



Home Office

Identity Standards glossary

Version 1.0

Glossary of terms and definitions for UKVI Identity Standards.

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About this guidance

This guidance is a glossary of terms for different technical words and phrases that are used in UKVI applications around identity standards.

It is intended to help decision makers understand common identity documents, systems, checks and processes, and apply the guidance consistently when assessing whether a person's identity has been satisfactorily established.

This guidance is primarily for:

- Immigration, nationality and asylum decision makers and caseworkers
- Entry Clearance Decision Makers (ECDM), also referred to as Entry Clearance Officers (ECO)
- any official making a decision on behalf of the Secretary of State

Border Force and Immigration Enforcement officers need to be aware of this guidance to understand the basis of a person's identity.

The identity requirements described in this guidance do not apply to British citizens or holders of a certificate of entitlement to the right of abode, who are not subject to immigration control. It does apply to British nationals who are subject to control.

Decision maker means immigration, nationality and asylum decision makers and caseworkers and immigration and Border Force officers.

People / person means applicants, claimants, individuals, and dependants.

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 the Identity Security 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 then you can email the Guidance, Rules and Forms team.

Publication

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

- version **1.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **21 October 2026**

Changes from last version of this guidance

This is new guidance.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Definitions of Forms of Identity Document

This section covers different types of identity document and their uses across different immigration routes.

Passports and other documents

A **passport** is a government issued travel document which satisfactorily establishes the holder's identity and facilitates international travel. The passport must contain the holder's key personal details, including name, date of birth, place of birth, facial image, date of issue and date of expiry. Where the issuing authority includes a sex marker, this will also appear; however, some countries do not include a sex marker on their passports. Usually, sex markers are recorded as either M (Male) or F (Female), but some countries include other markers including X or U, which may mean undefined or other.

Most countries, including the UK, issue passports that comply with the International Civil Aviation Organisation's ([ICAO](#)) global rules.

ICAO standards set:

- the passport layout
- the mandatory personal details
- for ePassports, the security checks required on the embedded chip

Compliance with ICAO standards allows border systems to:

- read passports quickly and accurately
- provide a high level of assurance when verifying a person's identity

Passports that do not meet ICAO standards:

- must be regarded as lower-assurance documents
- must be subject to enhanced scrutiny
- cannot have their authenticity reliably verified through automated security systems

Passports also carry visas (vignettes) and other types of endorsements that may allow a person to travel, enter, or remain in a particular country.

A **valid passport** shows a person's identity, is within its dates of validity, and is in good condition. This means it is intact, with no tears or marks that impede the document being checked (for example, security features damaged), and the document must not be reported lost or stolen. For chipped passports the chip must be readable.

If a person has a reasonable excuse for being unable to provide a passport (or for the EUSS, provide a passport or EEA / Swiss national ID card), they **must** provide evidence that satisfactorily establishes their claimed identity.

ePassports

ePassports are machine readable travel documents compliant with [ICAO Doc 9303](#). They can offer strong assurance in a claimed identity if the chip has been accessed and the chip certification, including the Document Signer Certificate, can be validated to confirm whether the document was issued by a national authority. The chip is integral to the document, and where the chip is not accessible or readable, fraud checks must be conducted to confirm the document's authenticity.

ICAO compliant chipped passports are usually marked with this symbol:



National identity cards

A national identity card is an official government-issued document used to confirm a person's identity and, in some cases, their nationality or immigration status. Where produced in line with [ICAO Doc 9303](#), it contains standardised machine-readable security features and may include a contactless microchip storing verifiable personal data and a digital facial image, enabling the document's authenticity and the holder's identity to be electronically checked. In some countries, national identity cards may also be accepted for international travel.

Travel documents

A travel document is a broad term covering documents that permit international travel. Travel documents other than national passports are often used where a passport is not available or is inappropriate, and these are subject to differing rules and levels of recognition. They can be used as identification documents. For example, a person applying for entry to the UK may use a [convention travel document](#) issued by another country. Home Office issued travel documents such as Certificates of Travel which are non-convention documents are also examples of travel documents.

Convention and non-convention travel documents

In most circumstances, a person will be required to use a recognised valid passport or travel document when they make an immigration or a nationality application, as this offers the most consistent approach to assuring their identity. Some people may hold convention travel documents issued under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, or travel documents issued under the 1954 Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. These documents may be issued by, or on behalf of, the authorities of a country or territory, or by an international organisation, in place of a national passport.

