



Home Office

Immigration and nationality refunds policy

Version 9.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells caseworkers about the policy for considering and issuing refunds of fees for immigration and nationality applications made either within or outside the UK for which a fee is specified in the Immigration and Nationality Fees Regulations.

This policy does not apply to:

- non-immigration related applications (for example, passports)
- refunds made in relation to the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS), or Immigration Skills Charges (ISC)
- fees paid to commercial partners, such as UKVCAS
- refund of fees paid following on from a complaint/claim of maladministration – such payments are made on an ex-gratia basis and the process for such is set out in the guidance [Ex Gratia Payments](#)

This policy must be used by anyone who is deciding whether or not a refunded application fee is appropriate. This may be before, during or after an application is considered.

Applications are generally made via the department's online application systems. Some customers will attend a visa application centre to enrol their biometrics, and others will submit their biometric data via their smartphone (ID Check smartphone app). Further information on the application process can be found on gov.uk through the following link [Applying for a visa to come to the UK: Choose a visa - GOV.UK](#).

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 Fees and Income Planning 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 Rules and Forms team.

Publication

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

- version **9.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **15 December 2023**

Changes from last version of this guidance

Clarifications throughout the guidance and to the following sections:

- update to include policy on withdrawing pre-determined applications

Related content
[Contents](#)

Refunds

This page defines a refund and sets out the principles that apply to refunding immigration and nationality application fees.

What is a refund?

A refund is the return of a fee or payment for a product or service. For the purpose of this guidance, the refund would be for either all or part of the fee paid for an application or service as set out in regulations, or for an overpayment of the fee.

Ex-Gratia payments are different to refunds and payments made on an Ex-Gratia basis fall outside of this policy. Ex-Gratia payments are a form of reimbursement that can go beyond the cost of a fee, such as the cost of flights or hotels. Ex-Gratia payments are made on a case by case basis where there has been maladministration in the handling of an application. There is no definition of maladministration in law but it is generally agreed to be a lack of care, judgement or honesty in the management of something. Further information on Ex-gratia payments can be found in the [Ex Gratia Payments guidance](#).

Legislation

The power to offer refunds is set out in primary legislation. Part 6, section 68 of the Immigration Act 2014 states that fees regulations may provide for the reduction, waiver or refund of part or all of a fee.

The Immigration and Nationality (Replacement of Tier 4 and Fees) and Passport (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 therefore provide power to refund:

- 13D(1) The Secretary of State may refund any fee, or any part of a fee, paid under these Regulations

Specific provisions already exist within regulations in respect of citizenship ceremonies and administrative reviews. However, for completeness, these scenarios are also detailed within this policy guidance.

General principle of refunds

The defining underlying principle of this refund policy is that the Home Office will only refund an application fee if:

- there is no legal basis to keep the fee (for example – if the application cannot be processed because it is void)
- there is a legal obligation to return the fee (for example if the application is fee exempt)
- the application is rejected as invalid (minus an administration charge)
- the applicant withdraws their application:

- where the application requires biometric data to be taken in person in order for the application to be considered, and the request to withdraw has been made before biometrics have been submitted
- where the application requires documents to be submitted at an application centre and the application is withdrawn prior to attendance at an application centre
- where the application is being made using the UK Immigration: ID Check app and biometrics are submitted through the app, and the application is withdrawn before the applicant has clicked the 'confirm and upload' button to either upload their supporting evidence or confirm that they have no evidence to upload
- where an application is being made using UK Immigration: ID Check app and biometrics are submitted through the app, and the applicant has not clicked the 'confirm and upload' button, the application is withdrawn before the specified period for submitting evidence has lapsed
- an applicant submits a second application which has the effect of varying a previous application
- an incorrect fee has been charged and paid to the Home Office
- a nationality application made overseas is not made to the correct authority

Where an application is made overseas and the application does not go on to be processed by the Home Office because biometric data was not submitted within the specified period, the application fee must be refunded.

