

International Student Support

Immigration Advice Service

Statement of Service

Our Mission

Our mission is to provide high quality, free, impartial and confidential immigration information and advice to Imperial College students (including unconditional offer holders) and recent graduates. We advise on Entry Clearance applications by Tier 4 students and their dependants, extensions of Tier 4 student visas, ATAS, Short-Term Student Visas, rules on working during study, and options to remain in the UK to work after study. We provide information on inviting relatives to visit, Schengen visas for Europe and US visas. For other areas of immigration advice, it is best to seek external guidance. We will, of course, try to help you to the best of our ability, but are not liable for any errors or inaccuracies. Imperial College staff with employment-related immigration queries should approach their departmental HR contact:

www.imperial.ac.uk/hr

We are normally only able to advise students up to 12 months from their degree award date.

Opening Hours

The Office is normally open Monday – Friday between 10am and 5pm, except Wednesday, when we open from 10 - 4. We offer a drop-in “quick query” service on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons. Pre-booked appointments are usually available on Tuesdays from 2 – 5 and Thursdays 10 -1. To book an appointment, please call the number below, email international@imperial.ac.uk or call into the office in person. It may sometimes be necessary to change these times for staff training or at periods of high demand. We will always try to announce any changes to our availability on our [website](#) and as much in advance as possible.

International Student Support Team Members

All of the team are trained and competent in advising students on Tier 4 visa applications and extensions, or are in the process of being trained. We are the only Imperial College staff authorised by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) to provide immigration advice and services to students. We work on a rota basis, so you may not always see the same person when you visit the office, but we use an electronic case-notes system which enables any member of staff to pick up any case. The team members are:

Lizzie Huckle, Head of International Student Support

Alison Walker, Senior International Student Adviser (part-time)

Christian Adams, International Student Adviser

Shelagh Markey, International Student Adviser (part-time)

John Killeen, Assistant International Student Adviser

Paulina Dyl, International Student Support Administrator

How to contact us

The International Student Support Office is on Level 3, Sherfield Building, South Kensington Campus

Telephone: 020 7594 8040

Fax: 020 7594 8002

Email: international@imperial.ac.uk

Our webpage is www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students

To book an appointment for immigration advice, please call the number above or pop into the office in person.

Conditions of Service

The International Student Support team provides immigration advice in good faith, based on information that you give us about your current situation. We expect you to be open and honest about your circumstances so that we can advise you appropriately. We make every effort to ensure that our advice is accurate but it is subject to change, often at short notice. We cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions, for consequences arising from the use of our advice, nor for decisions made by the Home Office, or any other organisations, regarding immigration applications. It is your responsibility to check the visa requirements that apply to you before making any decisions on how to proceed in your situation.

The College has an appropriate level of professional indemnity insurance, currently provided by Royal Sun and Alliance

General Information

On our website and in the office, you can find a number of information sheets on a range of general welfare and immigration issues, which you are welcome to read and take away. While we can answer basic questions at our reception desk, eg on opening a bank account, inviting family to the UK and how to start the process of a visa extension, for more complex visa questions, we will ask you to return during our dedicated “quick query” times: Mondays 10 – 12 and Fridays 2 – 4.

Immigration Advice and Record Keeping

Written records of all immigration advice must be kept. It is therefore more practical for you to meet with one of our trained advisers in a private, confidential space where your case can be discussed in detail. During your appointment the adviser will make notes of your enquiry, the information and advice they give you and any follow-up action required by you or by the adviser. This record is saved in our confidential electronic casenotes system and will be deleted 6 years after the case has concluded, in line with the OISC code of standards.

Immigration Workshops

At busy times and to help large numbers of students in similar situations, we may offer group visa workshops to talk through the student visa extension application process. We also offer regular workshops on working in the UK after your studies. At the end of our workshops, there is normally an opportunity to speak privately with an adviser if you have specific questions about your case which were not addressed during the session. We may then ask you to make an appointment with us for further discussion in complex cases.

The Regulation of Immigration Advice: Codes of Standards and Ethics

The provision of immigration advice is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC). The OISC sets the principles to which immigration professionals must comply in a Code of Standards and The Commissioner's Rules: <http://oisc.homeoffice.gov.uk/> Higher Education institutions are authorised under a Ministerial Order (Part V of the Immigration and Asylum Act, 1999) to provide immigration advice and services and should adhere to the OISC Code of Standards.

