are in the UK, you must leave immediately to return to your Home Country so as not to become an overstayer. Overstaying will have serious consequences for any future immigration applications that you make, including applications for countries other than the UK. For further advice on overstaying please see UKCISA's website:

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Protecting-your-Student-status>

9. CHANGE OF CIRCUMSTANCES

Aberystwyth University must report changes to a student's circumstances within 10 days of the circumstance being confirmed.

Changes we are required to report and what you need to do are listed below.

9.1. Change of study location

If you are planning to change the location of your study, you must inform the UKVI Compliance Office immediately.

Here are some examples of changes of study location:

9.1.1. Writing up from Home (PGT)

If you would like to write up your Master's dissertation from your home country you will need to request approval from your department. Your department will only approve the request if you have attended all required teaching sessions, have completed all required laboratory work and have discussed with your supervisor how supervision can be delivered remotely. If approval is given, you will need to inform the UKVI Compliance Office. The University will withdraw sponsorship and your visa will be curtailed. Although your visa will be curtailed, you will remain a student until the end of your registration.

You will not be able to return to the UK on your Student Visa once sponsorship has been withdrawn.

You should check the terms of any loan / scholarship you may be in receipt of to ensure you comply with those conditions. If you are a student from the USA in receipt of a US Federal Loan you should notify usloans@aber.ac.uk.

9.1.2 Exchange Programme or Study Abroad

If you are interested in participating in an Exchange programme or Study abroad for a period of time during your studies, you will need to contact the UKVI Compliance Office to discuss the implications for your visa. The University will report the location and duration of your exchange to the Home Office.

To satisfy engagement monitoring requirements, you will need to obtain signatures each month from a relevant contact at the partner institution. The UKVI Compliance Office will provide you with the attendance form. After the form has been signed each month, you should forward it by email to the exchange/Erasmus co-ordinator of your home department at Aberystwyth University as well as to the UKVI Compliance Office. You must send the e-mail with the completed form attached before the end of each month. If you do not provide a signed form your attendance will be recorded as "Unauthorised Absence" and this places your visa at risk.

9.1.3. PGR students - Writing up from home or conducting research abroad

Postgraduate Research Students who have agreed with their supervisor to write up from home or conduct research abroad must inform the UKVI Compliance Office immediately and prior to departure.

If you are writing up from home, the University will report this to the Home Office and withdraw sponsorship. Your visa will be curtailed and if you need to re-enter the country e. g. for your PhD viva voce, you will need to enter the UK on a Visit Visa. Please note that you can only return home to write up when you are in your 'Abeyance'/'Writing Up' period.

It is important that you understand that in choosing to end your visa early you will not be eligible for the Graduate Route visa after you complete your course. This is because a key condition for eligibility is that a student holds a valid/current Student Visa with time remaining on the permission. You should consider this in your decision making.

If you are conducting research abroad, withdrawing sponsorship will depend on the duration of that research and you can discuss this more with the UKVI Compliance Office.

If the length of the research duration demands the withdrawal of sponsorship, your visa will be curtailed, and you will need to apply for a new visa in order to continue your studies based at Aberystwyth University.

In each of the above cases it is your responsibility to amend your contact details via your Student Record and to inform the UKVI Compliance Office of the address of the new study location.

9.1.4. Undertaking fieldwork for PGR students

The University must inform the Home Office within 10 days of a student leaving to undertake fieldwork. This is recorded as 'Change of Study Location' and does not impact on the student's visa.

It is your responsibility to ensure that the UKVI Compliance Office is aware of your plans to undertake fieldwork and is informed prior to the fieldwork taking place. Whilst undertaking fieldwork you must maintain e-mail contact with your AU supervisor to discuss the work undertaken and to provide any available evidence of such work. These e-mails must be forwarded to the Compliance Office in a timely manner and as described in detail in the

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/compliance-information/engagement-and-attendance-monitoring/>

9.1.5. Split Site Study

Split site study is where a student spends a percentage of their study time at a different location as stated on their CAS. If you are undertaking split site study, you

will need to inform your department and the UKVI Compliance Office in advance of leaving for your external organisation.

You will need to confirm the following:

- Departure date (provide flight booking confirmation)
- Name of organisation (where you will be undertaking your external study)
- Name of your external supervisor
- Date you will be returning to Aberystwyth

These details will be reported to the Home Office, and it will be recorded as a 'Change of study location' which will not impact on your visa.

Please note that it is your responsibility to collect evidence from your external supervisor that you are attending and engaging with your studies. You must obtain the signature of your external supervisor once a month on the Split-site study form which the UKVI Compliance Office will send you. You are also required to maintain email contact (at least once a month) with your AU supervisor to discuss the work undertaken and to provide any available evidence of such work. The signed attendance form along with evidence of contact with your AU supervisor must be sent by e-mail to your academic department before the end of each month. Failure to send this evidence will be recorded as "Unauthorised Absence and/or non-engagement". This could put your visa at risk.

