



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 28092020

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A. VISA APPLICATIONS

1. I am still in South Africa and my visa has expired. What should I do?

All Visa Facilitation Centre's in South Africa visa services resumed September 22nd, 2020. The renewal requirements are covered below in questions No.2

**As the safety of customers and staff is VFS priority, they have implemented strict health and safety measures in line with Government guidelines for social distancing at our Application Centres. On arrival at the Visa Application Centre, you will be required to undergo a temperature reading. Customers exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, including fever (higher than 37.3 degrees Celsius), cough and difficulty in breathing will be allowed to reschedule their appointments for another day and not proceed further for their collections

** Kindly check [Visa Facilitation Service](#) for more information regarding processes.

2. UPDATED My study visa is expiring; how do I apply for a renewal of my visa?

If you are outside of South Africa, kindly check your Mission/Visa centres website for updates on operations.

If you are in South Africa, Visa Facilitation Centre's resumed visa services of September 22nd, 2020.

Visa RENEWAL applications requirements

Supporting documents required:

- Letter from Faculty confirming studies and support for the extension of study visa ** letter must include - student name & surname / student number / programme information expected end date of studies
- Copy of the current visa page

Please provide the following and ensure all information is correct:

- Full name(s) as it appears in your passport
- Surname as it appears in your passport
- Student number
- Programme information
- Duration of programme
- Expected end date of programme
- Expiry date of current visa
- Visa type renewal applying for
- City, Country of application for the renewal

Send request with supporting document to iapo@uct.ac.ac.za. Subject line: **Study Visa Renewal**.

** Due to high volumes of requests - processing takes **5 - 7 working days**.

**As the safety of customers and staff is VFS priority, they have implemented strict health and safety measures in line with Government guidelines for social distancing at our Application Centres. On arrival at the Visa Application Centre, you will be required to undergo a temperature reading. Customers exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, including fever (higher than 37.3 degrees Celsius), cough and difficulty in breathing will be allowed to reschedule their appointments for another day and not proceed further for their collections

** Kindly [Visa Facilitation Service](#) for more information regarding processes.



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3. **UPDATED** My current visa is expiring/has expired, will I face any penalty for the late visa renewal ?

If you hold a temporary residence visa that expired *from* the 15 February to 31st October 2020, you *will not be required to submit good case*. You will not be declared an illegal or prohibited person. You may re -apply for your respective visa or relevant visa exemption while in South Africa, from September 22nd, 2020 as , Visa Facilitation Centre's resumed visa services.

4. I received an offer to study, how do I receive a letter of undertaking to apply for a study visa?

The letter of undertaking is system generated and is released after the conditional/firm offer is sent from the faculty office to which you applied for a study place. We advise that you check your email (including the spam/junk folder) for the study offer and letter of undertaking: The letter of undertaking will be sent from noreply@uct.ac.za and the subject header is Letter of Undertaking for Visa.

The body of the email communication guides you with information on the visa application, tuition fees, medical aid, housing and relevant term dates. The letter of undertaking will be attached to this email, and will be coded **UCTB84.pdf**

5. I received an offer to study but have not received the automated letter of undertaking to apply for a study visa. What do I do?

Email iapo@uct.ac.za with the subject header *Letter of Undertaking*. Provide the following in your email:

1. study offer letter from the UCT faculty office
2. a copy of your passport bio page
3. full name(s) as it appears in your passport
4. surname as it appears in your passport
5. student number
6. programme name
7. programme duration
8. start and end date of programme
9. city, country of application
10. confirmation of which visa type you are applying for

Note: Due to high volumes of requests, the letter will take 5-7 working days to be processed.

6. **UPDATED** I applied for my visa renewal; my appointment to submit my documents was during the lockdown period; what do I do?

Visa Facilitation Centre's in South Africa resumed visa services of September 22nd, 2020. You should reschedule your appointment for the soonest available date.

7. I submitted my visa renewal application before the lockdown, my application is still pending; will I be allowed to stay in South Africa while waiting?

If you submitted your visa renewal application in South Africa before the lockdown and it has now expired, but your visa renewal application is still pending, you will be allowed to work, study or conduct business after the lockdown (or as soon as we arrive at a lockdown level at which such activities are allowed) while waiting for the outcome of your visa renewal application.



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8. NEW I missed my visa renewal appointment due to lockdown; my medical and radiological reports just past the 6-month valid period, can I still use them?

Expired medical reports and radiological reports are not acceptable. You need to get new medical reports and radiological reports. In light of COVID 19, these documents are critical.

9. UPDATED I am from a listed COVID-19 high-risk country and I have been accepted to study at UCT; can I obtain a visa to travel to South Africa?

The Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 indicates International travel from countries listed as having a high COVID-19 infection and transmission rate, remains prohibited until the Level 1 Risk adjusted strategy for International travel is announce. We are waiting on the various Ministerial departments to pronounce which countries will be removed from the "revoked" list.

The South African borders will Partially open October 1st . You can approach the South African embassy in your country for guidance on visa and travel.