The Home Office does not refund a fee if an application is refused, due to the applicant not meeting relevant requirements of the route under which they have applied. The Home Office is not able to issue a refund where an individual has been granted entry clearance/settlement/permission to stay or received the product or service paid for. This includes where a period of entry clearance or permission to stay has been granted that is less than the maximum permitted under the route applied under, for example in the case of a long term Visitor visa, where the validity of the visa issued is less than paid for.

For the purposes of this policy, 'specified period' is the time within which customers are required to complete actions on their application, such as submitting biometric data or uploading evidence. These periods will be set out to customers by the Home Office in writing after they have submitted their application and paid the relevant fee.

Refunds must never be used as compensation or to address maladministration. Cases such as this must be considered using the appropriate processes.

Authorisation

For refunds where the customer has made an application that is withdrawn either before biometric enrolment or before the applicant has clicked the 'confirm and upload' button where their application is made using the UK Immigration: ID Check app, the refund is managed using a 2 stage check and process approach. The cases are received into the Transactional Services WIP (Work in Progress), are checked and prepped and then passed to a third officer for processing.

For refunds where the customer is in the UK, all refund requests must be authorised by an official at HEO grade or above.

Any refund of priority service fees where the fee is being refunded but the application was considered, should be approved by an official at G7 level. Where G7 approval would have a substantial impact on operations, approval may be delegated to an HEO or SEO. These requests will all be subject to further checks and may be returned if the reason for the refund request is outside of policy.

Related content

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Refunds for standard application fees

Fee exempt

If an application route is exempt from the requirement to pay a fee, as detailed within the Immigration and Nationality Fees Regulations, and a fee is paid to the Home Office, the Home Office cannot legally keep the fee and it must be reimbursed.

Invalid applications

Depending on the type of application being made, there are specific criteria which must be satisfied in order to make a valid application, including payment of the specified fee. Guidance on what constitutes a valid application is set out in the guidance Applications for leave to remain: validation, variation and withdrawal.

If an application is rejected as invalid it will not be considered. In these circumstances where a fee over £25 has been paid it must be refunded minus a £25 administrative charge, as specified in the Immigration and Nationality (Fees) Regulations. Where the fee paid is £25 or less, the whole fee will be retained.

Where a fee has not been paid and the application is rejected as invalid, no refund can be made, and no administrative charge is payable.

Inappropriate/void applications

If an individual submits an application which could never be considered or becomes such during the consideration process, either because of the status they already hold or because of the provisions of law, the application cannot proceed. In these circumstances, the application must be cancelled (voided) and the full fee refunded.

Applications which cannot be processed and are deemed to be void include, but are not limited to:

- applications for limited permission to stay by people who already have settlement in the UK – this may occur where the applicant has misunderstood their residence permit and did not realise that they already have settlement
- applications for entry clearance or permission to stay by those who are exempt from immigration control, such as members of the home forces or diplomats – exemption is a matter of law
- where an applicant dies and the Home Office is told before the decision is dispatched

Guidance on the circumstances in which an in country rules based application is deemed to be void is in the guidance Applications for leave to remain: validation, variation and withdrawal.

Withdrawals

Where an application is withdrawn, the fee paid will only be refunded in the following circumstances:

- where an application requires biometric data to be taken in person in order for the application to be considered, and the request to withdraw has been made before biometrics have been submitted – the refund will include the Priority Visa (PV) or Super Priority Visa (SPV) fees, if they have been paid
- where an application requires documents to be submitted at an application centre and the application is withdrawn prior to attendance at an application centre
- where the application is being made using the UK Immigration: ID Check app and biometrics are submitted through the app, the application is withdrawn before the applicant has clicked the 'confirm and upload' button to either upload their supporting evidence or confirm that they have no evidence to upload
- where an application is being made using UK Immigration: ID Check app and biometrics are submitted through the app, and the applicant has not clicked the 'confirm and upload' button, the application is withdrawn before the specified period for submitting evidence has lapsed
- where an application that does not require biometric data to be taken or attendance at an application centre, and the application is withdrawn within 7 calendar days of the application being submitted
- where a citizenship ceremony fee has been paid and the citizenship application is withdrawn prior to a ceremony being arranged, the ceremony fee will be refunded
- where a request is made for an application to be predetermined or the requirement for the individual to attend a VAC to enrol their biometric information is deferred until they arrive in the UK, and the application is withdrawn before the applicant is notified that their application will be predetermined or the requirement to attend a VAC to submit biometric data will be waived

Requests to withdraw an application must be made in accordance with rules or guidelines specific to the application made. For rules based applications, withdrawals must be made in accordance with the process set out in Validation, variation and withdrawal of applications.

