



Home Office

Home Office status letters

Version 5.0

This page tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what a Home Office status letter is and how to deal with one sent to us as a supporting document in a passport application

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About: Home Office status letters

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners what a status letter is and how to use status letters with passport applications.

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 the Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards team.

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 the Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards team.

Publication

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

- version **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **26 September 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.

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What a Home Office status letter is

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff what a Home Office status letter is, including who issues them and why and what they are used for.

A Home Office status letter (also known as a 'statement of nationality entitlement') is an official document issued by the United Kingdom Visas & Immigration (UKVI), to show their assessment (based on the information and documents provided to them) about a customer's British nationality status.

Status letters are the outcome of a balance of probabilities assessment made by UKVI about the customer's nationality rather than conclusive evidence of nationality. UKVI will issue a status letter to a customer with an automatic claim to British nationality if the:

- claim is complex
- customer is unable to provide standard evidence to confirm their claim to British nationality and UKVI are satisfied with the customer's evidence on a balance of probabilities (for example, for customers who are unable to prove settlement under the Windrush scheme)

UKVI may issue the customer with a letter known as a "production of" letter. These letters tell the customer what documents they must send to HM Passport Office to obtain a passport.

You must check the letter from the Home Office is an original status letter and not a "production of....." letter if you intend to use it as part of a passport application.

How customers get status letters

Customers must apply to UKVI for a status letter and pay the correct fee for the service.

Format of status letters

Each status letter shows:

- a unique Home Office reference number
- the customer's:
 - o full name
 - o place and date of birth
 - o nationality status under the relevant legislation
 - o documents that UKVI used to confirm their nationality

UKVI will send a copy of the status letter to the customer.

Status letters for passport purposes

From January 2018, UKVI no longer issue status letters solely for passport purposes. If UKVI are aware that a customer wants a status letter for their passport application, they will:

- not issue the status letter
- refund the fee paid for the status letter
- refer them to HM Passport Office to apply for a passport

However, UKVI still issue status letters for other purposes (and customers may not have informed UKVI of their intention to use them in applications for British passports). As a result, HM Passport Office examiners may still receive recently issued status letters as well as status letters issued before January 2018.

You, the examiner, must accept the status letter for passport purposes if it was issued:

- before January 2018
- after January 2018, unless the letter states it was solely issued for passport purposes
- by the Windrush task force (regardless of the date it was issued)

If you receive a status letter issued after January 2018, stating that it was issued for passport purposes only, you must not accept the status letter. This is because UKVI stopped issuing status letters solely for passport purposes in January 2018.

When accepting a status letter for passport purposes, you must check if the customer needs to supply further supporting documents along with the letter. See [Using status letters as supporting documents with passport applications](#) for information.

If you have any fraud concerns, or believe the letter has been issued in error, you must refer the application to an operational team leader (OTL). The OTL will liaise with the Quality Examination Support team (QuEST) and [set up a case conference](#) with UKVI before any decisions are made on the application.

Checking a status letter is genuine

When you receive a status letter, you must check the letter to confirm it is genuine.

The system you need to use to check and find a record of the status letter, will depend on when the status letter was issued.

If the status letter was issued:

- before January 2018, this will be held on the Browse Status Letter file on Application Management System (AMS)

- after January 2018, this will not be held on the Browse Status Letter file (see [status letters not held on AMS Browse Status Letter file](#))
- by the Windrush task force, this will not be held on the Browse Status Letter file (see Windrush guidance for how to check and deal with these status letters)

Status letters not held on AMS Browse Status Letter file

A status letter will not be held on the Browse Status Letter file if it was issued:

- after January 2018
- by the Windrush task force

If you are dealing with a status letter issued by the Windrush task force, you must follow the Windrush guidance as this covers how to check and deal with these status letters.

If you are dealing with a status letter issued after January 2018, this will not be held on the Browse Status Letter file. This is because we stopped recording all status letters on the Browse Status Letter file when UKVI stopped issuing status letters solely for passport purposes.

For status letters issued after January 2018, you must carry out manual checks to confirm they are genuine, using UKVI system records (ATLAS).

Status letters: how to set up a case conference

You, the OTL, will receive an application from an examiner if they have received a status letter and they:

- have fraud concerns
- believe the status letter has been issued in error

You must contact QuEST to set up a case conference with UKVI before any decisions are made on the application.

You, the QuEST officer must set up the case conference including representation from, if relevant to the case:

- QuEST
- Guidance & Quality team
- Counter Fraud team (CFT)
- the examiner's OTL
- UKVI

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Using status letters as supporting documents with passport applications

This section tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about using Home Office status letters with passport applications.

You, the examiner, must ask the customer for the standard documents needed to establish a British nationality claim if they send in a status letter. We must still ask for standard evidence, unless the status letter was issued by the Windrush task force.

If the status letter was issued by the Windrush task force, you must accept it as evidence of the customer's nationality only. You must still request documents to confirm identity, in line with guidance.

Where the customer can provide all the necessary documents to prove their claim to British nationality you must assess their claim using the standard documents. You must check your assessment matches with UK Visa and Immigration's (UKVI) opinion given on the status letter.

If your assessment matches UKVI's opinion you must continue with the application and confirm, on the system, we have received the status letter in an application case note.

If your assessment does not match the status letter and you believe that the status letter is incorrect (for example UKVI have quoted an incorrect section of the British Nationality Act or there does not appear to be a claim) you must refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) to check your assessment.

You, the OTL, must check the examiners assessment of the application. If you believe the status letter is incorrect, you must liaise with the Quality, Examination Support team (QuEst), who will [set up a case conference](#) with UKVI before any decisions are made on the application.

Status letters: when a customer cannot provide standard documents

If a customer cannot provide all of the standard evidence, we need to confirm their nationality claim, you must:

- ask for other evidence
- consider their nationality claim using a balance of probabilities

You can use the Home Office status letter as part of the customer's additional evidence when considering a customer's claim on a balance of probabilities.

In most cases status letters are acceptable as supporting evidence. But status letters must not be accepted in cases where the identity of the customer is in doubt or where the examiner's assessment of the customer's nationality differs to that given on the status letter.

If your assessment:

- matches UKVI's opinion you must continue with the application and confirm, on the system, we have received the status letter in an application
- does not match the status letter and you believe that the status letter is incorrect (for example UKVI have quoted an incorrect section of the British nationality act or there does not appear to be a claim) you must refer the application to your OTL to check your assessment.

You, the OTL, must check the examiners assessment of the application. If you believe the status letter is incorrect, you must liaise with the QuEST, who will [set up a case conference](#) with UKVI before any decisions are made on the application.

Status letters: Main Index checks

If the automated system checks are clear for the intended passport holder you can continue with the application and accept the status letter on the system.

If, for example, the status letter has been issued in a different name to the customer's supporting documents, you must check Main Index (MI) to confirm that a passport has not already been issued to the customer or anyone else named on a status letter. If the MI checks are clear for the intended passport holder, you can continue with the application and accept the status letter on the system.

You must refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT) if the status letter has been issued to more than 1 person and both the:

- checks show that a passport has already been issued to the customer
- personal details do not match (for example, where the status letter has been issued in a different name to the customer's supporting documents, or a check on the ATLAS system shows the customer is not included on the status letter).

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Status letters: accepting the letter on the system

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how we must update the passport application system to show we have received a Home Office status letter as part of a passport application.

If a status letter was issued before January 2018, UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) usually provided HM Passport Office with details of all status letters they issued.

If a status letter was issued after January 2018, UKVI no longer provide HM Passport Office with the details of the status letters issued. These will [not be held on the status letter file](#).

Matching the status letter to the file

You, the examiner, must update the system when a customer's details are recorded on a Home Office status letter and you use it as part of their passport application.

To confirm if a record of the status letter is on the Application Management System (AMS) you must:

1. Access the customer's application from the Examination screen on AMS and click on the **Supp Docs** tab.
2. Click in the **Status Letter** field.
3. If the status letter submitted does show a reference number, type in the customer's Home Office reference number from the status letter and select **Lookup**. The results of any matching records will be displayed.
4. If the status letter submitted does not show a reference number or is not known select **Lookup** to access the **Browse Status Letter File**, type in any known search criteria (for example the customer's name) and click Search; the results of any matching records will be displayed

Status letters: case notes

You must add a case note to the application recording the Home Office reference number and customer's nationality status as shown on the accepted status letter.

