



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Table of Contents

A. VISA APPLICATIONS	3
1. I am still in South Africa and my visa has expired. What should I do?	3
2. My study visa is expiring; how do I apply for a renewal of my visa?	3
3. My current visa is expiring/has expired, will I face any penalty for the late visa renewal?	3
4. I received an offer to study, how do I receive a letter of undertaking to apply for a study visa?	4
5. I applied for my visa renewal; my appointment to submit my documents was during the lockdown period; what do I do?	4
6. 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?	4
7. I missed my visa renewal appointment due to lockdown; my medical and radiological reports is just past the 6-month valid period, can I still use them?	4
8. 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?	4
9. I am in South Africa on a Lesotho/Zimbabwean Special Permit which has expired; what do I do?	5
10. I am an asylum seeker or have refugee status and my permit has expired, what do I do?	5
11. Will I face any penalties or be deemed undesirable if I travel home on an expired visa?	5
12. 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?	5
13. I am on a work visa registered for part time studies. I want to change to a study visa, what is the process?	5
14. 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?	5
15. I am International student who returned to my home country before lockdown, how do I get a letter / permit to return to campus?	5
16. When will International students outside of South Africa be allowed back onto campus?	6
17. Who is eligible to apply for a permit to travel and what is the process?	6
18. 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?	6
19. I travelled home at the start of lockdown, is my current visa endorsed for UCT still considered valid?	6
20. I am from a high-risk country, I have a valid visa endorsed for UCT, can I travel back to South	6
21. I have a valid visa and I am from a low risk country/ I am travelling from another African countries, can I travel back to South Africa?	6
22. I want to return to campus/residence, what is the process to return?	7
23. Which countries are on listed as high risk for covid-19?	7
24. What is COVID-Alert App and where can I download the App?	7



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

B. REGISTRATION & PRE-REGISTRATION	7
25. What is pre-registration?.....	7
26. What documents are required for pre-registration?	7
27. I am in South Africa, how do I pre-register during lockdown?.....	7
28. 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?.....	8
29. I am conducting my research in my home country and not required to be in South Africa; how can I pre-register and register?.....	9
30. I am in South Africa, my visa expired. Can I pre-register and register?	9
C. MEDICAL AID COVER	9
31.. I have left South Africa because of COVID-19. Can I get a refund on my medical aid from Momentum Health?	9
32. Will my medical aid cover the COVID-19 test which is a requirement for return to South Africa?	9



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

A. VISA APPLICATIONS

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

The Department of Home Affairs is *extending the validity period of legally issued visas* which expired during the lockdown period from **15 February 2020 to 31 January 2021**. Holders of legally issued visas are *permitted to remain in the country under the conditions of their visas* until 31 January 2021 as directed in the Disaster Management Act (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 [Government Gazette 43749](#).

You encourage you to reapply for the respective visa type as all Visa Facilitation Centres (VFS) in South Africa **resumed their services on 22 September 2020**. The renewal requirements are covered below in questions No.2.

**VFS has stated that the safety of customers and staff is priority therefore, they have implemented strict health and safety measures at their application centres, in line with government guidelines for social distancing. Kindly check [Visa Facilitation Service](#) for more information.

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

If you are *outside of South Africa*, kindly check the relevant South African Mission and/or Visa centre website for updates on operations.

If you are *in South Africa*, Visa Facilitation Centres **resumed visa services on 22 September 2020**. Through VFS Global, submission of Visa services applications will also resume in the following categories: visitor's visas; study visa; treaty visa; relative's visa; general work visa; critical skills work visa; and exchange visa.

UPDATED 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 current visa page and passport bio page

Complete the [Visa renewal request form](#) to ensure the information is captured accurately.

** Please note, you will need the Faculty/Supervisor letter in order to complete the online request form.

Send request with supporting document to iapo@uct.ac.ac.za. Subject line: **Study Visa Renewal**. ** Due to high volumes of requests - processing takes **3-5 working days**.

NB: IAPO no longer issues the visa renewal form (DHA-1739, complete it online at VFS when you submit an online application** VFS [Complete ONLINE form](#)

3. 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/ expiring **from the 15 February to 31 January 2021**, you will not be required to submit a Form 20 for good cause; giving reason for being in South Africa on an expired visa. 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. Visa Facilitation Centres **have resumed visa services as from 22 September 2020**.

