



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) 2015

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● What is the Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme?

The Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES) is designed to provide a bridge for PhD students from Tier 4 to Tier 2 (and Tier 1).

A visa issued under this scheme allows Tier 4 students who complete a PhD at a UK institution time to find work with a Tier 2 employer; set up as an entrepreneur; or to gain practical work experience in their field. Work as a Doctor or Dentist in training or a sportsperson (including coaches) is not permitted.

To apply under this scheme you will need to be sponsored by the University with a new Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) and to make a new Tier 4 visa application **before you complete your PhD**. The DES visa will be granted for a period of **12 months** from your expected completion date stated on the new CAS.

The less restrictive terms, regarding employment, of the Tier 4 DES visa apply from the date of PhD completion (providing a valid visa application has been made before this date), even if the applicant is still awaiting the outcome of their visa application

If the study for your PhD required ATAS clearance and your current certificate is still valid (i.e. your research has not changed), you are not required to obtain a new ATAS certificate in order to apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme.

During the DES year you will need to keep in contact with the University as your sponsor for the scheme.

● Who can apply?

To be eligible for this visa you must:

- Hold a valid Tier 4 (General) visa for PhD studies at Cambridge until you will be 'approved' for your PhD. This visa must not expire before you receive unconditional approval for your PhD;
- Be able to make your visa application from within the UK;
- Complete a University declaration and £50 payment;
- Receive a CAS, and make the visa application within the sixty day period prior to receiving final approval for your degree;
- Meet all other requirements of the Tier 4 application, including financial.

● How can I apply to the scheme?

If you wish to apply for this visa, you will need to complete the DES [Expression of Interest](#) form, preferably before you undertake your viva.

After you have had your viva and are aware of the result you will need to update the International Student Team in order to obtain a CAS number.

If you have no, or only minor, corrections to complete we will likely be able to agree with you an 'expected course end date' for your CAS at this stage. This is the date that you expect the University expects to approve you, unconditionally, for your degree. Provision of a CAS is not confirmation that PhD approval will be granted and plays no role in the approval process; a CAS can be withdrawn if a PhD is not awarded.

If you do have major corrections we would recommend that you contact us again, approximately three weeks before you intend to submit your corrections.

● **What do I need for my Tier 4 visa application?**

The Doctorate Extension Scheme requires you to submit a new Tier 4 visa application before you complete your PhD. This application process is similar to the process for extending your Tier 4 visa from inside the UK. Please click [here](#) for a step by step overview.

Our [Visa Advice Service](#) will be able to guide you through this process. For the application you will need to provide the following documents:

- **Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS)**
You will receive this form by e-mail. Your CAS is not an actual certificate or paper document but is a virtual document. The Home Office requires your CAS number, and you require the detail from your CAS to complete your application, but the Home Office does not require your CAS statement.
- **Current passport and visa**
- **2 passport sized-colour photographs** with your name written on the reverse side
- **Bank statements** as proof of your finances for maintenance
- **Police registration certificate** (if applicable); you will only need to send this with your visa application if your current visa requires you to have a Police Registration Certificate.
- **ATAS certificate** (if applicable); if the study for your PhD required ATAS clearance you will need to provide your most recent ATAS certificate with your application
- **Healthcare surcharge:** You will need to make a payment of £150 for the [healthcare surcharge](#) before submitting your visa application. You should enter the course start date as the course end date in your CAS and the course end date as a date between 6-12 months after this date to ensure you pay the correct amount.

The website of the [Home Office](#) provides more information on the Tier 4 visa application process.

● **How much does it cost to apply?**

When you apply for your Tier 4 DES visa you will have to complete an online application form. You can either send your supporting documents in the post or attend a Premium Service Centre (PSC). Further information is outlined on the [Home Office webpages](#).

At the time of writing the standard Tier 4 (DES) application costs £439. This option requires you to print off the cover sheets and send these with your supporting documents to the UKVI by post.

The cost for the premium Tier 4 (DES) application is at the time of writing £839. This option requires you to book an in-person appointment.

● **Can my dependants apply?**

Any dependants that are in the UK with you will be able to extend their stay when you apply. They can apply for a visa extension as a Tier 4 DES dependant.

Dependants that are not yet residing in the UK can apply for a Tier 4 DES dependant entry clearance visa.

You can find more information on this process on [our website](#) as well as on the [UK Visas & Immigration \(UKVI\) website](#).

● **Where can I find more information?**

On our website we offer information on the Doctorate Extension Scheme, as well as on other after study visas such as Tier 1 and Tier 2: <http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/visas-after-studying>

More details on the DES scheme can be found on the [UKCISA website](#).

If you have any further questions about applying for your visa under the Doctorate Extension scheme please email us at international.students@admin.cam.ac.uk

Frequently Asked Questions

Timings for Application

1. What is my expected completion/course end date?

Your completion date is that date on which you expect to have your degree approved without condition by the Board of Graduate Studies, which includes having submitted the hardbound thesis. We will need to agree this expected date once you have had your viva and know whether you have any corrections to complete.

2. When should I apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme?

You can apply for the scheme up to sixty days before your expected course end date. You must submit the visa application before your PhD receives unconditional approval (usually submission of hardbound thesis).

3. Will my course end date for DES be different to my original course end date?

Yes, in most cases your course end date will be different to your original course end date which was stated in the CAS for your PhD.

