

A guide to studying in the UK for international students



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You will discover so much about yourself, here in the home of the English language. We're one of the world's most popular study destinations; with a welcoming, inclusive way of life, outstanding academic standards and rich traditions that will inspire you to think independently, be creative and truly grow as an individual. It's why our graduates are progressing further and being promoted quicker than peers educated elsewhere.

And with new friends, new experiences and some of the world's greatest cultural events waiting for you, you'll make memories that last a lifetime.

Why study in the UK?

The UK has inspired some of the finest minds in human history, and now it can inspire you.

For centuries, the planet’s most inventive and creative thinkers were taught at universities in the UK. And today, our country’s rich traditions of critical thinking and problem-solving are taught alongside the most cutting-edge and modern approaches to learning in the entire world.

That means that the UK is the perfect place for you to be creative. Our universities have one of the most diverse subject offerings in the world and we’ll give you the support and space you’ll need to be imaginative, ambitious and to think differently. And all while receiving a prestigious education that is built on the most solid of historical foundations.

Celebrated figures in science, politics, art and literature have all benefited from this exceptional standard of teaching and one in four world leaders have been shaped by their studies in the UK.



Like them, you'll be inspired to push your imagination as far as you possibly can, and to view the world in unique and life-changing ways. Because in the UK, your teachers will encourage you to express your opinions, your ideas and to develop your own interests and intellectual abilities.

You will be given space in other ways, too. Unlike in other countries, studies in the UK aren't confined to the classroom or lecture theatre. Regular field trips, visits and excursions will accelerate your learning by applying it to real world situations. By studying and problem-solving with friends you will learn how to challenge each other's ideas, enjoy constructive debate and gain an unbeatable understanding of how lessons and theories can be translated into working practice.

This critical and intellectual approach to education will give you so much more than just a competitive edge among your peers. It will fire your imagination and widen your personal experiences too.

A world-class education

A UK education is your bridge to the world, and to a bright and successful future.

Academics and employers across the globe admire and respect the formidable reputation of the UK's education system, and our graduates are among the most employable in the entire world. In fact, the majority of international students who have studied in the UK report a significant competitive edge over peers educated in other countries. They are progressing further, being promoted quicker, and earning more because of the prestigious education they have received in the UK.

That's because our universities and colleges consistently top world rankings. Two of the world's top three universities, and 27 more are in the top 200 best global institutions for learning (QS Top Universities, 2025).

What's more, the UK's higher education system is held to strict and exacting standards by the UK government, so you can be certain to get the very best in teaching, support and educational resources.

The UK is one of the most popular study destinations in the world. Over 700,000 students from other countries are currently studying here, and so you'll make all kinds of friends and learn about hundreds of other cultures. All in the home of the English language.

This is a chance to discover the very best in yourself. You will gain the knowledge, skills and insights which are in extremely high demand, all across the globe. It is also your opportunity to develop your personal interests, to learn about other cultures and experiences and to forge new and important friendships.

A great student experience

Studying in the UK offers more than a world-class education – it’s a life-changing experience. From iconic music scenes and rich literary heritage to vibrant multicultural cities and breathtaking natural landscapes, the UK invites you to explore, connect, and grow. Whether you’re enjoying the nightlife in London, hiking in the Scottish Highlands, or discovering diverse global cuisines, every day brings something new. You can make lifelong friends, join exciting clubs and societies, and feel part of a welcoming community that celebrates individuality and creativity. The UK offers unforgettable memories – and a future full of possibility.



And whether you're the type who wants to get muddy at Glastonbury Festival, or someone who keeps things refined at the Royal Opera House – you can be sure to find the things which will truly make your heart sing.

And as we're the nation that invented football, tennis, rugby, golf, cricket and so many other games – don't forget that the UK is also home to some of the greatest experiences that sport can offer. So whether it's cheering on Manchester City or Liverpool in the English Premier League, or watching a singles final with your friends at Wimbledon, you'll find opportunities and experiences here like nowhere else on earth.

Great universities that give you space to grow

With a global reputation for research and academic excellence, the UK is the perfect place to discover your talents. And by studying here, you'll feel confident and ready to make great leaps forward in your life and chosen career.

The UK is one of the world's most innovative countries and has consistently been at the forefront of science, culture, finance, politics and more. We are the birthplace of many world changing events, from the Industrial Revolution to the invention of the World Wide Web – and our small country continues to exert enormous global influence.