9.2 Work Placement

If you undertake a work placement as part of your course, the Home Office will need to know the location and duration of that placement. You cannot be on a work placement for more than 50% of the total length of your course. The University remains responsible for you whilst you are on the work placement.

If you undertake a work placement that has been approved by the University and is connected to your studies, you must provide the following information by emailing compliance@aber.ac.uk before your placement starts. The University is required to pass this information to the Home Office:

- Name of the organisation offering the work placement;
- Address of the organisation;
- Reason why the work placement is a necessary part of your studies;
- Start and end date of the work placement.

It is your responsibility to make all of the necessary arrangements for obtaining clearance to enter the country of the work placement, but you are welcome to contact the International Student Adviser (immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk) for advice.

It is also your responsibility to collect evidence from your employer that you are attending your placement. You must obtain the signature of your employer once a month. The signature must be recorded on the Attendance Monitoring Form that the UKVI Compliance Office will provide. This form must be sent by e-mail to your academic department and to the UKVI Compliance Office once a month. It is your responsibility to ensure that the form is properly signed and submitted before the end of the month. Failure to send this evidence will result in an “Unauthorised Absence” being recorded on your attendance record. This could put your visa at risk.

9.3. Change of course of study

If you are interested in transferring to another course at Aberystwyth University, you will need to obtain approval from your current department (and from your new department if you are transferring between two different departments). You must also discuss the possible change of course with the International Student Adviser prior to making a formal decision as changes may have an impact on your visa.

Once the transfer has been approved by the University, the Home Office will be informed of the change. You must ensure that you inform the Compliance Office that you are transferring to another course.

9.4. Finishing a course earlier than expected

The University is obliged to tell the Home Office if you complete your course earlier than expected.

For example, if you are a PhD student who is awarded their PhD earlier than the course end date stated on your last CAS, the University must inform the Home Office of the actual date that you completed your PhD.

Once the early completion has been reported to the Home Office, your visa will no longer be valid and you must either leave the UK or make a new visa application with the Home Office to change your purpose of stay in the UK.

9.5. Re-sit Exams

There are two types of re-sits as follows:

9.5.1. Internal Resit

In some cases, the University will recommend that you re-sit a year of study “in attendance”. The University will expect you to re-register to repeat a whole year of study. In this case, you will need to extend your visa for another year, due to the

repeat year. Please be aware that the Home Office has set a limit of 5 years on the amount of time that can be spent studying in the UK at degree level. Students with more than one re-sit year may be affected by this time cap. Further information on the time limits can be found on UKCISA's Time Limit (Cap) on Study at <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk>.

9.5.2. External Resit

In other cases, the University will require you to be withdrawn from study due to failed exams, which means that you cannot progress to the next level of the course until you have re-taken the re-sit exams. You will be required to leave the UK; the University will report the change of circumstances to the Home Office and will withdraw sponsorship. The report to the Home Office will result in curtailment of your visa. When you have successfully completed your resit(s) and are ready to return to Aberystwyth University to continue with your course, you will need to apply for a new visa with a new CAS.

If you need to return to the UK to re-sit your exams you will need to do this on a Visit Visa. You will need to contact the UKVI Compliance Office before traveling to Aberystwyth University to re-sit your exams.

10. VISA REFUSALS

Aberystwyth University must report any visa refusals to the Home Office within 10 days of being made aware of the refusal.

Your responsibility:

You must inform the UKVI Compliance Office immediately of any visa refusal notification you have received from the Home Office by e-mailing compliance@aber.ac.uk. You must include all pages of the refusal notice you have received from the Home Office in the format of a PDF document. If you need advice following the visa refusal, please contact the International Student Adviser by e-mailing immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk.

11. ENGAGEMENT & ATTENDANCE MONITORING

In accordance with Home Office policy, Aberystwyth University is required to monitor the engagement and attendance of Student Visa students on a regular basis. Full details are provided in the <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/compliance-information/engagement-and-attendance-monitoring/>. This is available on the Student Visa Compliance website.

Your responsibility:

The University monitors your attendance at timetabled contact points (e.g. lectures, seminars, practicals) via the Student Attendance Monitoring System (SAMS). Attendance at exams, submission of coursework in person, and meetings with supervisors for PGR students (and PGT students during the dissertation element) are also defined as contact points for attendance monitoring purposes. The method of monitoring engagement will depend on your course level and whether you are studying in Aberystwyth.