** Kindly check question 2 for requirements and [Visa Facilitation Service](#) for more information.

Those wishing to be repatriated to their countries within this period can depart without being declared undesirable persons



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

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

Visa Facilitation Centres in South Africa resumed visa services on 22 September 2020. You should reschedule your appointment for the soonest available date.

6. 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 during the lockdown while waiting for the outcome of your visa renewal application.

The Department of Home Affairs has *extended the validity period of legally issued visas* which expired during the lockdown period from **15 February 2020 to 31 January 2021**. Holders of legally issued visas are *permitted to remain in the country under the conditions of their visas* until 31 January 2021 as directed in the Disaster Management Act (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 [Government Gazette 43749](#)

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

Expired medical reports and radiological reports are not acceptable. You would need new medical reports and radiological reports, in light of COVID 19, these documents are now most important.

8. 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?

You are eligible to travel. Kindly contact the South African embassy in your country for guidance on visa and travel requirements. A list of South African missions abroad is available here: www.dirco.gov.za/webmissions/index.html

**Please check link of [Department of International Relations and Cooperation](#) (DIRCO) regarding:

- What are the health protocols when travelling to South Africa?
- What are the requirements for the 72-hour PCR test for COVID-19?
- What are the requirements for travellers travelling to South Africa by air?
- What is COVID-Alert APP? & Where can I download the COVID-Alert APP?



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

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

A Special Permit lawfully issued in terms of section 31(2)(b) of the Immigration Act, 2002 (Act No. 13 of 2002) which has expired is deemed to have been extended up to and including 30 October 2020.

** Services to extend Lesotho Exemption Permits and Zimbabwean Exemptions Permits resumed as from 1 October 2020 as directed in [Government Gazette 43749](#)

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

Asylum seeker permits lawfully issued and a refugee status granted in terms of section 22 of the Refugees Act, 1998 (Act No. 130 of 1998) which expired from 15 March 2020, or is to expire is deemed to have been extended up to and including **31 January 2021** in terms of [Government Gazette 43749](#), (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19

** Regularly check the Refugee Centre website for updates on operations

(<http://www.dha.gov.za/index.php/contact-us/24-refugee-centres>).

11. Will I face any penalties or be deemed undesirable if I travel home on an expired visa?

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. * Please note the validity period of the expired visa as noted in the [Government Gazette 43749](#).

12. 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?

Visa Facilitation Services resumed on 22 September 2020. You can either remain in South Africa and apply to renew your visitor's visa for a further 3 months or return home. If you opt to return home with an expired visa within the period in [Government Gazette 43749](#) you will not be penalised or declared undesirable on departure.

13. 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 i.e. a different visa category is not allowed*. To apply for a different visa category, you will be required to travel back home and submit your visa application from your home country.

14. 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?

Visa Facilitation Centres in South Africa **resumed their services on 22 September 2020**. You must apply for a change of status (same visa type, change of institution) i.e. endorsed for study at UCT. You cannot pre-register and register without a study visa endorsed for UCT. Please note IAPO is not able pre-register you with a receipt, IAPO is only able to pre-register you with a valid visa endorsed for UCT.

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

Prior to Alert Level 1 lockdown, there was no authorization or permit that allowed university students to travel from across the border or internationally into South Africa. As South African borders partially re-opened under [Alert Level 1 lockdown](#) on October 1st, students with a valid visa are permitted to return, provided they adhere to the protocols directed by [Department of International Relations and Cooperation](#) (DIRCO) concerning covid-19 testing and medical cover in the event of infection.



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

16. When will International students outside of South Africa be allowed back onto campus?

Invitations to return to campus is managed by the Office of the Vice Chancellor (OVC). The phased return to campus framework is still in place. **UCT is not "fully back" on campus.** Teaching and learning continue online, and the university is operating according to their COVID-19 framework for staff and students.

17. 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. Since we are at lock down alert level 1, you no longer require a permit to travel between provinces within South Africa.

18. 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 or Embassy in the country where you are currently residing. Regularly check Embassy websites for updates on operations.

