Start-Up Visa Policy

1. Purpose

- This document sets out the University’s policy regarding its endorsement of students applying for a Start-Up Visa of the Points Based Immigration System.
- This policy is specific to the University of Kent and does not represent a full statement of immigration or Start-Up Visa requirements.
- This policy is subject to change and the University is entitled to revise its policies and procedures relating to compliance with its sponsor duties at any time.
- The Immigration Rules, Start-Up Visa guidance and advice from the Home Office will at all times supersede and override the content of this policy.
- The University is under no obligation to endorse any individual and will make a case-by-case assessment.

2. Start-Up Endorsements

2.1 The University of Kent is an endorsing body under the Start-Up Visa arrangements with UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) and is able to endorse up to 20 individuals that have been assessed by ASPIRE as having developed a genuine and credible business idea or entrepreneurial skills. The University renews its endorsements annually in April.

2.2 To receive an endorsement for the Start-Up Visa individuals must have first been approved by the ASPIRE panel had had their business plan approved in line with Home Office guidance.

2.3 All endorsements will be for a two-year period.

3. Eligibility Criteria

3.1 Applicants for endorsement must:

- Have graduated from the University of Kent with a Bachelor’s degree, Master’s degree or PhD within the immediate 2 years preceding the date of application to the Start-Up Visa; and
- Have a good engagement record with the University during their academic studies
- Have no record of academic misconduct including cheating or plagiarism whilst studying at the University; and
- Have no outstanding debts owed to the University; and
- Have agreed to the Terms & Conditions of Start-Up Visa; and
- Be able to provide evidence of meeting the financial requirements as required by UK Visas and Immigration

3.2 The University will conduct additional checks on individuals it considers for Start-Up Visa endorsement. This may include, but is not limited to, an immigration history check with UKVI or request for financial documentation to ensure the individual meets the financial requirements for the visa.

4. Monitoring

4.1 All individuals endorsed by the University are required to maintain contact with the University. Points of contact will be determined and monitored by ASPIRE, but at a
minimum contact will be on a quarterly basis. The University and ASPIRE reserve the right to request additional contact points.

4.2 ASPIRE will monitor the endorsed individual’s engagement on a quarterly basis and the Student Immigration Compliance Team will provide additional oversight reviewing records on a six monthly basis to ensure engagement is taking place in accordance with this policy.

4.3 If an endorsed individual misses a contact point then ASPIRE will make two further attempts to contact the individual within a reasonable amount of time. If a reasonable explanation is not provided for missing the contact point and ASPIRE is unable to re-establish contact with the individual then the University reserves the right to withdraw its endorsement.

5. Withdrawing Endorsements

5.1 When the University initially endorses an individual on the Start-Up Visa it does so with the intent to endorse the individual for the duration of the two-year period the individual is eligible. However, the University reserves the right to withdraw endorsement at any time should it become aware the individual is breaching the terms and conditions of their visa or if the University has evidence that the student has not disclosed all relevant information at the time of issuing the endorsement or has not acted honestly or in good faith. Endorsement may also be withdrawn where there is failure to progress the business as agreed or where an individual is not spending the majority of their time pursuing their business idea.

5.2 The main purpose of endorsement is to engage and develop a business idea in the UK. If the ASPIRE feels a Visa holder is not spending a credible amount of time developing their business or other entrepreneurial activity, the University will withdraw endorsement.

5.3 Individuals endorsed on the Start-Up Visa are expected to fully cooperate with the University and ASPIRE. Any individual who puts the University at risk, may have their endorsement withdrawn.

6. Record Keeping

6.1 The University will keep on record the following documents:

- Evidence of the selection process that resulted in the University endorsing an individual which includes but is not limited to the application, transcripts, qualifications, and interview notes.
- Copy of the endorsement letter
- Copy of a valid visa and passport
- Copies of all documentation used as evidence of progression of the individual’s business including evidence of contact points.

7. Reporting to the Home Office

7.1 The University will report a Visa holder to the Home Office in the following situations:
• If a Visa holder does not keep in contact, such that one or more contact points are missed without authorisation;
• If the University has evidence to suggest a Visa holder is breaching the conditions of their leave;
• A Visa holder is not spending a credible amount of time developing their business.

7.2 Reports to the Home Office will be made by the Student Immigration Compliance Team to the following email address: StartUpRoute@homeoffice.gov.uk

8. Policy Review

8.1 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with the Start-Up Visa Guidance and Immigration Rules as well as good sector practice.

Policy Approved by:

Mary Hughes,
Academic Registrar and Home Office Authorising Officer

Date: