



Home Office

Observations in passports

Version 5.0

This guidance tells Her Majesty's Passport Office staff about passport observations; what they are, when they are used and how to add them to a passport

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About this guidance

This guidance tells Her Majesty's Passport Office operational staff:

- about passport observations
- when we use them
- how to add them to a passport application

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 **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **31 January 2021**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This version of the guidance has had minor reformatting changes.

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Observations in passports

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office operational staff about passport observations, where observations are printed in British passports and the wording of each passport observation and where to find guidance which tells you when they are used.

Passport observations are printed, stamped or handwritten notes added to some passports to show important information about the passport or the holder. We add observations into British passports to explain to immigration staff and other government officials about:

- the customer's British nationality or immigration status
- the customer's identity (for example, if the holder has a hereditary title)
- why the passport will expire earlier than a standard passport
- the customer is in diplomatic or official service

The International Civil Aviation Organization decided that:

- a person's name, place and date of birth, nationality status and photo must be included in the details page of their passport
- observations must not be added to the personal details page

We print observations in capital letters in British passports on page 3 (the observations page) of the current digital passport.

Observations must have no more than:

- 18 lines of text
- 44 characters per line including spaces

You can remove line breaks from observations to create more space.

If a passport is not required to have an observation, the system will automatically print the observation page with the words:

'THERE ARE NO OFFICIAL OBSERVATIONS'.

You must:

- not automatically renew all previous observations like for like when a person applies to renew their passport
- ask for further documents or evidence to confirm the observation where this is needed in line with existing guidance

You can:

- view observations held on passport records using the ‘observations’ tab on Main Index
- find information about where observations were printed in older style passports in the UK Knowledge Base

Order of observations: applications on AMS

Some passport types (for example, British national overseas passports) always need an observation added to their passport.

If you are processing an application on the Application Management System (AMS) and need to add more than one observation to a passport (as shown in relevant guidance), you must add them in the following order:

1. [Immigration and nationality observations](#)
 - UK immigration observations
 - Hong Kong immigration observations
 - British overseas territory or Crown dependency immigration observations
2. [Diplomatic, Official and Queen’s Messenger Service observations](#)
 - Diplomatic observations
 - Official observations
 - Queen’s Messenger observations
3. [Identity observation](#)
 - Names observations
 - Titles observations
 - Employment observations
4. [Validity observations](#)

Order of observations: applications on DAP

If you are processing an application on the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system, you:

- must add observations as needed in line with the tasks presented to you
- do not need to:
 - order the observations manually
 - add them in a specific order (DAP will order the observations automatically when the passport is sent to print)

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Immigration and nationality observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office staff about observations we use to give information about the holder's immigration or nationality status.

UK immigration observations

You must add the United Kingdom (UK) immigration observations in line with:

- immigration and right of abode guidance
- the below guidance documents, as applicable:
 - British subjects
 - British overseas territories citizens
 - British overseas citizens guidance
 - British national (overseas) citizens
 - British protected persons

Observation code OBTB: subject to control under Immigration Act 1971

You must use observation code OBTB in some passports for customers who are not British citizens in line with existing guidance. These customers will be subject to restrictions under the Immigration Act 1971 and will not have the right of abode in the United Kingdom.

Observation code OBTB:
THE HOLDER IS SUBJECT TO CONTROL UNDER THE IMMIGRATION ACT 1971

Observation code OBTC: Right of abode in the UK

You must use observation code OBTC in a passport for customers who are British subjects with right of abode in the UK under the Immigration Act 1971.

Observation code OBTC:
THE HOLDER HAS THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Observation code OBTE: entitled to readmission to the UK

You must use observation code OBTE only in passports for customers who hold British subject or British overseas citizen status and where the customer can provide evidence that they are entitled to re-admission to the United Kingdom. See Immigration and right of abode guidance.

Observation code OBTE:

THE HOLDER IS ENTITLED TO RE-ADMISSION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM

EU immigration observations

The UK's transition period after leaving the European Union (EU) ended on 31 December 2020. This means you must not add either of the below EU immigration observations to any British passport you issue on, or after 1 January 2021.

