Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) was launched on 1st November 2007. The aim of the scheme is to help stop the spread of knowledge and skills that could be used in the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery.

This means that international students who are applying to study certain postgraduate courses in science, engineering or technology will need to obtain ATAS clearance before making a Tier 4 application.

Your CAS statement will tell you if you require ATAS clearance.

If the programme you are following, or planning to follow, requires ATAS clearance you will need to provide a valid ATAS clearance certificate with your Tier 4 (General) application. This applies whether you are applying from overseas or in the UK. If you do not do so your Tier 4 application will be refused.

Please visit https://www.gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme for more information about ATAS and the type of programmes that require ATAS clearance, or to start the ATAS application process.

ATAS clearance is issued for a specific course with a specific Tier 4 sponsor. If you change courses and/or sponsor (university or other Higher Education provider) or your research area has changed significantly from when you started your programme and you need to extend your visa, you may be required to make a new application for ATAS clearance. If you started your programme after November 2007 and you wish to extend your visa in order to write up your thesis you will need to apply for fresh ATAS clearance and submit a copy of this with your Tier 4 application.

Any students already in the UK who need to extend their student visa to commence or continue on one of the relevant courses, will also need to get ATAS clearance before making an application for Further Leave under Tier 4.

The published processing time for ATAS clearance is up to 20 working days but this can take longer at busy times. For this reason we strongly recommend that you apply for ATAS clearance as soon as possible if required to do so. When you receive your clearance you should print off the certificate and add it to the documents you will need to submit in support of your Tier 4 application