

ATAS Application Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) – for international researchers

Before you apply for an ATAS certificate, please read these FAQs in conjunction with the guidance available on the Gov.uk webpages:

- Find out if you need an ATAS certificate <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-out-if-you-require-an-atas-certificate>
- ATAS guidance <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/academic-technology-approval-scheme>
- Guidance on how to apply for an ATAS certificate <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-on-how-to-apply-for-an-atas-certificate>
- Check if you need an ATAS certificate/Apply for an ATAS certificate <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

What is ATAS?

The Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) is run by the UK government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The scheme is designed to prevent the spread of knowledge that could be used in programmes to develop Advanced Conventional Military Technology (ACMT), weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) or their means of delivery.

Under the scheme, international researchers who will be undertaking research activities, **at PhD level or above**, in certain **sensitive subject areas** will be required to apply for government clearance by obtaining a free of charge ATAS certificate before they can apply for a visa to start or continue working in the UK.

Do I need an ATAS certificate?

You will need an ATAS certificate where you meet **all 4** of the following criteria:

1) Visa type

You are submitting an initial or extension application in one of the following visa / immigration categories:

- Skilled Worker visa; or
- High Potential Visa; or
- Government Authorised Exchange visa (Sponsored Researchers); or
- Standard/Academic Visit, where research as part of a permitted activity is subject to the ATAS condition

OR

- You already hold a relevant immigration status:
 - Tier 2/Skilled Worker
 - Tier 5/Government Authorised Exchange
 - High Potential Individual
 - Standard/Academic Visitor

and will be undertaking new/additional/different research activity from your current research/study

*If you are applying for another visa type e.g. Global Talent Visa, Graduate Visa, Dependant Visa you do **not** require ATAS clearance (Unless you are also enrolling to study at a higher education institution and the study programme requires ATAS for student).*

2) Nationality

You are a non-EEA national who requires permission to be in the UK.

*Nationals of the following countries are **exempt** and do **not** require ATAS clearance: UK/Ireland, European Economic Area (EEA) countries, Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and USA.*

3) Occupation type

For relevant sponsored immigration categories (Skilled worker / GAE), **and** if you are in a role that falls under one of the following Standard Occupational Classification codes **and** will undertake research at a PhD level as part of the role:

2111 Chemical scientists

2112 Biological scientists

2113 Biochemists and biomedical scientists

2114 Physical scientists

2115 Social and humanities scientists

2119 Natural and social science professionals not elsewhere classified

2122 Mechanical engineers

2123 Electrical engineers

2124 Electronics engineers

2125 Production and process engineers

2126 Aerospace engineers

2127 Engineering project managers and project engineers
2129 Engineering professionals not elsewhere classified
2161 Research and development (R&D) managers
2162 Other researchers, unspecified discipline
2311 Higher education teaching professionals
3111 Laboratory technicians
3112 Electrical and electronics technicians
3113 Engineering technicians
3114 Building and civil engineering technicians
5234 Aircraft maintenance and related trades **Previously known as designated PhD level SOC codes*

For High Potential Individual visas

If you're a researcher undertaking PhD level-or-above research in one of the listed sensitive research fields, and are not exempt due to nationality, ATAS will be required. For this route, there is no SOC selection during the application process.

For Standard or Academic Visit visas

If you're a researcher undertaking science and academic activities in a restricted ATAS subject/field, including:

- gathering information and facts for a specific project which directly relates to your employment overseas, or to support independent research
- taking part in formal exchange arrangements with UK counterparts
- carrying out research for your own purposes or as a group

*If you're a researcher attending meetings, conferences, seminars or interviews, or giving speeches, **and** will not be undertaking research during your time in the UK, you do **not** require ATAS clearance.*

4) Research field

If your field of research is in a subject set out in the list of Academic Subjects/Fields of Research relevant to ATAS - see **Appendix 1** below.

I will be undertaking new/additional/different research activity – do I need an ATAS certificate?

If you are due to start new/additional/different research activity that is different from your current research/study **and** meet **all 4** of the criteria above, you **will** need a new ATAS certificate **before** you can start your new/additional/different research activity.

This requirement applies to you:

- if you are a Tier 2/Skilled Worker/Tier 5/Government Authorised Exchange visa holder - due to start new/additional/different research activity; or
- if you are a Tier 2/Skilled Worker/ Tier 5/Government Authorised Exchange visa holder – due to start new/additional/different research activity as permitted supplementary work
- if you hold High Potential Individual visa and you are due to start new/additional/different research activity
- even if you do not need to make a further visa application at this time and/or did not need ATAS clearance for your previous visa application.

When should I apply for ATAS?

- You should apply for your ATAS certificate as early as possible as you will need to submit this as part of your visa application.
- If you are a new visa applicant, it is recommended that you apply as soon as you receive your job offer but no earlier than 6 months before your proposed work start date.
- If you are applying to extend your visa, it is recommended that you apply at least 4 months before (but no earlier than 6 months before) your current visa expiry date.
- If your contract and visa extension will be for a period of less than 3-months, then new ATAS is not required. Where this is a sponsored visa, the certificate of sponsorship will contain a 'sponsor note' confirming this.

How long will it take to get ATAS clearance?

- Applications will normally be processed within 6 weeks. However, anything up to 3-4 months is not uncommon, and the peak period is between April and September. There are no fast-track or priority options available.

How long is ATAS valid for?

- An ATAS certificate is valid for 6 months from the date of issue. Please ensure that you submit your visa application before your ATAS certificate expires.