Observation code OBTF: UK national for EU purposes

You must not use observation code OBTF. We previously used it in some British overseas territory citizen passports for customers, who:

- got that status from a connection with Gibraltar
- had the right of free movement in the EU

Observation code OBTF:

THE HOLDER IS DEFINED AS A UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL FOR COMMUNITY PURPOSES

Observation code OBTR: not entitled to EU benefits

You must not use observation code OBTR. We previously used it in passports:

- for British citizens connected to, the:
 - Channel Islands (who did not benefit from EU provisions)
 - Isle of Man (who did not benefit from EU provisions)
- issued between 30 March 2019 and 31 December 2020 (the UK's transitional period for leaving the EU), to:
 - British subjects (if they were connected to Ireland and had the right to readmission to the UK)
 - British subjects (if they were connected to India)
 - British overseas territory citizens (except for customers connected to Gibraltar)
 - British overseas territory citizens connected to Gibraltar (if their BOTC passport did not include 'THE HOLDER IS DEFINED AS A UNITED KINGDOM NATIONAL FOR COMMUNITY PURPOSES' observation)
 - British protected persons
 - British national (overseas) citizens
 - British overseas citizens

Observation code OBTR:

THE HOLDER IS NOT ENTITLED TO BENEFIT FROM EU PROVISIONS RELATING TO EMPLOYMENT OR ESTABLISHMENT

Hong Kong immigration observations

You must add the following observations to a British National (overseas) passport in line with British national (overseas) (BN(O)) guidance.

Observation code OBTS: entry certificate not required for UK

You must add this immigration observation (code OBTS) to all (BN(O)) passports.

Observation code OBTS:

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM IMMIGRATION RULES, THE HOLDER OF THIS PASSPORT DOES NOT REQUIRE AN ENTRY CERTIFICATE OR VISA TO VISIT THE UNITED KINGDOM

Observation code OBTT: Hong Kong PIC number and Right of abode

You must use observation code OBTT in passports for customers who have (BN(O)) citizenship and the right of abode in Hong Kong. You must type the customer's permanent identity card number into the free text field on the system when you have confirmed it.

Observation code OBTT:

THE HOLDER OF THIS PASSPORT HAS HONG KONG PERMANENT IDENTITY CARD NO [INSERT FREE TEXT] WHICH STATES THAT THE HOLDER HAS THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN HONG KONG

Observation code OBTG: The holder [free text up to 74 characters]

You must use observation code OBTG and complete the free text field on the system with the relevant information for customers who have (BN(O)) citizenship who have lost Right of Abode in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region who have the right to land in Hong Kong. See British National (overseas) guidance.

Observation code OBTG:

THE HOLDER [INSERT FREE TEXT UP TO 74 CHARACTERS]

Observation code OBTV: Chinese commercial code

You must not use observation code OBTV. It was previously used in some (BN(O)) passports but is no longer used by HM Passport Office.

Observation code OBTV:

THE HOLDER'S NAME IN CHINESE COMMERCIAL CODE IS [INSERT FREE TEXT]

British overseas territory or crown dependency observations

The following 2 observations can be added in line with existing guidance.

Observation code OBTA: British overseas territory citizens

You must use observation code OBTA for British overseas territory citizens. See British overseas territories citizens guidance.

Observation code OBTA:

THE HOLDER IS A BRITISH OVERSEAS TERRITORIES CITIZEN
--

Observation code OBTD: Right of abode in overseas territories

Customers who hold British overseas territory citizenship can request us to add observation code OBTD to their passport to show they have the right of abode in a territory.

It is not essential that this observation is added because customers can ask their relevant territory immigration office to add an immigration observation themselves.

See Immigration and right of abode guidance and British overseas territories citizens' guidance.

Observation code OBTD:

THE HOLDER HAS THE RIGHT OF ABODE IN [INSERT FREE TEXT]

Free text observations for immigration purposes

Observation code OBTZ: free text for immigration purposes.

If you need to add a nationality or immigration observation which needs more text than the observation code on the system allows, you must:

use observation code OBTZ which is entirely free text
type the free text so that the observation is the same as in the relevant observation code

Observation code OBTZ:

[INSERT FREE TEXT]

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Diplomatic, Official and Queen's Messenger observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office staff about observations we add to standard passports, if the customer is entitled to a diplomatic or official observation. See Diplomatic and Official service - passports and observations guidance.

Diplomatic observations

These observations are placed on passports for diplomatic staff and their families.

Observation code OBTJ: member of the diplomatic service

Observation code OBTJ is used for members of the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBTJ:

THE HOLDER IS A MEMBER OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE
--

Observation code OBTK: spouse, member of the diplomatic service

Observation code OBTK is used for the spouse of a member of the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBTK:

THE HOLDER IS THE SPOUSE OF A MEMBER OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE
--

Observation code OBTL: dependent, member of the diplomatic service

Observation code OBTL is used for a dependent of a member of the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBTL:

THE HOLDER IS A DEPENDENT OF A MEMBER OF HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

Observations for people seconded to the diplomatic service

Members of the home-based civil service and their families, working in the FCDO and posted overseas (including FCDO Services staff and those who are seconded or attached to the FCDO) will have a diplomatic observation added to their passport.

