



The Essential Guide for international students

As your visa sponsor, it is our responsibility to advise you of your visa conditions while you study at St Mary's University. It is very important that you read and follow all of the steps below. We're here to assist and support you, so don't be afraid to ask us any questions.

Please include your regnum and name when you email us: studentvisas@stmarys.ac.uk

Please use the web links below to source the information you need. For more information about your student visa status, please visit the UKCISA website: [UKCISA](https://www.ukcisa.gov.uk)

Please watch the St Mary's University [UKVI Immigration and Compliance Advice presentation](#)

► Your engagement

Your attendance and engagement

Your engagement throughout the full academic year is monitored. You **MUST** attend all timetabled (online or face-face) sessions and submit all your work on time.

Reminder:

Please download [MySMU app](#).

You **MUST** record your attendance for all timetabled sessions via a unique access code, presented to you via your lecturer at the beginning of each timetabled session.

Please arrive at your class on time and record your attendance immediately. If you do not record your attendance there will not be an accurate record.

Unexplained absences will be investigated which may put your visa sponsorship at risk.

Minimum attendance threshold requirements:

Foundation degree: 85% per week.

Undergraduate and Postgraduate degree: 70% per week (you **must** check with your Course Lead if your programme has a higher attendance threshold; this will depend on your degree).

If you do not attend or fully engage with your studies, you will be at risk of being withdrawn from the University.

For more information about your attendance, please visit: [STUDENT VISA ENGAGEMENT AND MONITORING POLICY](#)

► Your Accommodation

It is highly recommended that you live as close to St Mary's University as possible. This is to enable you feel a part of the St Mary's community and to fully engage with your studies. If you would like assistance to find accommodation please contact: [ACCOMMODATION SERVICES](#).

If your accommodation is too far away from St Mary's University and your attendance and engagement are affected because of the distance, you are at risk of being withdrawn. You **MUST** make every effort to live as close by to the University as possible.

► Your contact details

Throughout your studies, you must keep your UK contact details updated via the student portal. You must update your **personal email address, mobile telephone number and term-time UK address** if there are any changes during your studies. Please use this link to access the student portal: [PORTAL](#).

► eVisa, passport and ID Check

Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) and vignettes (visa stickers in passports) are being completely replaced by a digital immigration permission known as an 'eVisa' or 'digital status' for all visa holders. From January 2025 you **MUST** apply for the eVisa to view and prove the complete length of your Student Visa.

If you are a visa national, you may also have a 90-day vignette granted inside your passport called Entry Clearance permitting your entry to the UK. If you are a continuing student who has a BRP that expired on 31st December 2024, you **MUST** create a UKVI account and apply for your eVisa.

Please download our [EVISA APPLICATION GUIDE](#) to complete the eVisa application. The Home Office will process and approve the application and send instructions to access the eVisa by email. We conduct **face-to-face ID checks** with all Student visa holders during enrolment periods. The visa team will check and retain digital copies of your eVisa, passport, share code and boarding pass. Once the check is verified the visa team will change your enrolment status from 'provisionally enrolled' to 'fully enrolled' and full access to university systems will be granted.

If there are any errors with eVisa a correction process **MUST** be followed to ensure your permission is correct. Please read the [UKCISA GUIDANCE](#) to understand the correction process. Please email the visa team if you spot an error and you require assistance.

If you apply for a **new passport** during your studies, you **MUST** update your student record via the [STUDENT PORTAL](#). The visa team **MUST** have a copy of any new immigration documents.

*From 1st December 2025, there will be no more physical student visas printed. Use the link to read our information about how to apply for and view your eVisa: [EVISA](#)

► Apply for a proof of age card

You are advised to apply for an officially recognised UK proof of age ID card with a NUS TOTUM card application. This means that you can have a student discount card (TOTUM) as well as an official ID card. This also means you will not need to carry your Passport or BRP with you, please keep these in a safe place at home.

The student discount card has a small cost per year, further information can be found online: [PROOF OF AGE CARD](#).

► Work placements

Some courses include work placement opportunities. These can vary in duration up to a full year on placement.