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

- Try registering with a different email address, ideally an internationally recognised email such as Outlook, Hotmail, Yahoo or similar as ATAS have experienced difficulties with firewalls for local servers, or from a different computer.
- Please avoid using Gmail email addresses, as we are aware this can cause technical issues for applicant receiving the outcome notifications.
- Alternatively, try using a different web browser. The ATAS website works best with Google Chrome. You may experience difficulties when using Internet Explorer or Firefox to complete the form.

How do I apply?

To apply for an ATAS certificate you will need to complete and submit the online application form, available at <https://www.academic-technology-approval.service.gov.uk/>

When you begin your ATAS application, please select Imperial College London from the dropdown menu. Your ATAS certificate must be linked to Imperial College London to enable you to use this as part of your visa application to work at Imperial.

Although the ATAS application system suggests that the form can be completed within 1 hour, we have been made aware by some applicants that it can take considerably longer. It is therefore recommended that you set aside a reasonable amount of time to complete your application.

The process appears to be particularly time consuming for researchers with a long list of publications as the information for each publication (including title, year of publication, co-authors, brief summary of research activities/findings) has to be entered separately. You may therefore wish to prepare this information before you start your application.

What is my CAH code?

To apply for an ATAS certificate you will need to know the CAH code for your field of research as you will need to enter this on your application form.

If you are a new member of staff applying for a Skilled Worker/Government Authorised Exchange visa, the Staff Compliance team will email you the CAH code along with your information about the visa application process.

If you are an existing member of staff applying for a Skilled Worker/Government Authorised Exchange visa **or** you are applying for a visitor visa, your dept email you an ATAS assessment form containing the CAH code.

What start date should I enter on the form?

If you are a new visa applicant, you should enter the proposed work start date detailed in your job offer.

If you are applying to extend your visa, you should enter the start date for the visa extension application i.e. the day after your current visa expiry date. This may be different to any associated contract extension start date.

If you already hold a relevant immigration status (Tier 2/Skilled Worker/Tier 5/Government Authorised Exchange/Tier 4/Student Visa) and are applying for permission to undertake new/additional/different research activity, you should enter a realistic start date based on standard ATAS processing times of 10-15 working days.

Please note that you will not be able to enter a start date in the past as ATAS will not allow you to make a retrospective application.

Who is my Named Supervisor?

If you do not know who your Named Supervisor is, please ask your department.

The application asks for a research statement - where can I get this?

If you are a new member of staff applying for a Skilled Worker/Government Authorised Exchange visa, the Staff Compliance team will email you the research statement, provided by your department, along with your information about the visa application process.

If you are an existing member of staff applying for a Skilled Worker/Government Authorised Exchange visa **or** you are applying for a visitor visa, your department will email you an ATAS assessment form containing the research statement.

You should copy the research statement and enter it into the 'What Will you be Studying/Research Statement' box on your application form.

The application asks for details of any government funded research that I have worked on – how can I find out if my research work at Imperial is government funded?

Please ask your department to confirm whether your project would be classified as government funded research and, if so, to provide the required details.

The application asks for information about my sponsor - where can I get this?

This information relates to your financial sponsor i.e. your research funder, rather than Imperial sponsorship of your work visa. Please ask your department to provide these details.

**The application states that one of my referees must be from my home country.
What should I do if I cannot provide a referee from my home country?**

If you are unable to provide a referee from your home country because you have been working in another country, then please provide two referees who meet the other referee criteria. If the ATAS team ask for more information then please explain the reasons why this is not possible.

I have already obtained ATAS clearance but my passport details have since changed – what should I do?

If you have been issued a new passport please email the ATAS team with your ATAS ID and new passport number. In most cases they will update your certificate to reflect the new passport details. In some instances, you may be required to apply for a new ATAS.

If you have changed nationality, you may be required to apply for a new ATAS.

I have already obtained ATAS clearance but I entered the incorrect CAH code – what should I do?

You will need to make a new ATAS application using the correct CAH code. Once you have submitted your new application, please email the Staff Compliance team with a copy of your most recent ATAS certificate together with the ATAS reference number for your new application. We will then ask the ATAS team whether they will be able to fast-track your application. You will need to wait until you have your new ATAS certificate before you submit your visa application.

I have applied for ATAS clearance using the wrong passport/CAH code but do not yet have my ATAS certificate – what should I do?

Please email the Staff Compliance team with your ATAS reference number. We will then ask the ATAS team to see if they are able to change this information before your certificate is issued. If they cannot, you will need to make a completely new ATAS application (as explained above).

If these FAQs do not answer your query then please email the [Staff Compliance team](#) or contact the ATAS team directly.

Appendix 1 Academic Subjects/Fields of Research relevant to ATAS

Medicine:

- CAH02-02-01 - Pharmacology
- CAH02-02-02 - Toxicology
- CAH02-02-03 - Pharmacy
- CAH10-01-06 - Bioengineering, Medical and Biomedical Engineering

Mathematical 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

Biological Sciences:

- CAH03-01-02 - Biology (non-specific), includes Bioinformatics
- 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)
- CAH03-01-10 - Others in Biological Sciences

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 - Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- CAH10-01-09 - Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering

Veterinary Sciences, Agriculture and related subjects:

- CAH05-01-02 - Others in Veterinary Sciences
- CAH06-01-02 - Agricultural sciences

Technologies:

- CAH10-03-03 - Polymers and Textiles
- CAH10-03-01 - Minerals Technology
- CAH10-03-02 - Materials Technology
- CAH10-03-04 - Maritime Technology