Information on [cancelling your visa, immigration or citizenship application](#) is available on GOV.UK. Where no specific guidelines or process exist, the application must be withdrawn through the [Return of Documents tool](#). A request by telephone will not be accepted until the request is received in writing. The date of withdrawal is the date on which written authorisation is received by the Home Office.

Refunds will not be issued if the application is withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- where an application is being made using the UK Immigration: ID Check app, the applicant does not click the 'confirm and upload' button and the specified

period ends before they withdraw their application – after this period has lapsed, the application will go on to be considered

- where an application is being made using the UK Immigration: ID Check app and application is withdrawn after the applicant has clicked the 'confirm and upload' button to either upload their supporting evidence or confirm that they have no evidence to upload
- where the customer is required to submit biometric data but fails to do so, they withdraw their application after the specified period for submitting biometric data has lapsed and the application has gone on to be processed by the Home Office
- after the customer has attended a mandatory appointment at an application centre and enrolled their biometric information in person
- where a request is made for an application to be predetermined or the requirement for the individual to attend a VAC to enrol their biometric information is deferred until they arrive in the UK, the application is withdrawn after the applicant is notified that their application will be pre-determined or they have been excused from the requirement to attend a VAC to submit biometric information

Where an Administrative Review is withdrawn, the Administrative Review fee will not normally be refunded. Guidance on withdrawn Administrative Review applications is set out in Administrative Review.

Variation of immigration applications

Where an application is made and a further application is submitted from the customer that has the effect of varying it, the fee for the first application must be refunded.

For guidance on varying applications, please see the document titled Applications for leave to remain: validation, variation and withdrawal.

Where the Secretary of State varies an application for settlement (Indefinite Leave to Remain) to an application for permission to stay, the fee paid for the ILR application will not be refunded – this includes where permission to stay is rejected due to non-payment of the Immigration Health Charge.

Refused applications

Where an application has been considered by the Home Office and is refused, the fee paid will not be refunded.

Where an application for citizenship is refused, fees for a citizenship ceremony will be refunded.

Citizenship ceremonies - special circumstances

A refund will be made where the Home Office disapplies the requirement to make a citizenship oath and pledge at a citizenship ceremony because of the special circumstances of the case.

Administrative reviews

Where an administrative review results in the decision under review being withdrawn, any fee paid for the administrative review will be refunded.

The only exceptions are where the application for administrative review is being considered under Appendix AR (EU), or the Citizens' Rights (Frontier Workers) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020 and the original decision is withdrawn solely on the basis of new evidence. In these circumstances the fee paid for the administrative review will not be refunded.

Reconsiderations

Where an application for a certificate of registration or naturalisation, or for a certificate of entitlement, has been refused and is subsequently overturned following a reconsideration, the fee paid for the reconsideration will be refunded.

Travel documents

If a customer has more than 6 months extant permission to stay when they apply for a travel document, but by the time their application is considered they have less than 6 months permission remaining, they will be given a choice of a short validity travel document or a refund.

Home Office Exchange Rate Policy

The [Home Office Exchange Rate Policy](#) (HOERP) is used to set exchange rates applied to Immigration and Nationality fees charged in foreign currencies.

Where an application fee paid is subject to HOERP, if the incorrect exchange rate is applied and the applicant is overcharged, they should be refunded the difference between the fee paid and the correct fee, which will have been calculated using the correct exchange rate.

A refund of any charges issued by card providers or banks will not be provided or where currencies have been converted as part of the payment process.

Biometric enrolment fees

Where a biometric enrolment fee has been paid in addition to the visa application fee, but either:

- enrolment of fingerprints is required, but has not taken place

- the applicant is required to provide a facial image and has not provided it

and the application subsequently withdrawn, a refund of the biometric enrolment fee must be made.

Where either:

- fingerprints (where required) have been enrolled
- an existing enrolment has been used and a facial image has been provided

no refund of the biometric fee will be provided.

Withdrawn and revoked status within in the UK

Where permission to stay or citizenship has been granted and is subsequently revoked by the Home Office or renounced by the applicant, no refund will be issued.

Certificate of Sponsorship and Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies

The fee charged for issuing a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) or Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) will not be refunded to the sponsor if the sponsor has subsequently surrendered its licence, or had its licence revoked, before the CoS or CAS was used in an immigration application. The only exception is where a revoked licence is later reinstated, and the unused CoS or CAS expired during the period in between the revocation and the reinstatement of the sponsor licence, in which case a refund of the CoS or CAS fee may be issued.

If a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS) or Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) is cancelled or withdrawn no fee will be refunded.

Court judgments

Where the Home Office is directed by a UK court or tribunal to refund application fees, or where a UK court or tribunal deems payment of a fee to have been unlawful and restitution required, refunds must be issued.

Prior to any refunds being issued, the Fees and Income Planning Team, Finance Business Partners and ministers must be notified of the court's decision.

Exceptional circumstances

In most circumstances, the information set out within this policy will be sufficient for a decision to be made on whether it is appropriate to refund application fees paid. However, nothing in this guidance is to fetter the decision maker's discretion to issue a refund of fees paid where there are genuinely exceptional and compelling reasons to do so. For example, global travel restrictions brought about by a pandemic or catastrophic event, where other, specific arrangements have been agreed by the Home Secretary or minister appointed by her.

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Refunds for additional services

This page tells you when you can refund fees for additional services.

Priority Visa (PV) and Super Priority Visa (SPV)

A refund of fees paid to expedite an application through the Priority or Super Priority service may be sought where the applicant has taken necessary steps to complete their application, but the application has not been considered within the published timescales. Refunds must be made in accordance with the table below which applies only to the priority and super priority fee:

-	Application type	Action
Withdrawn and the customer is entitled to a refund of their application fee.	Priority and Super Priority	Refund full PV/SPV fee
Withdrawn and the customer is not entitled to a refund of their application fee (for example after biometrics have been submitted).	Priority and Super Priority	No Refund
Void	Priority and Super Priority	Refund full PV/SPV fee
Application rejected as invalid	Priority and Super Priority	Refund full PV/SPV fee
Visa Refused	Priority and Super Priority	No Refund
Straightforward application not processed in published timescales (official error – this excludes maladministration) Official error includes: IT error/failure; lack of resource to process the application; administrative error	Priority Visa	Refund full PV fee
Straightforward application not processed in published timescales (official error –this excludes maladministration) Official error includes: IT error/failure; lack of resource to process the	Super Priority Visa	Refund full SPV fee or refund the difference between PV and SPV where the application goes on to be processed under the published timescales for PV.

-	Application type	Action
application; administrative error		
Application is determined within published timescales but (in country) is not communicated to the customer; or (out of country) it is not communicated to the customer that their decision is available for collection within the published timescales	Priority and Super Priority Visa	Refund full PV/SPV fee
Application is excluded from the published timescales due to being assessed as non-straightforward	Priority and Super Priority Visa	No Refund
Excluded from the published timescales due to the customer not supplying required information in time for the application to be considered within the published timescales (this would not include invalid cases or submitting biometrics)	Priority and Super Priority Visa	No Refund

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Sponsor licence premium service

A fee may be paid to expedite the processing of an employer sponsor licence application. Where an expediting fee is paid, a refund of the expediting fee will only be made in the following circumstances.