10. I am in South Africa on a Lesotho Special Permit which has expired; what do I do?

A Lesotho Special Permit lawfully issued in terms of [Government Gazette 43572 Disaster Management Act](#) in line with the Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 which has expired *is deemed to have been extended* up to and including 30 October 2020.

11. I am an asylum seeker or have refugee status and my permit has expired, what do I do?

An asylum seeker permits lawfully issued in terms of section 22 of the Refugees Act, 1998 (Act No. 130 of 1998) and a refugee status granted in terms of section 24 of the Refugees Act, 1998, which expired from 15 March 2020, or is to expire or which status *is deemed to have been extended* up to and including 30 October 2020 in terms of [Government Gazette 43572 Disaster Management Act, in](#) terms of the Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19

12. Will I face any penalties or be deemed undesirable if I travel home on an expired visa (once it's officially permitted to do so)?

A person whose visa has expired from 15 February 2020 and has remained in the Republic during the period of the national state of *disaster will not be declared an undesirable person* in terms of the Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 upon leaving the Republic during the period of the national state of disaster up to and including 30 October 2020.

Any declaration of undesirability that has been issued to any person who departed the Republic on or after 15 February 2020 is hereby set aside.

13. Will I face any penalties or be deemed undesirable if I travel home on an expired visa (once its' officially permitted to do so)?

Those who opt to return to their countries of origin or residence after the lockdown instead of renewing their visa in the Republic of South Africa will not be declared undesirable on departure.



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14. I am in South Africa on a visitor's visa as I had to meet with my supervisor. My visitor's visa is expiring soon and I'm not able to leave as my country's border has closed – what do I do?

You can stay in South Africa during this period of lockdown. As soon as we arrive at a lockdown level at which such activities are allowed, you may either apply to renew your visa for a further 3 months or return to your country of origin or residence. Those who opt to return to their countries of origin or residence after the lockdown instead of renewing their visa in South Africa, will not be declared undesirable on departure. *Alternatively, you can contact your High Commissioner if you would like to be Repatriated. Please note, repatriation is at your own cost and is not guaranteed.*

15. I am on a work visa registered for part time studies. I want to change to a study visa: what is the process?

An application for *change of visa status is not allowed*. To apply for a different visa category, you will be required to travel back home after the lockdown period (or as soon as we arrive at a lockdown level at which such activities are allowed) and submit your visa application from your home country.

16. I have been studying at a different institution in South Africa. I received an offer for UCT and need to change my visa so that it is endorsed for study at UCT. What do I do?

You must wait until VFS operations resumes in order to apply for a change of condition i.e. endorsed for study at UCT. UCT cannot pre-register you without an endorsed study visa for UCT.

17. UPDATED I am International student, I returned to my home country before lockdown, how do I get a letter / permit to return to campus?

The Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19, states the South Africa borders are closed. University staff have no authority to issue letters/permits to travel from across the borders into South Africa. Any person who left South Africa at the start of lockdown, their Visa was revoked/withdrawn. As South African borders will partially re-open under Level 1 lockdown on October 1st, sstudents who travelled home at the start of lockdown can approach the South African Embassy in your home country to validate your visa **this is country specific. The Embassy validations is a requirement before you can travel.

18. UPDATED When will International students, outside of South Africa be allowed back onto campus?

Under the Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID 19, Referencing the [Government Gazette 43414 Department Of Higher Education And Training \(DHET\)](#); Risk adjusted strategy for the return of students to campuses/ delivery sites for teaching and learning..

International students who returned to their home countries during the lockdown will only be permitted to return to campuses when Level 1 of the strategy is announced.

** DHET is expected to make pronouncements October 1st, we will provide an update once received.

19. Who is eligible to apply for a permit to travel and what is the process?

Permits were issued for Inter-Provincial (across provinces) travel within South Africa. At level 2 of lockdown, inter-provincial travel was allowed, you no longer require a permit to travel is between Provinces within South Africa.



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20. I am an international student/researcher who is abroad when South Africa went into lock down (whether in my own country or another), how do I renew my visa?

Once services resume, you will need to apply for a new visa from the South Africa mission in the country where they are currently residing. Regularly check Embassy websites for updates on operations.

21. **UPDATED** I travelled home at the start of lockdown, is my current visa endorsed for UCT still considered valid?

All persons currently outside of South African borders visas were revoked/withdrawn when they left South Africa. Students who travelled home at the start of lockdown can approach the South African Embassy in their home country to validate your visa. The Embassy validation is a requirement before you can travel, effectively reinstating your visa. **This is country specific as we await the pronouncement regarding countries on the revoked list.

22. **UPDATE REVOKED VISA's clarification:**

Disaster Management Act, (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 referencing [Government Gazette 43162](#)

- All submitted applications (pending and adjudicated) at Missions abroad prior to South African's lockdown came into effect and borders were closed, ALL these visas were revoked/withdrawn.
- If you received the visa, it immediately became invalid and revoked/withdrawn when the South African border closed to International travel.
- Nationals from countries which were previously visa exempt will need to obtain a visa to travel to South Africa. That is, the country exempt from a visa and receiving the 90-day visa entry stamp, will now require a visa.