- A work placement **MUST** be assessed and **MUST** form an integral part of your course. 'Assessed' means you can pass or fail a placement. 'Integral' means the placement must be a part of your course/curriculum.
- A placement can be paid or it can be unpaid.
- A placement can be classified as full time, even during term time.
- Your work placement provider and your employer could be the same, as long as the work that is completed can be assessed and forms an integral part of your course. Many jobs you can be employed in won't be directly related to your course and may not be appropriate. It is likely your work placement provider and your employer are different companies.
- Foundation degree students are allowed a maximum of 33% of the total length of their programme on a placement/s.
- Undergraduate/Masters/PhD students are allowed a maximum of 50% of the total length of the programme on a placement/s.
- You can complete a work placement at the same time as being employed under your visa condition up to a maximum of 10 or 20 hours per week, depending on your course level.
- For Undergraduate/Masters/PhD students, we would recommend that you work no longer than 40 hours per week in total, which is an average working week inside the UK. This would include the total amount of hours on your placement and the maximum permitted employment hours of 20 per week, within your visa conditions.
- For Foundation Degree students a maximum of 10 working hours is permitted in paid employment.
- **Working example:** Work placement provider hours: 4 hours per day Monday – Friday = 20 hours per week; plus: A maximum of 10 or 20 hours per week of employment depending your course level.
- Per 'week' means any seven-day period starting on a Monday-Sunday.
- Working too many hours can lead to exhaustion and should not prevent course attendance and missing submission deadlines.

- You are responsible for ensuring that you do not exceed your maximum weekly hours or employment, 10 or 20 depending on your course level.
- Please read the [Work During Studies](#) information about your working rights inside the UK.
- Your work placement details **MUST** be reported to the Home Office and we may contact you for further details if any work placement details are missing from your student record.
- Most work placements are arranged via the Centre of Workplace Learning Team. You will require a letter to provide to your placement provider before you start working at the company that explains your visa attendance requirements.
- Whilst on your placement your engagement and/or progress will be monitored. If you do not attend your placement as planned you are at risk of being withdrawn from St Mary's University by the UKVI Compliance and Immigration Team.

CENTRE OR WORKPLACE LEARNING TEAM

► **Changes to your studies**

Any changes to your studies are likely to have implications to your visa; for example:

- Changing your course
- Withdraw/leave of absence
- Repeating, resitting or interrupting studies
- Transfer of university
- Change of immigration status

Please contact us with any questions before making any changes to your studies. Once you have agreed for changes to be made via your Course Lead and the visa team, please request the necessary changes via the [PORTAL](#).

► **Travelling around Europe**

The Schengen Visa Scheme allows those who wish to visit certain countries within the European Economic Area (EEA) (and Switzerland) to travel between these countries using only one visa. You should contact the Embassy in London of the country or countries you wish to visit.

The countries are: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

You will require a letter to apply for a Schengen visa. Please email us for a letter confirming you are a student at St Mary's University. More information about how to apply can be found at: [SCHENGEN VISA](#).

► **Dependants**

Since January 2024 more restrictions on bringing dependents to the UK have existed in the immigration rules. If you are studying on the Student Route, you can only have your dependants with you in the UK under certain circumstances.

Please select this link to see if any of the situations in the following categories apply to you: [DEPENDANTS](#)

► **Graduate Immigration Route**

The Graduate Immigration Route (GIR) will be open to you if you have successfully completed an eligible course and you have valid Student or Tier 4 permission.

Eligibility requirements

- You must have studied your course in the UK for at least the last 12 months or the full length of your course, whichever is shorter. (Not studying overseas or remotely.)
- You must successfully complete your entire course and obtain a full award for it. You are not eligible to apply if you leave St Mary's University with an Exit Award.
- You must submit your application from inside the UK before your current student visa expires.
- The UKVI Compliance and Immigration Team will confirm with you via email when you are eligible to apply after the exam board for your programme.
- You will need to pay a new visa application fee and pay for 2 years (3 years for Phd students) of IHS costs as part of your visa application costs. Please ensure you have the funds in place before you apply.
- Programmes below degree level, are not eligible, e.g. Foundation degree.
- If you have unpaid course fees or outstanding university accommodation payments, you will not be eligible for UKVI reporting until all payments are made.

For more information please access the [GIR FAQs](#).