For non-EUSS applications, if a person does not have a valid passport or travel document, you must consider whether they can reasonably obtain one (for example, by approaching their national authorities) or whether there are credible reasons why they cannot. Where a valid document cannot be provided, you must consider alternative acceptable documents and a satisfactory explanation in line with this guidance (see Identity Standards In-country and out of country applications).

For EUSS applications other documents can also be provided as evidence of identity and nationality, this includes a valid national identity card, for EEA and Swiss nationals, or a biometric residence card (BRC) for non-EEA nationals. See EU Settlement Scheme EU, other EEA, Swiss citizens and family members.

Refugee and stateless travel documents issued by non-signatory countries can be accepted as part of identity and documentation assessment, but decision makers must assure themselves that the claimed identity is authentic.

UNHCR registration certificates

There may be scenarios where the only evidence of identity a person may have will be United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) certificates or refugee certificates. Information on their registration and identification process can be found at [UNHCR – Guidance on Registration and Identity Management](#). A UNHCR registration certificate can be accepted as part of the evidence used to establish identity, but you must keep in mind the UNHCR may have issued it based upon the person's self-declared identity and without supporting evidence. The UNHCR will only reject a submitted identity if it is obviously false, so the identity may be based on unreliable information. Where a UNHCR certificate is the only evidence presented and you are satisfied as to the claimed identity, the claimed biographic identity must be securely linked to the person through biometrics captured under controlled conditions, ensuring that the identity can be fixed with confidence. Decision makers must enquire with the person what documents were provided to obtain the certificate, if possible by email, and this information should be verified with the UNHCR.

UK-issued eVisa

A UK-issued eVisa is a secure biometric immigration document and can be accepted as evidence of a person's identity if the status holder securely shares their immigration status with a third party using the 'view and prove' service. The decision maker must satisfy themselves that the person sharing their status is the correct holder of the eVisa. Like a passport, an eVisa is an identity document for the purposes of Section 7 of the [Identity Documents Act 2010](#). However, it is only issued where an identity has already been assured.

Expired documents

An expired passport is one that has passed its validity date. This is different from a cancelled passport which has been invalidated by the issuing authority, often during renewal or when the document is damaged, and is typically shown by a clipped

corner. A revoked passport is one the issuing authorities have formally cancelled due to loss, theft, or security concerns. None of these documents are valid for travel.

There may be circumstances where, with a reasonable explanation a person may submit an expired passport as part of establishing their identity. (see identity Standards In-country and out of country applications), An expired passport must only be accepted where it can be verified as genuine, untampered, and directly linked to the person, and ordinarily should be a chipped biometric passport. Expired passports or travel documents must not be relied upon as the sole source of identity verification; they must be accompanied by other documents demonstrating that the identity is currently in use by the person presenting it. When accepting an expired document, you must ensure that the person resembles the facial image. A cancelled or revoked passport must not, on its own, be accepted as evidence of identity even if it is in the validity period.

Other identification and source documents

In most circumstances, you must only accept other forms of identification documents from individuals in compelling circumstances. The individual must reasonably explain why they are unable to obtain a valid passport or travel document.

Documents meet different levels of assurance depending on whether they contain a readable biometric chip and / or include other security features, such as watermarks. Biometric identity cards that meet ICAO standards, which can be checked electronically and biometrically to match the holder, will normally meet or exceed the satisfactory standard threshold. Other documents can be used by people, who cannot obtain a valid passport, as evidence of their identity but you must not automatically assume they meet or exceed the required identity standard. You will need to conduct other checks to ensure the satisfactory standard is met.

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Where a person is unable to produce a valid passport or travel document, they will be required to provide supporting documents to enable you to establish their identity. In most circumstances, when an applicant for Entry Clearance only has an expired passport or travel document, they must be expected to obtain a new passport before applying. In extreme cases, where they provide a compelling explanation for why they are unable to obtain a new valid passport or travel document, and they can satisfactorily establish their identity through corroborative evidence, entry clearance must be issued on a [Form for Affixing a Visa \(FAV\)](#). A FAV is not a high-assurance identity or nationality document, as it is issued where a recognised passport or travel document is unavailable. It may have evidential value but must not be accepted in isolation, and decision makers must consider any limitations in how identity was established at the point of grant.