You must also case note on the customer's application the names, details and British nationality status of any other people recorded on the status letter.

Status letters: scanning as a permanent record

If you accept the status letter you must scan it onto the application as a permanent record and return the original to the customer when you complete the application.

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Status letters: unable to find a file entry or the details differ

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to deal with a passport application when the customer's Home Office status letter has not been added to the file or the details shown are not the same.

There are a number of reasons why you (the examiner) may not be able to find a status letter file entry. The entry:

- could already have been associated to the customer's application
- could have been associated to a family members application (if the letter referred to more than one person)
- may not have been created because we have not been notified by UK Visa and Immigration

Status letters are entered onto the status letter file as soon as they are received. Where there is no trace, you must check ATLAS to try and find a record of the status letter. You must consider if:

- the match entry has been used for another family member
- we have not received notification

Status letters: letter cannot be found on file

If you receive a status letter and you cannot find a record of it on file, you must check if multiple people are named on the status letter.

Multiple people named on a status letter

A status letter file entry can only be linked to 1 application; once an examiner confirms the match, you will not be able to:

- find the entry on the file
- match it to any other application
- remove or change the match

If the status letter is not visible on the file and the letter contains details of other family members you must:

1. Check Main Index (MI) to make sure no passport has been issued in the customer's name.
2. Check MI using all other names recorded on the status letter and if a passport is found check the case notes for details of the customer's name. Check the scanned image of the status letter on application images.
3. Check ATLAS to see if the status letter is visible on UKVI systems.

4. Case note the details of the MI checks and include the:
 - o names and British passport details of anyone recorded on the status letter
 - o national status of everyone recorded on the status letter
 - o status letter Home Office reference number

No status letter record on the file

If there is no record of the status letter on the file and it was not issued to multiple people you must email the Intel hub, and ask them to confirm they did not receive notification from UKVI.

If the Intel hub confirms that they have not received a copy of the status letter you must:

1. Search MI for a passport in the customer's details.
2. Check ATLAS to confirm the status letter details on UKVI's issuing system.

If the details shown on the UKVI issuing system do not match the details shown on the file, you must follow [if the details do not match the records](#).

If the details shown on the UKVI issuing system match the details on the file, you must:

1. Case note the results of the check.
2. Case note the status letter details.
3. Scan the status letter to the application as a permanent record.
4. Complete the examination process.
5. Return the status letter to the customer with their supporting documents.

Status letters: if the details do not match the records

If the details shown on the status letter do not match the details shown on the file you must:

1. Search MI for a passport in the customer's details and the details shown on the status letter.
2. Check UKVI's issuing system to confirm the status letter details.
3. Case note the results of the check.
4. Case note the status letter details.
5. Scan the status letter to the application as a permanent record.
6. Refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT) for further investigation.

You must refer the application to CFT if the details on the status letter do not match the file and UK Visa & Immigration service's issuing system.

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Status letters: the national status is incorrect

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to deal with an application if the customer's British nationality status shown on the Home Office status letter appears to be incorrect.

You must refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) if your assessment of the customer's nationality status is different to that recorded on the Home Office status letter.

If your assessment of the customer's British nationality status is correct and your OTL confirms the status letter contains an error the OTL must:

1. Check the status letter details on UK Visa & Immigration's (UKVI) issuing system.
2. Liaise with the Quality, Examination Support team (QuEst), set up a case conference with UKVI if the details on UKVI's system match.

QuEst will [set up a case conference](#) with UKVI, provide them with all the relevant information and ask them to re-consider their decision. UKVI will investigate and reissue the letter if necessary.

You must refer the application to CFT if the details on the status letter do not match the status letter file and UK Visa & Immigration service's issuing system.

You must not issue or refuse a passport application until the status letter is amended or withdrawn by UKVI. HM Passport Office and UKVI must agree a consistent Home Office position about the customer's British nationality.

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