

Skilled Worker Sponsorship

A comprehensive guide for departments and colleges

December 2025



Microsoft Teams Training

Microphone:

- Due to the number undertaking training, please mute or turn off your mic.

Questions:

- The training will be broken into sections, with a 'pause' at certain points for questions.
- You can type in questions in the chat panel or turn on your mic to ask.

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What we do

- Advise departments, colleges and visa holders on:
 - Global Talent, Skilled Worker and Tier 5 process and requirements
 - ILR and British citizenship
 - Right to Work checks
 - Visitor immigration requirements
- Process Skilled Worker and Tier 5 Certificate of Sponsorship applications and hold all data for Skilled Worker and Tier 5 visa holders centrally.
- Manage complex cases and matters of non-compliance with external legal input where necessary.
- Support any EU/EEA Frontier worker applications and any staff applying late for the Pre-Settled/Settled status due to reasonable grounds.
- Provide regular training on Global Talent, Skilled Worker, Tier 5, right to work and visitors visas.
- Represent the collegiate University's comments and concerns with immigration policy to the Home Office.
- Provide assurance to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on immigration and right to work compliance.

Contents of today's session

- Compliance
- The Points-Based System and Skilled Worker overview
- Sponsorship criteria
- Certificate of Sponsorship request
- Visa application
- Visa holder's arrival in the UK
- Changes during employment
- Visa extensions
- Changing employment
- Visa restrictions and conditions
- Application fees

Compliance

- Home Office rules are complex, onerous and inflexible...but compliance is mandatory
- Oxford have a good relationship with the Home Office and have lobbied successfully in the past for key changes
- Consequences of non-compliance with Home Office rules:
 - Down-grading of the University's sponsor licence to a B rating - would not be able to sponsor new applicants from overseas
 - Withdrawal of the sponsor licence - **all** sponsored visa holders would have to leave the University and the UK
 - Up to £20,000 fine for **each** illegal migrant
 - Up to 2 year prison sentence and/or an unlimited fine if illegal workers are employed knowingly

A breach of Home Office requirements from a single college or department (including those who do not have any Skilled Worker or Tier 5 sponsored visa holders) may result in serious consequences for entire Collegiate University.

Points-Based System

Global Talent

- For highly skilled academics and researchers, and those in the arts and digital technology
- Accelerated routes for external funded posts, Individuals Fellowships and Senior Academic and Research appointments

Skilled Worker

- Worker with a job offer, and sponsored by the University

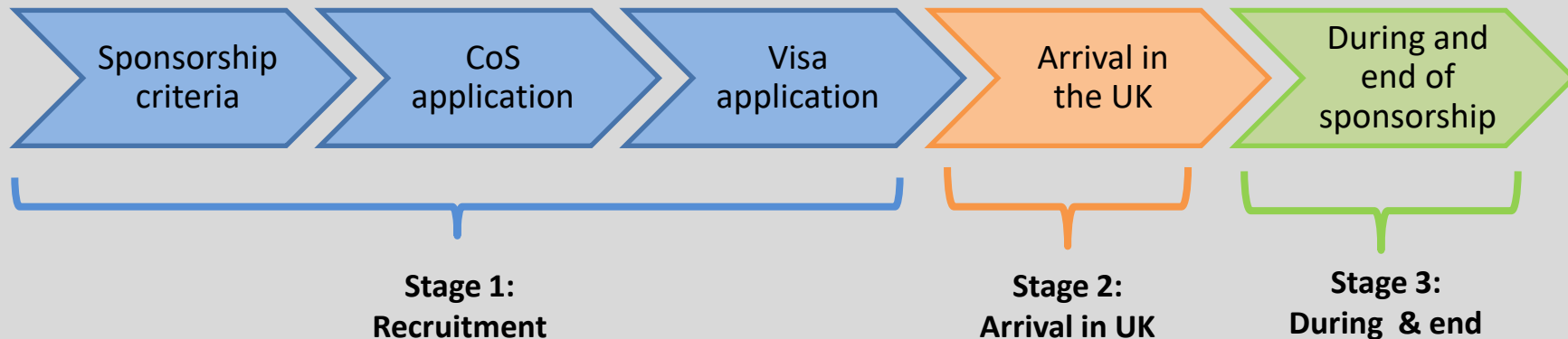
Student Visa

- Managed by Student Immigration team
- Graduate Scheme – DPhil – 3 years post study visa, all other graduates – 2 years

