

## Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Frequently Asked Questions for International Researchers

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is a scheme administered by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and is aimed at preventing the transfer of information, knowledge or technology which could develop, advance or support an Advanced Conventional Military Technology and Weapons of Mass Destruction programme or their means of delivery. ATAS is a type of vetting scheme and we have a legal requirement to protect our research both as a University and internationally.

Individuals coming to the UK to undertake research / element of research, may be subject to either the ATAS Requirement or the ATAS Condition.

HM Government defines a researcher as: *an individual conducting investigation into a problem or situation, where the intention is to identify facts and/or opinions that will assist in solving the problem or dealing with the situation. A researcher may be working independently or as part of team.* ([GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk))

These FAQs should be read in conjunction with the official guidance available via the following links to GOV.UK:

- [GOV.UK Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](https://www.gov.uk/academic-technology-approval-scheme)
- [GOV.UK Guidance on how to apply for an ATAS certificate](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-apply-for-an-atas-certificate)
- [GOV.UK Check if you need an ATAS certificate](https://www.gov.uk/check-if-you-need-an-atas-certificate)
- [Immigration Rules Appendix ATAS: Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](https://www.gov.uk/immigration-rules/academic-technology-approval-scheme)

FAQs for ATAS Requirement / Condition	Answers
1. What is the difference between the ATAS Requirement and the ATAS Condition?	The ATAS Requirement means a valid ATAS certificate must be provided as part of visa application. The ATAS Condition means that a valid ATAS certificate must be obtained and retained before research commences.
2. Who is subject to the <b>ATAS Requirement</b> ?	<p>This requirement applies to the following immigration routes and is required for new, extension, switch applications or if the individual changes subject area into a relevant subject area under ATAS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skilled Worker (including Tier 2)</li> <li>• Temporary Worker (Tier 5) - Government Authorised Exchange</li> <li>• Student (see <a href="#">University SAA webpages</a> for information)</li> </ul> <p>An individual being sponsored under the worker routes (Skilled Worker (including Tier 2) or Temporary Worker (T5 – Government Authorised Exchange)) will be subject to the ATAS requirement where <b>all</b> the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role is sponsored under a relevant <a href="#">SOC code</a></li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role includes an element of research at <b>PhD level</b> or above in a <a href="#">relevant subject</a></li> <li>• The individual is <a href="#">not an exempt national</a></li> </ul> <p>An ATAS Certificate will confirm that the applicant is permitted to apply for a Skilled Worker or Temporary Worker T5 visa. <b>The ATAS Certificate does not guarantee the visa application will be successful.</b></p>
<p>3. Who is subject to the <b>ATAS Condition</b>?</p>	<p>Visiting researchers / academics coming to the UK under a non-sponsored visitor visa will be subject to the ATAS Condition where:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They will be carrying out or taking part in any research activity* at <b>postgraduate level</b> or above in a <a href="#">relevant subject area to ATAS</a></li> <li>• Their research subject changes to another subject area / or into a subject area <a href="#">relevant to ATAS</a> <b>AND</b></li> <li>• The individual is <a href="#">not an exempt national</a></li> </ul> <p>*Activity includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gathering information and facts for a specific project which directly relates to the visitor’s employment overseas, or to support independent research</li> <li>○ Taking part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts</li> <li>○ Carrying out research for the visitor’s own purposes or as a group</li> </ul> <p>If you’re a researcher attending meetings, conferences, seminars, or interviews, or giving speeches, <b>and will not</b> be undertaking research during your time in the UK, you do <b>not</b> need to apply for ATAS clearance.</p>
<p>4. Do I need an ATAS Certificate for the Global Talent Visa?</p>	<p>No, this immigration route does not require an ATAS certificate.</p>
<p>5. Do I need an ATAS Certificate if I currently hold a Student visa and am looking to start employment with the University?</p>	<p>If your current course of study is in the <b>same</b> subject area of research for employment <b>and</b> are both at the University of Southampton, HR Operations will check if your ATAS certificate on your Student record is relevant to your research employment.</p> <p>If your current course of study is <b>different</b> to the subject area of research for employment <b>and/or</b> the institution is different, you will need ATAS clearance for the new/additional/different research area for employment.</p>
<p>6. Which subject areas are subject to ATAS?</p>	<p>The list of academic subjects relevant to ATAS are available via <a href="#">Immigration Rules Appendix ATAS</a></p>
<p>7. Which SOC (Occupation) codes are relevant to ATAS?</p>	<p>The list of SOC (Occupation) codes relevant to ATAS are available via <a href="#">GOV.UK Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS): occupation codes</a> for the Skilled Worker and Temporary Worker (Tier 5 - Government Authorised Exchange) routes.</p>

