



Home Office

British national (overseas)

Version 48.0

This document tells His Majesty's Passport Office staff how to process passport applications for customers who hold British national (overseas) citizenship

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About: British national (overseas)

This guidance tells His Majesty's Passport Office examiners how to deal with applications from customers who were British dependent territories citizens connected to Hong Kong who became British nationals (overseas) or stateless on 1 July 1997.

Only examiners with the correct level of training must deal with British national (overseas) (BN(O)) cases.

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, email the Guidance team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance, email the Guidance team.

Publication

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

- version **48.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **20 June 2025**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This guidance has been updated to:

- make minor terminology changes
- remove instructions to transfer applications to AMS (Application Management System)
- explain Digital Application Processing will issue a British national (overseas) passport when renewing, replacing or changing a BN(O) passport (despite the **Application details** tab showing British citizen)
- clarify what action examiners must take if they need to change the application type to first time
- change terminology from 'overseas' to 'international' when referring to customers
- remove references to the Application Management System

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Multiple British passports and nationality statuses

Additional passports

Withdrawing passport applications

British national (overseas) citizenship

This section tells HM Passport Office examination staff about the nationality status British national (overseas).

British nationals (overseas) status was created by [Article 4\(1\) of the Hong Kong \(British Nationality\) Order 1986](#). The order came into effect on 1 July 1987 before Hong Kong was no longer a dependent territory of the UK and returned to Chinese rule on 1 July 1997. British nationals (overseas) are Commonwealth citizens.

The act allowed British dependent territories citizens (BDTC) who got their status from a connection with Hong Kong to register as a British national (overseas) under section 4(2) of the Order and keep:

- a connection with the United Kingdom
- UK consular protection throughout the world, except in the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong or Macao

British national (overseas) (known as BN(O) status) was only available to Hong Kong BDTCs if they registered before 1 July 1997. Only children born in the first six months of 1997 could be registered after this date until 31st December 1997.

BN(O) status was only available by registration and cannot be passed down to future generations. This means no one born on or after 1 July 1997 can be a BN(O).

BDTCs who registered as British nationals (overseas) had their details added to a national register (known as the Hong Kong historic application database). They received a British passport which showed they held BN(O) status and were not issued with a registration certificate.

Children who were registered as BN(O)s with their parents may have had their details added to their parent's first BN(O) passport. They may not have held a BN(O) passport in their own right or had their personal details added to the Hong Kong historic application database. We must assume a child was registered as a BN(O) if they were born on or before 30 June 1997 and were named on either parents BN(O) passport.

BDTCs from Hong Kong who did not register as BN(O)s lost their BDTC status and became foreign nationals. The British government considered former BDTCs who were not a foreign national to be stateless which entitled them to British overseas citizenship.

Rights of British national (overseas) citizens

British national (overseas) citizens can hold a British passport and get consular help and protection from UK diplomatic posts. Unless the BN(O) is a dual British citizen,

they are subject to immigration controls and do not have the automatic right to live or work in the UK.

Not all BN(O)s can only hold dual British nationality. If a BN(O) customer registered as a British citizen under:

- British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990 they automatically lose their entitlement to BN(O) status
- British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1997 or British Nationality Act 1981 they will keep their BN(O) status and can hold both passports at the same time

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People who did not register as a British national (overseas)

This section tells HM Passport Office staff what happened to British dependent territory citizens (BDTC) who did not register as a British national (overseas) (BN(O)) before 1 July 1997.

People from Hong Kong who were British dependent territories citizens (BDTC) and did not register as a British national (overseas) lost their BDTC status when Hong Kong returned to The People's Republic of China on 1 July 1997. These people would become:

- Chinese
- a foreign national (for example, but not limited to, Indian, Malaysian, French)
- stateless
- a British citizen (if they were eligible to register)

A former Hong Kong BDTC who did not register as a BN(O) and who does not have Chinese, or another foreign nationality became stateless on 1 July 1997.

Article 6(1) of the [Hong Kong \(British Nationality\) Order 1986](#) reduces statelessness by providing an alternative. Article 6(2) stated a person born after 1 July 1997, who would otherwise be stateless, will become a BOC if, at the time of their birth either:

- his father or mother is a BN(O)
- his father or mother is a BOC by virtue of article 6(1)

Article 6(3) allows the customer to register as a BOC if their parent was 6(2).

