

# Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS)

## Application Guide for Research Students

**IMPORTANT:** If a course requires ATAS and the student is not exempt, the student must hold the ATAS certificate before starting their course at Durham University or before making a Student visa application, if required. Durham University cannot register a student on a course where ATAS is required until the certificate has been issued. If you arrive at the university without ATAS, you will not be permitted to register and may have to defer your studies.

### 1. What is ATAS?

The [Academic Technology Approval Scheme \(ATAS\)](#) gives non-UK nationals security clearance to study or undertake research in specific sensitive technology-related fields in the UK. The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) administers the scheme and issues ATAS certificates.

### 2. Who needs an ATAS certificate?

You will need an ATAS certificate if:

- You are studying at postgraduate level or above (including integrated Masters degree)
- You are studying or researching a relevant science subject as defined by [FCDO](#), which includes mathematics, computer science, engineering, biomedical sciences and physics
- You are a non-UK national who do not hold [an exempt nationality](#)

### 3. Who is exempt from ATAS?

- [Nationals of this list](#)
- Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) or Settlement status holders.
- If you are exempt from UK Immigration Control
- Dual nationals who hold an exempt nationality. However both nationalities should still be declared where asked

### 4. When do you need your ATAS?

- You must obtain an ATAS certificate before you start your visa application. Non-Student visa holders (e.g. BNO visa, Visitor, Dependent visa, Skilled Worker visa, etc.) do not require an ATAS certificate at the point of application, although you must always have a valid ATAS clearance before you start your course or research

- ATAS is free of charge and takes 30 working days to issue. Fast-track service is not available. Longer waits are to be expected during peak periods (April – September). Therefore, you are advised to apply for it as early as possible.
- The ATAS certificate is valid for 6 months from date of issue and must be used while it is valid in your visa application. ATAS does not need to remain valid for the full duration of the course
- For non-Student visa holders, ATAS certificate must be valid at the time of enrolling in your course. ATAS does not need to remain valid for the full duration of the course.

## 5. When should you start your ATAS application?

Student type	Recommended timing	Why
New students applying for a Student visa	Apply as early as possible once the Durham offer and CAH3 code are available, ideally up to 6 months before the course start date.	ATAS processing can be slow, and students must obtain their ATAS certificate before submitting their visa application to avoid the risk of visa refusal.
New students applying for a non-Student visa	Apply as early as possible once the Durham offer and CAH3 code are available, ideally up to 6 months before the course start date.	ATAS processing can be slow, and students must obtain their ATAS certificate before starting their course. Where ATAS is required, students are not permitted to begin studying at Durham University without a valid ATAS certificate.
Continuing students, extending their Student visa	Apply at least 4 months before visa expiry, return from leave, or the point at which a new ATAS is needed.	This allows sufficient time for ATAS processing and any subsequent CAS or visa action. Students must obtain their ATAS certificate before submitting their visa application to avoid the risk of visa refusal.
Continuing students, switching to a course for which ATAS is required	Apply at least 4 months before transferring to the new course.	This allows sufficient time for ATAS processing and any subsequent CAS or visa action, where required. Students must obtain their ATAS certificate before switching to a course for which ATAS is required.

## 6. When a new ATAS may be needed for continuing students

- If you are extending your Student visa because your course end date is delayed by 3 months or more.
- If you are transferring to a course for which ATAS is required.
- If your primary supervisor changes.
- If the content of your course changes.
- If you wish to study or research at a different institution not listed on your ATAs certificate
- If you have changed your nationality.

## 7. Preparing your ATAS application

Before you start your ATAS certificate application, make sure to have:

1. Confirmation that the course requires ATAS
2. [Correct CAH3 code](#)
3. Exact programme title
4. Correct course start and end dates
5. Correct supervisor or programme lead details
6. Full research summary (for research students), or the core and optional modules (for taught students)
7. Passport details
8. Referee details, sponsor details, prior study history, and employment history

You can find the above information in your offer letter, CAS statement (you will only have a CAS if you are applying for a Student visa), or through [your department](#).

**IMPORTANT:** Please check all details carefully before submitting your ATAS application, as any errors may require a new application.