Tier 5

- Government Authorised Exchange (supernumerary researchers, lecturers, external examiners)
- Youth Mobility Scheme (for people under 31 from qualifying countries)

Skilled Worker process



Data to be sent at each stage to be held centrally by SIT

Stage 1: recruitment – using CoS form

Stage 2: arrival in UK – using Arrival form

Stage 3: during/end of employment – using changes & leaver form

Questions



STAGE 1: RECRUITMENT

Skilled Worker visa holder

- Non UK/Irish nationals who require a visa to work in the UK
- Undertake a **‘skilled’ role** as defined by the Home Office
- **Salary** meets the threshold for the specific role they are appointed to
- Appointed to a **‘genuine’ vacancy**
- Hold University/college contract of employment
- Paid via University/college payroll

Skilled Role

SIT assess job description against Home Office job codes – **not something HR teams, PIs/ academics/ hiring managers, or applicants can or should research themselves**

SIT will be as flexible as possible but **cannot try to change the role or job code we have stated is appropriate to make a role sponsorable** – *we would lose our license!*

SIT cannot check every role – **check with SIT if chosen candidate requires visa – provide JD, copies of passport(s), qualifications & CV, all UK visas**

[22 July 2025 rules changes](#) Home Office reduced list of sponsorable job codes using Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) levels to classify Skilled Worker job codes as either skilled (RQF 6 – ‘PhD level’) or lower skilled (RQF 3 – 5).

PLEASE NOTE: ‘PhD level’ just used as term for these job codes for higher skilled roles, does not mean in all cases a PhD/DPhil must have been specified in job description, or that applicant must hold a PhD/DPhil.

Most Skilled Worker visa applications within collegiate University (96.7% of the applications since 2020) are for RQF 6 roles which can still be sponsored, as long as relevant salary thresholds can be met.

Skilled Role *(continued)*

Instead of simply removing lower skilled (RQF 3 – 5) roles from Skilled Worker visa route, changes are designed for employers/ sponsors to transition away from using visa holders for these roles, with Skilled Worker sponsorship still permitted where:

Skilled Worker visa holder already working in role under RQF 3 – 5 job code **before 22 July 2025 changes** – can extend visa to continuing working in same or similar role, or apply for new Skilled Worker visa for new role under same job code with different employer/ sponsor; **OR**

New Skilled Worker application being made for role under RQF 3 – 5 job code, but only if that code appears on a new Temporary Shortage List. They can apply for Skilled Worker visa **but cannot apply for Dependant visas for partner & children.**

Where RQF 3 – 5 job code is not included in Temporary Shortage List it is no longer possible to sponsor a new Skilled Worker application.

Temporary Shortage List is temporary – job codes only on list until 31 December 2026 but could be removed sooner. 178 (59.5%) of Skilled Worker job codes classified as RQF level 3 – 5, of these 113 (63.5%) not on Temporary Shortage List.

Skilled Role *(continued)*

Types of roles within collegiate University which fall under RQF 6 & RQF 3 - 5 job codes discussed in latest **(13 August 2025) SIT immigration & right to work bulletin**

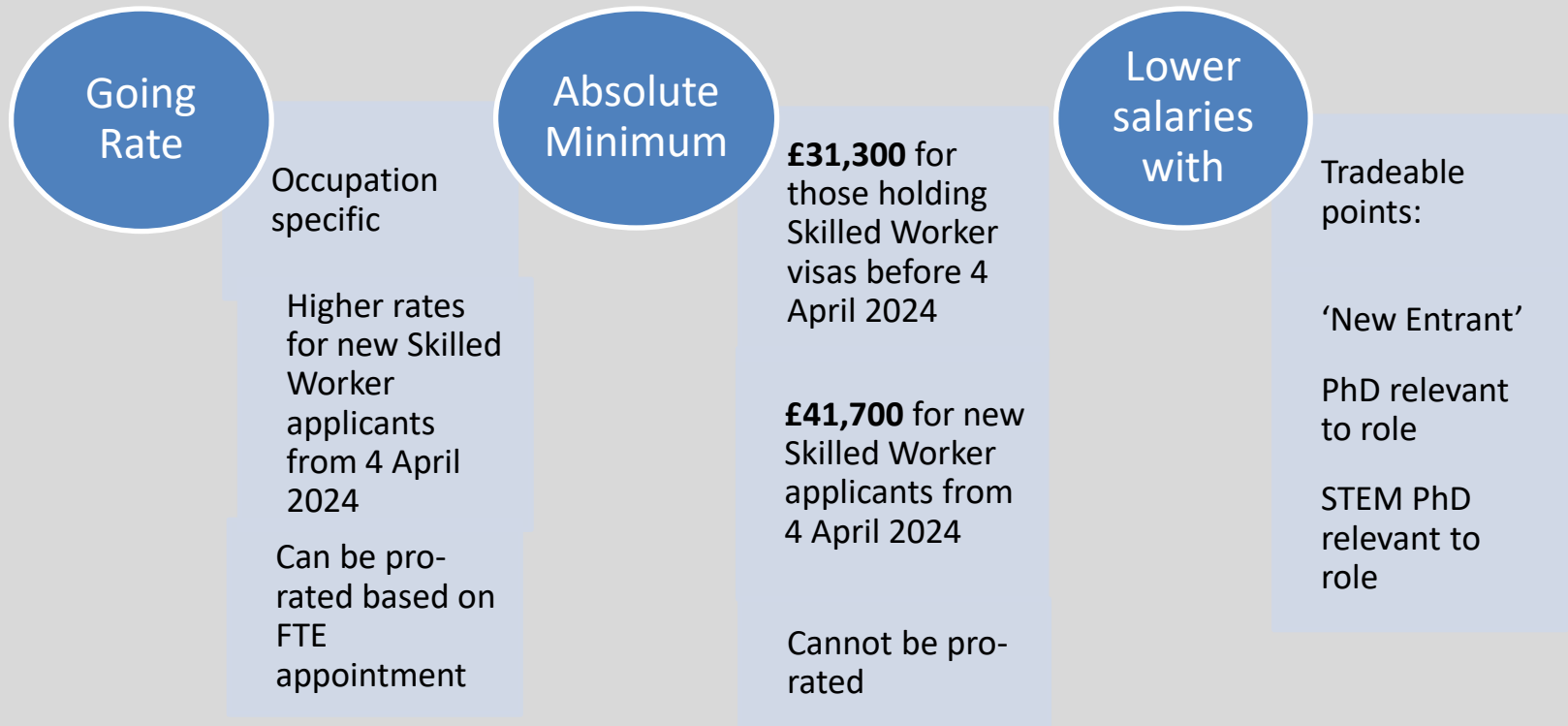
If you did not receive SIT bulletin please email sit-administration@admin.ox.ac.uk to request to be added to SIT mailing list. ***Please note: SIT mailing list & update bulletins are only for HR staff within collegiate University***

Skilled Worker requirements now more complicated - SIT recommend against mentioning in job descriptions whether or not role may be sponsorable. If receive queries from applicants/ candidates explain details of chosen candidate are required, so advice & assistance provided when/if they are chosen for the role.

If chosen candidate needs a visa, SIT happy to advise on Skilled Worker & other visa routes. If no visa routes possible revert to second choice candidate.

More efficient & manageable for you & SIT to discuss after selection completed instead of continuing very large & increasing volumes of queries on roles before selection has been completed, where in many cases a visa is not required.

Salary



Salary must meet 'going rate' or 'minimum' threshold, whichever is higher

Lower versions of the 'going rate' and 'minimum' thresholds apply with tradeable points

Allowances cannot be included in the salary calculation

Salary threshold & calculations are complex – SIT will advise – no need to research yourself

Salary – tradeable points

Job on **Immigration Salary List** – not relevant to roles within University

PhD OR STEM PhD relevant to the role – will need explanation how relevant to the role & how it is a STEM subject to include when issuing CoS

‘New Entrant’

- Under 26 on the date of their Skilled Worker visa application
- Hold or last held (within the past 2 years) a Student (Tier 4) visa having completed their studies, or at least 12 months of study towards a PhD
- Switching from a Graduate visa
- Job is a ‘postdoctoral position’ – falls under the 2311 lecturer/ teaching or 2119 or 2162 job codes used for research roles
- **NOTE: 4 year ‘New Entrant’ limit includes time spent under Graduate & Tier 2/ Skilled Worker visas so lower ‘New Entrant’ salary may work but may limit length of Skilled Worker visa & could be an issue when go to extend if cannot then meet normal higher threshold**

Genuine Vacancy

- Job description accurate to the requirements of the role, and duties have not been inflated to meet skills level
- Applicant meets the skills, experience and qualification requirements as detailed in the Job description
- Think carefully about wording of qualification – refer to [SIT guidance](#) on how to describe PhD/near to completion
- Role is in line with the universities scope and plan

Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS)

A CoS is a Home Office database record which shows details of the post the applicant will be filling.

