

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Guidance

Overview

On 29 January 2021, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCO) announced the expansion of the Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) to international researchers as well as international students.

The ATAS scheme currently applies to international students (depending on nationality) who require a visa to study in the UK and are intending to study at postgraduate level in certain sensitive subjects (although some undergraduate and Masters students also come into scope).

The subjects are those where individuals' knowledge could be used in programmes to develop Advanced Conventional Military Technology (ACMT), weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) or their means of delivery. These criteria were updated in the Autumn of 2020 to essentially cover any activity which may be "against the UK's national interests".

Extension of the ATAS from May 2021 to international researchers

From 21 May 2021, the ATAS will be extended to cover researchers intending to work in the UK in areas of research which could result in the Intangible Transfer of Technology (ITT) to WMD and ACMT programmes of concern. Essentially, all subject areas requiring ATAS for students will now also be required for international researchers.

Who will be affected?

The ATAS requirements will impact international researchers where **all four** of the following criteria are met (i.e. where even one criteria is not met, an ATAS certificate is **not** required):

1. Visa application type

All new hires and existing staff where applying for a visa in one of the following categories:

- Skilled Worker Visa (used for employees); or
- Government Authorised Exchange (GAE) T5 visa (used predominately for visiting researchers and academics); or
- Standard/Academic visitor visa

No other visa type is in scope (e.g. Global Talent Visas)

2. Nationality

Nationals of the following countries are **exempt** from the ATAS requirement:

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, German, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.

All other nationalities are in scope.

3. Type of role

For **Skilled Worker Visa** applicants and **GAE T5 visa** applicants, roles defined by the following SOC Codes are in scope:

- 2111 – 2119: Encompassing all postdoctoral research positions (including Research Assistants)

The following roles are also in scope, but **only** where the individual will undertake research at a PhD level as part of the role:

- 2150 Research and development managers
- 2122 Mechanical engineer
- 2123 Electrical engineers
- 2124 Electronics engineer
- 2127 Production and process engineers
- 2129 Engineering professionals not elsewhere classified
- 2311 Higher education teaching professionals
- 3111 Laboratory technicians
- 3112 Electrical and electronics technicians
- 3113 Engineering technicians
- 3114 Building and civil engineering technicians

For **visitors** to the University, where applying for a **standard/academic visitor visa**, the following activities are in scope:

- Where they gather information and facts for a specific project which directly relates to their employment overseas, or conduct independent research; or
- Where they share knowledge or advise on an international project that is being led from the UK; or
- Where they carry out research for their own purposes if they are on sabbatical leave from their home institution (i.e. “Academic visitors”).

No ATAS liability for visitors attending conferences, meetings, interviews, workshops etc.

4. Research field

The field/programme of research must be one of those as listed in Annex A of this document. **If the field is not listed in Annex A, the role is not ATAS liable.**

Key issues

The ATAS scheme is administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO).

Individuals in scope for ATAS will be required to obtain an ATAS certificate before applying for either a Skilled Worker or GAE T5 visa. As both of these are sponsored routes, they will require a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) issued by the University before making the visa application. The CoS will not be issued to the applicant until such time as the HR Compliance Team has seen the ATAS certificate.

There is no cost to either the individual or the employer/host to gaining an ATAS certificate. Presently, it is possible for the individual to apply for an ATAS certificate up to 6 months before entry, with a service standard of 10-15 working days to gain the certificate. This timeframe must be factored into all recruitments.

As part of the ATAS application, the individual must provide a research statement from the University and the appropriate 'CAH3' code which defines their programme/field of research. **The research statement and the CAH3 code should be provided by the department** (which mirrors the process for international students in scope for ATAS). A template to capture this is provided by way of the HR58 form, available here:

<https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/forms>

Visitors entering on standard/academic visitor visas, who are in scope of ATAS, are **not** required to gain an ATAS certificate as part of the visa application, but they are required to obtain it before they undertake any research in the UK (within the confines of the activities outlined above).

The University is required to check the ATAS certificate for visitors before allowing the research to start. If this is not provided, the individual should not be permitted on-site or given access to secure laboratories. Departments are asked to consider reviewing the risk assessments and protocols currently in place for their visitors, and incorporate the ATAS requirement into these, using the guidance above to determine who is in scope for ATAS.

Communication / Briefings

The University's Key Issues Bulletin dated 18 February 2021, 25 March 2021 and 13 May 2021 provided guidance on the introduction of the ATAS scheme for international researchers.

The FCDO provide guidance on their webpages as to the scope and application process for ATAS:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme#academic-researchers>

Annex A: CAH3 Codes for 'ATAS liable' research programmes / fields

CAH Code	Subject
Biological Sciences	
CAH03-01-02	Biology (Non-specific)
CAH03-01-03	Ecology and Environmental Biology
CAH03-01-06	Zoology
CAH03-01-04	Microbiology and Cell Science
CAH03-01-05	Plant Sciences
CAH10-03-05	Biotechnology
CAH03-01-07	Genetics
CAH02-05-03	Biomedical Sciences (Non-specific)
CAH03-01-08	Molecular Biology, Biophysics and Biochemistry
CAH03-01-01	Biosciences (Non-specific)
Engineering	
CAH10-01-01	Engineering (Non-specific)
CAH10-01-07	Civil Engineering
CAH10-01-02	Mechanical Engineering
CAH10-01-04	Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering
CAH10-01-05	Naval Architecture
CAH10-01-08	Electronic and Electrical Engineering
CAH10-01-09	Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering
Mathematics and Computer Sciences	
CAH09-01-01	Mathematics
CAH09-01-02	Operational Research
CAH11-01-01	Computer Science
CAH11-01-02	Information Technology
CAH11-01-03	Information Systems
CAH11-01-04	Software Engineering
CAH11-01-05	Artificial Intelligence
Medicine	
CAH02-02-01	Pharmacology
CAH02-02-02	Toxicology
CAH02-02-03	Pharmacy
CAH10-01-06	Bioengineering, Medical and Biomedical Engineering
Physical Sciences	
CAH07-02-01	Chemistry
CAH10-03-07	Materials Science
CAH07-01-01	Physics
CAH07-01-02	Astronomy
CAH26-01-05	Others in Geographical Studies
CAH07-04-01	Physical Sciences (Non-specific)
CAH07-04-03	Sciences (Non-specific)
CAH07-04-04	Natural Sciences (Non-specific)

CAH Code	Subject
Technologies	
CAH10-03-03	Polymers and Textiles
CAH10-03-01	Minerals Technology
CAH10-03-02	Materials Technology
CAH10-03-04	Maritime Technology
Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture and related subjects	
CAH05-01-02	Others in Veterinary Sciences
CAH06-01-02	Agricultural Sciences