Unrecognised passports or travel documents

Some passports or travel documents are not recognised by the UK because they are not issued by a recognised sovereign authority. In some cases, the issuing process may also raise concerns, such as a lack of verifiable checks, fraud risks, corruption, or document recycling.

These documents cannot be treated as high assurance identity documents, and you must not rely on them alone to establish identity. They may hold limited evidential value, but only when supported by corroborative evidence. They must not be accepted for travel, and entry clearance must not be endorsed in them. However, where an unrecognised passport or travel document is the only document that exists, it must be considered as lower-level supporting evidence of identity and assessed alongside other corroborative information. Entry clearance must not be issued in such documents; instead, a [Form for Affixing a Visa \(FAV\)](#) is to be issued.

Identification and nationality documents

Identification documents are government regulated identity documents which usually show a facial photo of the holder. To obtain one of these the individual usually needs to undergo identity verification.

Where a digital version is presented, it may only be accepted if it can be securely validated through trusted sources and system checks that confirm it is genuine and can be confidently linked to the person presenting it.

Source documents

Source documents, for the purpose of this guidance, are 'foundation documents' that show an event took place linked to a person and used to support access to identity documents. They normally cannot be directly linked to the holder as they do not contain a facial image. The biographical details shown may be more limited. These documents may not offer a high level of assurance in a claimed identity in isolation. Multiple documents being presented together may build assurance in an identity, but without one that contains a facial image of the holder, they can only demonstrate that the claimed identity exists. A non-exhaustive list of examples of source documents is:

- birth certificate
- adoption certificate
- certificate of citizenship
- national registration documents
- marriage certificate
- civil partnership certificate
- statutory declaration
- baptism certificate

Documents showing the identity is being used (Living Documents)

Other forms of documents are used to show the identity is being used and belongs to a person who is alive. A combination of these documents can be used alongside others to show the claimed identity exists and is being used. The following can help a person who does not hold a recognised passport or travel document:

- any correspondence issued by the Home Office relating to a verified person, including enrolment letters and decision letters
- proof of accommodation (for example, tenancy agreements)
- bank documentation / proof of banking
- other supporting documents – affidavit, doctor's letter
- utilities or other bills containing the individual's name and address
- employment documents or photo-passes
- education records

People must be made aware that if they do not submit evidence that strengthens their claimed identity, their application may take longer to process and / or lead to refusal.

Related content

[Contents](#)

[Convention travel document](#)

[Form for Affixing a Visa \(FAV\)](#)

Related external links

[ICAO](#)

[ICAO Doc 9303](#)

[UNHCR – Guidance on Registration and Identity Management](#)

Glossary of Identity Flow terms

Atlas

Atlas is the Home Office's modern, digital immigration caseworking system. It consolidates person, identity, document and case information into a single platform and replaces legacy systems like Case Information Database (CID). Atlas enables decision makers to manage tasks, view immigration histories, and make decisions efficiently through a unified, person-centred view for in-country cases.

AUK1

Access UK – Route 1 (AUK1) is the original Access UK application route used for a wide range of immigration applications, including Further Leave to Remain (FLR), settlement, fee waiver, and Change of Circumstances. It represents the legacy, document- and biometrics-dependent application flow. It also remains the dominant route for most entry clearance (out-of-country) applications, while some in-country and combined routes continue to use it as well.

People attend a Visa Application Centre (VAC) or a Service and Support Centre (SSC) to enrol biometrics where required. In some AUK1 routes, however, biometric enrolment is not required. For example, in the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) route, people who are not required to enrol fingerprints do not attend VAC and instead submit their identity document directly to UKVI. AUK1 does not support chip check, biometric reuse or identity reuse. A person's identity profile is resolved by the Resolve Identity Service (RIS), and caseworkers must complete all Operating Mandate (OM) identity checks.

AUK2

Access UK Route 2 (AUK2) is the digital application route that supports online identity verification rather than attending a VAC for upfront biometrics. It was introduced for the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS) and subsequently expanded to other routes. It includes chip check (for EEA nationals), biometric reuse (for eligible non-EEA nationals), and VAC integration flows, where AUK2 connects directly with the VAC process to support application journeys that still require biometric enrolment through a VAC. These are not consistently applied across routes, for example the EUSS. Person Resolution Service (PRS) completes identity establishment, fixing and assurance, meaning caseworkers generally do not need to perform Operating Mandate identity checks. AUK2 is the strategic future platform for most routes.