Stateless people from Hong Kong

When dealing with applications where the customer may be stateless, you, the examiner, must make sure the customer has no entitlement to any other nationality before you issue a British overseas citizen passport.

Entitlement to Chinese citizenship

Customers who did not register as BN(O)s ceased to hold British nationality on 1 July 1997 and became Chinese nationals if they were ethnically Chinese.

You must tell the customer to contact the Chinese authorities (through the nearest Chinese consulate) to get a Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport if the customer is ethnically Chinese.

Proving statelessness

You must check the customer's passport application and ask them for extra information if there is evidence, they may be stateless.

You must check passport records, G: Search or Hong Kong historic database for any British passports issued to the customer, their parents and grandparents (if necessary). You must check the passport record for:

- passport notes or case notes referring to BN(O) registration
- any child details included on the parents BN(O) passport

If there is no indication the customer has been registered as a BN(O) and you believe they may be stateless you must ask the customer to send in evidence:

- to show they (or their parent) were a Hong Kong BDTC and held no other nationality on 1 July 1997
- from the Chinese authorities to confirm they are not Chinese citizens
- from authorities in any other country they are connected to by birth or descent confirming they did not have that country's nationality or citizenship on 1 July 1997

These requirements also apply to any children born on or after 1 July 1997 to a parent who was a BDTC of Hong Kong.

You must refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL) to contact the customer if the customer is stateless and may be entitled British overseas citizenship or if the customer has not registered as a BN(O), is not stateless and has no claim to any British nationality.

People who registered as a British citizen

People who were eligible and wished to register as British citizens were able to apply using the:

- British nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990
- British nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1997
- Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 amendments to the British Nationality Act 1981

These acts gave British citizenship otherwise than by descent (OTBD) and by descent (BD). The United Kingdom Visa and Immigration service issue registration certificates to people who register as British citizens, to prove their British nationality.

You must check and record the holder's full nationality status in case notes to make sure a customer claiming descent through a British citizen parent is not given a passport in error.

British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1990

Specially selected people from Hong Kong were invited by the Governor of Hong Kong to register as British citizens under the [British Nationality \(Hong Kong\) Act 1990](#) between 1990 and 1997.

These people registered in their own right under section 1(1) of the act and held the status:

- BC 1(1) BN(HK)A '90 OTBD

As they held OTBD status (other than by descent) they can pass on their British citizenship to any child born to them after they registered.

The act also allowed the spouse and existing children of the selected person to register as a British citizen under section 1(4) of the act. This section gave these people BD (by descent) status, which cannot be passed down to future generations. Their status is shown as:

- BC 1(4) BN(HK)A '90 BD

Customers who registered as a British citizens under this act cannot be a British national (overseas) as well.

British Nationality (Hong Kong) Act 1997

The [British Nationality \(Hong Kong\) Act 1997](#) allowed people who were British only because of their connection to Hong Kong to register as British citizens.

This act allowed people to be registered with the status:

- BC 1(1) BN(HK)'97 OTBD
- BC 1(1) BN(HK)'97 BD

Their BD or OTBD status was dependent on whatever their previous British nationality status was. For example, a person born outside Hong Kong who held British dependent territories citizenship by descent through a parent born in Hong Kong would be registered under this act as a British citizen by descent.

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Dealing with applications for British national (overseas) passports

This section tells HM Passport Office examination staff how to process a passport application for a British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport.

All applications for a BN(O) passport will come from adult customers, no-one born on or after 1 July 1997 could register for BN(O) status. The customer must send in:

- a completed application (the customer must complete the sections needed for the application type used)
- the correct fee
- passport photos
- documents needed for their application type (for example, identity documents for applications sent from abroad, birth certificates and change of name documents, where necessary)
- their current BN(O) passport (or their parents BN(O) passport which they are named in)
- an original or colour copy of at least 1 of the following documents to confirm their immigration status in Hong Kong (if available), their:
 - Hong Kong identity card (either a Hong Kong Identity Card (HKID) or a Permanent Identity Card (HKPIC))
 - valid Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport
- any foreign passport they hold (including a HKSAR), or a colour copy of their non British passport if they need to keep it for travel or identity purposes
- evidence to show they are settled in the UK or has valid immigration leave (permission) to be in the UK, so we can add the correct UK immigration observation to their passport (if they are living in the UK and applying for their first passport)

You must follow the How to issue a BN(O) passport guidance:

- if the customer cannot provide evidence of their immigration status in Hong Kong; or,
- to check the evidence submitted for their immigration status in Hong Kong is acceptable for passport purposes

Customer guidance for all countries states the customer must:

“send us a colour photocopy of your non-British passport (every page including blank pages). We retain the right to ask for the original passport. We will let you know by email or post if we need you to send it to us”

You must only ask for the original document if other guidance tells you to, you must bear in mind the customer may be unable to comply if they need it for identification. We accept colour copies of the customer’s HKID, HKPIC or valid HKSAR passport

because Hong Kong residents over the age of 15 must always carry valid legal identification.

