



COVID 19 VISA & IMMIGRATION FAQ's as at 15.07.2021

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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A. VISA APPLICATIONS

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

The Department of Home Affairs has *extended the validity period of legally issued visas* which expired during the lockdown period from **March 2020 to 30 September 2021**, as the date until which the validity of visas and permits is extended and the date until which a person holding such visa or permit may leave the Republic without being declared as undesirable, respectively. The above extension applies to a holder of legally issued visas (longer than 90-days up to 3 years) e.g. *visa for study, work, critical skills who did not depart the Republic since lockdown* was announced in March 2020. Internationals residing in South Africa whose visas have expired must apply for renewal by **30 September**, as directed in the Disaster Management Act (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 [Government Gazette 44786](#) .

The regulations do not apply to visas obtained after March 15th, 2021 or to persons who entered South Africa after March 15th, 2021.

Visa renewal applications can be submitted via the Visa Facilitation Centres (VFS) in South Africa. 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. **UPDATED** My study visa is expiring; how do I apply for a renewal of my visa?

For applications **outside** of South Africa, kindly check the relevant [South African Embassy/Mission](#) and/or Visa Facilitation centre website for updates on operations.

****** If a country's border is closed, the visa issuing authorities will likely suspend operations. Governments will issue lockdown regulations applicable for their country which could result in limited services including visa issuing centres, Embassies and Consulates suspending their operations.

Application **in** South Africa, should be made via the [Visa Facilitation Center](#) (VFS) for the visa to be issued by the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA). The visa services offered by DoHA are aligned to the regulations of the Disaster Management Act, implemented in response to the covid-19 global pandemic and adjusted according for each lockdown level and the corresponding restrictions. During Level 4 The Chief Directorate: Permits is operating at 50% capacity.

******Kindly note the DoHA is experiencing service delivery delays. This is owing to Covid infections resulting in weekly closures. The turnaround time for visa applications is well over 12 weeks- Include timelines for applications being processed.

To receive a letter of undertaking to support the **visa renewal** please complete *section A and B* of the [Letter request webform](#).

Supporting documents required:

- Letter from enrolling UCT faculty office or academic department, confirming continued studies and support for the extension of study visa. Note: the letter must include student name & surname; student number; programme information; and expected end date of studies.
- Copy of current visa page and passport bio page

NOTE: Processing timelines are **3 - 5 working days**. For more information, review the [Study visa renewal guidelines](#).



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3. 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 or 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**

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

As of **15 April 2021**, the Asylum Seeker and Refugee division at the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA) is issuing refugee and asylum seeker permits via an online extension service. Qualified asylum seekers and refugees are expected to renew their expired visas and statuses online before the deadline on **30 June 2021**. Brief overview of the online extension process: a client sends an email message to a dedicated email address listed in the link [The DoHA media statement on renewal of asylum and refugee permits](#). A client will then receive a response outlining the process to follow, a template and list of required documents. Once all documents are sent and received, the DoHA will consider the request and communicate its decision by email. When Covid regulations allow, the in-person process at the various offices will resume.

5. 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.

6. 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 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.

7. I am applying for a visa in the United States of America, where do I apply?

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation has decided to close several Missions and Consular General offices in the Midwest regions of the United States. **All consular, civic and immigration services for the 14 states of the Midwest will be processed by the South African Embassy in Washington DC.**

Detailed information regarding operations and applications can be reviewed at <https://www.southafrica-usa.net/homeaffairs/>

B. TRAVEL

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) in South Africa communicated *Expectations versus reality*

- ❖ DIRCO and mission abroad must respect the sovereignty of the foreign country
- ❖ DIRCO and Missions abroad cannot enforce the SA Constitution or other Acts of Parliament and South African Court orders abroad.



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

The teaching & learning framework for 2021 is underpinned by the principal of physically distance learning in lieu of the covid-19 global pandemic. As a result, most coursework is being taught and completed online. Access to the UCT

campuses to complete course work will vary based on the requirements for each course. It is recommended that students consult their enrolling UCT faculty office's web page and contact the specific course convenors and lecturers to confirm the course attendance requirements. [UCT faculty office contact details](#).

9. I have been accepted to study at UCT; can I obtain a visa to travel to South Africa?

You are eligible to apply for a study visa if the Consular Service in your country is operational. If you travel to South Africa, you will be expected to adhere to the healthy & safety protocols as directed in the Disaster Management Act (ACT NO. 57 OF 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 and by DIRCO.

We advise that you monitor the webpage or 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 In addition, we advise that you monitor the [Travel Bans.Org](#) to determine which countries are open for travel.

10. Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) Health and Safety travel protocols in South Africa?

10.1 What are the health protocols when travelling to South Africa?

Travellers visiting the country will be expected to abide by the regulations which include mandatory wearing of masks at all times, practising social distancing in public spaces, regular washing or sanitising of hands and presenting a negative COVID-19 test result not older than 72 hours from the time of departure.