-	Action
Customer withdraws application after they have submitted their mandatory documents.	No refund
Customer withdraws their application before they have submitted their mandatory documents.	Refund
Customer does not submit all mandatory documents within the specified timescale.	Refund
Home Office unable to process the application within the expedited SLA due to additional information being required by the Home Office that is not provided by the customer within the specified timescale.	No refund (This application will be completed as soon as possible once the additional information has been provided.)
Home Office is unable to process the application within the expedited SLA due to the application being non-straightforward (complex).	Refund
Home Office not able to process the application within SLA due to Home Office error.	Refund
Sponsorship application refused	No refund
Sponsorship application invalid	Refund

Other Premium Service Fees

Refunds will not be issued where a premium service is provided:

- through the Immigration Enforcement Checking and Advice Service
- for the provision of any premium service by a Border Force Officer

Registered Traveller Service

Where an application for the Registered Traveller Service is unsuccessful, the £50 membership fee will be automatically refunded to the applicant where they are an adult at the time of application.

If a customer has applied for the Registered Traveller Service and believes they are due a refund, they should email the team at the email address on their application correspondence.

Related content

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Triggers for considering a refund

This page tells you about the triggers for considering a refund for immigration and nationality fees.

An applicant or their authorised immigration adviser does not have to start the process for considering a refund, although such requests may be received either directly by the team or through the customer service unit.

Caseworker led

The caseworker may decide that a refund is required for the following reasons:

- the application is invalid and cannot be processed, for example because biometrics have not been provided
- the application is inappropriate or becomes void during processing

In these circumstances, a refund must be provided if it meets the criteria set out in this policy.

If a caseworker realises a mistake has been made (for example a passport has been damaged) and an ex gratia payment is required rather than a fee refund, the caseworker must consult the Complaints Ex Gratia unit before deciding what action to take.

Customer led

The customer might request a refund of their application, Priority or Super Priority fee for several reasons, for example if they believe that:

- their application has not been considered within the service level agreement (for Priority and Super Priority applications)
- they have been incorrectly advised by a member of Home Office staff
- they have withdrawn their application
- maladministration by the Home Office
- the product provided is not what the applicant applied for

A refund of the fee paid should be considered in these cases and only issued if it meets the criteria in this policy.

Where there is maladministration by the Home Office, or where an applicant has been incorrectly advised by the Home Office, an Ex-Gratia payment can be considered via the complaints process.

If a customer makes a chargeback through their credit card issuer for any of the fees paid to the Home Office, for example where they do not think that they have received the product they applied for, see Card fraud, money laundering and chargebacks.

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Card fraud, money laundering and chargebacks

This page tells you about card fraud, money laundering and chargebacks.

The Home Office is part of the National Fraud Initiative. This is a data matching exercise which takes place every 2 years which, by comparing similar data sets from a number of different organisations, identifies anomalies for further investigation.

The reporting of information or suspicions about fraud by staff and other third parties is an important detection element. So you can assist in the detection of fraud, you must be aware of the various methods and types of frauds that can occur and potential fraud indicators. Fraud indicators are clues or hints that the Home Office should take a closer look at an individual, area or activity and point the way for the possibility of a further detailed investigation.

Cash payments and money laundering

[The Money Laundering Regulations 2017 \(as amended\)](#) require organisations that handle financial transactions to conduct ongoing monitoring and take steps to be aware of transactions with heightened money laundering or counter-terrorist financing risks.

[The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002](#) requires the Home Office to report suspicious transactions.

Home Office Staff processing refunds should familiarise themselves with the framework for reporting suspicious transactions under Part 7 of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

When processing a refund, a member of Home Office staff risks committing a money laundering offence if they 'know' or 'suspect' that the applicant is engaged in money laundering and/or they are dealing with criminal property, if they do something to assist that individual. This would include processing a refund where there is reason to believe the funds or transaction appears suspicious. In these circumstances Home Office staff must submit a Suspicious Activity Report (SAR) to the United Kingdom Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU), to seek consent to process the transaction. This will alert law enforcement to potentially suspicious activity that might indicate money laundering or terrorist financing and provide the reporter with a defence against a money laundering offence.

The National Crime Agency website provides [guidance on how to submit a SAR](#).

Chargebacks

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