BN(O) applications: paper referee (1 page form)

If you need a new referee, you can accept a paper referee (1 page form) a customer sends by email, if the application is to renew or replace their BN(O) passport.

How to issue a BN(O) passport

DAP (Digital Application Processing) will:

- create a British national (overseas) task if certain criteria are met when the customer applies to renew their passport
- issue a BN(O) passport for renewal, replacement and change application types (despite showing the customer's nationality status as a British citizen in the **Applicant details** tab)
- allow you to select BN(O) status on a first time application

DAP does not yet have the functionality to change an application type to first time. If you are processing an Old Blue BN(O) passport application and you need to change the application type to first time, you must select **I cannot do this application** and **Cannot change application type to First time**.

DAP will transfer the application to the Exceptions Handling Team (EHT) and create a **Cannot change application type to first time** task. The EHT will follow their guidance to process the old blue BN(O) passport.

BN(O) renewal applications

DAP system will create a British national (overseas) (BN(O)) task when both of the following apply:

- the customer's application is to renew their passport
- the old passport shows the nationality status as BN(O)

When DAP creates the BN(O) task, you, the examiner must:

1. Select the **British national (overseas)** task.
2. Select the **documents** tab to view the customer's documents and check if they sent, a:
 - Hong Kong Identity Card (HKID)
 - Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card (HKPIC)
 - Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport
3. Check the HKID or HKPIC are acceptable for passport purposes. If they are not acceptable for passport purposes, you must refer to when the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA.

4. Compare the details on the HKID, HKPIC or HKSAR (depending on what the customer sent) with the observations recorded on the passport record for the old BN(O) passport.
5. Add (or amend) the observations for the BN(O), so these are printed on the new passport (see: BN(O) observations).
6. Decide if the customer is entitled to a BN(O) passport.

If you have everything you need and decide the customer is entitled to a BN(O) passport, you must:

1. Select **Yes**.
2. Add the correct observations needed for the BN(O).
3. Add a case note to explain the actions and decision you made.
4. Click **Save**.

DAP will not update the customer's nationality status to British national (overseas) on the **Applicant details** tab but will issue the customer's passport showing their nationality status as British national (overseas).

You must refer to You need more information to process BN(O) application, if you decide you need more information to deal with the customer's application.

BN(O) observations

When you are dealing with a BN(O) task on DAP, you must check the observations on the customer's old passport. You must do this by checking the old passport record, or other previous passport records.

To check the observation on the customer's old passport (or their previous passport records), you must:

- complete the **observations on old passport** task (if it is there)
- check if any of the customer's previous passports on passport records (if the **observations on old passport** task is not there), have any observations

DAP adds the incorrect observation code

If DAP adds the incorrect observation code to the application you must use the observations guidance to:

- remove the incorrect observation code
- add the observations needed for the BN(O)
- complete the observations task

This may happen, for example, if the examiner used the free text observation code instead of the UK immigration observation code when they issued the customer's old passport.

BN(O) first time applications

You must deal with the application as a first time BN(O) application if the customer meets these criteria. You must follow this process if you are processing the application as a first time BN(O) application.

You need more information to process BN(O) application

If you need more documents to deal with the application (for example, because the customer's name does not match) or the customer sent an old style HKID or HKPIC, you must:

1. Select **Not sure, need new documents**.
2. Send an email to the customer to ask them for the information or documents you need.
3. Add a case note to explain the actions and decisions you made.
4. Click **Save**.

BN(O) refer for investigation

You may decide the application needs further investigation (for example, if you have doubts about the customer's identity). You must:

1. Complete additional checks, as required by following the guidance.
2. Select **Refer for investigation**.
3. Add a case note to show your actions and decisions, and why you are referring the application for investigation.
4. Select **Save**.

