

# International Students' Guide to Student Union Elections

This information is for you if you have Student or Tier 4 permission and you want to stand for election as a sabbatical officer at Goldsmiths SU.

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## Can international students stand for Elections?

Yes! All current students and new graduates can stand for elections. However, there may be challenges depending on your permissions and circumstances.

## What do I need to know and do, as an international student standing for Student Union Elections at Goldsmiths SU?

The students' union must check that you have immigration permission that allows you to do the job, according to Home Office rules. This means your ability to fulfil roles depends on your Right to Work that is on your immigration permission. This information assumes you already have Student or Tier 4 permission. Talk to [Goldsmiths Immigration Advice](#) if you are studying with a different type of permission. Your current permission may expire, or may not allow you to work. You therefore may need to apply for Student permission in order to get Right to Work.

The Sabbatical Officer role is a paid, full time position. This means you will need to work either by taking a one year break from your studies or in the academic year after your course has ended. As an international student on a Tier 4 or Student visa permission, you can stand for election for a Sabbatical Officer position. However, it will be good to check if your Student permission allows you to work first, as that will impact your right to stay and work. The [Student Visa](#) generally allows 20 hours of part time work during term time, and full time work only as a Sabbatical Officer in a Student Union. This means, if you are elected and your course has not ended, you can take a one year sabbatical leave from your studies and start work as a Sabbatical Officer on your current Student permission. However, if your Student permission expires before the end of the Sabbatical Officer contract, and you have not graduated, you will need to apply for an extension of your student visa so you can work and finish your studies. Your application fee and international health surcharge will be paid for.

### What you can and cannot do

You can:

- study
- work as a student union sabbatical officer

You may be able to work - how much depends on what you're studying and whether you're working in or out of term-time.

You cannot:

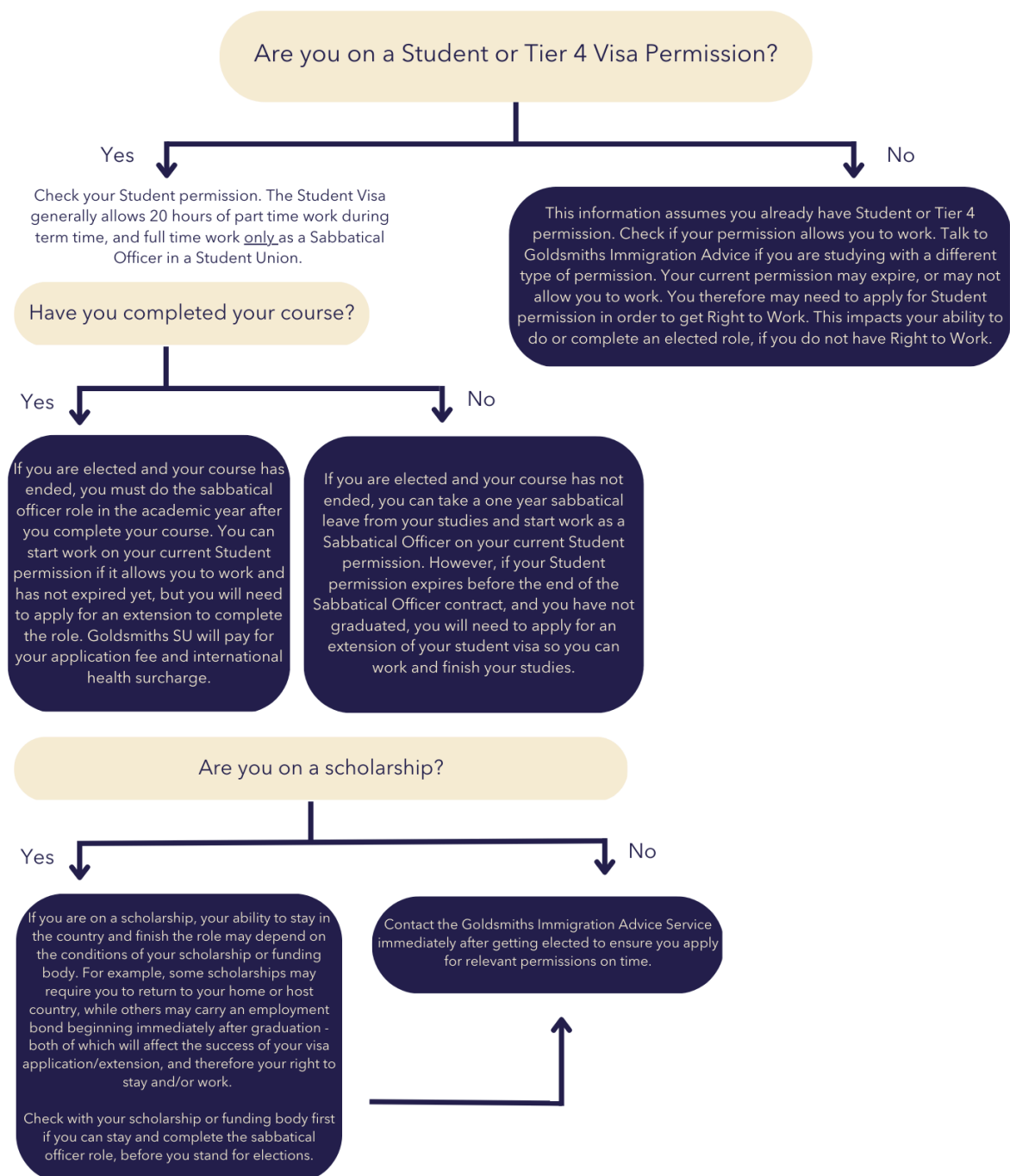
- claim [public funds](#) (benefits) and pensions
- work in certain jobs, for example as a professional sportsperson or sports coach
- be self-employed
- study at an academy or a local authority-funded school (also known as a maintained school)