Failure to comply with the University's Student Engagement and Attendance Monitoring Policy, for example, by missing consecutive contact points, may result in an official warning and / or a meeting with the University's UKVI Compliance Office. More serious breaches of this policy, for example, missing exams, coursework deadlines and/or persistent avoidance of expected contact points) will lead to severe penalties that could result in exclusion from the University, withdrawal of sponsorship and curtailment of your visa. Failure to comply with your visa requirements in the UK can also impact on any future visa applications for the UK or any other country. Therefore, you are advised to take your engagement with your studies seriously and to ensure that you do not miss contact points without good reason.

If you are not able to attend a teaching activity or an exam or you cannot submit your coursework on time, please contact your personal tutor as soon as you become aware of any circumstances that may qualify as an acceptable reason for absence and/or late-submission.

The Home Office does not require universities to monitor attendance or engagement during recognised vacation periods. Aberystwyth University's recognised vacation periods are:

Study Level	Excluded Period
Pre-Sessional English Course	None
International Foundation Programme (Pre-Masters)	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Undergraduate	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation, Summer Vacation
Postgraduate Taught	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Postgraduate Research	PGR students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year. Vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with their research and any teaching events.

Note that the summer vacation is only applicable to undergraduate students and that **Postgraduate Taught students** are studying full-time while working on their dissertation. During this period, Postgraduate Taught students must meet their supervisor at least once a month to discuss their progress and to provide a brief summary of what was discussed. Supervisors will confirm that a meeting has taken place.

Postgraduate Research (PGR) students are also studying full-time throughout the academic year unless they have requested and been granted authorised absence up to a maximum of 8 weeks per calendar year (PGR students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year and any vacation must be taken in the remaining 8 weeks of the year). It is good practice for PGR students that are on authorised vacation to keep contact with their supervisor by email.

12. AUTHORISED ABSENCE

The University is required to monitor engagement and attendance during term time (<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/about-us/dates-of-term/#term-dates-for-session--->)

Authorised absence must be sought outside of recognised vacation periods and is determined on a case-by-case basis. **Please ensure that authorised absence requests have been submitted and approved before finalising your travel arrangements.**

Unauthorised absences will count as missed contact points and could lead to your exclusion from the University and the curtailment of your visa. **Retrospective permission will not normally be granted.**

This process safeguards you and your visa as you will be able to prove to border officials that you have permission to be away from the University during term time.

12.1 Postgraduate Research (PGR) Students

AUTHORISED ABSENCE PROCESS for Postgraduate Research (PGR) students	
STEP 1	Student to contact their Academic supervisor requesting Authorised Absence by stating: a) Where they are going b) How long for c) Why
STEP 2	Academic Supervisor to assess request and if happy to authorise the absence they must state in writing (by e-mail) that “they approve and that this absence will not impact on the student’s current latest submission date”. They will then need to forward the request to the Departmental Compliance Contact.
STEP 3	Departmental Compliance Contact to forward the Authorised Absence request to the UKVI Compliance Office (compliance@aber.ac.uk)
STEP 4	UKVI Compliance Office to assess and authorise request and produce a letter to be used by the student when travelling abroad

12.2 Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Undergraduate (UG) Students

AUTHORISED ABSENCE PROCESS for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Undergraduate (UG) students	
STEP 1	Student to contact their Departmental Compliance Contact requesting Authorised Absence and for the purpose of travelling the student must state: a) Where they are going b) How long for c) Why
STEP 2	Departmental Compliance Contact will forward the request to the relevant member of staff to seek approval in writing.
STEP 3	Departmental Compliance Contact will forward approval of the Authorised Absence request to the UKVI Compliance Office (compliance@aber.ac.uk)
STEP 4	UKVI Compliance Office to assess and authorise request and produce a letter to be used by the student when travelling abroad and will ensure that the student's SAMS record is updated to reflect Authorised Absence and any notes are added as appropriate.

13. WORKING WHILE STUDYING

Your visa - either the passport sticker (entry clearance or residence permit) or your biometric residence permit (identity card) or your digital visa - will state whether you have the right to work while you are in the UK.

Further information is available on UKCISA's website via the following link:

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Student-work>

Employers have a legal obligation to check that you are allowed to work in the UK, and you must be able to provide evidence of this by showing your visa. You must also provide your employer with information regarding term and vacation dates for your course in order for them to know when you can work part-time (term-time) or full-time (vacation period). This information must be in one of the following formats:

- A printout from the University's website showing the term and vacation dates for your course (this information can be found at www.aber.ac.uk/en/dates-of-term/);
- A letter or e-mail from the University confirming your term and vacation dates (please request this from the International Student Adviser at immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk);

Home Office guidance on the checks that employers must make and where they should go to check a person's entitlement to work is available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/illegal-working-penalties-codes-of-practice-for-employers>

13.1. Undergraduate Students

As a Student Visa undergraduate student (studying at degree level or above), you are allowed to work part-time (a maximum of 20 hours per week) during term time provided that it is stated on your visa. You can work full-time during vacation periods.