BN(O)s: first time applications

You must deal with the application as a first time application if the customer appears to be applying for a BN(O) passport and:

- has never held a BN(O) passport in their own right (for example, they were previously included in their parents BN(O) passport)
- is renewing or replacing a passport (an Old Blue (hardback style) or machine readable style passport) which cannot be found in our records

If a customer tells us they registered as a BN(O) but there is no record in our archives, they may have been registered and named on their parents passports. If they were registered with their parents, they may or may not have had their personal details added to the Hong Kong historic database.

In this situation you must:

1. Ask the customer for:
 - their birth certificate and any change of name documents they may have had

- their parents BN(O) passports or birth certificates and change of name documents they may have
- 2. Check the customer's details in the Hong Kong historic application database to confirm if they or their parents were ever registered using all changes of name the customer sends in.

Refer the application to an appropriately trained examiner if the customer has no claim to British nationality.

Lost or stolen Old Blue passports found on our records

You must check the Hong Kong historic application database or Old Blue index cards records if the customer's Old Blue BN(O) passport is missing. If you cannot find a record matching the customer's details, you must deal with the application as if the customer were applying for their first passport.

If you find a record matching the customer's details, you must:

1. Change the service type to first time application (we cannot create a lost or stolen (LS) record for Old Blue passports).
2. Deal with the application as a replacement and confirm the customer's identity using their referee. If you have fraud concerns, you must refer the application to the Counter Fraud team.
3. Examine the BN(O) application and make sure the national status and observations are correct.

When the customer is named on their parent's BN(O) passport

Some customers may never have held a BN(O) passport in their own right and may only have been named on their parents' old passport. Their details may or may not have been registered on the Hong Kong historic application database.

When the parent's BN(O) passport is sent in

If the customer's personal details and their HKID or HKPIC number were included on their parent's passport, you must check their application details using the details shown on the parent's old passport.

If there are differences (for example the name in the parent's passport is different), you must:

- check the customer's details on the application against their documents (and information on the Hong Kong historic application database, if they are included)
- request evidence of the name change if this is needed (in line with change of name guidance)
- make sure you have evidence to link the customer to the person named in the parent's passport, before you issue the customer's passport

Once you have confirmed their identity, you must delete the customer's details from their parent's passport when you issue the customer's first BN(O) passport.

To delete the details, you must:

1. Complete all tasks on DAP, but do not **Submit** the application.
2. Use the **Request a rescan** option to:
 - ask the DHU to revalidate the parent's passport (see: DHU: how to ask for document revalidation)
 - add a note in the free text box to tell the DHU to delete the customer's details from their parent's BN(O) passport
3. Put the application on hold while you wait for the DHU to delete the customer's details from their parent's passport.
4. Complete the application in line with current guidance when DAP generates a task for you to deal with because the DHU have:
 - dealt with the re-validation request
 - deleted the customer's details from their parent's passport

When the parent's BN(O) passport is missing

Some customers may tell us they were included on their parent's BN(O) passport, but it is now lost or stolen. This means we will not be able to confirm if they were included, in this situation you must consider whether it was likely they were included in their parents BN(O) passport.

Together with the extra checks needed to issue a BN(O) passport you must consider all the following points:

1. Decide if it is likely the customer was included on their parents BN(O) passport, and making sure you have enough evidence to confirm the claimed parent:
 - is the parent of the customer (for example, birth certificates confirm this)
 - has BN(O) status
 - held the lost or stolen passport (their identity matches the passport details)
2. Decide if you have enough evidence to confirm the:
 - customer's identity
 - customer was born before 1 July 1997 and was a child at the time of their parents BN(O) registration
3. Check the customer holds a Smart Identity Card that says 'Hong Kong Permanent Identity card' or is willing to get a Smart Identity Card.
4. Refer to when the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA evidence (if the customer does not want to get a Smart Identity Card).
5. If they will not comply and ask to withdraw the application, you must:
 - add a case note to the application to explain the actions and decisions you made
 - refer the application to the Counter Fraud team and ask them to add the customers details to the watchlist

If there are no fraud concerns and it is likely the customer was included on their parents BN(O) passport, you must continue to deal with the application.

Duplicate BN(O) passport numbers

There are a small number of BN(O) passports that have the same passport number. You may see them when a customer's old passport correctly shows on G-search but the passport number on our records, relates to a different customer.

When this happens, you must:

1. Check the customers are not the same person, by checking if their:
 - details on passport records, G-Search and the Hong Kong database are different
 - HKPIC numbers are different
2. Send an email to the Data Governance and Assurance team, to ask them if it's an affected case. When you email them, you must:
 - put 'Possible duplicate passport number' in the **Subject field**
 - include the passport number in the body of the email
3. Store the application while you wait for the Data Quality team to tell you if it's an affected case.

If the Data Quality team confirm it's an affected case and you are satisfied it's not the same customer, you must:

1. Change the service type to a first time application (but continue to deal with the application as a renewal).
2. Remove the passport number from previous passport section on the customer's current application (so you do not cancel the other person's passport).
3. Add a:
 - case note to the customers application to explain the checks you completed that helped you confirm both passport numbers relate to 2 different customers
 - passport note to the other person's record on our records, to explain you identified a duplicate passport number when dealing with another customer's application (include the application reference number)

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Checking BN(O) status

This section tells HM Passport Office staff dealing with British national (overseas) customers, how to check the customer's nationality status and confirm it is correct.

Customers who registered as British national (overseas) citizens were not issued with a registration certificate; the BN(O) passport they were named in, is evidence they registered.

Most British national (overseas) customers will already hold or have held a BN(O) passport and a record of their passport will exist in our records. A record in any of our archives showing the customer registered as a BN(O) or holds a BN(O) passport is confirmation of the customer's BN(O) nationality status.

You must check our passport records to see if the customer is entitled to a BN(O) passport. You only need to check the Hong Kong historic database if there is no record of the customer's BN(O) passport on our records or G-search. If a record of the customer's passport does not exist in these archives you must try to locate the passport in our Old Blue index card records.

You must not issue a BN(O) passport to a customer if they cannot provide a genuine passport or there is no trace of their personal details in any of our records. You can only issue a new passport if we can confirm the customer is entitled to a BN(O) passport. If you cannot confirm the customer is entitled to BN(O) status you must refer the application to an appropriately trained person who will deal with the application.

How DAP records the customer's status

If you are processing a BN(O) task, DAP will automatically select British national (overseas) as the nationality status (based on the nationality status on the customer's old passport). You do not need to check or change this.

How to record BN(O) status on a first time application

If you are processing a first time BN(O) application, you must record the customer's nationality status using the **Nationality task**. You must case note your checks and decision.

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Observations in British national (overseas) passports

This section tells HM Passport Office staff which immigration observations they must add to British nationals (overseas) passports.

We must add immigration observations to all British national (overseas) passports. These include:

- UK immigration observations
- Hong Kong immigration observations

UK immigration observation

When we issue a customer with a British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport, we must add the correct UK immigration observation. This will be one of the following:

- subject to immigration control (STC) observation code OBTB, that says:

THE HOLDER IS SUBJECT TO CONTROL UNDER THE IMMIGRATION ACT 1971

- re-admission to the UK (RUK) observation code OBTE, that says:

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

If we do not use the correct UK immigration observation, especially for customers in the UK, it may:

- cause them difficulties when they return to the UK, for example after a holiday
- create similar issues seen with Windrush customers

The UK immigration observation we use in a BN(O) passport, depends on:

- if they are a UK or international customer
- how long a customer has been in the UK
- what UK immigration observations are in a customer's previous passports
- any immigration documents a customer has from UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)

First BN(O) passport: customer is in the UK

If a UK customer applies for their first British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport, you must check:

- their supporting documents to see if they show they:
 - are settled in the UK (for example, indefinite leave to remain (ILR), indefinite leave to enter (ILE) or no time limit (NTL))
 - have valid leave (immigration permission) to be in the UK (for example, a visit visa, limited leave to enter or limited leave to remain)
- UKVI systems (if the customer does not have documents showing they are settled or have valid leave) to see if the records show if they are settled or have valid leave

If the supporting documents or the UKVI system shows the customer is settled or has valid leave, you must refer to first BN(O) passport: customer is settled or has valid leave.

If the customer's documents and the UKVI systems do not show if they are settled or has valid leave, you must:

1. Send the customer system letter 137. The letter asks for:
 - evidence that shows their immigration status in the UK
 - the document they used to enter to the UK (if they cannot give us evidence that shows their immigration status in the UK)
 - a signed letter that explains when they travelled to the UK and what document they used (if they cannot give us the document, they used to enter the UK)
2. Add a case note to explain the actions and decisions you made.
3. Store the application while you wait for a response.

When you get the customer's response, you must refer to:

- first BN(O) passport: customer is settled or has valid leave (if the customer provides evidence to show they are settled or has valid leave)
- first BN(O) passport: asking UKVI if a customer is settled or had valid leave, below (if the customer cannot provide evidence to show they are settled or has valid leave)

First BN(O) passport: asking UKVI if a customer is settled or has valid leave

When a customer in the UK applies for their first British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport, we will ask UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to confirm if they are settled or have valid leave, when both of the following apply:

- the customer could not provide evidence to show they are settled or has valid leave
- the UKVI system does not show if the customer is settled or has valid leave

To ask UKVI if a customer is settled or has valid leave, you must:

1. Complete the UKVI referral – customer's immigration status form using the details on the passport application to:

- ask UKVI to check their records to see if the customer is settled or has valid leave
 - tell UKVI to contact the customer to explain what they need to do about their UK immigration status, if their records do not show the customer is settled or has valid leave
2. Create an email and with the subject field showing:

HMPO request – customer's settlement status

3. Attach the referral form to the email and send it to UKVI from your team's mailbox.
4. Add a case note to explain the:
 - customer could not give us evidence to show they are settled or has valid leave
 - actions and decisions you made
5. Store the application while you wait for UKVI to respond (usually within 10 working days).

When you get a response from UKVI, you must refer to:

- first BN(O) passport: customer is not settled and does not have valid leave (if UKVI confirm the customer is not settled and does not have valid leave)
- first BN(O) passport: customer is settled or has valid leave, below (if UKVI confirm the customer is settled or has valid leave)

First BN(O) passport: customer is settled or has valid leave

If the British national (overseas) (BN(O)) customer provides evidence to show they are settled or has valid leave, you must first check to see if the evidence is genuine. You must:

1. Check the customer's documentary evidence agrees with UKVI systems.
2. Refer the application to your operational team leader (OTL), to decide if the evidence is genuine (using a balance of probability) if there is nothing on the UKVI systems.
3. Complete additional checks, if you suspect the customer's evidence of settlement is not genuine.

Providing you are satisfied there is evidence to show the customer is settled or has valid leave (either from the customer's supporting documents, information from UKVI systems or because UKVI confirmed they are settled or have valid leave), you must:

1. Add the following UK immigration observation codes:
 - code OBTB, the STC immigration 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

2. Add the correct Hong Kong immigration observations.
3. Send the customer letter 132, making sure you use the correct phrase to show their nationality status is British national (overseas).
4. Add a case note to explain, the:
 - customer is settled or has valid leave (including how)
 - actions and decisions you made
5. Continue to process the application (in line with current guidance).

First BN(O) passport: customer is not settled and does not have valid leave

If UKVI confirm the British national (overseas) (BN(O)) customer is not settled and does not have valid leave, you must:

1. Add the following UK immigration observations:
 - code OBTB, the STC immigration 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

2. Add the correct Hong Kong immigration observations.
3. Send the customer letter 133, making sure you use the correct phrase to show their nationality status is British national (overseas).
4. Add a case note to explain the:
 - customer is not settled and does not have valid leave
 - actions and decisions you made
5. Continue to process the application (in line with current guidance).

First BN(O) passport: international customer

If an international customer applies for their first British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport, you must:

1. Add the following UK immigration observations:
 - code OBTB the STC immigration 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

2. Add the correct Hong Kong immigration observations.
3. Add a case note to explain the actions and decisions you made.
4. Continue to process the application (in line with current guidance).

We do not send letters to a BN(O) international customer about UK immigration observations.

Renewal and replacements of BN(O) passports

If a UK or international customer applies to renew, replace or change the details on their British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport, you must:

1. Deal with the application in line with current guidance (for example, lost and stolen, [Names: aligning names in foreign passports](#)).
2. Check if the RUK or STC immigration observation is on their old passport.

If the customer's old British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport does not have the RUK or STC immigration observation or only has the STC immigration observation, you must check what's on their previous passports, using:

- Passport records
- G-search
- X-drive
- Hong Kong database

Previous BN(O) has RUK

If the customer's old or any previous British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passports has the RUK immigration observation, you must:

1. Add the UK immigration observation:
 - RUK immigration observation only
2. Add the correct Hong Kong immigration observations.
3. Send the customer letter 136, making sure you use the correct phrase to show their nationality status is British national (overseas) (you must only send it to UK customers, as international customers do not need it).
4. Add a case note to explain the actions and decisions you made.
5. Continue to process the application (in line with current guidance).

Previous BN(O) does not have STC or RUK or just has STC

If the customer's old or previous passports do not show the RUK or STC immigration observation or only shows the STC immigration observation, you must follow the guidance:

- First BN(O) passport: customer is in the UK (if it's a UK customer)
- First BN(O) passport: international customer (if it's an international customer)

Hong Kong immigration observations

Only the Hong Kong authorities can grant right of abode (ROA) or the Right to Land (RTL) in Hong Kong. We:

- record Hong Kong ROA in British passports using:
 - an observation to show ROA (see: right of abode in Hong Kong)
- no longer record a customer's Right to Land in Hong Kong in a British passport (see: right to land in Hong Kong)

Right of abode in Hong Kong

Any person who has the Right of Abode (ROA) in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) will have the right to:

- land in the HKSAR
- be free from any condition of stay (including a limit of stay) in the HKSAR
- not be deported or removed from the HKSAR

Before you add a Hong Kong ROA observation to a British passport you must confirm the customer still holds ROA in Hong Kong. The customer must send in their Hong Kong identity card or valid HKSAR passport (or a colour copy) so we can check the details.

If the customer's HKID or HKPIC confirms they have ROA in Hong Kong, you must add the OBTT observations to their new BN(O) passport.

The Hong Kong Immigration departments website explains [who is entitled to hold ROA in Hong Kong](#).

When the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA evidence

We will not add Hong Kong, Right of Abode (ROA) immigration observations to a British passport if the customer cannot provide acceptable evidence, they have ROA in Hong Kong. For example, if they have:

- an expired HKSAR and no new HKID or HKPIC
- have lost their HKID or HKPIC and cannot send you a replacement
- have an old style HKID or HKPIC and cannot send you a Smart Identity Card
- do not have ROA in Hong Kong

If they cannot send us evidence, they have ROA in Hong Kong, you must not add any Hong Kong immigration observation. You must:

1. Send the customer letter 952 explaining, they must contact the Hong Kong Immigration Department, about their immigration status, because we cannot:
 - check their immigration status with the Hong Kong Immigration Department
 - add observations to British passports that say 'the holder has the Right of Abode in Hong Kong' if we have not received a valid HKSAR, HKID or HKPIC
 - add Right to Land vignettes or observations to British passports
2. Deal with the application in line with current guidance.

Right to Land in Hong Kong

A person may have acquired the Right to Land (RTL) in the HKSAR, if they do not hold ROA in the HKSAR. The Right to Land:

- allows them the right to land
- means they are free from any condition of stay (including a limit of stay)
- means they cannot be removed from the HKSAR unless they are being deported

If the customer cannot show us they have ROA in the HKSAR you must tell them to contact the Hong Kong Immigration department to get the necessary immigration permissions. We will issue their passport without a Hong Kong immigration observation.

When you are ready to issue the British passport you must not add the Right to Land in Hong Kong observation (code OBTG) or the Right to Land vignette under and circumstance. This is because from 31 January 2021 we have been unable to check these with the Hong Kong Immigration Department.

To tell the customer we no longer add the RTL immigration observation, you must:

1. Send the customer letter 952 explaining, they must contact the Hong Kong Immigration Department, about their immigration status, because we cannot:
 - check their immigration status with the Hong Kong Immigration Department
 - add observations to British passports that say 'the holder has the Right of Abode in Hong Kong' if we have not received a valid HKSAR, HKID or HKPIC
 - add a Right to Land vignette or observation to a British passport
2. Deal with the application in line with current guidance.

EU immigration observation

Between 30 March 2019 (when we started issuing non-EU passports) and 31 December 2020 (when the UK's transitional period for leaving the EU ended), we added the following observation to BN(O) passports:

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

The UK's transition period after leaving the European Union (EU) ended on 31 December 2020. This means you must not add this observation to any BN(O) passport you issue on, or after 1 January 2021.

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Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passports

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about Hong Kong Special Administrative Region passports and how they can be used to support passport applications for British national (overseas) passports.

Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passports are issued by the Hong Kong Immigration department. Customers are only [eligible to apply for a HKSAR passport](#) if they fulfil 3 criteria; they must:

- be a Chinese citizen
- be a permanent resident of the HKSAR
- hold a valid Hong Kong permanent identity card

If the customer is a permanent resident of Hong Kong but does not have a Hong Kong permanent identity card, they must apply for an identity card before applying for a HKSAR Passport.

HKSAR passports: proving permanent residence

You, the examiner, can accept a valid HKSAR passport in place of a Hong Kong permanent identity card (HKPIC) if the customer has not sent in their HKPIC with their application for a BN(O) passport. The HKSAR records the customer's PIC number on the personal details page.

You can be certain the holder of a valid HKSAR passport has permanent residence in Hong Kong as this is one of the criteria the customer must fulfil to be eligible for the passport.

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Identity cards from Hong Kong

This section tells HM Passport Office examination staff about the different identity cards held by customers born in Hong Kong, living in Hong Kong or who have a connection to Hong Kong.

GOV.UK tells the customer to send in their Hong Kong Identity Card (HKID) or Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card (HKPIC) (or a colour copy), with their passport application when they apply.

There are 2 types of identity cards used in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region:

- Hong Kong Identity Card (HKID)
- Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card (HKPIC)

Since 2003, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) have issued their Smart Identity Cards containing a microchip, older cards were issued without a microchip. HKSAR requires holders of older style cards to replace them with a Smart Identity Card.

We will accept the customer's valid Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) passport if they send this instead of a Smart Identity Card.

HM Passport Office cannot accept an older style card without a microchip as evidence of the holders Hong Kong immigration status. You must refer to when the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA evidence if the customer sends you an older style card without a microchip.

Hong Kong cards without microchips

If the customer lives in Hong Kong and sends in an 'old style' Hong Kong identity card or permanent identity card without a microchip, you must [tell them to get a replacement card](#) and send it to us. They can get a replacement from any 'Registration of Persons Office' of the Hong Kong Immigration Department. You must withdraw the customer's application if the customer does not provide a replacement within the agreed timescales.

You must refer to when the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA evidence if all of the following apply:

- the customer does not live in Hong Kong
- the customer cannot go to the Hong Kong Immigration Department to get a replacement card
- you need to check if the customer has Right of Abode in Hong Kong

Hong Kong identity codes

Hong Kong identity cards and permanent identity cards have a code sequence which records information about the holder. For example, it records if the holder was born in Hong Kong or Macao, if the holder has had a change of name and it records the holder's immigration status in Hong Kong.

The code letter 'A' on HKID or HKPIC is used to show the holder has Right of Abode in Hong Kong. If the identity card does not state the holder has Right of Abode or it does not contain the 'A' code you must refer to When the customer cannot provide Hong Kong, ROA evidence.

The Hong Kong Knowledge base gives examples of an old identity card and a Smart Identity Card and explains the different codes used on them.

Hong Kong identity card

HKID cards are issued to non-permanent residents of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and children under the age of 11 years.

A Hong Kong identity card (HKID) has the title 'HONG KONG IDENTITY CARD' printed on the front. You must check the identity code to see if the holder has the Right of Abode (ROA) or not. The HKID card is issued to:

- people who have the Right to Land (RTL) in Hong Kong
- anyone 11 years of age (or above) who enters and is permitted to stay in Hong Kong for more than 180 days
- anyone under the age of 11 with Right of Abode (ROA) or RTL status in Hong Kong (however this is not mandatory)

Hong Kong permanent identity card

A Hong Kong permanent identity card (HKPIC) has the title 'HONG KONG PERMANENT IDENTITY CARD' printed on the front. The statement 'The holder of this card has the Right of Abode in Hong Kong' is printed on the back.

If the customer sends in a permanent identity card with a microchip you can accept they have ROA in Hong Kong and add the correct observation to the customer's passport application.

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Dual British nationals

This section tells HM Passport Office staff about additional services which are available to British nationals who hold British national (overseas) nationality and another British nationality.

Customers who hold dual British nationality can hold valid passports showing each national status. You must not cancel the customer's British national (overseas) (BN(O)) passport if they hold passports in multiple British nationalities.

You must case note the current application to confirm they hold dual British nationality. You must also add a passport note to every valid British passport the customer may hold if they hold additional passports, this includes when the customer holds multiple dual British nationality.

Hong Kong Right of Abode observation entered into other British passports

Some customers hold dual British nationality; they may hold a passport in another British nationality and a BN(O) passport at the same time.

You must add the Hong Kong Right of Abode immigration observation OBTT into the customer's other British passport if they ask for the observation and can show us evidence, they have ROA in Hong Kong.

You must ask the customer for their HKID, HKPIC or HKSAR passport (or a colour copy) and check the details before you add the observation.

If you add the Hong Kong ROA observation (OBTT) to the customer's passport you must also add the OBTG observation and change the free text field to say:

THE HOLDER IS ALSO A BRITISH NATIONAL (OVERSEAS)

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