



Home Office

Diplomatic and Official service: passports and observations

Version 10.0

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners how to deal with passport applications from members of the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad

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About: Diplomatic and Official service: passports and observations

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff about passport applications sent by United Kingdom government officials, members of the British Diplomatic service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad and their dependents. It explains:

- the difference between Diplomatic, Official and standards passports with diplomatic or official observations
- how these customers apply for British passports
- who deals with these applications and how to process them

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 **10.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **14 November 2022**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This version of the guidance has been updated to reflect this department's change in name to His Majesty's Passport Office following the death of our sovereign Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

It also changes:

- who must add diplomatic observations in standard passports from an examiner to an operational team leader working on AMS and:
 - the observation code needed for diplomatic observations in standard passports
- Queen's Messenger Service passports to Kings Messenger Service (KMS) passports and:
 - the number and type of passports that can be held by King's Messengers from 5 diplomatic passports and 5 standards to 10 diplomatic passports (all with KMS observations)
 - adds a new observation for KMS passports

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Diplomatic and Official service

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about the British passports we issue to diplomatic or official staff and their dependents. It includes who we issue these passports to, how much they cost and how customers apply.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) are the lead government department for diplomatic or official status and inform Parliament of any changes. They delegate powers to various UK government departments to decide who may hold diplomatic or official status. Customers must get permission from the FCDO or letters from delegated departments before they apply for a British passport used for government service abroad.

HM Passport Office will maintain a record on Main Index of all passports issued for diplomatic or official purposes. We may be asked to provide the FCDO with information about these passports so they can comply with their responsibilities to Parliament and the Vienna Conventions which govern diplomatic or official status. Government service is recognised in 4 types of British passport:

- a standard passport with a diplomatic or official observation
- a Diplomatic passport
- an Official passport
- a Diplomatic passport with a King's Messenger Service observation

Customers must hold a standard British citizen passport with at least 6 months validity in the same personal details before we issue them a Diplomatic or Official passport. They must use their standard passport for personal travel and travel in and out of the UK on government business and their Diplomatic or Official passport for travel in or out of the country they are working in.

On rare occasions a British national who is not a British citizen may apply for a Diplomatic or Official passport. HM Passport Office will not issue a Diplomatic or Official passport to them unless we have specific permission from the FCDO and the Passport Policy team.

Permission to issue a passport and advice about any immigration observations that may be needed, must be requested by the Diplomatic and Official Passport team using the guidance referral process.

Where we receive permission to issue a Diplomatic or Official passport to a non-British citizen, we will issue the passport in the British nationality the customer holds.

Who can have a Diplomatic or Official passport

Diplomatic or Official accreditation (official recognition) is governed by the United Nations Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations 1961 (VCDR 1961) and the [Vienna Convention on Consular Relations 1963](#) (VCCR 1963).

The government of the country being visited (the host nation) may grant accreditation to recognise the diplomatic status of the passport holder if they are going to be living in the foreign country for a long time. It is the accreditation that gives the holder diplomatic or official status in that country and not the passport itself.

UK government staff and their dependents who are accredited with:

- Diplomatic or consular status are entitled to hold a Diplomatic passport
- Administrative and technical status are entitled to hold an Official passport

Customers may also use their Diplomatic or Official passport when travelling for work to countries that have visa requirements or where a visa would not be necessary if they used a Diplomatic or Official passport.

Standard passports with diplomatic or official observations

The FCDO authorises diplomatic or official observations in standard passports when the holder (or their dependents):

- travels on diplomatic or official business
- is not accredited by a foreign government
- is resident in a foreign country for a short time
- cannot wait for a Diplomatic or Official passport
- need to travel to a politically sensitive area

Who the FCDO treats as a dependent

The FCDO considers a qualifying dependant, as:

- a spouse
- a civil partner
- an established partner
- a son or daughter who was under 21 years old at the start of the posting and:
 - is living with the member of staff at the post abroad
 - is not married, in a civil partnership or has an established partner
 - has been financially dependent on the member of staff for the greater part of the posting
- a son or daughter, who regardless of their age, is a dependent because of physical or mental disability

Dependent sons and daughters who do not live with the officer abroad do not usually qualify for diplomatic or official status but this may be exceptionally granted, if they are:

- under the age of 23 years and:

- do not live at post because they are in full-time education (for example, at a boarding school) or vocational training (not in post graduate studies)
- spends at least two thirds of their holidays with the member of staff at post
- is not married, in a civil partnership or has an established partner
- is financially dependent on the member of staff

Diplomatic or Official passports: when not to issue

HM Passport Office will not issue a Diplomatic or Official passport or a standard passport with a diplomatic or official observation, if:

- we cannot confirm the customer's identity and claim to British nationality
- we do not have the correct [authorisation from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office \(FCDO\)](#)
- the customer holds a passport in a different name or date of birth

How diplomatic or official staff apply for a passport

For diplomatic or official staff, the route to apply for a passport will depend on if they are applying for a:

- standard passport
- Diplomatic or Official passport

Standard passports

Members of the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad (and their dependents) who apply for a standard passport (with or without a diplomatic or official observation), must:

- send in their application online or by post (using a paper application form)
- pay the UK fee for the channel type they use (for example, the UK fee for an online application)

Diplomatic or Official passports

Customers who apply to HM Passport Office for a Diplomatic or Official passport must:

- use a paper application form
- send the application to the Diplomatic and Official passport team at the Durham office using the dedicated address
- pay the UK online fee

Delivery fees

The fee paid by the customer includes delivery of the new passport and the return of their supporting documents, to:

- a UK residential address
- a BFPO (British Forces Post Office) address

If a customer wants their documents returned by a secure courier or sent to another address (for example, their home address abroad), they must pay additional fees, in line with the current Passport fees guidance.

Refunding overpayments: diplomatic or official applications

Customers who are members of His Majesty's diplomatic service or who are serving overseas in an official capacity must pay the UK fee for their passport application.

You must refund the customer if they have overpaid (for example, if they apply using an overseas online channel and pay an overseas fee).

You must have evidence from the customer showing they are a member (or dependant) of the diplomatic or official service, before you process their refund.

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British Diplomatic Service Missions abroad: examiner responsibility

This section tells HM Passport Office staff how to deal with applications from the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad, including adding passport notes to link passports together. It explains who is responsible for issuing standard passports (with or without diplomatic or official observations) and who is responsible for issuing Diplomatic or Official passports.

Members of the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad (and their dependents) will always hold at least 1 standard British citizen passport so they can travel outside the UK. Their standard passport may or may not have a diplomatic or official observation.

Who deals with standard passports

An examiner in any HM Passport Office can deal with an application for a renewal or replacement of a standard passport:

- without a diplomatic or official observation
- with a UK government, official observation

An operational team leader (OTL) working on the Application Management System (AMS) must deal with applications to renew or replace a standard passport with a:

- diplomatic observation

You, the examiner or OTL must process applications to renew or replace a standard passport as if it has been [sent from the UK](#).

Who deals with Diplomatic or Official passports

Only the Diplomatic and Official passport team (DOPt) based in Durham Application Processing Centre (APC) can process passport applications for Diplomatic, Official or King's Messenger Service passports. HM Passport Office staff must [transfer the customer's passport application](#) to DOPt, if the customer:

- sends an application for a Diplomatic or Official passport to any other HM Passport Office
- applies for their first British passport and the system tells us the customer has also applied for a Diplomatic or Official passport

Passport notes: Diplomatic, Official or standard passports

All examining staff in HM Passport Office must make sure Main Index (MI) accurately records when customers hold more than 1 passport. You must add a passport note to every valid passport record the customer holds, see Multiple British passports and nationality status guidance for how to do this.

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Diplomatic and Official passports: referring an application

This section tells HM Passport Office staff which applications must be referred to the Diplomatic and Official Passport team (DOPt) and how to refer an application to DOPt if it is processed on Digital Application Processing or the Application Management System (AMS).

Applications for Diplomatic or Official passports must be dealt with by the Diplomatic and Official Passport team (DOPt) in the Durham Application Processing Centre (APC).

You must transfer the application to the DOPt, if it is an application for:

- Diplomatic or Official passport
- a first British passport and the system tells us the customer has also applied for a Diplomatic or Official passport

Referring an AMS application

If you are in Durham APC, you must refer the application to the DOPt. To do that on AMS, you must:

1. Case note the application on the system to show you are referring the application to DOPt.
2. Use a handheld barcode scanner to electronically transfer the application into a clean exception wallet. This is an empty plastic wallet with a barcode label attached to the outside. The wallet must not contain any other application numbers.
3. Physically put the application in the wallet and arrange for the application to be taken to the DOPt.

If you are in a different APC, you must transfer the passport application to the DOPt.

To do that, you must:

1. Case note the application to show you are sending it the DOPt.
2. Email the DOPt to tell them the application and documents are on their way and give the customer's name and application number.
3. Send the application form (or TEB (Telephone Enquiry Bureau) enquiry sheet if there is no form) and documents to the DOPt using internal secure post.

Referring a DAP application

If the customer sent the application through the Digital Customer Service and the application is on the Digital Application Processing (DAP) system, the examiner must:

1. Transfer the application to AMS.
2. Follow the instructions to refer the application to the DOPt.

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Standard passport applications: diplomatic or official staff

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners how to deal with a passport application from a member of the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad (or a dependent), if the customer asks for a diplomatic or official observation in a standard British passport or wants to renew their standard British passport (without a diplomatic or official observation).

You, the examiner, may receive a passport application from diplomatic or official staff or their family members ([dependents](#)) asking to renew their standard passport or for a diplomatic or official observation to be included in their new standard passport.

You must process these applications in any Application Processing Centre (APC) as if it was sent from the UK, provided you have the [appropriate authorisation from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office](#) (FCDO).

Customers who hold a Diplomatic or Official passport must also hold a standard passport for personal use. The customer's standard passport may or may not include a diplomatic or official observation. Because the customer must always hold a standard passport, you must not count Diplomatic or Official passports as additional passports if the customer applies to renew their standard passport or needs an additional standard passport.

You must check how many standard passports the customer holds, if they ask for [an additional standard passport with or without an observation](#). Ask the customer for evidence to support their request, as shown in the additional passport guidance.

Diplomatic and Official passports appear on Main Index (MI). You must not cancel these when you issue a standard passport (with or without an observation). However, when you issue a new standard passport, you must put a [passport note on each valid passport](#).

Renewing standard passports from Diplomatic or Official passport holders

If the customer is posted overseas on official or diplomatic service, they may apply to renew their standard passport at any APC.

You must deal with the application as a UK case, if the customer has:

1. Sent a signed letter from the FCDO or post abroad confirming they are Diplomatic or Official staff members.
2. Provided:
 - a UK residential address
 - a British Forces Post Office (BFPO) address

Customers who live abroad and were recruited abroad (known as locally engaged staff) are usually not entitled to diplomatic or official status and are not eligible to renew their standard passports in this way.

Evidence needed for diplomatic or official observations

We will not issue, renew or replace a passport with a diplomatic or official observation without the correct FCDO authorisation. The customer must send us a signed letter with their application authorising the observation. The letter must be from the:

- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Human Resources
- FCDO Services Human Resources
- Estates and Security Directorate in the FCDO
- Head of Mission (UK embassy or consulate abroad) for non-FCDO staff, such as Partners Across Government and British Council staff

The customer's supporting letter must be on official FCDO headed paper and must confirm the:

- customer's name
- reason why a diplomatic or official observation is needed in the customer's standard passport
- wording of the observation

You must:

- ask the customer for an authorisation letter, if the:
 - customer has not provided one
 - original letter is not signed
 - original letter is not on official FCDO headed paper
- accept signed PDFs (portable document formats) or emailed copies of confirmation letters
- check with the FCDO if you have any concerns about the PDF or emails
- scan the authorisation letter on the application as a permanent record
- case note the application on the system to record you have the correct information and authorisation
- issue the passport without the observation, if the customer does not provide a letter and we are unable to contact them on the first try
- case note the application and scan any correspondence, if the customer tells us they no longer need the observation
- tell the customer to contact the FCDO, if the customer asks for the observation after their application is passed for issue

When you have the correct authorisation, you must add the diplomatic or official observation to the application on the system. The authorisation letter will tell you which observation to use.

You must:

- not use the diplomatic observations pre-coded into either passport issuing systems as these refer to Her Britannic Majesty and are incorrect
- continue to use UK government official observations coded into the system as they are correct and do not make reference to Her Majesty

You, the examiner must:

1. Add a case note to the application requesting a diplomatic observation, to say:

'Customer requires diplomatic observation'
2. Refer the application to an operational team leader (OTL) working on AMS by:
 - transferring a DAP application to AMS
 - referring an application on AMS to an OTL

You, the OTL working on AMS must use the free text observation OBTZ if a diplomatic observation is needed in a standard passport. You must copy the required diplomatic observation from the Observations in passports guidance and paste it into the observation field on AMS.

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Additional passports for diplomatic and official purposes

This section tells HM Passport Office examiners and the Diplomatic and Official Passport team (DOPt) how to process requests for additional passports from member of the British Diplomatic Service and British Diplomatic Missions abroad (or a dependent).

Customers who hold 1 standard passport and 1 Diplomatic or Official passport are not classed as being an additional passport holder. This is because they must always hold a standard passport for personal use. You must only apply the additional passport guidance if the customer wants to apply for an additional standard (with or without a diplomatic or official observation) or additional Diplomatic or Official passport.

If a government employee applies for an additional Diplomatic, Official or standard passport with an observation, they will need to send in authorisation from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO). The evidence must confirm they have permission to hold an additional Diplomatic, Official or standard passport with a diplomatic or official observation. The letter must come from the:

- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Human Resources
- FCDO Services Human Resources
- Estates and Security Directorate
- Head of Mission for non-FCDO official staff, such as Partners Across Government and British Council staff

Additional standard passports with or without observations

In exceptional circumstances, a UK government employee may not be able to use their combined standard, Diplomatic or Official passports to meet all their travel needs.

You must issue an additional standard passport (with or without a diplomatic or official observation) using the additional passports guidance. If the customer applies for a standard passport with a diplomatic or official observation the request must be specifically supported by a letter from the FCDO.

You must refer requests to issue a customer with 3 or more standard passports (with or without diplomatic or official observations), to a Higher Executive Officer (HEO) for approval.

HM Passport Office has agreed HM government employees can, in certain circumstances have additional passports while there is a current and ongoing need to travel (for example, between China and Taiwan, while they continue their territorial

dispute). The FCDO's letter must explain why more passports are needed, above the usual limits.

You must contact Guidance & Quality, through the regional Quality and Examination Support team (QuEST), if there is any doubt about the exceptional nature of the request. Guidance & Quality will contact the FCDO for advice.

You must not include full Diplomatic or Official passports issued by HM Passport Office, against the total number of standard passports a government employee holds.

Additional Diplomatic or Official passports

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCDO) must specifically authorise any additional Diplomatic or Official passport. The customer must provide a letter authorising an additional Diplomatic or Official passport from the FCDO if they need one.

Some departments have limited the number of passports their staff can hold. You must refuse requests for additional passports (above the maximum allowed) until the customer returns a previous Diplomatic or Official passport to HM Passport Office for cancellation or declares a [passport lost or stolen](#).

Customers from these departments can hold a maximum of:

- 10 valid Diplomatic passports with King's Messenger Service observations
- 2 Diplomatic or 2 Official passports (if they are FCDO floating staff)
- 3 Diplomatic or Official passports (if they are FCDO Services staff)
- 2 Diplomatic or 2 Official passports (if they are overseas security contractors)

Diplomatic or Official passports: frequent travellers

Customers will have to apply for an additional passport using our additional passports guidance if they are posted abroad and need to keep their old passport while working.

The customer must send us their old Diplomatic or Official passport if they apply to renew it. The customer must apply for an additional passport, if they:

- are working abroad and cannot send in their old Diplomatic or Official passport for renewal
- need a visa added to their new passport while they continue to work

The customer must send us a letter from FCDO Human Resources (HR) department telling us:

- a member of staff needs an additional Diplomatic or Official passport
- they will return the old Diplomatic or Official passport to us when they receive their new passport

- they will return the old Diplomatic or Official passport to us when any visas have been transferred to their new passport

The FCDO or other government department must return the old passport to the Lost Stolen and Recovered team (LSR team) in Peterborough for cancellation when the customer receives their new passport.

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DOPt: processing first time standard applications

This section tells the HM Passport Office's Diplomatic and Official passport team (DOPt) how to process a first time standard application sent with an application for a Diplomatic or Official passport.

Examiners will refer a customer's first British passport application to the Diplomatic and Official Passport team (DOPt), if the customer applies for a first British citizen passport and a Diplomatic or Official passport at the same time.

HM Passport Office will not issue a Diplomatic or Official passport, unless we have issued the customer with a fully valid standard British citizen passport, with at least 6 months validity.

You, the DOPt examiner, must examine all first time standard passport applications, in line with current HM Passport Office guidance.

If the application was sent from abroad, you must also consider if you need more information and documents.

If the customer is also applying for a Diplomatic or Official passport, the DOPt can reduce the amount of identity evidence needed and remove the need for an identity interview.

The letter from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) will provide significant evidence of identity, for:

- change of name purposes (for example, evidence of name in use)
- address evidence
- confirming a customer's identity (for example, [an interview may not be needed](#))

DOPt: evidence of name and address

HM Passport Office checks the customer's name and address evidence for overseas applications. A letter from the FCDO will usually be enough to confirm both the customer's name and address. If the evidence is difficult to get, you, the Diplomatic and Official Passport team (DOPt) officer must speak to your line manager to make sure there is enough evidence to issue a passport.

The address evidence for overseas applications may be a residential address or a British Forces Post Office (BFPO) address. Members of the British diplomatic service and Missions abroad generally use BFPO addresses for correspondence, tax and banking purposes. This will show in the documentation the customer provides. When

examining the name and address evidence, you must consider where the passport is being delivered. If you need it, you must ask the customer for more evidence.

DOPt: interviews

The FCDO conducts strict security checks on UK government staff and their families, before their posting is confirmed.

The system automatically selects first time applications for interview. You, the DOPt examiner, can override the requirement, as long as:

- the customer is also applying for a Diplomatic or Official passport
- their supporting documentation is in order
- you can clear any warnings and matches
- there are no risk indicators
- you are satisfied the supporting evidence is genuine

If you have identity concerns, you must discuss the case with the Public Protection Standards (PPS).

If PPS agrees there are identity concerns, you must refer the application to Guidance & Quality, Operating Standards, who with FCDO Human Resources will decide how to proceed.

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Diplomatic or Official passports: processing applications

This section tells HM Passport Office staff working in the Diplomatic and Official passport team (DOPt) how to process applications for Diplomatic, Official or King's Messenger service passports.

Passport applications for Diplomatic or Official passports:

- are completed by the Diplomatic and Official passport team (DOPt) based in the Durham Application Processing Centre (APC)
- are printed centrally in the UK and cannot be printed in an APC
- are not eligible for a premium or fast-track service (they cannot be upgraded)
- cannot be issued as a Frequent Traveller passport book

Customers who need a Diplomatic or Official passport urgently must contact the FCDO Policy team and send their application to HM Passport Office DOPt to process. The FCDO will contact the DOPt and ask them to prioritise the application. If the DOPt cannot provide a Diplomatic or Official passport in the required time period they must tell the FCDO and issue the customer a standard passport containing a diplomatic or official observation using local print facilities in the APC.

Anyone needing a Diplomatic or Official passport must already hold a British citizen passport unless the FCDO and Passport Policy team have given specific permission for a British national who is not a British citizen to hold a Diplomatic or Official passport. HM Passport Office will only issue a Diplomatic or Official passport, if the customer:

- already holds a fully valid standard British citizen passport or a fully valid British passport (where specific permission for a non- British citizen holder has been granted)
- has at least 6 months validity left on their standard British passport
- has the same name in all the passports they hold

This means anyone holding a Diplomatic or Official passport will have a minimum of 2 or more valid passports at any time.

We will only consider the customer's application for a Diplomatic or Official passport if their standard passport is acceptable. The customer must:

- apply for their first British citizen passport (if they do not already hold one)
- replace their standard passport (if it has been lost or stolen)
- renew their standard passport (if it will expire in 6 months or less)
- renew all of their passports (if they have changed their name) as we will not issue a Diplomatic or Official passport in a different name to the customer's other passports

When completing a Diplomatic or Official passport application, you, the DOPT examiner, must make sure you do not cancel the customer's standard passport. You must remove the tick from the 'Cancel Passport' tick box, on the Photo and Signature tab on the Application Management System (AMS) and save your change.

If you do not save the change AMS will cancel the customer's other passport.

You must process any application for a Diplomatic or Official passport, as a UK postal application. You must:

1. Withdraw the:
 - online application referred from another office and ask the customer to complete and send in a paper application
 - paper application referred from another office and stick a UK barcode to the application
2. Send the paper application to Sopra Steria Ltd, so they can:
 - Stick a UK barcode on the application
 - scan the application on the system
3. Case note the original application with the new barcode number.
4. Case note the new application to show the:
 - old barcode number
 - fee taken on the original application
5. Refund the customer any excess fees.

Checking the standard passport

You must check Main Index (MI) to confirm the customer already holds a British citizen passport. You must check the record to confirm the:

1. Customer's personal details on the Diplomatic or Official passport application match with the details of any valid passport they hold.
2. The customer can be identified from our passport records.
3. The customer's standard passport was a fully valid passport (not a restricted validity) and will remain valid for at least 6 months.

You must investigate and resolve any differences you find between the details on a customer's standard passport and their Diplomatic or Official passport application, in line with the correct guidance.

You must contact the customer and ask them to renew their standard passport if it's not acceptable for our purposes (for example, it has less than 6 months validity or the customer's personal details are different).

HM Passport Office must approve and issue the standard passport, before we can complete the Diplomatic or Official passport application. The customer can send a paper application directly to the DOPT or apply online to renew their standard passport. Standard passports can be processed by a standard examiner.

You, the DOPt examiner, must check the system to identify the customer's standard passport application, if you have asked the customer to renew their standard passport.

You must put an alert on the standard passport application so the examiner dealing with the standard passport application tells you when the application has been processed.

Supporting documents for Diplomatic or Official passports

Customers must send in evidence to confirm they are eligible to hold a Diplomatic or Official passport. The customer must send us:

1. A document from the FCDO or relevant UK government department authorising us to issue a Diplomatic or Official passport.
2. A photocopy of the details and signature page of their standard passport.
3. Their old Diplomatic or Official passport (if they are renewing it) or a photocopy of the details and signature page of their Diplomatic or Official passport and a letter from the FCDO if it cannot be returned to us (for example, if the customer is working abroad and is applying to renew their passport as a frequent traveller).

The authorisation document will change, depending on which government department needs the Diplomatic or Official passport. You must check the authorisation document to make sure the correct person or department has authorised the passport. Authorisation will come from:

- Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) Human Resources
- FCDO Services Human Resources
- Estates and Security Directorate in the FCDO
- Ministry of Defence
- Head of Mission (UK embassy or consulate abroad) for non-FCDO staff, such as Partners Across Government and British Council staff

A list of the departments and the evidence they will send is found [in Diplomatic and Official passports – evidence and validity table](#).

You may receive an application that does not have the correct authorisation evidence because the customer is not accredited. The FCDO HR department will provide a letter if this is the case, confirming the customer needs a Diplomatic or Official passport but they do not have the correct paperwork as they are not accredited. You must accept this letter as authorisation, as it will confirm what type of passport and validity is needed.

You must contact the customer to ask for the correct authorisation document if the customer does not send it in or the authorisation evidence is incomplete (for example, there is no signature on the letter or the evidence does not say which type of passport is needed). If you have a valid reason to doubt the authenticity of the

application, you must contact FCDO Human Resources so they can confirm the application.

Once the customer's entitlement and eligibility is confirmed, you must case note the application and scan all correspondence as a permanent record.

Posting relocation forms and letters

You can accept relocation forms and letters as evidence if they are accompanied by a letter of appointment which confirms the customer's posting. A customer who is moving to a location overseas will complete the posting relocation form or use the FCDO's Manage Your Move (MYM) service to generate a relocation letter. These forms and letters will:

- be in a standard format on FCDO headed paper
- give details of any dependants
- be completed by the customer and may not carry a signature

Posting relocation forms and letters are not acceptable on their own if the customer is applying for [an additional Diplomatic or Official passport](#). A letter confirming the need for an additional passport from the FCDO HR department will also be needed.

Documents for dependents

If you receive a Diplomatic or Official passport application from a dependent living in the UK, it must include a posting relocation form or a MYM relocation letter naming them as a dependant.

The form or MYM letter will tell us if the dependents will be living at the post abroad. Unless they are a [dependent who is visiting parents based in Russia](#), the spouse or dependant will not qualify for a Diplomatic or Official passport if they won't be living at the posting abroad.

Dependents in full time education in the UK (for example, at a boarding school) are not entitled to Diplomatic or Official passports, unless exceptional circumstances apply.

The head of mission may approve applications for Diplomatic or Official passports for dependents.

If a child is born in a foreign country and the parent is already at post, the parent will need to send in:

- the correct [nationality and identity documents for the country where they are resident](#)
- a FCDO confirmation letter (or Annex A) signed by the head of mission, instead of
- a posting relocation form or MYM relocation letter

Dependents of staff based in Russia

Children of Diplomatic or Official passport holders working in Russia may be exceptionally granted a Diplomatic or Official passport, even if they are not living in Russia. This is because they cannot visit their parents in Russia without this passport.

Customers must send in an FCDO Annex A as authorisation for the passport. The Annex A must tell us how much validity to place on the passport.

You, the DOPt, will calculate the validity based on the parent's last day in post, plus 6 months (for example, if the parent is due to leave Russia on 17 August 2020, the dependent's passport will expire on 17 February 2021).

You must issue a 5 year passport, if the intended passport holder is a child under 16 years old and the parent's posting is longer than 5 years.

Government business travel to China

British government staff travelling to China on government business must hold Diplomatic passports.

Authorisation for these passports will come from the FCDO Human Resources (FCDO HR) team who will email their authorisation to the DOPt and provide a copy to the customer. The FCDO's Asia Pacific Directorate will also give the customer a letter confirming they can apply for a Diplomatic passport.

The customer must send their passport application to the DOPt and include the 2 letters as authorisation for the passport. These customers will not have relocation letters or forms or an FCDO Annex A.

You must check the letter to confirm the validity needed on the passport. FCDO staff must be issued with passports valid for 10 years and staff employed in any other department (known by the FCDO as Partners Across Government) must be issued with passports valid for 3 years.

How to select the Diplomatic or Official passport type

The option to select a Diplomatic or Official passport book type is only available on AMS, using the application channel type of UK postal.

Sopra Steria Ltd will stick a UK barcode to the paper application and cashier the case as a UK domestic application, regardless of whether the application was posted in the UK or overseas.

To issue the correct passport type, you must:

1. Access the fees tab on AMS.
2. Select the correct passport type from the drop down menu.

Validity periods for Diplomatic or Official passports

HM Passport Office issues Diplomatic or Official passports with different validity periods, depending on the government department the officer works for and the operational needs of the FCDO.

Diplomatic or Official passports valid for less than 10 years (5 years for children under the age of 16 years) are not considered restricted and do not need a validity observation.

You must use the [evidence and validity table](#) to make sure you put the correct validity period on the passport. You must not issue a child (under 16 years) with a passport that is valid for more than 5 years.

If you receive a request for a Diplomatic or Official passport with a validity period different to the validity table, you must contact Guidance & Quality using your local Quality, Examination and Support team (QuEST).

Adjusting the passport validity on the system

To set the validity you need on the Application Management System (AMS), you must:

1. Access the 'Prepare Passport' tab.
2. Access the 'Passport Summary' tab.
3. Enter the validity in the 'Val Period Years' and 'Val Period Months' fields.

Lost and stolen Diplomatic or Official passports

Customers must report their Diplomatic or Official passport lost or stolen as soon as possible on GOV.UK.

You, the DOPt, must process an application to replace a lost or stolen Diplomatic or Official passports using the Lost, stolen and recovered team guidance. You must refer the application to the Counter Fraud team (CFT) if 3 or more of the customer's Diplomatic or Official passports have been reported lost or stolen within 10 years.

You must also email the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) and give them details of the passport application to replace a lost or stolen Diplomatic or Official passport. You must tell them:

- the customer's full name
- the customer's date of birth
- the customer's government department or HM Armed forces unit
- the date the passport was lost or stolen
- how the passport was lost or stolen

How to cancel Diplomatic or Official passports

The customer must return their Diplomatic or Official passport to HM Passport Office, if they:

- need to renew or replace it
- no longer need a Diplomatic or Official passport

You, the DOPt, must cancel any Diplomatic or Official passport sent to us for renewal or replacement (if it is damaged). The system will automatically cancel any passport sent in for renewal or replacement on Main Index (MI) when the application is complete and you have issued a new passport. You must make sure:

- the application form includes the customer's old passport number
- you put a case note on the current application that shows 'Diplomatic/Official passports surrendered by the FCDO [date]'

You must physically cancel and return the old passport to the customer when you have processed their new application.

If the customer no longer needs the Diplomatic or Official passport

FCDO guidance tells the customer to send their old Diplomatic or Official passports to the Lost, Stolen and Recovered (LSR) team in Peterborough when they no longer need it. The LSR team will cancel the passport and create a recovered record on MI.

You must not cancel the passport on MI, if the customer sends the passport to the DOPt instead of the LSR team. You must:

1. Add a passport note to the MI passport record, saying, 'Diplomatic/Official passport surrendered on [date]'.
2. Physically cancel the old passport.
3. Send the LSR team the customer's old passport and any related letters about the cancellation of the passport.

Related content

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King's Messenger Service passports

This section tells HM Passport Office staff working in the Diplomatic and Official passport team how to process passport applications for the King's Messenger Service passports.

The Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) previously issued Messenger Service passports. They are now issued by the Diplomatic and Official passport team (DOPt) in HM Passport Office.

The FCDO Human Resources department or the King's Messenger Service (KMS) department will provide the customer a letter to confirm they can hold a KMS passport.

If you receive a passport application for a KMS passport you, the DOPt examiner, must:

- scan the letter onto the application as a permanent record
- [process the application as a Diplomatic passport](#)
- [consider how many KMS passports the customer already holds](#)
- make sure the passport has [the correct validity](#)
- add an [KMS observation](#) to the passport

King's Messenger Service observation

Diplomatic passports which are needed for the KMS must have an observation added to the passport. The customer's letter confirming they can hold a KMS passport will explain which observation you must add to the Diplomatic passport.

You must use the system observation code OBTX and type in the free text field to show one of the following observations:

- THE HOLDER IS A MEMBER OF THE KING'S MESSENGER SERVICE
- THE HOLDER IS A KING'S MESSENGER

Related content

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Diplomatic and Official passports: evidence and validity

This section tells HM Passport Office staff working in the Diplomatic and Official Passport team what evidence is needed from each UK government organisation for a Diplomatic or Official passport and how long the passport must be valid for.

The following tables show the organisations who can apply for a Diplomatic or Official passport and the maximum validity allowed for an adult Diplomatic or Official passport. For children under the age of 16 years, the passport must have no more than a maximum validity of 5 years.

Organisation	Abbreviation	Evidence needed	Validity (adult)
All Partners Across Government travelling to China on duty	PAG	Letters from Asia Pacific Directorate and FCDO HR	Issue passport valid 3 years
British Council	BC	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Crown Prosecution Service	CPS	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy	BEIS	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for Health	DH	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for International Development	DFID	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for Works and Pensions	DWP	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science only)	DEFRA (CEFAS)	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department for Transport	DFT	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Ecosystems Services for Poverty Alleviation	ESPA	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Food Standards Agency	FSA	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Diplomatic Service)	FCDO (DS)	Posting letter from FCDO HR	Issue 10 year Diplomatic/Official passport

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (King's Messenger Service)	FCDO (KMS)	Letter from FCDO HR or KMS	Issue 10 year Diplomatic passport with KMS obs.
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Home Civil Service)	FCDO (HCS)	Posting letter from FCDO HR	Issue passport validity showing end of tour date plus 6 months
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Rapid Deployment Team)	FCDO RDT	Letter from RDT head of department	Issue 10 year Diplomatic/Official passport
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Floaters)	FCDO Floaters	Posting letter from FCDO HR	Issue 10 year Diplomatic/Official passport
Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (Roamers)	FCDO	Posting notification letter from FCDO HR or authority from HRD policy officer	Issue 10 year Diplomatic passport
FCDO Services	FCOS	FCDO Services Posting letter	Issue 10 year Diplomatic/Official passport
Health and Safety Laboratories	HSL	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
His Majesty's Revenue and Customs	HMRC	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Home Office (including) HM Passport Office Office of Security & Counter Terrorism UK Border Force Risk & Liaison Overseas Network UKVI	HO	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Intellectual Property Office	IPO	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Invest Northern Ireland	Invest NI	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Meteorological Office	Met Office	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Metropolitan Police Service	MPS	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Ministry of Defence	MOD	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years

Ministry of Defence /Hereford	MOD	Letter from Hereford 501 No form required	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Ministry of Defence (Joint Arms Control Implementation Group)	MOD	Letter from MOD No pro-forma required	Issue passport valid for 6 years
National Crime Agency	NCA	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Office of the First Minister & Deputy First Minister (including Northern Ireland Bureau, Washington)		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Ordinance Survey	OS	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Overseas security contactors: Morsons G4S (Kabul, Nairobi) Garda World (Baghdad, Mogadishu, Tripoli) Control Risks (Erbil) Hart Security Ltd. Minimal Risk Consulting Pilgrims Group		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Public Health England	PHE	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Research Councils UK (including) Economic and Social Research Engineering and Physical Science Research Medical Research Councils		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Scottish Enterprise (including) Scottish Development International		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Scottish Government		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Security and Intelligence Agencies		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Department of International Trade	DIT	Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Visit Britain		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years
Welsh Government (including):		Signed copy of FCDO Annex A	Issue passport valid for 6 years

International Business Wales			
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