8. What are the exempt nationalities?	Nationals from countries in the EEA and Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, and USA, <b>do not need to meet the ATAS requirement or the ATAS condition</b> . Please see <a href="#">Immigration Rules Appendix ATAS</a> for the full list.
9. What if I am looking at conducting research at more than one HEI / research institute?	The ATAS certificate is applicable to <b>one</b> Higher Education Institution (HEI) / research institute. You will need to apply for an ATAS certificate for each institute, including details on the research you will undertake at each institute.
10. Is the ATAS certificate free of charge?	Yes
11. How long does it take to obtain an ATAS certificate?	It can take a minimum of 10 working days (2 complete weeks) – can be more during peak times (May – September). There is no fast-track option and applications are processed in order of receipt, for fairness and consistency. The certificate will be sent to the applicant via email and an electronic notice sent to the University.  If you have not received an outcome for more than 20 working days, contact the ATAS unit <a href="mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk">ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk</a>
12. Who should check the details on the ATAS certificate?	Both the applicant and the HEI. Applicants should contact the ATAS unit at <a href="mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk">ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk</a> if there are mistakes or inaccuracies.
13. Can the FCDO be contacted for queries?	Yes, you can contact <a href="mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk">ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk</a> if you have queries about your application.
14. Can I apply for an ATAS certificate ahead of requesting a Certificate of Sponsorship? If so, is there a date range which confirms validity?	Yes, ATAS clearance can be applied for ahead of obtaining a Certificate of Sponsorship (COS). ATAS certificates are valid for 6 months and are sent to the applicant.  Once the ATAS application has been processed, the FCDO will also send the University an outcome directly. A COS will not be issued by the University until the electronic approval notice has been received by the FCDO.
15. What do I need to apply?	You will need to provide the following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about your research, including CAH3 code.</li> <li>• Previous studies</li> <li>• Previous and current employment (if applicable)</li> <li>• All published papers</li> <li>• Area of research and a description</li> <li>• Full names and contact details of 2 referees</li> <li>• How your research will be financially sponsored</li> </ul>
16. How many sections are there to the application?	There are 10 sections to complete: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Proposed course of research (CAH3 code + Statement of Research provided by your manager)</li> </ol>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Personal details</li> <li>3. Spouse details</li> <li>4. Contact details</li> <li>5. Undergraduate / Postgraduate studies undertaken</li> <li>6. Published papers</li> <li>7. Employment history</li> <li>8. Referees</li> <li>9. Financial Sponsor Information</li> </ul> <p>Guidance available <a href="#">here</a>.</p>
17. How long does it take to complete the application?	It takes about 1 hour depending on information required. You can save and come back to the application.
18. What start date shall I use for the section ' <b>Proposed Research</b> '?	<p>You will need to use the University of Southampton's details for this section in the application for it to be linked to your employment / visit at the University.</p> <p>The start date should be the date you are due to start employment / visit / new research subject area, or the extension start date if applying for leave to remain.</p>
19. Where do I find my CAH3 code and Research Statement?	The CAH3 code and Research Statement are confirmed by your line manager and will be provided to you by HR Operations as part of the Certificate of Sponsorship process. The research statement should be copied and pasted into the online ATAS application.
20. What information should I use for the ' <b>Sponsors</b> ' section?	This section is about who is the financial sponsor for your research and not the sponsorship for your visa i.e. who is funding your research. Please ask your manager / department if you don't know these details.
21. What happens if I am refused an ATAS certificate?	You will not be granted permission to research in the UK in the given subject area applied for. Please advise your HR contact / <a href="#">Ask HR</a> urgently if you are refused an ATAS certificate as part of your research with the University.
22. Is there further guidance available for applicants applying for ATAS clearance?	Yes, GOV.UK provide guidance on how to apply for an ATAS certificate both <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a> .
23. Will all Certificate of Sponsorships be subject to the ATAS requirement and will I require a new ATAS certificate? E.g. Certificate of Sponsorship extensions.	Yes, depending on all eligibility criteria being met. If you are subject to the requirement, you would need an ATAS certificate before a Certificate of Sponsorship is assigned to you. It is recommended that individuals apply for an ATAS certificate as soon as possible and no earlier than 4 months prior the current visa expiry date.
24. What would happen if I need a Certificate of Sponsorship	You must apply to extend your leave and apply for an ATAS before your current visa expiry date. The extension cannot be finalised until

<p>extension following a last-minute contract extension and there is not enough time to obtain an ATAS certificate?</p>	<p>ATAS is provided, but a person who has submitted an in-time application can continue on their current visa conditions.</p>
<p>25. Does the ATAS certificate have an expiry date?</p>	<p>The ATAS certificate is valid for 6 months for you to apply for your visa. If permission has been granted, the ATAS clearance will be in place and you can start work. Employment contracts do not have to be finalised before an ATAS application is made. A further ATAS certificate is not needed after 6 months unless you apply for a visa extension or your research subject changes.</p>
<p>26. Will my Certificate of Sponsorship confirm whether I am subject to the ATAS requirement or not?</p>	<p>Yes, a sponsor note will be added to all Certificate of Sponsorships to confirm whether subject to ATAS or not. Your Certificate of Sponsorship confirmation letter will also confirm this.</p>
<p>27. What happens if my research subject area changes or I undertake additional research?</p>	<p>If you are moving into researching a subject where ATAS is required, you must obtain an ATAS certificate before you start researching in the new area. You will not necessarily need to apply for a new visa if you hold extant leave to remain, but you will need to obtain an ATAS before starting new research area.</p> <p>The ATAS certificate must accurately reflect the University as your host for the research, the research project, job title and duration. If any of these details change you should check whether you require an ATAS certificate and apply for a new certificate if you need one.</p>
<p>28. What if I am a dual national and one of the nationalities is exempt?</p>	<p>You will not be subject to the ATAS Requirement / Condition if you hold a nationality which is on the exemptions list. The Certificate of Sponsorship will reflect your exempt nationality, but you should include both nationalities in your visa application.</p> <p>If your nationality changes to that which is not on the exemptions list, you may need to apply for ATAS clearance.</p>
<p>29. What happens if I make a mistake in my ATAS application and I have already submitted it?</p>	<p>If you have already received your certificate, you will need to apply for a new ATAS certificate. If you have only just submitted your application, you should contact the ATAS unit via <a href="mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk">ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk</a> to see if they can change the information.</p> <p>If there is an error on your ATAS application after you have submitted it, you must <b>also</b> advise your HR contact / <a href="#">Ask HR</a></p>