A list of South African missions abroad is available here: www.dirco.gov.za/webmissions/index.html

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

All persons who left South Africa at the start of or during the lock down period would have had their valid visas *revoked/withdrawn* by the Department of Home Affairs. According to the current regulations by the Department of Home Affairs, at lock down level 1, all valid visas which were previously revoked upon departure from South Africa, *have been reinstated*.

20. I am from a high-risk country, I have a valid visa endorsed for UCT, can I travel back to South Africa?

You are eligible to return. Kindly check with the South African Embassy/High Commissioner in your home country for guidelines to travel. A list of *South African missions abroad* is available here: www.dirco.gov.za/webmissions/index.html

**Please check link of [Department of International Relations and Cooperation](http://www.dirco.gov.za) (DIRCO) regarding:

- *What are the health protocols when travelling to South Africa?*
- *What are the requirements for the 72-hour PCR test for COVID-19?*
- *What are the requirements for travellers travelling to South Africa by air?*
- *What is COVID-Alert APP? & Where can I download the COVID-Alert APP?*

21. I have a valid visa and I am from a low risk country/ I am travelling from another African countries, can I travel back to South Africa?

Travellers from low risk and all other African countries are allowed to return if they have a valid visa endorsed for UCT.

**** Please check the following link [Department of International Relations and Cooperation](http://www.dirco.gov.za) (DIRCO):

- *What are the health protocols when travelling to South Africa?*
- *What are the requirements for travellers from other African countries?*
- *What are the requirements for the 72-hour PCR test for COVID-19?*
- *What are the requirements for travellers travelling to South Africa by air?*



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

22 I want to return to campus/residence, what is the process to return?

Students **are** only **permitted to** return to residence if they have **received an invitation to do so** and may only arrive on the date specified in that invitation. Read more in the [announcement](#) from VC Phakeng, posted on 22 September 2020.

23. Which countries are on listed as high risk for covid-19?

The list of high-risk countries can be viewed from the Department of Home Affairs [website](#) and will be updated fortnightly. The currently list was as at September 30th.

24. What is COVID-Alert App and where can I download the App?

The COVID-Alert APP alerts subscribers and provides relevant information if they have been in contact with any person who has tested positive for the virus. The APP helps to minimise the risk of spreading the virus. The [Department of International Relations and Cooperation](#) has requested that all international travellers who intend to visit the country download and install the APP so that they are able to monitor and minimise their risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. Download the APP on Apple App Store or Google Play Store before arrival in South Africa or on arrival.

B. REGISTRATION & PRE-REGISTRATION

25. 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.

26. 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). This requirement is specific for holders of study visas.
3. proof of payment of fees or sponsorship
4. photocopies of all the above.

27. 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



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

For fees clearance, write to iapo-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: We are currently working remotely. Once our offices re-open at the university campus students who travel to South Africa for their studies will be required to bring their actual passport containing their visa to the UCT International Academic Programmes Office (IAPO) for verification and capturing. IAPO is situated on level 3 in the Masingene Building on Middle Campus, Cross Campus Road, Rondebosch, Cape Town.

28. 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 iapo-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.



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 10.11.2020

29. 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.

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

All visas and Permits that expired after **15 February 2020 to 31 January 2021** are considered valid under the Disaster Management Act (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19. You will be permitted to pre- register and register if your visa expired after 15 February 2020. You will be expected to meet all other pre- registration requirements as indicated in Question 27 for the pre-registration requirements.

You are expected to renew your visa as [Visa Facilitation Service](#) (VFS) and the Department of Home Affairs resumed visa operations on 22 September 2020 and can receive visa applications.

C. MEDICAL AID COVER

31. 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 180 days while out of South Africa. Further information can be found [here](#) (select Lifestyle benefits for more detail).

32. Will my medical aid cover the COVID-19 test which is a requirement for return to South Africa?

We cannot account for all medical schemes as the benefits vary for each schemes' health plan. Kindly check with your medical provider. Momentum Health medical scheme will cover the COVID-19 test (i.e. PCR test) for students who intend to travel back to South Africa to resume their studies from here. This cover is subject to the [following terms and conditions](#).