



Home Office

# Defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS)

Version 5.0

This guidance tells you how to consider applications for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS).

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# About this guidance

This guidance tells caseworkers how to consider applications for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS).

It contains guidance on:

- how the sponsor applies for DCoS
- the mandatory and optional checks you need to make
- how to grant DCoS

You must use this guidance together with the existing [sponsor guidance](#). Any differences in the workflow processes and how you consider applications for DCoS are highlighted in this guidance.

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think the guidance has factual errors, email Economic Migration Policy.

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, email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

## Publication

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

- version **5.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **19 April 2024**

## Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been changed to reflect Immigration Rules changes to salary minima and Standard Occupation Classification codes in force from April 2024.

### Related content

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# Defined certificates of sponsorship

This page tells you about defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS).

A sponsor must request DCoS for each named position before they assign them to workers applying for entry clearance in the Skilled Worker route. A DCoS must specify the job and salary details for the worker.

## **Related content**

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# Applying for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS)

Only A-rated sponsors can apply for DCoS.

There is no fee to apply for a DCoS.

The application must include:

- the number of DCoS required
- the job title and standard occupation classification code (SOC)
  - for SOCs 6135 and 6136, the location of the role
- the salary
- how many hours they will work each week – an average figure is acceptable if this varies
- an explanation of how it meets the relevant salary option, including:
  - whether the post meets the [Immigration Salary List](#) criteria
  - whether the worker has a PhD and if so, it should state:
    - i) why the qualification is relevant to the job
    - ii) whether the PhD is in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) subject) and if so, how
- the work start and end date

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# Automatic validation

This page tells you how applications for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS) are validated prior to Executive Officer (EO) consideration.

All validating is performed automatically by the sponsor management system (SMS) and Metastorm.

## SMS

To apply for DCoS, the sponsor must hold an A-rated licence. The application must be submitted by the sponsor's level 1 user. SMS undertakes an automatic validation which:

- prevents the sponsor from submitting the application if they do not hold the appropriate rating in the Skilled Worker route
- checks the information provided by the sponsor, for example:
  - the salary and occupation code
  - whether the information provided is consistent (if, for example, the sponsor selects 'shortage occupation' but then selects a non-shortage occupation code, SMS prevents the application from being submitted)

## Metastorm

Metastorm automatically validates the application to prevent DCoS being granted to sponsors who have been downgraded to a B or have had their licence suspended.

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# Executive Officer duties

The Executive Officer (EO) performs an initial assessment on DCoS applications and decides:

- which can be accepted
- which require further consideration

## Cases to be marked for further scrutiny

The EO must make a pre-assessment to determine the risk of non-compliance with the guidance and Immigration Rules, for example, the job description details are incomplete or suggest non-compliance or a non-genuine vacancy or there is a marker on the licence that requires further action.

Only cases that seem to meet the skill and salary criteria in the initial sift and do not have a marker that requires further action do not need further information or review. These can be put forward for approval through the automated DCoS panel. If you decide further information is required, you must mark the request for [AO consideration](#) on the Check Credibility Review (CCR) Spreadsheet located on SharePoint.

All other cases should be marked for further scrutiny by a caseworker.

To begin the process, use the 'Ad Hoc' caseworking function in Metastorm to:

- change the application status to 'Under Review'
- update the comments field with details of the check

## Running the Panel

This is conducted each working day. Cases that are not marked for further scrutiny should be considered the next working day after the request has been submitted to us.

An application is not considered as valid until all appropriate checks are complete. If the DCoS Team has written to the sponsor or further checks are required, the application may not receive an outcome on the relevant working day.

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# Administration Officer duties

It is the job of an Administration Officer (AO) to request further information and perform checks on cases marked for processing by the EO.

## Genuine employment checks

This section tells you how to undertake genuine employment checks for a defined certificate of sponsorship (DCoS) application.

These are designed to make sure the sponsor is able to offer the job described in the application, that the job exists and hasn't been created for the worker, and the numbers requested are justified.

The checks could include, but are not limited to:

- salary confirmation (including hours per week)
- clarification of occupation code and skill level requesting:
  - references to confirm the worker's experience if appropriate
  - job descriptions (to compare to Appendix Skilled Occupations)
- hierarchy chart showing current employees and any vacancies that need to be filled
- service contracts if appropriate to ensure the sponsor is responsible for providing a non-routine service or project
- previous CoS usage and DCoS requests
- where workers are named, check for any links to the sponsor, such as previous employment or family relationships
- whether any outside agency was involved in the recruitment
- for regulated industries such as health or education, any inspection reports issued by the regulator to check their views on staff to client ratios and for appropriate registration

Managers will allocate cases when a genuine employment check is required and the type of application submitted will determine which letter is issued to the sponsor.