Imperial College is a member of the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and operates in accordance with the UKCISA and AISA (Association of International Student Advisers) Code of Ethics for those advising international students: www.ukcisa.org.uk/code-of-ethics

Only the International Student Support team are qualified and authorised to provide immigration advice to students at Imperial College London. DO NOT take immigration advice from academic staff, other administrative staff or other students. If the level of immigration advice you require is beyond our competence we will refer you to appropriately qualified external legal professionals. For contact details of some relevant organisations, please see our information sheet entitled “Immigration Advice” which you can pick up from our office or download at: www.imperial.ac.uk/study/international-students/visas-and-immigration/information-sheets

Data Protection and Confidentiality

The International Student Support Team operates in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>). This Act aims to ensure that personal information is used in a way that is fair to individuals and protects their rights. For information on the College Data Protection Policy see: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/legalservicesoffice/dataprotection>

Within the International Student Support Office, all paper documents relating to individual cases are locked securely at the end of each working day.

The International Student Support Team keep statistical records of the numbers of visitors to the office and the type of issues discussed. This enables us to monitor demand for our service and to identify any practical or policy issues to improve the service. Any reports that are produced from this information are anonymised, so that individual users of the service cannot be identified.

You have the right to confidentiality when you use our service. We define confidentiality as a “circle of confidentiality” within which International Student Support Team members may discuss information about you, in an appropriate environment, eg to help with staff training and development. Any information we receive from or about you will not be disclosed to others outside our team. The only exceptions to this are:

- When you have given your explicit consent to disclose information to an individual or organisation
- If you or others are in immediate danger
- If the provision of such information is required by the law
- If there is any risk to the College’s Tier 4 Licence

We may decide it is in your best interest to contact an external organisation such as the Home Office or the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) for further advice or opinions about your case.

Whenever possible we will advise you if we intend to do this. However, sometimes this may not be practical and we would generally assume that by coming to us for help, you are allowing us to resolve your queries in the best way we can.

To help protect confidentiality, advice will be delivered in a private space, large enough to accommodate a visitor with a child in a pushchair or a wheelchair user, with the door closed.

Conflict of Interest

Under OISC rules, an adviser must not act where there is a real or potential conflict of interest between them and the client. Advisers must act objectively and in the client’s best interests, even where they may hold different personal views or beliefs from the client. In such situations we would explain the circumstances fully and clearly to you. It may be appropriate to refer your case elsewhere or transfer it to another member of the team

Discrimination

The International Student Support Team will not discriminate, or tolerate discrimination on the part of others, on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, age, nationality, faith, sexual orientation, physical ability or any other irrelevant consideration. We are committed to providing a fair and equal service to all clients without any prejudice or bias.

Referrals and withdrawals

An adviser must not advise a client if this requires them to act beyond their authorisation (see “our mission” above). If we find ourselves in this position then we will inform you of this immediately in writing, giving the reasons why we are unable to assist. Where possible, we will refer you to appropriately qualified legal professionals. We will only withdraw from a case if it is in your best interests. If we deem it necessary to withdraw from a case, we will inform you in writing and where possible, we will refer you to appropriately qualified legal professionals.

Comments, Suggestions and Complaints

We are committed to providing a high quality service to all our clients. If something goes wrong, please tell us about it so that we can work to improve our standards. We also welcome suggestions for how we might improve and develop the service we provide. We welcome feedback by email, in writing or in person.

If you have a complaint regarding our service, please let us know and we will do our best to resolve the matter swiftly and informally. You can make the complaint in writing directly to the staff member concerned or to the Head of International Student Support.

If you would like to raise the issue at a higher level within College, there is a College Complaints Procedure, outlined at: <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/secretariat/collegegovernance/provisions/ordinances/e3>. When College processes have concluded, and if you are still unsatisfied, you are entitled to contact the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (see www.oiahe.org.uk).

If your complaint is specific to a piece of immigration advice you have been given, you can make a complaint to the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC: <http://oisc.homeoffice.gov.uk/>), whether or not you have made a complaint to the College.

What you can expect from us...

We will provide you with confidential, accurate and up to date information and immigration advice, based on what you tell us and on our knowledge and experience of the immigration system, to help you make decisions about your situation. We will not tell you what to do.

We cannot guarantee the success of an immigration application and we are not liable should applications be refused, although we will of course try to assist with refusals or refer on to immigration lawyers where we are not competent to advise you.

Records of your consultations with us and any documentation (eg application forms, passports etc) that you leave with us will be stored securely and in accordance with the College's Data Protection Policy. We will take care to ensure that applications given to us to be submitted to the Home Office Student Batch Team are securely handled and posted in advance of your visa expiry date. As soon as applications are returned to us we will notify you.

What we expect from you...

If you make an appointment for Immigration Advice we expect you to keep it. If you need to change the date or time of your appointment, please contact us by telephone or come to the office in advance.

We expect you to treat us with the same respect and courtesy that we extend to you.

We expect you to be open and honest about your situation, as the quality and accuracy of the advice we give is dependent on the information that you give us.

We expect you to act upon the advice given in a timely fashion, for example providing us with a complete student visa extension application well in advance of your visa expiry date, to allow time for the application to be double-checked and prepared for posting to the Home Office.

When asked, you will give feedback about your experience of the service provided, so that we can continually evaluate and improve our service.

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