- Request a CoS from SIT approx. 3 months before start date / visa expiry date
- Late submission = possible delay in start date
- Submit CoS application form and documents electronically
- Put supporting documents in one folder – password protect the folder using 7Zip
- Email applications to [Staff Immigration Advisor](#) – mark as confidential & include 'Skilled Worker', applicant's name & start/ visa expiry date in subject line

CoS application form

- Excel based form found at <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/skilled-worker-initial-cos-application-form>
- Provides drop downs, notes, error messages and sections greyed if not applicable
- Staff Immigration Advisor will check and return comments on the right hand section

Key areas of the form:

- **Previous UK visas** – 6 year limit & ‘cooling off period’ no longer apply but need for ILR
- **Maintenance** – default position is the employing department/college certifies this requirement if required during first month of employment, otherwise the applicant has to evidence **£1,270** of personal savings, plus **£285** for partner, **£315** first child, & **£200** each additional child, held for **28** days, prior to date visa application is submitted.
- **Residential address** and any visa status for where the applicant is currently resident
- **Employment details** – start date, end date, salary, main duties
- **Record-keeping** and reporting declaration
- Checklist for **supporting documents**
- **Declaration** – to be completed by key contact/ responsible delegated person

CoS application form

Ensure applicant prepares:

- Evidence to meet the **English language** requirement, *either*
 - a) national of an English-speaking country as defined by the Home Office
 - b) has been awarded degree from a UK institution
 - c) has been awarded a degree taught entirely in English and have this confirmed by UK ENIC (*previously called UK NARIC*) to level B2 (if applicable)
 - d) has passed a Home Office approved English language test to level B2
 - e) previously met the English language requirement when applying for a UK visa
- Undertakes **TB Screening**, if resident in a listed country or countries for longer than 6 months. Further info & countries list: <https://www.gov.uk/tb-test-visa>
- Sponsorship for 'Senior professionals of educational establishments' roles (rarely used) must also submit criminal record certificate to cover last 10 years.

CoS application form

- Applicant may need to obtain an **ATAS certificate** from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) if;
 1. Undertaking an element of research at PhD level or above in an area that could be used to develop military technology, and weapons of mass destruction
 2. Not on the nationality exempt list
 - EU/EEA nationals, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and the USA

Process

- Identify all relevant [‘CAH Codes’ using the spreadsheet](#)
- If ATAS required HR issue a letter to individual, using [HR Template Letter](#)
- Individual submits a free online application to FCDO
- Certificate received in approx. 2 weeks, although can be up to 4 weeks in busy period.

CoS cannot be issued until ATAS certificate obtained.

Questions



Visa/leave to remain application

- SIT issue CoS to applicant by email with details on how to apply for their visa. Email copied to department/college HR contact
- Advise applicants to apply as soon as possible – to avoid delay in start date
- Must apply no later than three months after CoS is issued (CoS expires after three months)

Application process:



Online application

Main applicant, and each dependant

Staff Immigration Advisor can check draft pdf.



Payment

Visa fee
NHS Surcharge:
Priority service available in some counties.



Biometric details

In country: Submit at a UKVCAS Sopra Steria Centre

Overseas: Make appointment to attend Visa Application Centre

EU/EEA & Swiss may be able to use ID App



Submit documents

For example, passport, photographs, evidence of English language, relationship to dependants (marriage/birth certificate)

Questions



STAGE 2: ARRIVAL

Arrival

1. Any delay in start date/do not arrive (no more than 28 days) notify SIT
2. Conduct RTW check **before** visa holder commences work
3. Departments fill out Right to Work screen in People XD
4. Add to your list of List B document holders (include expiry date and type of visa)
5. Fill out Arrival Form and send to SIT within **five working days** of start date with:
 - Contact details (even if temporary)
 - Copies of Signed Contract & RTW copies
 - Personnel Number & Oxford email address
 - NI number (can follow if not available on arrival)
6. Communicate with visa holder about reporting change in contact details, absence and non UK travel, (**police registration requirement has now been abolished- 09/11/22**)
7. For joint appointments – ensure agreement is in place between departments/colleges as to who will lead on reporting to SIT

Visa Evidence

BRPs (plastic visa cards) were phased out at the end of 2024 & no longer issued
Vignettes (paper visas in passports) no longer issued to main applicants, but if partner and children applying for Dependent visas they may be issued vignettes
Whether issued a vignette or not they will need to create a UKVI account to access their digital immigration status called an eVisa.

There are 3 different types of sharecodes (right to work starts with W, right to rent starts with R, show your status starts with S) **check it's the right one !**

If they have any **problems accessing eVisa or UKVI account** or if there are any **errors in visa details**, SIT can't help with or resolve these issues, so visa holder will need to report this to the Home Office.

<https://www.gov.uk/report-error-evisa>

<https://update-your-details.homeoffice.gov.uk/account-recovery/help>

You can use Employers Checking Service (ECS) to verify right to work while Home Office is resolve issues/ errors & then carry out online right to work check when resolved. <https://www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status>

Keeping UKVI Account up to date

Visa holders must ensure they keep their personal information in UKVI account up to date, including:

- mobile phone number
- email address
- name
- identity document (passport or national identity card)
- home address
- postal address

Important: eVisa is linked to their passport.

Renew your passport = update UKVI account

Otherwise they may encounter issues when returning to UK

<https://www.gov.uk/update-uk-visas-immigration-account-details>

Questions



STAGE 3: CHANGES DURING EMPLOYMENT

Changes during employment

1. Use the Changes & Leaver Form to inform SIT **within 5 working days** of:

- Change in start date on CoS/ did not arrive on start date (no more than 28 days)
- Change in job details (*e.g. job title/ duties/ salary/ hours/ work location*)
- Unauthorised absence of more than ten consecutive working days
- Authorised unpaid leave of up to a total of four weeks in twelve months (Jan-Dec)
- Change in salary due to leave (*maternity, paternity, shared parental, adoption, sick*)
- Left early (*e.g. finished early/ resigned/ funding withdrawn/ dismissed*)
- Change in immigration status (*e.g. granted ILR/ other visa/ other nationality*)
- Left as expected in line with visa

SIT is required to record/report these changes to the Home Office

2. Update People XD with changes (departments only)

Changes in residential/contact details only need to be reported to SIT if not entered onto People XD (*these details must always be kept up to date*)

Form at: <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/skilled-worker-t5-changes-and-leavers-form>

Absence recording and reporting

Normal work related travel does not need to be recorded or reported

Annual leave and sick absence:

- Record according to staff group and keep in department/college
- **Communicate with visa holders** about this policy

For Indefinite Leave to Remain applications visa holder must record all out of UK travel for their application. Dependants on visas issued after the 11 Jan 2018 will also need to detail absences.

Unauthorised absence: does not arrive for an expected work contact (e.g. to give a lecture)

- If a visa holder does not show for work when expected – contact them immediately!
- If absence is explained (e.g. sick, family emergency) – not classed as unauthorised
- Record unauthorised absence and report unauthorised absences of more than ten consecutive working days to SIT (Changes/Leaver Form)

Contact details vital – must be able to contact visa holder in reasonable time

- If visa holder is travelling to out of contact area they must notify admin

Absence policy overview

Academic staff

- Sickness – must report to line manager as soon as possible on first day of absence
- Annual leave – determine own duration of working time but in accordance with regulations, Academic staff are entitled to at least the statutory minimum number of days paid holiday per year

Academic related and support staff

- Sickness – must report to line manager as soon as possible on first day of absence
- Annual leave – entitlement as specified in letter of appointment

**Procedures must be in place to record sick and annual leave for all
Skilled Worker sponsored visa holders – Home Office policy**

Skilled worker visa extensions

- Includes extending current Tier 2 visa holders
- New CoS required (use CoS Extension form)
- Apply for CoS approx. 3 months before visa expiry date
- Job details must remain same as on original CoS (duties, location, job title etc.)
- Salary increases as a result of annual increments permissible
- Visa application to be made no later than six weeks before visa expires
- Visa application can be checked by SIT prior to submission
- Priority/Super Priority options for urgent applications but cost more
- Conduct a repeat RTW check before visa is due to expire (if visa application pending when visa expires, complete Employer Checking Service)
- Send copies of RTW for Skilled Worker and T5 sponsored visa holder to SIT