10.2 What are the requirements for the 72-hour PCR test for COVID-19?

Travellers intending to visit the country will be expected to produce a PCR (polymerase chain reaction) test that is not older than 72 hours from the time of departure from the country of origin to South Africa; and be presented before travelling to South Africa. This test must be conducted by a certified medical practitioner and should have the name and signature of the practitioner who conducted such test.

10.3 What are the requirements for travellers travelling to South Africa by air?

All travellers landing at these airports must present a PCR test which is not older than 72 hours from the time of departure from the country of origin to South Africa. Furthermore, the international travellers should possess a mandatory travel insurance which is supposed to cover the COVID-19 test and quarantine costs. All these travellers will be subjected to COVID-19 screening on arrival. Those who present COVID-19 symptoms which include elevated body temperatures and flu-like symptoms, will be required to take a COVID-19 test which should be covered by the travel insurance. Should the test results come back positive, the traveller will be subjected to mandatory quarantine, which will also be paid for by the traveller or the travel insurance.

10.4 What is COVID-Alert APP, and 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. We request all international travellers who intend to visit the country to download the APP so that they are able to monitor and minimise their risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

You may [download the APP on Apple App Store or Google Play Store](#) before your arrival in South Africa or on arrival.



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11. I am an international student/researcher who is abroad, how do I renew my visa?

Regularly check Embassy websites for updates on operations. 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. Refer to question 2 if the visa has expired and for visa renewal guidelines.

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

** Travel bans and lock down regulations instituted in any country is a Government matter and for the safety of citizens. UCT is not able to advocate when a Government institutes travel bans or lock down restrictions. For more on travel bans: Travel.Bans.Org OR [COVID-19 Travel Alert: Which Countries Have Open Borders?](#)

C. PRE-REGISTRATION

12. What is pre-registration?

Pre-registration verifies compliance with immigration and visa regulations. It is a requirement for all international students regardless of whether they travel to South Africa or not.

Pre-registration is the administrative process for:

1. Verifying that an international student has the required immigration visa and study permit required for registration at UCT, and that the student has medical aid cover from a South African medical aid scheme for the full duration of their study visa; and
2. Confirming that all initial fee payments have cleared through the UCT bank account.

Both checks require the lifting of blocks to academic registration on students' records. Both pre-registration blocks are administered by the International Office.

13. 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, sponsorship, or scholarship award letter

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

Pre-register is facilitated online by completing a Service Request on the staff and student administration system called PeopleSoft. Only once both visa and fee clearance holds are lifted from your student record, will you be able to register with your faculty.

Students with a valid **study visa**, follow the [Pre-Registration guidelines](#)

For **visa and fee clearance**, upload original certified copies of the following on your self-service request:

- Passport bio page
- Relevant visa endorsed for UCT (i.e. study visa, endorsed for study at UCT or visitors' visa endorsed for research)
- Entry stamp confirming date of entry into South Africa (if travelled to South Africa)
- Medical aid cover from a South African medical aid scheme, valid for the full duration of the visa and study programme, renewed annually (specifically for holders of study visas)
- Initial minimum fee payment OR suitable proof of scholarship/ bursary/ postdoctoral fellowship award letter.



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15. I have received an offer from UCT and want to register. What do I do if, my borders are closed, and I cannot travel OR I am completing my fieldwork outside South Africa and do not intend to travel?

Pre-registration is facilitated online by completing a Service Request on the staff and student administration system called PeopleSoft. As an international student/researcher, in order to be registered, you need to preregister first. Only once both visa and fee clearance holds are lifted from your student record, will you be able to register.

Students who **do not hold a valid visa** for study at UCT and they reside outside of South Africa, for **visa and fee clearance**, follow the [Pre-Registration guidelines](#) and submit the following documents via online Service Request:

- Passport bio page
- Letter from your UCT enrolling faculty office or academic supervisor confirming that you will be completing your studies and/or research from outside of South Africa for this academic year.
- Initial minimum fee payment OR suitable proof of scholarship/ bursary/ postdoctoral fellowship award letter

Note: if you do travel to South Africa at a later date, you are expected to report your study visa and proof of medical aid from a South African medical aid scheme to the International Office via a new Service Request.

D. REGISTRATION

16. I received a study offer from UCT and want to register. Am I expected to travel to South Africa OR can I learn online?

The teaching & learning framework for 2021 is underpinned by the principal of physically distance learning in lieu of the covid-19 global pandemic. As a result, most coursework is being taught and completed online. Access to the UCT campuses to complete course work will vary based on the requirements for each course. It is recommended that students consult their enrolling UCT faculty office's web page and contact the specific course convenors and lecturers to confirm the course attendance requirements. [UCT faculty office contact details](#).

You can pre-register and register online. Pre-registration is facilitated by the International Office. Once this is completed, you can proceed to register online with your enrolling UCT faculty office. For more on pre-registration, see questions 14-15.

17. I have registered, and I am completing my studies remotely. I won't be able to travel to South Africa in time to meet me in-person course requirements, what do I do?

If you cannot travel to South Africa due to border closures, visa delays or any other substantial reason, you MUST inform your enrolling UCT faculty office and discuss your options for completing your coursework and degree requirements if you are unable to fulfil your course requirements in-person from South Africa.