



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

**Counter Proliferation and Arms Control
Centre**

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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Website: <https://www.gov.uk>

02 February 2018

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 REQUEST REF: 018-18

Thank you for your email of 05 January 2018 asking for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000. You asked:

On the 1st January 2013 a request (FOI Request, Ref: 0017-13) by Dr. Geraint Bevan concerned ATAS processing times.

The FOI response suggested that "the database as configured cannot generate statistical reports that monitor performance" and that "we are not presently able to provide statistics on processing times for ATAS applications".

However, it was also noted that "we recognise the need to improve upon the existing database and are currently developing a new tool that we expect to be able to introduce later this year [2013]."

As such could you now please provide statistics that you have on processing times for ATAS applications for:

- a) new applicants; and*
- b) applicants renewing clearance in support of visa extensions*

The last 12 months of data would be sufficient please.

I am writing to confirm that we have now completed the search for the information which you requested.

I can confirm that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) does hold information relevant to your request.

In 2017, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office received 19,300 Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) applications from international students wishing to study ATAS-relevant courses in Engineering and Science related subjects at post-graduate level in the UK.

The ATAS scheme applies only to students from outside the European Economic Area (EEA). Every application received by the ATAS team receives the same level of scrutiny, irrespective of whether it is a 'new' application, or an extension of an existing visa. Although the assessment process for each ATAS application is the same, every application is unique and, as such, will take its own time to complete the ATAS process.

Our published timescale for completing assessment of ATAS applications is at least 20 working days, four calendar weeks, rising to 30 working days, six calendar weeks, in our peak summer period between April and September. We are currently completing the assessment process within an average of 16 working days and throughout 2017 we consistently turned applications around in an average of 18 working days. We are not required to report more detailed metrics in this area.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS – FCO)



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