

# QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST

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## Guide to completing the ATAS online application form

AND

## ATAS related visa requirements

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### What is an ATAS certificate?

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) requires that students and visiting students studying certain subject areas at MEng/MSc/MSci undergraduate level, master's or PhD level obtain ATAS clearance. The scheme is managed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

UK immigration law does not allow universities to permit international students or contracted researchers to study or undertake research in an ATAS applicable course until the student or contracted researcher has provided the university or research institute with the correct ATAS certificate.

### What subject areas require an ATAS?

The University will advise you if your study/research requires an ATAS. This information will be provided in your offer letter. You will also find this information here: <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

### Which visa holders require an ATAS certificate to study or undertake research in the UK?

- Student visa holders – must submit ATAS with visa application
- Visitor visa holders
- Those in the process of applying for asylum in the UK
- All those that hold a time-limited visa e.g. Skilled worker, Global Talent, Dependant etc.

If you have Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, you do NOT need an ATAS certificate to study in the UK.

### Exempt nationalities

If you are a UK national or a national of any of the following countries, you do not require an ATAS certificate: Australia; Austria; Belgium; Bulgaria; Canada; Croatia; Republic of Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Latvia; Liechtenstein; Lithuania; Luxembourg; Malta; Netherlands; New Zealand; Norway; Poland; Portugal; Romania; Singapore; Slovakia; Slovenia; South Korea; Spain; Sweden; Switzerland; United States of America.

### How do I apply for ATAS clearance?

The ATAS scheme is managed by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) of the UK Government. In order to apply for ATAS clearance, visit the ATAS website at:

<https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk>

### How much does an ATAS certificate cost?

There is no charge for an ATAS certificate even if you need to reapply for additional clearance if your course or research area changes.

## When should I apply for ATAS?

You can apply for ATAS clearance up to 9 months before the start date of your course. The ATAS team at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) is advising that it is currently taking at least 30 working days (6 weeks) to process applications for clearance. Processing times may be slower at peak times (June-September).

## Select the correct type of ATAS clearance

The ATAS application will ask you to declare whether you are a **student** or a researcher and your selection will determine the questions you are asked and the clearance you obtain. All students, including postgraduate research students and visiting research students, must apply for **Taught /research student** (highlighted in the below diagram) ATAS clearance.

**Apply for an ATAS certificate**

**!** UK, EEA, Switzerland, United States, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Singapore, Japan and Republic of Korea nationals do not need to apply for an ATAS certificate.

Before applying for an ATAS certificate, you'll need to read the [ATAS guidance](#).

Are you a taught / research student or are you a researcher? \*

Taught / research student  Researcher

[Continue to Checklist](#)

You will then be asked to select whether you will be studying a **taught** course or a **research** course.

## Is my course Taught or Research?

Taught and Research Courses at Queen's University Belfast	
Taught Courses	All MEng, MSci, MPharm, MRes and MSc courses
Research Courses	All MPhil and PhD courses

## What is my CAH3 code?

Students will be provided with the CAH3 code that relates to their course of study in the offer letter issued by the International Admissions team ([intl.admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:intl.admissions@qub.ac.uk)).

Students visiting from another institution, i.e., Visiting Research Students, should ask the person that will supervise their Queen's University Belfast visit for this information.

You will also find this information here: <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

## Selecting the university where you will study or conduct research

When you begin your ATAS application you should select Queen's University Belfast from the drop-down menu. Your ATAS certificate must be linked to Queen's University Belfast and state the correct course of study and/or research for the certificate to be valid for both a Student visa application and to start your course of study or postgraduate research. **You will NOT be permitted to enrol or engage in study/research activities if you do not hold a valid ATAS certificate.**

## Which e-mail address should I use?

We recommend you use an internationally recognised email server such as Outlook, Hotmail, Yahoo, Gmail or similar as ATAS have experienced difficulties with firewalls for local servers.

## **I am having problems registering on the ATAS website – what should I do?**

Try registering online from a different computer (e.g. in a place of education or work) or with a new login email address. Alternatively, try using a different web browser; the ATAS website works best in Google Chrome and Internet Explorer version 5 and above.

The ATAS Team at the FCDO has reported that students using email servers 126.com, 163.com, sina.cn and qq.com may have difficulty receiving messages from them and recommend the use of Yahoo, Gmail, Hotmail or similar commercial email providers, if possible.

## **How long will it take for me to get ATAS clearance?**

It will take at least 20 working days (4 full weeks) to process a student ATAS application. Processing times will increase between April and September and can take 30 (6 full weeks) or more working days to complete. The processing time will only start at the point at which that the ATAS team receive a completed and correct application, so you should check your application carefully before submitting it.