## 8. Section-by-section guidance

Section	What Durham students should enter
<b>1. Proposed research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select Durham University when asked what university you will be researching at.</li> <li>• Enter the name of the academic department you will be studying at.</li> <li>• Use your official programme title for the subject you will be studying.</li> <li>• New students should use the start and end dates on their offer letter or CAS statement.</li> <li>• Continuing students should use the date they submit their ATAS application as their course start date as the system doesn't accept dates in the past. They should also use the new course end date if extending their studies.</li> <li>• Continuing students could use the "Personal Statement of Intent" section to enter the original start date.</li> <li>• Select the correct CAH3 code. You can find your CAH3 code <a href="#">here</a> and the qualification you will be studying for.</li> <li>• Enter your primary supervisor name.</li> <li>• For your Personal Statement of Intent, use formal, factual language to describe the context of the research.</li> <li>• Research Statement: You should use the agreed Durham research statement and include methodologies or technologies where relevant.</li> <li>• For your plans after completion of research, you should state how you intend to use your completed research within the UK.</li> <li>• You could obtain some of the above information from your academic department.</li> </ul>

Section	What Durham students should enter
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuing students applying for extra time should make clear that the new ATAS application is to complete the current course or because the programme end date has been extended.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Personal details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enter your name, gender, date of birth, nationality, all other details exactly as they appear on the passport that will be used for travel or visa purposes.</li> <li>Declare dual nationality where applicable.</li> <li>You should enter your National Identification Number if you have one, otherwise select No.</li> <li>Answer all other questions accurately then add all languages you speak with level of competency.</li> <li>If passport details change after submission or after the certificate is issued, students should update this by contacting the ATAS team promptly (quote your ATAS reference number).</li> </ul>
<b>3. Spouse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Answer marital status questions accurately. If married or in a civil partnership, complete the dependent details requested where relevant exactly as shown on their passport.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Contact details</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use a reliable primary email address and, ideally, add an alternative email address.</li> <li>Enter current correspondence address and at least one telephone number.</li> <li>You should always monitor spam or junk folders as the ATAS team may contact you by email for corrections or decisions.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Undergraduate or postgraduate studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List university-level study already undertaken and any current university-level study not yet completed.</li> <li>Give the expected completion date and qualifications where relevant.</li> <li>Do not include school education.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Other studies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List other post-school study or formal professional training where requested, in the UK or overseas.</li> <li>Again, do not include school education up to age 18.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Published papers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List academic or professional publications and provide the requested summary where applicable.</li> <li>If none, answer no and move on.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Employment history</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>List paid work and significant unpaid or voluntary roles since leaving school.</li> <li>Explain major gaps such as unemployment or full-time parenting.</li> <li>Temporary jobs during university vacations do not usually need to be included.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Referees</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide at least 2 referees who have known you for at least 3 years.</li> <li>At least one of them should be an academic from your country of origin.</li> <li>Do not use family or friends.</li> <li>Use full names, not initials.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If you have mainly studied or worked outside your home country, an alternative academic or professional referee may be acceptable, but poor referee choices can delay the application.</li> </ul>
<b>10. Sponsors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Give details of whoever is funding your research, for example yourself, parent, government, employer, scholarship body, lender, or more than one sponsor.</li> <li>Give a summary of any conditions attached to the funding.</li> <li>This section is about financial sponsorship, not visa sponsorship.</li> <li>If funding is still pending, students should declare that rather than delaying the ATAS application.</li> </ul>
<b>Submit Application</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Check all the information you have provided is correct before submitting your application.</li> <li>After an application has been submitted, it cannot be changed.</li> <li>Any changes needed after submission will require you to withdraw the application and restart a new one.</li> </ul>

## 9. After submission

- Save a copy of the submitted information where possible
- Monitor your registered email account, including junk or spam folders
- If the ATAS team asks for more information, log back in promptly and provide this
- If the application is still pending beyond the published minimum processing time, students may contact the ATAS team at [ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk) and quote the ATAS reference number. However, responses are not guaranteed
- If the ATAS certificate is issued, you should check every detail immediately to ensure all information is correct
- If there is an error on the certificate, you should contact the ATAS team immediately. Minor errors may sometimes be corrected, but not all errors can be fixed without a new application

## 10. If your ATAS application is unsuccessful

- FCDO does not provide a reason for refusal due to national security.
- You cannot study or conduct research in the UK without an ATAS certificate if it is a condition or requirement of your visa.
- You must wait 90 days before reapplying for an ATAS certificate for the same course or research at the same institution with the same CAH3 code.
- You can apply again for an ATAS certificate for a different course or research area at the same HEI, or you can apply to a different HEI.
- If you are refused ATAS clearance you can ask for an appeal by contacting the ATAS Team at: [ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk](mailto:ATAS@fcdo.gov.uk)