



UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI): Biometric reuse in response to COVID-19

Monday 17 August 2020

Overview

- UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) has temporarily changed the way it processes applications in response to COVID-19. For some customers, this involves reusing biometrics (fingerprints and photograph) that have been recorded in a previous application as part of the process to verify an applicant's identity, consider their application and/or produce a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP).
- As part of the process to reuse biometrics and verify a customer's identity, customers will also be asked to provide an image (using a photo taken from a phone) of their face.
- This new process, and the technology to support it, will enable UKVI to assess visa and citizenship applications without eligible customers having to visit a UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services (UKVCAS) service point to enrol new biometrics.
- UKVI's introduction of biometric reuse will benefit many customers who have been affected by COVID-19 related closures of UKVCAS service points, and the reduced capacity of those that have reopened, since March this year.
- The safety of our staff and customers has been UKVI's priority throughout this time. Where UKVI have identified customers as being eligible for biometric reuse, those customers have been informed that they will not need to attend a UKVCAS service point.
- Customers are reassured that their immigration status remains unaffected whilst their application is in progress, and whilst the biometric reuse process is introduced.
- This new option for eligible customers will reduce in-person contact at UKVCAS service points and allows UKVI and UKVCAS to manage availability of appointments for those who require one.

IDV App Key Lines:

- To allow biometrics to be reused for some customers, UKVI and UKVCAS (UK Visa and Citizenship Application Services) have worked together to develop a way to submit facial images using a new UKVCAS Identity Verification app, known as "IDV app".
- The IDV app lets customers submit application information to UKVI without having to book or attend an appointment with UKVCAS. This new, free to use, way of submitting information to UKVI involves a customer taking a photo of themselves and uploading supporting information using their mobile



device. The IDV app is quick and easy to use and works on most Android phones and iPhones.

- Customers who are eligible to use the new IDV app for biometric reuse will be invited to use it **from 17 August onwards**. Invites will be staggered as the process is introduced, according to the date of the customer's initial application.
- The immigration status of all customers remains unaffected whilst their application is in progress.
- UKVI and UKVCAS have produced guidance for customers using the IDV App, including [online Questions & Answers](#) and a ['How to' animated video](#)
- Once customers receive an invite to use the IDV app and submit their facial image and/or documents, UKVI will complete the assessment of the customer's application.



Questions and Answers

1. Some customers have been told they are eligible for biometric reuse. When will the IDV app be available?

Rollout of the IDV app will take place in phases, beginning 17 August 2020. We will invite eligible customers to use the new IDV app rather than require them to book an appointment at a UKVCAS service point. The immigration status of all customers remains unaffected whilst their application is in progress.

2. What does this mean for customers?

For most customers, using the IDV app means **they will not have to attend an appointment at a UKVCAS Service Point**. Customers will be sent an invitation to use the new IDV app, with further details about how to use the IDV app and the next steps.

3. What if customers want to book an appointment and not use the IDV app?

The key advantage of the IDV app is that customers don't have to attend an appointment at a UKVCAS Service Point. If customers urgently need a decision about their application (for example because they need to travel outside of the UK), the option to book an appointment is still available.

4. Some customers have been told they are eligible for biometric reuse so haven't been able to book an appointment. Why have other applicants received their decision before them?

Covid-19 has caused unprecedented disruption to UKVI services in the UK and around the world. As local restrictions in the UK have lifted, we have developed biometric reuse for some customers in order to manage increased demand for our services whilst we operate at reduced capacity at UKVCAS service points across the UK. Where customers have been identified as eligible to use the IDV app for biometric reuse, and therefore do not need to book an appointment at a UKVCAS service point, we have reassured them that their immigration status is unaffected whilst their application is in process and the IDV app is rolled out.

5. Can customers use the IDV App before they are invited to use it?

No. Customers will only be able to use the UKVCAS IDV app when they are invited to do so by email. Customers will not be able to log into the UKVCAS IDV app unless UKVI have identified that they are eligible for biometric reuse.

We are inviting customers in phases to use the UKVCAS IDV app, starting from the earliest to the most recent applications. Customers are reassured that their immigration status remains unaffected whilst their application is in progress.



6. What if customers can't download the IDV app on their phone when they are invited?

Any customers invited to use the IDV app and experiencing difficulty can call UKVCAS for assistance on 0844 8920232 (Calls cost £0.04 per minute plus the provider's access charge. Lines are open 9am to 5.30 pm Monday to Friday). If a customer is unable to use the new IDV app when they are invited, they will be able to book an appointment at a UKVCAS Service Point.

7. What if a customer needs a decision on their visa urgently due to compassionate or emergency reasons?

Please contact UKVI for further information [here](#)

8. Why are some customers not eligible for biometric reuse – what does this mean?

Not all in-progress customer applications will be eligible for biometric reuse. UKVI introduced this new approach [as a short-term measure](#) in response to the impact of COVID-19 on customers. If the customer last enrolled biometrics before July 2015 (for adults and February 2018 for children) they will still need to attend an appointment at a service point. In family groups where any of the group's fingerprints cannot be reused the family group will [all](#) need to attend a biometric enrolment appointment together at a UKVCAS Service point or a UKVI Service and Support Centre.

9. As UKVI has started re-using biometrics for some customers, will it be used in future for all visa or settlement applications?

In response to the impact of COVID-19 on UKVI services, we have initially introduced biometric reuse for eligible customers affected by UKVCAS closures and reduced capacity on reopening. This has been introduced in a phased approach where our internal processes and technology supports it, and where an individual's previous identity verification information can be reused.

This approach has allowed UKVI to address increased demand for our services whilst UKVCAS service points reopened with reduced appointment capacity, due to safety and social distancing requirements across the UK.

The biometric reuse process, and the IDV app to enable it, will be reviewed and considered for future use by UKVI. To assist the processing of this academic year's in-country student application peak, we will also be **reusing biometrics for some of our Tier 4 customers** who have previously supplied their fingerprints since July 2015.

Further details on this will be made available to customers in the UK in due course.