Vacation periods for undergraduate students at Aberystwyth University are:

Study Level	Excluded Period
Pre-Sessional English Course	None
International Foundation Programme (Pre-Masters)	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Undergraduate	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation, Summer Vacation

13.2. Postgraduate Students

If you are studying towards a Postgraduate Taught course (Master), you can work a maximum of 20 hours per week during term time provided that it is stated on your visa. You can work full time during vacation periods.

Please note that when you are working on your dissertation this is not vacation period for you as you are studying full-time. During those months, you are limited to working part-time as stated on your visa until you have submitted your dissertation and no longer have any pending academic commitments.

Vacation periods for postgraduate students at Aberystwyth University are:

Study Level	Excluded Period
Postgraduate Taught	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Postgraduate Research	PGR students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year. Vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with your research and any teaching events.

Postgraduate Research students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year. Vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with your research and any teaching events.

If you are a Postgraduate Research student you must be studying at Aberystwyth University and be based in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year.

Any vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with your research and any teaching events. You will need to seek approval for your period of vacation in line with the Authorised Absence process.

You are permitted to work up to 20 hours per week during term-time provided that this is stated on your visa. You should not assume that you can work full-time during summer time or any other time of the year where there are no specific teaching activities.

14. NON-GENUINE STUDENTS

Unfortunately each year we receive reports from UKVI of people using the student route to enter the UK with no intention to study. The University is required to report any cases of non-genuine students to the Home Office.

Where there are concerns that a Visa Student is not a genuine student studying and not engaging with the course in Aberystwyth we will arrange a meeting with the student and may ask for additional supporting evidence that shows they are genuine. This may include, but is not limited to:

- proof of address,
- payment of fees,
- statements from personal tutors/academic department,
- proof of use for halls of residence
- academic engagement such as attendance, submission of work and use of online course materials
- attendance records.

15. GRADUATE ROUTE AND COMPLETING YOUR COURSE

On 1 July 2021 the Home Office launched a new Graduate Route Visa.

If you successfully complete your course and pass initial eligibility requirements, you may be able to apply for the Graduate Route Visa. If you are eligible for this visa the University is required to report this to the UKVI, even if you do not intend to apply.

On successful completion of your course the UKVI Compliance Office will inform you when your eligibility has been assessed and whether the Home Office has been informed.

You can only apply for this route if you do not intend to study another course in the UK.

If you are an undergraduate student who has completed your course of study, you may receive a notification that they you are eligible for the graduate route. However, if you intend to study a postgraduate course in the UK you should apply for a new Student Visa.

More details about the Graduate Route Visa are available here:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/sscs/visa-support-advice/post-study/graduate-route/>

16. USEFUL INFORMATION

Please contact the UKVI Compliance Office at compliance@aber.ac.uk for more information and/or clarification regarding your responsibilities whilst studying at Aberystwyth University.

Please contact the International Student Adviser at immigrationadvice@aber.ac.uk for any visa advice and support. The International Student Adviser can also help you with your visa application, help you if your visa is not granted and also help you if you lose your passport or Biometric Residence Permit.

The following weblink provides that names and contact details of each Departmental Compliance Contact: <https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/compliance-information/departmental-compliance-contacts/>

Recognised Vacation Period For AU Students

The Home Office does not require universities to monitor engagement or attendance during recognised vacation periods. These vary by course type and you should check the University Term Dates webpage for details for your course.

Here are Aberystwyth University's recognised vacation periods:

Study Level	Vacation Period
Pre-Sessional English Course	None
International Foundation Programme (Pre-Masters)	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Undergraduate	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation, Summer Vacation
Postgraduate Taught	Christmas Vacation, Easter Vacation
Postgraduate Research	PGR students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year. Vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with their research and any teaching events.
Postgraduate Research	PGR students must be studying in Aberystwyth for 44 weeks per academic year. Vacation must be taken when appropriate in line with their research and any teaching events.

Student Engagement & Attendance Monitoring Policy.

This policy is available on the Student Visa Compliance webpage:

<https://www.aber.ac.uk/en/academic-registry/compliance-information/>

You will be asked to enter your AU username and password to access the document.

17. USEFUL EXTERNAL INFORMATION

Eligibility and Requirements for Student or Visitor Visas

For information about the eligibility requirements please refer to the Home Office website at <https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration/student-visas>

Public Funds

For information about Public Funds please refer to the Home Office website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-funds--2>

Caseworker Guidance for Home Office staff assessing Student Visa applications.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/points-based-system-student-route>

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) www.ukcisa.org.uk

Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)

For information about the Regulated Qualifications Framework please refer to the Ofqual website at: <https://www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification>