



Home Office

# Photo standards and quality assurance

Version 18.0

Photo standards and instructions for His Majesty's Passport Office examiners dealing with photo quality assurance during examination

# Contents

Contents.....	2
About: Photo standards and quality assurance .....	5
Contacts .....	5
Publication .....	5
Changes from last version of this guidance .....	5
Photo standards .....	6
Paper photos .....	6
Digital photos .....	6
Digital photo customer guidance .....	7
Digital photo online check .....	7
Submitting the digital photo.....	7
Automated photo checks .....	7
Examiner photo checks .....	8
Standards for paper and digital photos.....	9
Background and background colour .....	9
Face.....	9
Eyes.....	10
Eyes: looking at the camera.....	10
Glasses .....	10
Red-eye.....	11
Ears .....	11
Recent photos .....	11
Clothing and uniforms.....	12
Customers posing on their own .....	12
Headwear and head coverings .....	12
Hair accessories.....	12
Mirror images.....	13
Mouth closed .....	13
Neutral expression.....	13
Shadows.....	13
Self-portraits (selfies).....	14
Photo editing.....	14
Digital photo enhancements.....	14

Filters .....	14
Black and white photos .....	14
Additional standards for paper photos.....	16
Home printing .....	16
Photo paper .....	16
Photo size .....	16
Two photos .....	16
Writing on photo (countersignature).....	16
Exceptions to photo standards .....	17
Disabilities .....	17
Visual impairment .....	17
Temporary injuries.....	18
Head coverings.....	18
Urgent travel .....	18
Exceptions to photo standards for children.....	18
Sopra Steria Ltd photo checking .....	20
SSL: photos that fail photo QA .....	20
Eye positions.....	20
Unacceptable photos .....	20
SSL: photos that pass photo QA .....	21
SSL: exceptions.....	21
Examining paper and digital photos .....	22
Counter front office examiners: checks on paper photos.....	22
AMS Examiner: photos that have failed photo QA.....	22
AMS Examiner: checks on paper photos.....	23
AMS examiner: processing a paper photo.....	23
AMS and DAP examiner: checks on digital photos.....	24
AMS examiner: processing a digital photo.....	24
AMS examiner: photos that meet exceptions .....	25
AMS examiner: asking for a new digital photo .....	25
AMS: if the customer sends us paper photos.....	25
DAP examiner: processing a digital photo .....	26
DAP: photo standards task .....	26
DAP examiner: photos that meet exceptions .....	26
DAP examiner: asking for a new digital photo.....	26
DAP: if the customer sends us paper photos .....	27
DAP examiner: need more information .....	27

DAP examiner: no photo standards task.....	27
Accepting original photos after asking for new photos.....	28
AMS Examiner: Check & Send photos do not meet the standards.....	28
AMS examiner: transfers from DAP.....	28
Photo errors: during or after examination.....	29
HM Passport Office error: live AMS applications.....	29
HM Passport Office error: passport issued.....	29
Customer error: live AMS applications.....	29
Customer error: passport issued.....	29
Refunds and returning photos.....	30
Returning photos.....	30

# About: Photo standards and quality assurance

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on the Application Management System and Digital Application Processing about:

- photo standards and exceptions for adults and children
- automatic photo quality assurance for paper and digital photos
- manual examination of photos, including when and how to accept or reject photos

For guidance about the checks you must complete to confirm a customer's identity see:

- Confirming identity
- Facial Matching
- Countersignatories and Digital referees

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards.

## Publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was published:

- version **18.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **3 October 2022**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to reflect the change in our sovereign from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to His Majesty King Charles III.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Photo standards

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners why we have photo standards and about the automated checks the system does.

All passport photos for adults and children must:

- meet the standards set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)
- be a true likeness of the intended passport holder
- be recent

These standards will make sure photos are captured by facial recognition software accepted in the United Kingdom and by international border control.

Customers must provide His Majesty's Passport Office with recent photos to help us confirm their identity by:

- automatic (system) checks, for example facial matching
- manual checks, for example, examiners comparing images on the system

Children's photos must meet the same standards as adults but may also meet one or more exceptions. See [exceptions to photo standards for children](#).