** Students who travelled home at the start of lockdown can approach the South African Embassy in their home country to validate your visa. The Embassy validation is a requirement before you can travel, effectively reinstating your visa. **This is country specific as we await the pronouncement regarding countries on the revoked list

B. REGISTRATION & PRE-REGISTRATION

23. What is pre-registration?

Pre-registration is a fee and visa clearance process that takes place in person. All international students and researchers registered at UCT must be pre -registered prior to registration.

24. What documents are required for pre-registration?

You will need the following:

1. passport containing valid permit for studies at UCT (i.e. study visa) and entry stamp (received at the port of entry upon arrival)
2. proof of South African medical aid cover (the medical aid must be registered with the Council of South African Medical Schemes). The duration of cover must be for the full year of study (i.e. until 31 December 2020). This requirement is specific for holders of study visas.
3. proof of payment of fees or sponsorship
4. photocopies of all the above.



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25. I am in South Africa, how do I pre-register during lockdown?

We will facilitate remote pre-registration during the lockdown period. Pre-registration is a visa and fee clearance process that must be completed prior to registration. Only once both visa and fee clearance holds are lifted from your student profile, will you be able to register. For assistance with pre-registration, please provide us with the following:

For visa clearance, write to prereg@uct.ac.za with original certified copies of the following:

1. Passport bio page
2. Visa page
3. Proof of medical aid from a South African medical aid scheme – if you are a holder of a study visa
4. Confirmation from your UCT faculty office that they will process the remote registration, once you have been pre-registered

For fees clearance, write to ia-po-finance@uct.ac.za with proof of payment of bursary/ award letter. You will be notified once you have been pre-registered and cleared for registration.

Note: As soon as we arrive at a lockdown level at which such activities are allowed, you will be required to bring your actual passport containing your visa to the International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) for verification and capturing when we re-open. IAPO is situated on level 3 in the Masingene Building on Middle Campus, Cross Campus Road, Rondebosch, Cape Town.

26. I received an offer to study; however, I am not able to travel to South Africa as I am from a high- risk country. I need to register, what do I do?

As an international student/researcher, in order to be registered, you need to pre-register first. This is a visa and fee clearance process which must be completed prior to registration. Only once both visa and fee clearance holds are lifted from your student profile, will you be able to register. For help with pre-registration, you need to obtain visa and fees clearance:

For visa clearance, write to prereg@uct.ac.za with original certified copies of the following:

1. passport bio page
2. visa page
3. confirmation from your UCT faculty office that they will process the remote registration, once you have been pre-registered

For fees clearance, write to ia-po-finance@uct.ac.za with proof of payment of bursary/award letter or the proof of payment receipt issued by the bank.

You will be notified once you have been pre-registered and cleared for registration.

Note: Once the travel bans related to the COVID-19 pandemic have lifted, and you can travel to South Africa, and the IAPO office re-opens, you will be required to bring 1) Passport bio page 2. Study visa 3. Entry stamp 4. Visa entry stamp 5. Medical aid, with a provider registered with the Council of South African Medical Schemes 6. Copies of all the above. IAPO is situated on level 3 in the Masingene Building on Middle Campus, Cross Campus Road, Rondebosch, Cape Town.



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27. I am conducting my research in my home country and not required to be in South Africa; how can I pre-register and register?

We can facilitate remote pre-registration. Pre-registration is a visa and fee clearance process that must be completed before registration. If you are not completing your studies in South Africa in 2020, you are not required to have a study visa.

For pre-registration, write to prereg@uct.ac.za with the following:

1. Passport bio page -
2. Letter from your academic department and/or supervisor (on a letterhead), confirming that you will be completing your studies outside of South Africa. The letter should include your full name(s) and surname; student number; programme information and duration of studies
3. Proof of fee payment

You will be notified once you have been pre-registered and cleared for registration.

28. I am in South Africa, my visa expired. Can I pre-register and register?

All visas and Permits that expired after February 15 to October 30th, 2020 are considered valid under the Disaster Management Act. You will be permitted to pre- register and register if your visa expired after 15 Feb 2020. You will be expected to meet all other pre- registration requirements. You will be expected to renew your visa immediately once the Department announces that they are open to receive applications and provide proof to IAPO of the application. See question 23 for the pre-registration requirements.

C. MEDICAL AID COVER

29. I have left South Africa because of COVID-19. Can I get a refund on my medical aid from Momentum Health?

Full-degree students who have returned temporarily to their home countries because of the pandemic will not be eligible for a refund for the period they are out of the country. Medical aid schemes for students are structured to run over the duration of the study visa and residence in South Africa, rather than being products that can be switched on and off for short periods of time. You will be covered by your medical aid scheme for emergency cover for 90 days while out of South Africa. Further information can be found [here](#) (select Lifestyle benefits for more detail).