Switching employment

Applicant holding a Tier 2/Skilled Worker visa with a different employer cannot start a new post with the University until:

- SIT have issued a CoS and
- Their new permission to stay (visa) application has been approved by the Home Office and
- You have completed an online right to work check on the new visa

Applicants already working for the University on a Skilled Worker visa may be able to change employment without having to obtain a new visa, if:

- The new job is in the same occupation (i.e. same profession – research, teaching, IT etc.) and
- Is paid at the appropriate level and
- Changes in job details are reported to SIT to report to Home Office

Visa restrictions and conditions

- Must be paid into own bank account – cash payments prohibited
- No recourse to public funds (i.e. must not claim benefits) – exclusions apply for nationals of some countries
- Voluntary work permitted
- Skilled Worker visas are job specific – supplementary employment permitted under specific circumstances

Supplementary employment

The supplementary employment must be:

- a permitted type of work that could be sponsorable under the Skilled Worker visa route (*salary thresholds don't apply it's just about the type of work*) – see next slide
- no more than 20 hours per week
- outside hours of main role & does not interfere with main role

It is therefore not possible to reduce hours or otherwise change main role to facilitate supplementary employment a visa holder wants to (or PI wants them to) undertake

They also need to consider & discuss with you (HR team) University policies on [Conflict of interest](#), [30 day rule \(approval to hold outside appointments\)](#), & [additional appointments rule against being employed within University for more than 1 FTE](#)

Supplementary employment can include self employment – *but they will need to make sure to get & follow tax advice as any tax issues could mean next visa is refused*

Undertaking employment which is not in a permitted type of work or over 20 hrs/ week limit would constitute working illegally in the UK.

More information: <https://staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/supplementary-employment-and-studying>

Supplementary employment *(continued)*

Originally Skilled Worker supplementary employment could only be work of the same type under the same job code

4 April 2024 rules changed to permit supplementary employment in any Skilled Worker sponsorable job codes (*administrative roles, bar work, working as a waiter or kitchen porter, for example, not permitted*)

New 22 July 2025 rules changes – Skilled Worker sponsorable job codes split into skilled RQF 6 and lower skilled RQF 3 - 5 (mostly support roles):

- Continuously held Skilled Worker visas since **before 22 July 2025** supplementary employment still possible in ***any sponsorable job codes (RQF 6 & RQF 3 – 5)***;
- New Skilled Worker visa holders **from 22 July 2025** supplementary employment ***only permitted in RQF 6 job codes, or same job code as their main role***. So RQF 3 – 5 roles as supplementary employment only if same job code as main role.

SIT, or other employer, will determine the relevant job code & resulting RQF level

Since April 2024 changes no longer any need to report teaching as additional duty.

Data holding

- Hard or electronic copies to be kept by department/college
- SIT holds electronic data record for Skilled Worker visa holders **except:**
 - Absence and sick records – to be recorded according to staff group and retained by department/college
- Send data to SIT at three stages:
 - Recruitment – using CoS form
 - On arrival – using arrival form
 - During/end of employment – using Changes/leaver form
- See <https://hr.admin.ox.ac.uk/retention-periods-for-university-personnel-records> for info on how long documents need to be retained

Application fees

- CoS – paid for by SIT and cross-charged to department (colleges need to check amount with SIT and will be sent an invoice within the month after the CoS is issued)
- Visa application fee: [Costs involved | Staff Immigration \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)
- NHS Surcharge: [Immigration Health \(NHS\) Surcharge | Staff Immigration \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)
- Immigration Skills charge per individual sponsored by the University, paid for by SIT and cross-charged

Exemptions;

- 'PhD' Occupations
- Student (Tier 4) switching into Skilled Worker

University Visa Loan Scheme: staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/visa-loan-scheme
recommendation on reimbursement of visa costs:
staffimmigration.admin.ox.ac.uk/reimbursement-policy

Summary

- Assess the sponsorship requirements with help from SIT
- Apply in good time
- SIT need to review ATAS details as part of complete CoS application before ATAS letter is issued to applicant
- Delayed start dates can be no more than 28 days
- Report changes within five working days
- Keep up to date absence records (sick and annual leave)
- Keep People XD up to date (departments only)
- Send all required data on Skilled Worker and Tier 5 visa holders to SIT
- Self-audit to ensure that all required past changes have been notified

Questions