## Paper photos

Customers send us a paper photo if they apply using a paper form (for example, when they apply using the postal channel, or if they apply at a counter).

Customers must follow the guidance for paper photos included in the paper application pack, or on GOV.UK, and send their paper photo to us with their paper application form.

## Digital photos

In DCS customers can:

- upload a digital photo that they have either taken at home, or got from a photo shop
- enter a photo code to retrieve their photo which they have got from a photo shop or booth

DCS advises customers that photos taken in a shop or booth are more likely to meet the photo rules.

## Digital photo customer guidance

DCS provides detailed adult and children guidance on how to take a digital photo. This includes good and bad examples of photos to show how to meet the photo rules.

The online customer guidance tells the customer to:

- use a plain light-coloured background
- use even lighting with no shadows or reflections
- stand in the right position
- have a plain expression and face in full view
- not wear headwear
- show eyes fully visible

## Digital photo online check

The system completes an automated technical check, and then shows the customer the photo for them to review.

If there are no errors the customer can:

- continue and submit the photo
- choose to take another photo

If there are errors, the online check will show the customer the reason for the result and tips on how to correct any errors. The customer can:

- use the photo if they think the reason for the result is not correct
- use the photo if they cannot meet the rules because of a [religious](#) or [medical reason](#)
- choose to use another photo

## Submitting the digital photo

Before they can submit the photo, customers must confirm that their photo meets the rules.

If there are errors with the photo, the customer is asked to explain (in a mandatory drop-down box) why they want to use it. They must tell us:

- why they think the photo meets the rules
- if there is a [religious](#) or [medical reason](#) why they cannot meet the rules

## Automated photo checks

When we receive the customer's application and photo, some checks are done automatically by our systems. For example, on photos:

- sent through DCS
- examined on AMS (see [photo quality assurance](#))

## Examiner photo checks

You, the examiner, must make the decision to accept or reject a photo when dealing with a:

- passport application on AMS
- photo quality task on Digital Application Processing (DAP)

Because of the automated photo checks, the manual checks that you, the examiner, must complete are based on whether:

- the customer has sent us a paper or digital photo
- you are working on AMS or DAP (see [Examining paper and digital photos](#))

### Related content

[Contents](#)



# Standards for paper and digital photos

This section HM Passport Office tells examiners about the standards for paper and digital photos.

You must read these sections together with [Examining paper and digital photos](#).

## Background and background colour

HM Passport Office will accept:

- digital photos taken against any plain background that is any light colour
- paper photos taken against plain, light grey or cream backgrounds

We will accept textured backgrounds (for example woodchip or painted brick walls) if the background:

- is plain
- is any light colour
- will not show any visible marks

You, the examiner, must check the photo and consider if any visible marks will show when the photo is printed in the passport.

You must remember that the photo you see on the system may be larger than the photo printed in the passport. This may enhance marks which may not show when the photo is printed in the passport.

We will accept the photo if the background tone or shade is not consistent across the photo, for example, if it is lighter or darker in places, as long as the customer's face and features are clear.

We will accept photos lightened by the scanning process but showing no other negative effects.

We will not accept patterned backgrounds (for example patterned wallpaper) if the background marks will be visible when the photo is printed in the passport.

## Face

Nothing can cover the face. HM Passport Office will accept beards, moustaches, bindi (coloured dots on the forehead) and permanent tattoos. We may also accept body piercings, such as lip rings, eyebrow piercings and nose rings.

Multiple facial piercings make it difficult for the system to capture the outline of the customer's eyes, mouth, nose, chin and cheekbones. We advise customers to

remove their piercings (if possible) before taking a photo, as we will reject photos where piercings cause reflection.

Photos must be in sharp focus, showing a strong definition and contrast between face and background. We will not accept photos that do not show a clear image of the customer (for example photos are blurry, too dark or too light).

Customers must:

- squarely face the camera, with a straight head
- make sure chin and top of head are clearly visible (if hair on the top of head has been cropped from a photo, we may still accept it)

We will reject any photo where a customer's face or head is:

- hidden
- tilted backward, forward or to the side
- turned to one shoulder or at an angle
- facing left or right

## Eyes

To capture a true likeness of the customer, both their eyes must be open and, clearly visible. The system will have problems finding correct eye positions, unless the customer's eyes are in the top 40% to 70% of the photo (vertical eye band).

