Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme Policy

1. Purpose

This document sets out the University’s policy regarding its sponsorship of students under the Tier 4 Doctorate Extension Scheme (DES).

2. Sponsoring Students on the Doctorate Extension Scheme

2.1. The University will sponsor doctorate graduates under the DES only in situations where the University is satisfied the student is eligible for the DES and intends to find work, set up as an entrepreneur or gain practical work experience in their field.

2.2. Any student requesting sponsorship under the DES must apply to the University for a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS).

2.3. Requests for sponsorship under the DES will be considered on an individual basis and the University reserves the right to refuse sponsorship in certain situations including, but not limited to, the following:

- The student has outstanding debts to the University
- The student has a history of prior visa refusals
- The Student has had poor engagement throughout their doctorate
- The University is aware of information that could result in the student’s visa being refused, for example insufficient maintenance funds
- The student is in breach of their current visa conditions
- The University believes a student is not acting honestly

2.4. In the event a student’s current Tier 4 leave expires before their course completion date and the University doesn’t require the student’s continued attendance, the University will not issue a CAS to extend existing leave if the University cannot meet its sponsorship duties with respect to the student.

2.5. The University recommends that all applications made for leave under the DES be checked by a Student Adviser at the Kent Union or GK Unions Advice Centres.
3. Monitoring

3.1. The University will contact students at least two times throughout the duration of sponsorship (12 month period) to confirm the student is still in the United Kingdom and seeking or engaged in employment.

3.2. Monitoring is carried out by the Visa Compliance Team by email, but may be conducted in person, by phone or by Skype/FaceTime. Each contact point will be recorded in the student file either by paper or electronically. Where an individual sponsored on the DES is employed by the University of Kent, monitoring will be evidenced via the employee’s engagement in their employment duties, in lieu of monitoring carried out by the Visa Compliance Team.

3.3. If a student misses a contact point the University will make two further attempts to contact the student. If the student cannot provide a reasonable explanation for missing the contact point and the University is unable to re-establish contact with the student then the University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship.

4. Withdrawing Sponsorship

4.1. When the University initially sponsors a student on the DES it does so with the intent to sponsor the student for the duration of the 12 month period the student is on the DES. However, the University reserves the right to withdraw sponsorship at any time should it become aware the student 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 CAS or has not acted honestly or in good faith.

4.2. Students are expected to fully cooperate with the University. Any student who hinders the University’s ability to comply with its record keeping and reporting duties under Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance, or who puts the University at risk, may have their sponsorship withdrawn.

4.3. The University may withdraw sponsorship if it has made a report made to the Home Office in accordance with Section 6 of this policy.
5. Record Keeping

5.1. The University will retain copies of a student’s passport as well as Biometric Residence Permit or immigration status document in accordance with the University’s Tier 4 General Records Keeping Policy.

5.2. The Visa Compliance Team will keep evidence of the contact points with the student in accordance with Section 3 of this policy.

6. Reporting Students to the Home Office

6.1. The University will report a student to the Home Office in accordance with the Immigration Rules, Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance and any other guidance received from the Home Office.

6.2. All reports to the Home Office will be made using the Sponsorship Management System (SMS) unless a situation arises where a report must be made by email to the Home Office.

6.3. The University will continue to report Tier 4 students to the Home Office as normal until the student has successfully completed their doctorate. A student has successfully completed their doctorate at the approximate time when their School has placed their name on the pass list and it has been signed by the Dean. Schools must immediately inform the Visa Compliance Team when a student sponsored on the DES is named on the pass list.

6.4. The University will report against the DES CAS that a student has completed their PhD to the standard required for the award of a PhD along with the date of completion. This only applies to students who have made an application for leave under the DES.

6.5. Students are expected to have at least two contact points with the University throughout the duration of the period they are sponsored on the DES. If a student misses a contact point without reasonable explanation and the University is subsequently unable to regain contact with the student then the University will make a report to the Home Office and sponsorship may be withdrawn in accordance with section 3.3 of this policy.

6.6. If a student tells the University they are permanently leaving the UK then the University will report the student to the Home Office and sponsorship may be withdrawn in accordance with section 4 of this policy.

6.7. If the University becomes aware that a student is breaching the terms and conditions of their visa then the University will make a report to the Home Office.
6.8. The University will make a report to the Home Office if it withdraws sponsorship.

6.9. All reports to the Home Office will be made within 10 days that the University becomes aware of an issue that would result in a report being made.

7. **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it remains compliant with the Tier 4 Sponsor Guidance and Immigration Rules as well as good sector practice.

| Policy Approved by: Jon Pink, Academic Registrar (Home Office Authorising Officer) |
| Date Approved: 29 April 2016/reviewed HJW 12/02/2019 |
| Version 2.0 |