## Occupation code

You must check that the occupation code chosen by the sponsor is listed in the relevant table of Appendix Skilled Occupations in the [Immigration Rules](#) (and is therefore eligible for the Skilled Worker route). It must also be consistent with the type of business carried out by the sponsor.

You must then compare the information given about the position to the:

- example job tasks
- relevant salary rates depending on any salary points that might be claimed



as listed under the corresponding occupation code in the relevant table of [Appendix Skilled Occupations of the Immigration Rules](#).

For occupation codes 6135 and 6136, you must also check the location of the role. If the role is based in England, even if the sponsor isn't, it must involve carrying out regulated activities and the sponsor must have active CQC registration.

If the sponsor has not provided sufficient information and evidence, for example, references to confirm the migrant's experience if required, a job description or salary information, you must discuss the case with your line manager and include this in your [request for further information](#).

Once you have sufficient information, you should assess whether the most appropriate occupation code has been used; rejecting the application where you think it hasn't. If you need more information to help you decide whether particular occupation codes are the most appropriate, you can look them up on [Cascot Web](#).

## Check salary

You must check the salary is in line with those listed in [Appendix Skilled Occupations in the Immigration Rules](#) depending on any salary points that might be claimed. If you think a worker wouldn't score salary points, you must discuss rejecting the case with your line manager.

**Note:** if the sponsor hasn't identified and provided details of a worker chosen for the position, you must assume they will not qualify as a new entrant or having a relevant PhD qualification unless the application clearly justifies it.

**Note:** if the salary on a DCoS application doesn't meet the requirements, a full assessment will be required.

## Points for salary

The worker must be paid at least the higher of one of the following:

- £38,700 per year, £15.88 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code
- £34,830 per year, £15.88 per hour and 90% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker has a PhD in a subject relevant to the job
- £30,960 per year, £15.88 per hour and 80% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker has a PhD in a Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM) subject relevant to the job
- £30,960 per year, £15.88 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker's job is listed in the [Immigration Salary List](#)
- £30,960 per year, £15.88 per hour and 70% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is a new entrant at the start of their career
- £29,000 per year, £11.90 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)

- £26,100 per year, £11.90 per hour and 90% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) and they have a PhD in a subject relevant to the job or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)
- £23,200 per year, £11.90 per hour and 80% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) and they have a PhD in a STEM subject relevant to the job or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)
- £23,200 per year, £11.90 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) and it is listed in the [Immigration Salary List](#) or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)
- £23,200 per year and 70% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) and they are a new entrant at the start of their career or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)
- £23,200 per year and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a job in a health or education listed in Table 3 of [Appendix Skilled Occupations](#)

## Relevant PhDs

If the worker has a PhD or other academic qualification, the sponsor must provide a credible explanation as to how it is relevant to the job, to meet the requirements for a relevant lower salary level. If the qualification is from an institution overseas, UK NARIC must confirm it is of equivalent standard to a UK PhD. If the worker doesn't have a PhD or you don't think it is relevant to the job, you must assess whether the worker will be paid at least the higher of either:

- £38,700 per year, £15.88 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code
- £29,000 per year and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)

Similarly, if the worker has a PhD or other academic qualification in a STEM subject, the sponsor must provide a credible explanation as to how it is in a STEM subject and also how it is relevant to the job, to meet the requirements for a relevant lower salary level. If the qualification is from an institution overseas, Ecctis must confirm it is of equivalent standard to a UK PhD. If the worker doesn't have a PhD or you don't think it is relevant to the job, you must assess whether the worker will be paid at least the higher of either:

- £38,700 per year, £15.88 per hour and the going rate for the occupation code
- £29,000 per year and the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)

If you don't think the PhD is in a STEM subject but is relevant to the job, you should assess whether the worker will be paid at least the higher of either:

- £34,830, £15.88 per hour and 90% of the going rate for the occupation code

- £26,100 per year and 90% of the going rate for the occupation code if the worker is doing a [Health and Care ASHE salary job](#) or qualifies under the [transitional provision](#)

## Immigration Salary List requirements

Where the applicant has applied and indicated that the role on the [Immigration Salary List](#), you must:

- check the occupation code provided in the application is correct
- ensure the details of the job match the description set out in the relevant tables in [Appendix Immigration Salary List](#)

If you are unsure, discuss the case with your line manager.

## New entrants

To qualify as a 'new entrant', the worker must meet one of the following requirements:

- the applicant will be under the age of 26 on the date they apply for entry clearance
- the job offer is a postdoctoral position in any of the following occupation codes:
  - 2111 Chemical scientists
  - 2112 Biological scientists
  - 2113 Biochemists and biomedical scientists
  - 2114 Physical scientists
  - 2115 Social and humanities scientists
  - 2119 Natural and social science professionals not elsewhere classified
  - 2162 Other researchers, unspecified discipline
  - 2311 Higher education teaching professionals
- the job offer is in a [UK-regulated profession](#) and the worker is working towards a recognised professional qualification for that profession
- the worker is working towards full registration or chartered status with the relevant professional body for the job they are being sponsored for
- the worker applied for permission to stay and their most recent permission was as a Graduate or a Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) Migrant
- the worker is a recent UK graduate and meets the additional requirements below

To qualify as a new entrant on the basis of recent graduate-level study, the worker must have met all of the following conditions:

- their most recent permission must have been as a Student or Tier 4 (General) Migrant
- that permission must have expired less than 2 years before the date of application

- in that permission (or any previous permission as a Student or a Tier 4 (General) Migrant, the worker was sponsored to study any of the following:
  - a UK bachelor's degree
  - a UK master's degree
  - a UK PhD or other doctoral qualification
  - a Postgraduate Certificate in Education
  - a Professional Graduate Diploma of Education
- the worker either:
  - must have completed the relevant course mentioned above
  - applied no more than 3 months before they were expected to complete the relevant course above
  - was studying a PhD and had completed at least 12 months' study in the UK towards that PhD

Workers do not qualify as a new entrant if granting their application would mean their permission as a Skilled Worker, Tier 2 Migrant and/or Graduate, would exceed 4 years in total. This applies whether or not the 4 years is continuous or cumulative.

If you don't think the worker would qualify as a new entrant, you must assess whether the worker will qualify for points in one of the other tradeable options.

## Transitional provision

This transitional provision applies to applications where the worker for whom the DCoS is being sought meets all of the following requirements:

- they were granted permission as a Skilled Worker under the Immigration Rules in force before 4 April 2024
- they have had continuous permission as a Skilled Worker since then (continuous permission may include periods without permission that were disregarded under paragraph 39E of the Immigration Rules)
- they are being sponsored for a job in an eligible occupation listed in Table 2 or 2a of Appendix Skilled Occupations
- if being sponsored for a job in Table 2a, they were sponsored by the applicant in their most recent grant of permission and the applicant is seeking to continue to sponsor them

This transitional provision applies to applications for permission made before 4 April 2030, after which it will end.

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# Request further information

This section explains how to request further information from a sponsor.

When starting a case, the EO will have already provided an indication of what information is required and outlined potential risks in the Monthly Panel Spreadsheet, located on the Migration and Borders guidance platform.

Prior to a write out, you must perform [genuine employment checks](#) to see whether you need to request further information or evidence from the sponsor.

You must write out for further information using the relevant letter template on the Migration and Borders guidance platform.

If you are unsure about what information and evidence you require from the sponsor, discuss the case with your line manager.

You must then:

- contact the sponsor using the relevant 'request further information' letter from the Migration and Borders guidance platform
- allow 5 working days for a response
- attach the letter template, found on the Migration and Borders guidance platform, to the application using the 'standalone letter' function in Metastorm

If the sponsor does not respond by the deadline date, then using the 'Ad Hoc' caseworking function in Metastorm, you must:

- change the application status to 'rejected'
- update the comments field with details of the rejection
- include notes on Sponsor Summary Search detailing the reasons for rejection

You must then:

- send the sponsor a letter advising them that their application has been rejected from the 'Defined CoS mailbox', using the 'Application rejected – further information not provided' letter
- attach the template to the application using the 'Standalone Letter' function in Metastorm
- consider referral of the sponsor for compliance action

If the sponsor responds and provides all the requested information, you must check the information provided by the sponsor is consistent with the application details.

If the sponsor provides information that is inconsistent with the application details, for example:

- the sponsor has applied for a shortage occupation post, but the job description indicates the job is not one of the roles outlined on the shortage occupation list
- the salary is not in line with relevant going rate for the occupation code applied under
- the skill level of the job is not pitched at appropriate level
- an incorrect occupation code has been used

you must then update the CCR spreadsheet on Sharepoint and reject the application:

- changing the application status to 'Rejected' using the 'Ad Hoc' caseworking function in Metastorm
- updating the comments field with details of the rejection
- including notes on Sponsor Summary Search detailing reasons for rejection
- sending the sponsor the 'Application rejection – General' letter advising them of the reasons their application has been rejected from the Defined CoS mailbox
- attaching the template to the application using the 'standalone letter' function in Metastorm

If the information confirms the application is valid, using the 'Ad Hoc' caseworking function in Metastorm, you must:

- change the application status to 'Grant'
- update the comments field with details of the information received

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# Further investigation

This page tells you when to refer an application for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS) for further investigation.

You must refer applications for further investigation when:

- a marker is identified on the sponsor's licence
- genuine employment checks show the sponsor has provided incorrect or inconsistent information in their application and the application has been rejected
- the application has been granted, but there are concerns about the application - for example, that the sponsor may not be employing the worker in the job specified on the application or be paying the salary stated on the application

Where a marker has been noted on the sponsor's licence, the relevant team should be emailed to establish whether there are any reasons the DCoS application should be placed on hold. Such reasons include, but are not limited to:

- a compliance visit has been arranged
- a compliance visit has recently taken place and further action is under consideration

In these cases, the status of the application on 'Ad hoc' should be changed to 'Under Review' and a note added stating 'Internal Checks required'. Depending on the response, the application should remain on hold or the status changed to 'Pending' if the application can be considered.

Where other concerns with an application are identified, you should email SAIT.

## Related content

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# Outcome

This page tells you how to notify a sponsor of the outcome of an application for defined certificates of sponsorship (DCoS).

## Reject

Using the 'Ad Hoc' caseworking function in Metastorm:

- change the application status to 'Rejected'
- update the comments field with details of the rejection
- include notes on Sponsor Summary Search detailing reasons for rejection
- send the sponsor the 'Application rejection – General' letter advising them of the reasons their application has been rejected from the 'Defined CoS mailbox
- attach the template to the application using the 'standalone letter' function in Metastorm

Update the relevant spreadsheet located on Sharepoint.

## Accept

You do not have to issue written confirmation of the outcome. The sponsor's sponsor management system (SMS) account is updated automatically with the outcome of the application immediately once the application has been granted. Sponsors are notified of the outcome of their application by a system generated email after the decision is made.

Managers should refer to the Metastorm User Guide: Managing the monthly allocation of CoS for details of how to use Metastorm to manage the allocation of DCoS.

Caseworkers should also refer to the Metastorm User Guide DCoS Ad Hoc Process when applying ad hoc changes to DCoS requests.

## Sponsor licence suspended or revoked

When a sponsor's licence has been surrendered or revoked, their DCoS application will be automatically cancelled providing the status of the application is either:

- 'pending'
- 'pending – granted'
- 'pending – refused'
- 'under review' will be automatically cancelled

## Sponsor licence re-rated or suspended



When a sponsor's licence has been re-rated to 'B' or suspended during the allocation period, no changes are applied to their application until the sponsor is re-rated to an 'A', providing the status of the application is either:

- 'pending'
- 'pending – granted'
- 'pending – refused'
- 'under review'

#### **Related content**

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# Reclaimed DCoS

This page tells you the circumstances where a DCoS will be reclaimed and how to do so.

DCoS can only be reclaimed from sponsors when it is discovered that the sponsor's application for the DCoS was not valid, and the DCoS has been granted but not yet assigned.

Whether the sponsor returns the DCoS or it is reclaimed, you must amend the status of the application to update the sponsor's sponsor management system (SMS) account.

If you are reclaiming DCoS due to an invalid application, you must:

- search for the granted application
- change the status of the application to 'Reclaimed'
- advise the sponsor their DCoS has been reclaimed and the reason why
- update the 'Notes' field with all details including the number of DCoS reclaimed
- update the relevant monthly allocation spreadsheet with the date the DCoS was reclaimed - refer to defined CoS folder in [shared drive](#) for monthly allocation spreadsheet

## Related content

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