Counterfeit document

A counterfeit document is a document which has been completely fabricated and did not originate from the genuine issuing authority. It is made to look like a real document but has never been lawfully issued.

Example: a fake passport produced by an unauthorised source such as a criminal gang.

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EdisonTD (Electronic Documentation and Information System on Investigation Networks)

EdisonTD is a repository of images, security features and descriptions of genuine travel and identity documents from over 200 countries and organisations.

False documents

False documents are not genuine or are documents being used dishonestly to mislead about a person's identity or status. This includes counterfeit, forged, and fraudulently obtained genuine documents.

Forged document

A forged document is one that started as genuine or partially genuine but has been altered or tampered with to misrepresent information.

Example: a real passport where the photograph or biographical details have been changed.

Form for accompanying an eVisa (FAV)

People granted entry clearance who do not hold a Home Office-accepted identity document may be issued with a [Form for accompanying an eVisa](#).

The form for accompanying an eVisa is not an identity document or evidence of immigration permission in its own right; instead, it is a travel document used alongside a valid eVisa, which holds the individual's immigration status digitally. People issued with a form for accompanying an eVisa must collect it from a Visa Application Centre (VAC) unless other services are arranged. It can only be used to facilitate travel to the UK.

FAV holders should be encouraged to create a UKVI account, and access and use their eVisa as the primary evidence of their immigration status. Both the Form for Affixing a Visa and the Form for Accompanying an eVisa documents are valid until their expiry date.

Fraudulently obtained genuine document (FOG)

A FOG is a genuine document that was issued by the proper authority, but was obtained by deception, such as using false details or another person's identity during the application process.

Example: a genuine passport issued after the person provided false personal information

HOPS – Home Office Platform for Storage

HOPS is the Home Office's central digital repository for case documents. It stores documents submitted through supplier systems, scanned legacy paper files, and documents uploaded by caseworkers. All material is indexed using the Unique Application Number (UAN) or Case ID and accessed through Atlas as part of the caseworking process. Documents are uploaded by commercial partners and caseworkers.

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PEGA

PEGA is the platform used primarily across the EU Settlement Scheme (EUSS). It provides the workflow environment through which applicants submit information and caseworkers assess applications, review identity and suitability information, record decisions, and manage case progression. PEGA is linked to other Home Office systems, including Atlas, to support the assessment of identity and immigration status.

PRADO (Public Register of Authentic Identity and Travel Documents Online)

PRADO is a public-facing multilingual site, managed by the Council of the EU which provides technical details and security features of genuine travel and ID documents.

Proviso

Proviso is the Home Office's out-of-country (OOC) immigration caseworking system, used by UKVI Decision Makers to assess and decide entry clearance applications. It is the primary platform for processing all overseas visa applications.

RIS – Resolve Identity Service

RIS is a technical service that consolidates identity data from multiple internal systems after biometric enrolment. RIS performs automated security checks and resolves identity information into Atlas. RIS does not verify identity; it produces a resolved profile used by caseworkers in AUK1 to meet Operational Mandate (OM) identity requirements.

PRS – Person Resolution Service

PRS is the service responsible for identity verification in AUK2 flows. PRS compares uploaded identity documents and liveness selfies with historic images in Atlas to establish, fix and assure identity. If automated checks fail, PRS conducts manual review or requests further evidence. PRS fulfils the OM identity requirement in AUK2.

PSV – Person Summary View

PSV is Atlas's main person-centric screen, presenting a consolidated view of all data held on an individual from Atlas, CID, Asylum System (ASYS), Central Reference System (CRS), IABS, PEGA and other systems. It includes biographics, images, immigration history, alerts, documents and case cards. Caseworkers use PSV to validate identity in AUK1 flows.

Tri-scanning

Tri-scanning is the process by which the biodata page of a passport or travel document is scanned under three different types of light: transmitted (optical) light, infrared light, and ultraviolet light.

The images taken under these three different types of light are collectively referred to as tri-scans and are used to assess the authenticity and integrity of the document by revealing security features and signs of tampering that may not be visible under normal light.

Related content

[Contents](#)

Related external links

[Form for Affixing a Visa \(FAV\)](#)