If you have been waiting for a decision for more than 35 working days (7 full weeks), please email [immigration@qub.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@qub.ac.uk) with your ATAS application reference number, date of application, (as given in the ATAS application portal).

## **How long is ATAS valid for?**

If you need to apply for a visa, your ATAS clearance certificate is **only valid to be used in a visa application for 6 months from the date of issue**. Please make sure that you submit your visa application before the certificate expires. You will find the date the ATAS expires on the top left side of the certificate.

The ATAS clearance will remain valid throughout your course / research unless your academic circumstances change, e.g. you change your course modules / research focus, or you extend your course or research programme by more than 3 months.

## **I will be applying for a new passport soon, should I apply for ATAS clearance now or with my new passport details?**

As your ATAS application is linked to your passport, if you plan to obtain a new passport before applying for your visa you should wait until you have your new passport before applying for ATAS clearance.

## **I don't know what modules I'll be studying?**

MSc/MEng/MSci students should list the modules available on your course and (if known) give a short description of your dissertation / project topic. International Admissions ([int.admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:int.admissions@qub.ac.uk)) will provide the module list and description of your dissertation / project topic with your offer letter.

PhD/doctoral students are provided details of their Proposed Area of Research / statement of research. International Admissions will provide a Proposed Area of Research / statement of research with your offer letter.

## **I'm a PhD student but I don't have a statement of research - where can I get this?**

PhD students will also need to enter some information about their proposed area of research. This should be at least 5 lines in length and agreed with your PhD supervisor in writing. It will also be listed on your offer letter and can be copied and pasted into your ATAS application form.

Students visiting from another institution, i.e., Visiting Research Students, should ask the person that will supervise their Queen's University Belfast visit for this information.

### **What if I change my research topic or technique?**

If your area of research, research technique or course is likely to change to one still affected by the requirement to have an ATAS certificate, then **you should not register on the new course OR start the new area of research until you have applied for a new ATAS certificate and it has been issued.**

### **Is my programme a joint programme with another country?**

If your course includes a year abroad, but your degree will only be awarded by Queen's University Belfast then you should answer "No". If your course includes study in two different countries and will either be jointly awarded by Queen's and another institution, or awarded solely by another institution, then you should answer "Yes".

### **What education history do I need to provide?**

In the "Undergraduate / Postgraduate studies" section, the form will ask you whether you have "undertaken any undergraduate or postgraduate studies". This refers only to courses at university level that have been completed.

The application form only requires you to provide information on your education history related to professional qualifications from a college/university and previous undergraduate and postgraduate study. You are not required to provide information about your high school education.

### **How should I complete the 'Employment' section if I have never been employed?**

You are required to provide details of employment since you left school that includes any paid work and any long-term voluntary (i.e. unpaid) work. You do not need to provide information about temporary jobs you have done during university vacations. If you have not undertaken any employment as mentioned above, select "No" in this section.

### **Who should I use as referees?**

The ATAS guidance states that you need to provide details of 2 referees who have known you for a minimum of 3 years. At least one of the referees must be from the academic sector. If you have work experience, you should include a referee from your employment. A referee from your home country would be preferable, but it is not essential if you have studied and/or worked in another country. Family members are not accepted as referees. The ATAS team at the FCDO does not require that your referees must be able to speak English.

### **How should I complete the 'Sponsors' section?**

This section is about any financial sponsorship or financial support that you have for your studies and living costs. This may be an organisation or the name of a person. If you are waiting for a funding decision, include this and note the decision is pending. If you are funding your own studies or research, include your name and address in the relevant boxes. If another family member is paying for your studies, include their details.

The form asks if there are any "conditions of your offer". An example of a condition of your offer could be that you are required to return overseas after completion of course, or you must provide regular reports about your progress. If you have more than one financial sponsor, make sure you include them all in this section.

### **Submission**

When all the sections are marked "complete", then you are able to submit your application. Check your answers carefully before errors will delay the processing of your application and may result in you needing to apply for clearance again.

If the ATAS team need to contact you for further information then they will do so via email and ask you to log back into your account to provide further information in the relevant section.

## **What should I do if I submit my application and then realise that I have made a mistake?**

For instances where an ATAS application has been made and is pending approval, you can contact the ATAS team at [atas@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:atas@fcdo.gov.uk) with details of the change required and they will send the application back to you the applicant to make the changes and resubmit their application for the ATAS team to review.

**Or**

You may log into your ATAS account and click the 'withdrawal' button. Once you select withdraw your application cannot be recovered, and you will be required to begin the ATAS application from the start.

Please be aware it will take **at least 20 working days** (4 full weeks) to process a student ATAS application. Processing times will increase between April and September and can take **30 or more working days to complete**. The processing time will only start at the point at which that the ATAS team receive a completed and correct application.