Customers must not:

- wear sunglasses
- wear any type of tinted glasses (visually impaired and blind customers must remove their tinted glasses)
- have hair across one or both eyes

## Eyes: looking at the camera

We will not accept photos if the customer is not looking at the camera.

When a customer takes a digital photo, their eyes may appear to be looking slightly away. The system has found the customer's eyes if the digital photo has passed the automatic online check. You must not reject the photo due to the customer looking away if the photo has passed the online check.

## Glasses

If the customer wears glasses, both eyes must be clearly visible. Glasses frames may be over the eye socket or eyelids but must not hide the eyes in any way (the white and pupil of the eye).

Glasses can cause glare or reflection (in particular, strong lenses). Customers must remove their glasses, if they cause glare or reflection that covers the eye, as this may prevent the system from locating the correct eye positions.

Glasses can cause distortion, for example through the lens at the side of the customer's face, If the photo has passed the automatic checks (on DCS (Digital Customer Services) or Photo QA on AMS (Application Management System) you can accept the photo, as the system has identified the eye positions. If the photo has failed the automatic check, you must reject the photo.

If the photo has failed the automatic check, you, the examiner, must accept the photo if there is no visible distortion or glare.

## Red-eye

Red-eye shows as a red circle or a crescent shape covering the eye. You, the examiner, must reject the photo if red-eye shows on the paper photos or on screen.

## Ears

You must reject the photo if the customer is wearing earphones, air buds or over the head headphones. You must not reject the photo if the customer is wearing visible hearing aids on their ears.

## Recent photos

Customers must send photos taken in the last month. If you, the examiner, suspects a customer's photos are older than a month (for example, the photo has a date stamp) you must reject them.

If HM Passport Office has delayed an application due to application checks (for example, due to high passport demands or a customer needs to attend an overseas interview), you must use your discretion to accept the photos they sent us at the beginning of the application process.

You can accept photos that have been with us:

- for 12 months, if the intended passport holder is an adult (over 16 years)
- for 6 months, if the intended passport holder is a child (under 16 years)
- for 12 months (6 months for a child), if the passport is needed for any travel for urgent compassionate grounds or urgent government business

Photos must always show a true likeness of the customer, you will need to ask for new ones if the photos have been with us too long. Not having a recent photo in their passport may have a negative impact on the customer at border crossings and if they use their passport for identity purposes.

## Clothing and uniforms

HM Passport Office considers bare shoulders and military or school uniforms acceptable and a personal choice for the customer. You must reject any clothing that hides the facial features (for example, a high scarf which covers the chin).

If the customer's clothing is pulled up to ear level (for example the hood of a jumper or a coat collar) and the facial features are clearly visible, you must accept the photo.

If there is no photo standards task on Digital Application Processing (DAP) you must not transfer the application to AMS to ask for a new photo. This is because the automated system checks have accepted the photo.

## Customers posing on their own

Passport photos must be of the customer on their own, without other people or objects in the picture.

## Headwear and head coverings

Unless it is for religious or medical reasons, customers must not wear hats or head coverings in their passport photos. You must not accept headwear that:

- casts a shadow on or around the face if the shadows hide the customer's face
- hides parts of the customer's face
- distorts or alters the customer's face (for example, very tight scarves)
- causes contrast problems between the customer's head and the background (for example, head coverings that are white or light in colour)

For exceptions, see [head coverings worn for religious reasons](#).

## Hair accessories

A customer may wear different types of hair accessories that are either decorative (for example a fashion accessory) or functional (for example clips, pins, bobbles and headbands to keep hair off their face).

You must accept any head accessories (for example a hair band or hair clip) if the customer's facial features are clearly visible and there is contrast between the head and the background.

You must ask for another photo if the customer wears a hair accessory:

- that changes the shape of the customer's head (for example a headband with an attached large bow)

## Mirror images

HM Passport Office will not accept mirror images (when the photo is flipped from right to left or left to right) as it may cause problems at border control for the customer.

Examiners must challenge mirror images when comparing them with previous photos of the customer (for example, if there is a distinguishing mark on one side of their face).

If you suspect the photo is a mirror image, you must ask the customer to write to HM Passport Office stating that their photo is a true likeness.

## Mouth closed

You must reject any photo where the customer's mouth is open if this changes the shape of the customer's face.

You must accept the photo when:

- the customer's mouth is relaxed and:
  - their teeth are visible or
  - lips are slightly open
  - their facial features are not distorted
- it is clear the customer cannot close their mouth (for example, due to a medical condition)

## Neutral expression

You must reject photos if the customer's expression changes the shape of their face, for example if they are:

- smiling widely
- pouting
- frowning

A customer's expression which changes the shape of the face can stop the system from capturing accurate biometric information.

You must accept a photo if the customer's expression does not change the shape of their face.

## Shadows

You must reject photos with shadows on or around the face if the shadows hide the customer's face.

We may accept small shadows on the face, under the chin, or in the background (for example, beneath the ears or behind the head) when the:

- customer's face or facial features are not hidden
- digital photo has passed the automatic checks

## Self-portraits (selfies)

Customers may send us a digital photo that they have taken themselves, for example with their phone held at arm's length (a selfie). You can accept these photos if they meet the other photo standards.

## Photo editing

You can accept a photo that has been digitally edited if this does not affect the image of the customer (as we must be able to capture a true likeness of the customer). For example, you can accept a photo if the background has been edited to remove shadows or marks.

## Digital photo enhancements

You must reject any photos if the customer has digitally enhanced their facial image, for example, altering the hairline, removing blemishes or making facial features larger or smaller. We will not be able to capture an accurate facial image if the customer's features have been enhanced.

## Filters

You can accept a customer's photo where filters have been used if the photo:

- is a true likeness of the customer
- meets all other photo standards

You must accept filters that change the:

- brightness of a photo
- contrast of a photo

You must not accept filters that:

- add any textures or special effects to photo
- make the customer look younger or older

## Black and white photos

HM Passport Office will not accept black and white digital or paper photos. They make it difficult to tell a customer's skin tone, eye colour and true likeness.

**Related content**  
[Contents](#)

# Additional standards for paper photos

This section HM Passport Office tells examiners about the extra standards paper photos must meet.

In addition to the standards for [paper and digital photos](#), the following standards apply only to paper photos.

## Home printing

Photos printed at home must be of a similar, high quality to photos printed at booths and studios. Examiners will only accept home printed photos if they meet the standards.

## Photo paper

Photos must be printed on good quality photo paper and free of creases, serrated edges, ink marks and other visible damage, including staples and paper clip marks, so that the customer's image can be captured clearly. HM Passport Office will not accept glossy or textured paper, as it may cause haze and glare and distort the image on screen. We will reject photos with watermarks that show up on the screen when scanned.

## Photo size

Passport photos must be 45 millimetres (mm) high x 35mm wide. If a photo is too small, white gaps will show around the edges of the scanned image. If the photo is too large, the head size may not be correct when we cut it down to size. A customer's photo must measure between 29 mm and 34mm from the crown (top) of head to the bottom of chin.

## Two photos

Customers must send 2 paper photos that meet the standards. If only one photo is needed (for example, as part of a renewal application) and no countersignature is needed, you must not ask for a second photo.

## Writing on photo (countersignature)

If the customer needs a countersignature, only one of their photos must be signed on the back. The other must remain blank. You must reject any photo that has writing or printing that shows up on screen when scanned.

### Related content

[Contents](#)



# Exceptions to photo standards

This section HM Passport Office tells examiners when we accept photos that do not meet photo standards.

There are some exceptions to when we can accept photos, that do not meet our photo standards.

## Disabilities

Customers with a physical or mental disability that prevents them from meeting the photo standards may be exempt if either:

- it is clear from the photo or application that they have such a disability
- their application is supported by a written statement from the customer or their parent, carer or doctor

You, the examiner, may waive some or all the following standards:

- eyes looking at the camera
- eyes in correct position (vertical eye band)
- mouth closed
- neutral expression
- full face toward the camera
- background (for example where the background is otherwise correct but medical aids, such as a wheelchair, are visible)

You must make sure that:

- the photo captures the face of the customer
- you deal with the issue sensitively

You must add a case note to confirm your decision.

Customers applying online through DCS, have the option to override a photo warning. They must then add the reason why they've overridden the warning in the free text field. You, the examiner, must use this information to decide if you can [accept their photo](#).

## Visual impairment

If a visually impaired or blind person has their eyes shut, HM Passport Office may accept the photo. We may also accept permanent or long-term eye patches, but not temporary eye patches. Customers must remove tinted glasses.

## Temporary injuries

You must not accept photos of the customer with temporary injuries (for example, black eyes).

## Head coverings

We may accept head coverings worn for religious reasons, as long as they do not cover the face. We may also accept head coverings worn for medical surgery or illness (for example, scarves or bandages for head wounds or hair loss) as long as they do not hide the face.

If you, the examiner, have doubts about whether a head covering is worn for religious or medical reasons, you must ask the customer to write to HM Passport Office, stating their head covering is:

- worn for religious or medical reasons
- a normal part of their daily attire

## Urgent travel

If a customer needs to travel urgently and meets the criteria for Tiered Application Service or urgent government business, HM Passport Office may issue them with a Restricted Validity Passport, even if their photos do not meet the standards.

The examiner must tell the customer that they must apply for a new passport (at their own cost) as soon as possible.

## Exceptions to photo standards for children

Children under the age of 6 years [must meet the standards](#) set by the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

While photos of children must be a true likeness, examiners may waive the following for children under 6 years old:

- both eyes are not open (for example, if the child is less than one year old)
- child wears permanent or long-term eye patches (for example, to correct a squint)
- child does not have a neutral expression
- child does not have mouth closed
- child not looking directly at the camera

If you are not fully satisfied, you must ask the customer for 2 new, recent photos. For more examples, see the GOV.UK guide showing [acceptable images](#).

For applications which have been delayed by HM Passport Office or there is an urgent or compassionate need for the passport, you can use your discretion to

accept a child's photo (children up to the age of 16 years) submitted or taken up to 6 months ago. See [Recent photos](#).

### **Related content**

[Contents](#).

# Sopra Steria Ltd photo checking

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners, how our business partner, Sopra Steria Ltd (SSL), checks customer photos on applications processed on the Application Management System (AMS).

SSL check all photos except for photos on applications:

- sent on Digital Customer Services (DCS)
- received on paper by HM Passport Office counter
- sent by our partners (Post Office Ltd)

These will have already been checked and the photo QA tab will not show at data verification stage for DCS applications.

## SSL: photos that fail photo QA

SSL will write to the customer asking for 2 new photos if they do not meet [photo standards](#) for UK paper applications.

If a photo is of poor quality (for example, blurry) and facial matching checks cannot be completed, AMS will generate a warning.

## Eye positions

If a photo has failed photo QA and eye positions are:

- correctly identified
  - SSL writes to the customer asking for 2 new photos
- incorrectly identified
  - SSL sends application to HM Passport Office

SSL will only do this for UK paper applications.

## Unacceptable photos

SSL will write to the customer, for UK and overseas paper applications only, asking for 2 new photos if:

- customer is not squarely facing the camera
- hair is covering customer's face
- eyes are not clearly visible (for example, covered by hair)
- mouth is not closed
- part of head (but not hair) is cut off

- head covering does not appear to be worn for religious or medical reasons and there is no supporting letter
- background is unacceptable
- photos are not correct size (for example too small or large)

SSL will forward unacceptable photos to HM Passport Office if they fail the following standards:

- reflection or glare on glasses
- rims of glasses hiding the eyes
- customer wearing eye patches, sunglasses or tinted glasses
- head covering (application may be supported by a letter)
- shadows that hide the face or facial features
- red eye visible on photo or photo QA screen

## SSL: photos that pass photo QA

If a photo has passed photo QA and the eye positions have been incorrectly identified, SSL will untick the 'eye position acceptable' field and forward the application to HM Passport Office.

If the photo has passed photo QA and the eye positions have been correctly identified, SSL will apply the remaining [photo standards](#).

## SSL: exceptions

If SSL feels the customer has failed to meet the photo standards because of a physical or mental disability (even if the photo has passed photo QA) SSL will case note the application and mark it for the attention of HM Passport Office.

SSL do not write out for photo standards for children under 6 years old. They will pass these to HM Passport Office.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Examining paper and digital photos

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners, how to check that paper and digital photos meet the photo standards on the Application Management System (AMS) and Digital Application Processing (DAP).

When you are checking a photo, you must consider how the photo will appear when it is printed on the passport. For example:

- the photo on the passport may be much smaller than the photo you view on a DAP or AMS screen
- background marks or shadows visible on screen may not be visible when the passport is printed

You must also deal with any system notifications (for example, any warnings or matches). If the system prompts you, you must refer the application for authorisation.

## Counter front office examiners: checks on paper photos

You, the counter front office examiner, must use the standard eye distance template, making sure paper photos meet the template requirements, as well as photo standards.

You must tell the customer that their photos will also need to undergo automated checks.

You must ask the customer for 2 photos but will accept one if:

- the customer is renewing their passport
- a countersignature is not needed

The counter front office examiner must:

- use the Office use only section of the application form to note when photos meet the standards
- place both photos in the sealed side of the wallet

SSL will then attach the photo (with no writing on the back) to the application.

## AMS Examiner: photos that have failed photo QA

When the examiner enters the examination screen, the 'Photo & Sig' tab will be highlighted for DCS and partner and counter applications. The 'Photo & Sig' tab will not be highlighted for all other application channels and service types, unless:

- SSL has marked the application for the attention of HM Passport Office

- SSL has selected the 'unacceptable' flag
- the application has failed photo QA

If a facial matching warning appears on the system, see facial matching guidance.

If eye positions have been correctly identified but SSL has passed the application to HM Passport Office, the 'Photo & Sig' tab will be highlighted when the examiner enter the 'examination details' screen.

When the 'Photo & Sig' tab is highlighted, check the 'eye positions acceptable' tick box in the 'QA completed' field has been selected. If the photo is acceptable, select the 'Photo OK' tick box in the 'Photo checked?' field.

If the eye positions have not been correctly identified but the examiner thinks the photo would pass photo QA if the cross hairs were repositioned, the examiner must:

- reposition the cross hairs
- select the 'validate photo' button on the 'Photo QA' tab to revalidate the photo

When AMS revalidates a photo, an automatic case note is added and the 'Photo & Sig' tab will no longer be highlighted.

## AMS Examiner: checks on paper photos

You must decide if a customer's photo meets photo standards, using information the customer has given.

## AMS examiner: processing a paper photo

If you decide the customer's photo meets the standards, and the photo has not failed any automated checks, you must:

- Select the 'Photo OK' tick box in the 'Photo checked?' field

If you decide the customer needs a new photo for their paper application, you must:

1. Create a text 350 letter on AMS asking for a new photo that meets the standards (see Sending a letter).
2. Include at least 1 reason that the customer's photo failed to meet the standards.
3. Add a case note explaining why we rejected the photo.
4. Set an AMS 'bring-up' for the application service level (for example 14 days for standard applications).

You must wait for the customer to send us new photos, and when you receive them you must return the application to SSL for a rescan (see submitting an examining return to SSL).

## AMS and DAP examiner: checks on digital photos

The system will complete automatic checks on digital photos. The photo must pass these checks, or the customer must override the photo rejection (and tell you why) if the photo fails the checks.

If a customer decides to override their rejected photo, the customer's free text note will appear in the 'additional information' tab in AMS and in the photo review screen on DAP.

You must decide if a customer's photo meets photo standards. You must consider:

- if the photo has passed the online photo checks
- information the customer had given
- the declaration the customer has made (for example, their confirmation the photo is recent)

If you are examining a digital photo on DAP or AMS, you do not need to manually repeat the checks that have been done by the online photo checks (if the photo has passed these checks). For example, the system will check the:

- size of the photo
- customer's distance from the camera
- customer's eye position and any head tilt
- contrast, focus and brightness

There are some checks that the online photo check cannot complete. If you are processing a digital photo on AMS or a photo standards task on DAP, you must make sure:

- glasses and frames do not cover the customer's eyes
- hair does not cover the customer's eyes
- customer's eyes are not looking away
- there is no red-eye
- shadows do not cover the customer's face or facial features

If you are processing a photo standards task on DAP, you do not need to check the photo is a recent image (as you are not shown the photo from the customer's old passport). You must accept the customer's declaration.

## AMS examiner: processing a digital photo

If you decide the customer's photo meets the standards, and the photo has not failed any automated checks, you must:

- not add a case note (as AMS will have recorded 'photo acceptable')



## AMS examiner: photos that meet exceptions

If the customer meets a photo standard exception, you, the examiner, must:

- select the 'Photo OK' box on the 'Photo & Sig' tab to override the rejection
- include a case note

## AMS examiner: asking for a new digital photo

If you decide the customer needs a new digital photo, you must:

1. Create a text 917 letter on AMS asking for a new photo that meets the standards.
2. Include at least 1 reason that the customer's photo failed to meet the standards and a 'next action' paragraph.
3. Add a case note explaining why we rejected the photo.
4. Make sure the 'Photo OK' box on the 'Photo & Sig' tab is not selected.
5. Set an AMS 'bring-up' for 14 days.

You will not need to print out a paper copy of the letter, as we will not post it to the customer.

The customer will receive an automatic notification from DCS, asking them to follow the secure link. The link will let the customer read the letter on the online system. It will also direct the customer to the photo guidance notes.

The customer's notification will also include a link that lets them upload a new digital photo. When the customer uploads their photo, the online photo tool checks and crops their image. The customer will be given guidance during this step, to help them capture an acceptable digital photo.

When the customer submits their photo online, an alert is created on AMS with a bring-up for that day, telling you (the examiner) that a new photo has been uploaded.

You must review the photo and if it is acceptable, you must case note the application.

You must repeat the process if you decide the replacement photo is also unacceptable.

## AMS: if the customer sends us paper photos

Customers may tell HM Passport Office that they want to submit a paper photo instead of a digital version. DCS does not advertise this option but we will accept it if the customer asks for it.

We will give the customer an HM Passport Office postal address where they can send their paper photos.

After you get the photo, you must print and prepare a blank paper declaration form and send it to Sopra Steria Ltd (SSL) for scanning. The scan request must be marked 'Photo re-scan only' to make sure that only the photo (and not the entire application) is replaced (see Submitting an examining return to SSL).

When the new photo has been scanned on AMS, you must continue to examine the application and new photo.

If the application was on DAP but the [customer sends a paper photo](#), you must follow this paper photo re-scan process when the application is transferred to AMS.

## DAP examiner: processing a digital photo

DAP applications are subject to our automated process. Some applications are processed in DAP automatically and will not be referred to a DAP examiner.

You, the DAP examiner, must only check a photo meets the standards on applications that have a photo standards task.

### DAP: photo standards task

DAP will present a **photo standards** task to you, the DAP examiner, on some applications.

If you decide the customer's photo meets the standards, you must:

- select the **yes** button on DAP

### DAP examiner: photos that meet exceptions

If a customer fits a photo standard exception, you, the DAP examiner, must accept it, by selecting the **yes** button on DAP.

### DAP examiner: asking for a new digital photo

If you decide the customer's digital photo is not acceptable, you must keep the application in DAP and ask for a new digital photo. To ask for a new digital photo you must:

- select **no ask for a new photo** button on DAP and select a reason from the list on DAP

You must keep the application in DAP and ask for a new digital photo, if the original was not acceptable, even if the customer has already sent paper photos. You must only refer an application to AMS (to use the paper photos) if the customer was unable to capture a digital image due to a disability.

If the customer does send paper photos on a DAP application, you must assess the photo and decide if it is relevant to the application, as it may show there is an anomaly with the application.

## DAP: if the customer sends us paper photos

If the customer sends a paper photo you, the DAP examiner, will see an image of the photo in the **documents** tab. The Document Management Service will only scan the back of the photo if there is information on it, for example, if it has been countersigned or the customer has written on it.

You must:

1. Decide whether the paper photo is relevant to the application.
2. Not transfer the application to AMS if you can continue to process in DAP.
3. Case note any action taken and your decision (in the **Document received** task, if there is one, or in another task).
4. Continue with the application based on your decision.

For example, you can decide a paper photo:

- is relevant to the application because:
  - the customer sent it because their digital photo does not meet standards due to a [disability](#) and you must transfer the application to AMS
  - it shows a different person to the digital photo which a digital referee confirmed and you must decide whether a new digital referee is needed
  - it has been countersigned and this shows the customer's identity is in doubt (for example because of a different image or name) and you must refer for investigation
- is not relevant to the application because:
  - it is the same as the digital photo (because the customer used a photo booth and sent us the digital and paper version)
  - does not show a name (whether it is the customer or not), and you have no concerns about the customer's identity

## DAP examiner: need more information

You, the DAP examiner, must decide if you need to ask the customer for more information about their photo. For example, if the customer has not provided information about why their photo does not meet the standards.

You must contact the customer by phone to resolve your query. You can put the application on hold if you are unable to contact them and need to call them later.

## DAP examiner: no photo standards task

The automated process checks the customer's photo is acceptable. You do not need to check (or request) a new photo if there is no **photo standards** task, unless the:

- image of the customer is upside down
- customer is wearing a face mask

As you are unable to request the new photo on DAP (because there is no **photo standards** task) you must transfer the application to AMS, with a case note explaining the reason for the transfer.

## Accepting original photos after asking for new photos

You may decide to accept a customer's photo after first rejecting it (for example, if the customer provides new information and the photo falls under the photo exception policy, or you decide that the photo does meet the standards).

You must add a case note explaining why you accepted the photo, and your contact with the customer.

You must contact the customer and tell them not to upload or send a new photo.

## AMS Examiner: Check & Send photos do not meet the standards

If a customer uses Check & Send or Digital Check & Send to apply for a passport but their photos do not meet the standards, you must only send the customer a refund letter, if the Post Office accepted the photos in error. You must not send the customer a refund letter if the Post Office advised the customer that their photos were not acceptable.

If a Post Office clerk tells a customer they think their photo is not acceptable, they will record it on the application.

## AMS examiner: transfers from DAP

You may receive applications on AMS when the examiner working on DAP:

- rejected the customer's photo
- cannot make a decision about the customer's photo (for example, they need more information)

These applications will include a case note (see DAP to AMS transfers). You, the AMS examiner, must decide how to progress these applications.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Photo errors: during or after examination

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners how to deal with photo errors during the examination process and after we issue the customer a passport.

You, the examiner, may find out about a photo error, either:

- during the examination process
- after we issue the customer with their passport

## HM Passport Office error: live AMS applications

If HM Passport Office or SSL has made a scanning error (for example, scanned the wrong photo) and the application is live, the examiner must return the application to SSL for a rescan (see submitting an examining return to SSL).

## HM Passport Office error: passport issued

If we've issued a passport with the wrong photo, you must refer to How to correct errors on passports.

## Customer error: live AMS applications

If the customer has attached the wrong photo to the application, it's their mistake and not an HM Passport Office error. If the application is live, you, the examiner, must ask the customer for 2 new photos, 1 certified (if needed).

If a countersigned application has been countersigned incorrectly, you must ask for:

- a new photo countersigned by the original countersignatory
- a new application with a new countersignature if the original is not available

## Customer error: passport issued

If we've issued a passport with the wrong photo, you must refer to How to correct errors on passports.

### Related content

[Contents](#)

# Refunds and returning photos

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how we deal with refunds (after we reject a photo) and when we will return the customer's photo.

If HM Passport Office has rejected a customer's photo and the customer refuses to send another photo, we will not issue them a passport. We will consider any requests for refunds in line with the refunds policy.

## Returning photos

HM Passport Office will not normally return customer paper photos, as they are part of official records. However, if a customer asks us to return their paper photos and their application is still live, we may return their unused, uncertified paper photos, unless there's evidence of fraud.

### Related content

[Contents](#)