Observation code OBAA: attached to diplomatic service

Observation code OBAA is used for staff attached to the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBAA:

THE HOLDER IS ATTACHED TO HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE
--

Observation code OBAC: spouse, attached to diplomatic service

Observation code OBAC is used for the spouse of someone attached to the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBAC:

THE HOLDER IS THE SPOUSE OF AN OFFICER ATTACHED TO HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE

Observation code OBAD: dependent, attached to diplomatic service

Observation code OBAD is used for a dependant of someone attached to the diplomatic service.

Observation code OBAD:

THE HOLDER IS A DEPENDANT OF AN OFFICER ATTACHED TO HER BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S DIPLOMATIC SERVICE
--

Official observations

These official observations are used for staff working in British Diplomatic Missions abroad and their families.

Observation code OBTM: Official, member of government service

Observation code OBTM is used for official staff working in British Missions abroad.

Observation code OBTM:

THE HOLDER IS IN BRITISH GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Observation code OBTN: Official, spouse of

Observation code OBTN is used for the spouse of an official staff member working in British Missions abroad.

Observation code OBTN:

THE HOLDER IS THE SPOUSE OF A PERSON IN BRITISH GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Observation code OBAB: Official, dependent of

Observation code OBAB is used for the dependant of an official staff member working in British Missions abroad.

Observation code OBAB:

THE HOLDER IS A DEPENDANT OF A PERSON IN BRITISH GOVERNMENT SERVICE

Queen's messenger observations

Observation code OBTX: Queen's messenger service

Observation code OBTX must be completed by typing in the free text field on the system. It must only be used by the Diplomatic and Official Passport team when they issue a diplomatic passport to a Queen's Messenger.

Observation code OBTX:

THE HOLDER IS [INSERT FREE TEXT ' A MEMBER OF THE QUEEN'S MESSENGER SERVICE']

Free text observations for diplomatic or official purposes

Observation code OBTZ: free text for diplomatic or official purposes

If you need to add a diplomatic or official observation which needs more text than the observation code on the system allows, you must:

- use observation code OBTZ which is entirely free text
- type the free text so that the observation is the same as in the relevant observation code

Observation code OBTZ:

[INSERT FREE TEXT]

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Identity observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office staff about identity observations used to show information about a customer's name, title or other passport.

Names observations

You must add these observations as directed by the Names guidance.

Observation code OBTG: the holder [free text up to 74 characters]

You must complete the free text field on the system with the relevant information and use observation code OBTG in passports for customers who have a:

- foreign passport in a different name
- name or place of birth which is too long to show on the passport details page

You must use observation code OBTG if the observation has more than 30 characters including spaces.

Observation code OBTG:

THE HOLDER [FREE TEXT UP TO 74 CHARACTERS]
--

Observation code OBTO: holder also known as [free text]

You must complete the free text field on the system with the relevant information and use observation code OBTO when customers are also known by a different name.

Observation code OBTO:

THE HOLDER IS ALSO KNOWN AS [FREE TEXT UP TO 56 CHARACTERS]

Observation code OBTW: reference to [free text] is to forename not title

You must type the relevant information into the free text field and use observation code OBTW in a passport to show a customer has changed their first forename to a title of nobility or knighthood (for example, from John Smith to Sir John Smith).

Observation code OBTW:

THE REFERENCE TO [FREE TEXT] IS TO THE HOLDER'S NAME AND NOT TO THE HOLDER'S TITLE
--

Observation code OBTX: holder is [free text up to 30 characters]

You must not use observation code OBTX to show the customer is also known by another name or has a passport in a different name. Instead, you must use [observation code OBTG](#). See names guidance

Observation code OBTX:

THE HOLDER IS [FREE TEXT UP TO 30 CHARACTERS]

Titles observations

You must type the relevant information into the free text field add these observations where a customer has a title. See Titles guidance.

Observation code OBTX: holder is [free text up to 30 characters]

Observation code OBTX must be used if the observation needs up to 30 characters.

Observation code OBTX:

THE HOLDER IS [FREE TEXT UP TO 30 CHARACTERS]

Observation code OBTG: the holder [free text up to 74 characters]

Observation code OBTG must be used if the observation needs over 30 characters.

Observation code OBTG:

THE HOLDER [FREE TEXT UP TO 74 CHARACTERS]
--

Free text observations for identity purposes

Observation code OBTZ: free text for identity purposes

If you need to add an identity observation which needs more text than the observation code on the system allows, you must:

- use observation code OBTZ which is entirely free text
- type the free text so that the observation is the same as in the relevant observation code

Observation code OBTZ:

[FREE TEXT]

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Validity observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office staff about observations used to show information about a passport's validity.