## **How will I know if my ATAS application has been successful?**

If your application is successful, you should receive an email from ATAS with the attached ATAS certificate to the email address that you used to register. You should check your spam or junk folders regularly to ensure the email has not been filtered out. You must read your ATAS certificate carefully to check that the details on it are correct; if any information in the certificate is incorrect, please contact [immigration@qub.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@qub.ac.uk) for advice.

## **What should I do if I receive my ATAS clearance certificate, but it contains an error?**

If the error is yours then you will need to apply again for clearance. If you believe that there is an error in the certificate that is not as a result of information that you entered into the ATAS application form, please contact [immigration@qub.ac.uk](mailto:immigration@qub.ac.uk) for advice.

## **What if my ATAS application is refused?**

ATAS applications can be refused but it is unusual. The FCDO will normally only refuse an application if they feel there are legitimate and substantive concerns for UK security in allowing you to study or research the proposed area of studies.

You can request that the ATAS team to review the decision if you think your application has been treated unfairly. If you are a research student, you can also discuss with your academic supervisor whether a modified research project could be considered and, if that is possible, to apply for clearance using the modified project description.

You will not be permitted to start your course, even remotely from outside the UK, without having ATAS clearance. If you are already a student and your clearance application relates to a visa extension application or reflects a change in research direction, you will be required to suspend your studies pending the outcome of your appeal or new application for clearance.

**If your ATAS application is refused, according to FCDO regulations, you will be unable to apply for a new ATAS for the same course at Queen's for 90 days from the date the refusal email was received.**

**If you receive two ATAS refusals, Queen's University Belfast will NOT sponsor your visa or permit you to study.**

## **Should I send a copy of my ATAS certificate to the University?**

If you are an applicant, you can upload your ATAS clearance certificate via the QSIS portal when completing the registration and enrolment steps. Current students who have obtained a new ATAS clearance certificate, for a visa extension for the same course or to cover a change in research direction, should send a copy by e-mail to [isscompliance@qub.ac.uk](mailto:isscompliance@qub.ac.uk). Visiting Research Students should email a copy to [isscompliance@qub.ac.uk](mailto:isscompliance@qub.ac.uk)

## Will I need to apply for a new ATAS if my study or research circumstances change?

**Yes.** You **MUST** apply for a new ATAS in any of the following circumstances:

- you change course or modules
- you change research focus, techniques or topic
- your course end date changes - your course or research is extended by more than 3 months
- you change your visa - you extend your visa or apply for a new Student visa
- you change primary supervisor
- your financial sponsor or conditions for financial sponsorship change during your study or research

**You will not be permitted to enrol or engage in study/research activities related to this change until the new ATAS certificate has been issued. You must NOT start a new area of research until the new ATAS is issued. If you are extending or applying for a Student visa you require this certificate in advance of submitting the visa application.**

If you are **currently enrolled on a Queen's University Belfast course** and your circumstances have already changed you will be placed on a leave of absence (i.e. will not be permitted to engage in studies) until a new ATAS is issued. If you are a Student visa holder the **maximum permitted period of absence is 60 days**. If you are absent for more than 60 days, the University are required to report this extensive absence to the UK Home Office. The Home Office will act on this information and **cancel your Student visa**. You will be required to leave the UK and apply for a new Student visa to permit you to recommence your studies.

## Will I need to apply for a second ATAS certificate if I am visiting another institution for a short period of time while studying at Queen's?

Your ATAS certificate is linked to an institution. If you hold an ATAS certificate for research/studies undertaken at Queen's University Belfast this certificate does **NOT** permit you to study at another institution. If you are planning to spend some time studying/conducting research at another institution, you must check with them in advance of your visit whether or not you will require an ATAS for their institution.

## If I hold a Global Talent visa, do I require an ATAS certificate?

Yes, as per the conditions of a Global Talent visa, you must hold an ATAS certificate before engaging in a course of study, such as an MEng or PhD.

## Conditions of ATAS certification

1. The certificate is only valid for the person named on it.
2. The certificate is only valid for the University stated on it.
3. It is valid for use in a visa application for up to six months from the issue date shown on the ATAS certificate.
4. If you decide to study at another university and/or change your course/area of research/change primary supervisor, or your official financial sponsorship you will need to apply for another ATAS Certificate.
5. If you need to apply for a Student visa extension, you will need a new ATAS certificate.

## **IMPORTANT:**

**Students and visiting students that require an ATAS will not be permitted to enrol, study or undertake research at Queen's if this document is not presented and verified at registration.**

**Enrolled students that do not hold a valid ATAS due to a change in circumstances will be placed on a leave of absence and not permitted to engage in studies. If they are a Student visa holder, after 60 days of absence the University will inform the UK Home Office of the extended absence, and they will cancel the student's visa. If the student wishes to recommence studies, they will be required to return home and apply for a new Student visa.**