See: <https://www.gov.uk/student-visa>

If you are elected and your course has ended, you must do the sabbatical officer role in the academic year after you complete your course. You can start work on your current Student permission if it allows you to work and has not expired yet, but you will need to apply for an extension to complete the role. However, if you are on a scholarship, your ability to stay in the country and finish the role may depend on the conditions of your scholarship or funding body. For example, some scholarships may require you to return to your home or host country, while others may carry an employment bond beginning immediately after

graduation - both of which will affect the success of your visa application/extension, and therefore your right to stay and/or work.

If you want to stand for a Part Time Officer position, according to Home Office rules, you will not be able to extend your permissions if it ends before the end of the part time officer role, as they are voluntary roles. You will also have to keep to the 20-hour work limit during term time that applies to Student visa permissions. The 20-hour limit is inclusive of any voluntary or part time work you may do during term time.



## **What challenges may I anticipate in the Visa application process?**

Once elected, Sabbatical Officer positions run for a year from June to June. In order to fulfil the role, you will need to obtain or extend your immigration permissions if they expire before the end of the role, to maintain Right to Work. You will therefore need to engage in the Visa application process to either obtain or extend your Student permissions. However, certain factors may impact the outcome of your Visa application.

If you are on a scholarship, your ability to stay in the country and finish the role may depend on the conditions of your scholarship or funding body. For example, some scholarships may require you to return to your home or host country, while others may carry an employment bond beginning immediately after graduation - both of which will affect the success of your visa application/extension, and therefore your right to stay and/or work. Check with your scholarship or funding body first if you can stay and complete the sabbatical officer role, before you stand for elections. Write to them stating your intentions of standing for elections and why, and request for a signed and dated letter confirming you are able to stay and complete the role if elected. The application process may also be made more complex depending on the passport or travel document that you carry.

Please reach out to [democracy@goldsmithssu.org](mailto:democracy@goldsmithssu.org) if you are aware of, have experienced before or anticipate any difficulty with the Visa process, so we can see how best to support you. Specify that you are enquiring about being a Sabb as an international student, and we will direct you to the right person.

## **Can I do the Sabbatical Officer role and study at the same time?**

The answer is maybe. The Sabbatical Officer role runs like any other full time job for a one year contract. This means you will be onboarded to the SU and College emails and HR system, and be invited to attend meetings and work during office hours. As international students, your Student permissions require you to be studying full time. If you are elected and are about to complete your course, for example you do not have classes and just have to submit your dissertation, you can absolutely continue to do so. Two of our sabbatical officers have experience completing their dissertations in the height of their roles, and can chat with you at [sabbs@goldsmithssu.org](mailto:sabbs@goldsmithssu.org) if you'd like. However it should be noted that if at any point you want to defer your dissertation, please be aware that your attendance status in the College may change to 'Assessment Only' after the sabbatical officer role ends. This means there is a possibility you cannot extend your Student permission again (after extending it to fulfil the Sabbatical Officer role) to stay in the country and finish your dissertation, because you do not have classes to attend.

If you are elected and have not completed your course, for example you are in the middle of your course and still have modules to complete or classes to attend, you may find it a struggle to keep up with office hours of the role while attending classes and completing assignments. In these circumstances, it may not be possible for you to study (in terms of attending full classes) while completing the Sabbatical Officer role.

## **Can I stand for elections a second time?**

Absolutely! Sabbatical officer positions are full time for one year. The limit is two years at any institution.

If you stand for a second election and are elected a second time, you will need to apply for a visa or extension again if your permissions expire before the end of your second elected role.

## **Will I still be eligible for the Graduate Route Visa if I have done two years as a Sabbatical Officer?**

To qualify for the Graduate route you must have current valid permission as a Student. You cannot switch to the Graduate route from any type of immigration permission other than Student or Tier 4. Please make sure your current permission is a Student permission.

At the time of this writing, Page 8 of the [Graduate Route Caseworker Guidance](#) from the Home Office states that someone with permission as a Student Union sabbatical officer is allowed to apply based on a qualification they obtained in their current period of Student permission or "in the period of permission immediately before [it]" . It states that "Students who undertake two consecutive periods as a Student Union Sabbatical Officer after their studies will still be able to meet this requirement." This means that if you have successfully completed your course, doing two years as a Sabb does not bar you from accessing the Graduate Route visa, currently. The UKCISA also confirms this at present, on [this page](#) under Requirements > Current Immigration Permissions.

We would advise you to keep an eye on the [Home Office information on the Graduate Route](#), as well as [information from the UKCISA](#), just in case this changes over the course of your time as a Sabb.

## **Who should I contact if I have questions about standing for Student Union Elections at Goldsmiths SU?**

Please reach out to [democracy@goldsmithssu.org](mailto:democracy@goldsmithssu.org) as your first point of contact. Specify that you are enquiring about being a Sabb as an international student, and we will direct you to the right person.

If you would like to speak to Goldsmiths Immigration Advice, you may contact them here: <https://www.gold.ac.uk/immigration/contact/>.

If you'd like to read up, more information can be found at: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Students-union-sabbatical-officers>