Observation code OBTP: replaces cancelled passport

Observation code OBTP must only be added when you issue a free of charge non-standard validity replacement passport, because we previously made an error. You must complete the:

- first free text field with the customer's previous passport number.
- second free text field with the date of issue on the customer's previous passport using the format DD/MM/YYYY
- the third free text 'CANCELLED AND DESTROYED'

See preventing and resolving errors guidance.

Observation code OBTP:

REPLACES PASSPORT NUMBER [INSERT FREE TEXT] DATED [INSERT DATE] WHICH HAS BEEN [INSERT FREE TEXT]

Observation code OBTU: valid for [free text] for restricted validity passports

You must use observation code OBTU when you issue a restricted validity passport. You must complete the free text fields on the system with the correct information.

See restricted validity passports guidance.

Observation code OBTU:

VALID FOR [INSERT FREE TEXT] MONTHS, MAY NOT BE REPLACED WITHOUT REFERENCE TO THE PASSPORT OFFICE [INSERT FREE TEXT]

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Application Management System: adding observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office operational staff how to add observations to passports using the Application Management System (AMS)

You (the examiner) can add multiple observations into a British passport (if they are needed), making sure that:

- each observation is no longer than 44 characters (including spaces) on each line
- no more than 18 lines of text is added to the page
- you add them in the correct order

How to add observations on AMS

If you need to add an observation to a passport you must:

1. Click on the **Prepare passport** tab on the examination screen.
2. Click on the **Observations** sub tab.
3. Choose the observation you want to add from the list.
4. Click on the **add** button (this will show the observation you selected).
5. Type all the information you need, in the free text box.
6. Enter dates using the DD MM YYYY format.
7. Make sure you show multiple observations in the [correct order](#). You can move them by clicking on the 'up' or 'down' arrow.
8. **Save** the details on screen.

How to add manual observations: examiner

You must send the passport to be printed in the local print room if the system cannot fit all the required observations on the observation page. This will be needed if the observations exceed 18 lines of text.

Local print staff will then manually add any remaining observations to the observations page or on the first available visa page.

Manually added observations must be stamped by local print staff to show that that the observation is valid. Local print staff must use the relevant stamp to officially authorise the manual observation.

If you need to add a manual observation, you must:

1. Add as many full observations as the AMS system will allow.
2. Create a **TEB enquiry** (telephone enquiry bureau form) which:

- confirms that a manual observation is required because more than 18 lines of text is needed
 - lists all of the observations that are needed in the [correct order](#)
 - tells your local print team which observation they must manually add to the passport
3. Print out the TEB enquiry sheet
 4. Send the passport application for local print with the TEB enquiry.

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Digital Application Processing system: adding observations

This section tells Her Majesty's Passport Office examiners working on the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system, how DAP will identify if a passport needs an observation, how to add and remove an observation and how to complete a DAP observation task.

How DAP will identify if a passport needs an observation

DAP will run checks to identify if:

- an observation is shown on the customer's old passport
- the information the customer provides shows they may need an observation

If DAP identifies a passport may need an observation, it will create a task for examiners to complete.

DAP will create a task called 'Other title request' for examiners to consider if the customer needs an observation about their professional titles.

How to add an observation using DAP

You can add an observation in DAP in any order (as DAP will make sure they are printed on the passport in the correct order).

To add an observation, you (the DAP examiner) must:

1. Go to **Application Details**.
2. Select the **Observations** tab in the left hand menu.
3. Enter the observation code you want to add, into the box on the screen and select **Add to passport**. If you do not know the observation code, you can click on **Show codes** to see a list of all available codes.
4. Complete the free text areas. You must record dates as DD MM YYYY.
5. Check the observation is correct.
6. Add a case note in the case note text box, to explain why you added the observation.
7. Click **Save**.

If you need to add another observation, click **Add new** and follow steps 3 -7 again.

For the observation:

- OBTG 'THE HOLDER [INSERT FREETEXT]' - DAP allows 74 characters over 2 lines

- OBTX 'THE HOLDER IS [INSERT FREETEXT]' - DAP allows 30 characters over 1 line

If the name and title is more than 74 characters long, you must transfer the application to the Application Management System (AMS).

How to remove an observation

If you add an observation in error, or make a mistake when you enter the observation, you must:

1. Click **remove**, next to the observation you want to remove.
2. Enter a case note in the case note text box to explain why you are removing the observation.
3. Click **confirm**.
4. Add the correct observation (if you need to).

Completing an observation task

When you have added the observation to a passport, you must:

1. Return to the **Tasks** tab.
2. Open the correct observation task (for example 'Other Title').
3. Clear the task.

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