4. What should I do if my current Tier 4 visa will expire before I expect to complete?

If your current Tier 4 visa will expire before your expected completion date, you will first need to extend your stay as a Tier 4 (General) student before applying for the Doctorate Extension Scheme. Please email internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk to request a CAS.

5. Is it a problem if my expected course end date ends up being very close to my visa expiry date?

No, provided that your expected course end date is no later than the date your visa expires.

6. Do my corrections need to be approved before the Degree Committee meeting?

No, if your corrections are not approved before the Degree Committee (DC) meeting, you will likely be approved 'subject to corrections'. Students usually have three months for minor corrections and six months for major corrections from the date of the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) meeting. The DC and BGS only consider your degree once at a formal meeting unless your viva result is revise and re-submit.

7. Where can I find dates for the Degree Committee and Board of Graduate Studies?

Please see the [Board of Graduate Studies](#) website. Your viva result will first need to be considered by the relevant Degree Committee and will then go through the subsequent Board of Graduate Studies meeting.

8. Which graduation ceremony can I apply for?

You will need to contact your College to confirm which congregation you are able to attend.

Visa Application

9. When should I submit my visa application and how?

The application is a standard Tier 4 online application – there is a question which asks if you are applying for the Doctorate Extension Scheme. Please see ['extend your visa'](#).

10. Do I need to re-apply for ATAS clearance?

If the study for your PhD required ATAS clearance and your current certificate is still valid (i.e. your research has not changed) you are not required to obtain a new ATAS certificate

in order to apply for the Doctorate Extension Scheme. You should include your most recent certificate with your visa application.

11. Can I apply from overseas?

No, you must submit your visa application from within the UK.

12. What do I have to do to receive a CAS and how long does this take to issue?

In order to receive a CAS you need to sign an undertaking and make a £50 payment. You must also agree an expected course end date with IST. We are able to issue the CAS within 5 working days of these steps being completed.

13. Do I need to submit an English language certificate?

No, your CAS will confirm your English proficiency so you do not need to submit any further documentation with your visa application.

14. What level of funding do I need to show?

You must meet the requirements for established presence in the UK. This means you must show you have had £1,640 available to you for a consecutive 28 day period ending no more than one month before you apply for the visa. Please ensure that your financial documents meet the [Home Office](#) requirements.

15. How long will the visa take to process?

The Home Office aims to process applications made by post within 8 weeks. If you attend an in-person appointment using the premium service, your documents will be returned to you on the same day and your new visa will be sent by post within 7-10 working days.

16. Can I make an appointment to have my visa application checked?

Yes, you can make an appointment by e-mail with a visa advisor who will check over your visa application form and supporting documents before you submit them.

Responsibilities under DES

17. Do I need to register with the police?

If your current visa states that police registration is required then you will need to register your new visa and any changes in address at your local Police Station.

18. What responsibilities do I have under the Doctorate Extension Scheme?

As a sponsored student under DES, you are required to stay in contact with the University through the IST and there will be three email contact points during the twelve months. You are required to present your visa for scanning within a week of receiving it. You must also inform us of changes to your circumstances, including changes to contact details, if you permanently leave the UK or switch into another visa category.

19. Can I work whilst I am undertaking corrections?

Whilst you are undertaking corrections, you are considered to be in 'term time' and are subject to the [University's working restrictions](#). Once any corrections have been formally approved, you will be able to work full-time in a non-permanent role.

20. What options are available after the Doctorate Extension Scheme?

You can switch into Tier 2, Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) or Tier 1 Entrepreneur inside the UK as long as your DES visa is still valid. You would need to meet the requirements for the relevant visa category. There is no option to extend the DES visa for longer than the initial 12 months. Other visa options may exist dependent on your personal circumstances.

Timeline for Doctorate Extension Scheme Application

Submission of softbound thesis



Viva Examination



Degree Committee/Board of Graduate Studies



Completion of corrections



Prepare and submit visa application



Submission of hardbound

- Complete the 'Expression of Interest' form
- Check whether you need to apply for ATAS clearance. This is only if your course required ATAS clearance and you do not already have a valid certificate to submit with your visa application.
- Check when your current visa expires
- Inform IST as soon as you know your viva date

- Contact IST once you know the result of your viva.
- Complete the declaration and make the £50 payment.
- Ensure that you have started preparing documents for your visa application, particularly finances. The amount of money must have been in your account for 28 days prior to submitting your application.
- Agree a course end date for your new CAS with IST (see next steps for points to consider).

- Check when the next [Degree Committee](#) meeting is for your subject and the subsequent [Board of Graduate Studies](#) meeting.
- You will have one month after the BGS meeting in which to submit your hardbound thesis (provided any corrections have been approved before this date).

- Complete any required corrections and submit these to your examiners. Keep IST informed of the progress towards completing corrections and their approval.
- If you have major corrections, contact us about three weeks before you expect to submit your corrections.
- Your course end date will depend on when your corrections are submitted and approved.

- You should complete the Tier 4 online visa application. Click on the section '[extend your visa](#)' and follow the links to create an account.
- Ensure that your supporting documents meet the specific Home Office requirements.

- Ensure that you make your visa application **before your PhD is approved** (usually submission of hardbound thesis).
- Provide IST with proof of your visa application and bring in your new visa for scanning on receipt.