This impressive culture of innovation and invention will inspire you to get the very best out of your own studies. And as our teachers are among the brightest in the world, studying here is an opportunity to draw from a wealth of experience and learn from the very best.

This education will enable you to transform your life and career, giving you experience and insights that are in high global demand. And as our intensive postgraduate programmes maintain this exceptional standard of education, while often being shorter than those in other countries, choosing to study for a postgraduate degree in the UK can quickly transform their prospects in an effective and affordable way.

**Find a study option
that's right for you**

Whether you are looking for undergraduate, postgraduate, English courses or other study options, we can help you find the right course for you.

Courses in the UK are tailor made to support you in getting the most from your studies as quickly as possible. There are thousands of courses for you to choose from – no matter what you're passionate about, the UK is a fantastic place to pursue your interest.

In the UK, flexibility is built into the majority of our courses. Many universities allow you to choose from different subject 'modules', so you can build a course programme that suits you, specialising as you go for a perfectly tailored experience.

Postgraduate courses in the UK maintain our exceptional academic standards, and while some are shorter than those in the US and Australia, many of our prestigious MBA degrees take just one year to complete. This allows you to get excellent value for money in your studies and means you can begin applying your education to the real world a lot sooner.



Undergraduate studies

For international undergraduates looking to kick-start their career, the UK offers far more than just a world-class education. With a wide range of learning experiences around every corner, you will graduate with the confidence, skills and knowledge to shape your future.

UK undergraduate course types include:

Bachelor's or undergraduate degree: BA (Bachelor of Arts), BSc (Bachelor of Science), BEd (Bachelor of Education) and BEng (Bachelor of Engineering).

A full-time bachelor's degree normally takes three years to complete (four in some cases). Part-time options are also available at some universities and colleges.

Shorter courses: Foundation Degree, Diploma of Higher Education, Higher National Diploma, and Certificate of Higher Education.

Search for your course

UCAS lists more than 50,000 undergraduate courses with nearly 300 providers in the UK. You can use the course and university finder on the Study UK website to find the right one for you: <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/choosing-university-college>

You can also search via UCAS: <https://digitalucas.com/search>

Their subject guides also give you an insight into the courses you could study at undergraduate level, what they involve, and how to enroll: <https://wwwucas.com/explore/search>

Postgraduate studies

With our exceptional academic standards, progressive teaching techniques and globally-respected research practices, it's easy to see why so many international postgraduates choose to study in the UK.

UK postgraduate course types include:

Master's degrees: MA (Master of Arts), MSc (Master of Science), subject-specific qualifications, including MEng (Master of Engineering), MFA (Master of Fine Arts), LLM (Master of Laws), MArch (Master of Architecture), and MPhil (Master of Philosophy), which are research-led and usually designed for students to progress to a PhD.

A full-time master's degree normally takes one year (taught master's) or two years (research master's) to complete. Part-time options are also available at some universities.

MBA courses

PhDs or doctorates

Postgraduate diplomas and qualifications: Usually shorter than a master's and do not involve a thesis or dissertation.

Professional and vocational qualifications: most awards involve practical training.

Search for your course

Visit the Prospects website, which has details of postgraduate study options: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses>

Other options for you

As well as undergraduate and postgraduate study, the UK offers many other opportunities to international students:

Further education:

This refers to education after secondary school that is not an undergraduate or postgraduate degree. Further education institutions in the UK provide technical and professional education and training to people over the age of 16. Qualifications and training include A-Levels, apprenticeships, traineeships, vocational qualifications and entry level training.

Foundation pathway courses:

These are designed for international students to improve their English skills and develop the confidence to start undergraduate or postgraduate study. They provide the opportunity to adjust to the UK's culture and get used to university teaching.

English language courses:

As the home of the English language and with a reputation for academic excellence, the UK is the perfect destination to learn English.

Boarding schools:

A boarding school is a residential school where pupils live and study during the school year. There are approximately 500 boarding schools across the UK.

Studying for a UK degree outside the UK

Did you know you can gain a UK higher education qualification in your own country? There are various transnational education (TNE) options for you to choose from, including online courses, articulation pathways and joint degrees. Contact your local British Council office for more information.

To find out more about course information and other UK study options, visit: <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/ways-learning>

How to apply

Undergraduate studies

Most undergraduate applications are made through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). To apply through UCAS, you need to go to <https://www.ucas.com> and register your details in their application system. You can apply for up to five courses through UCAS and you will be contacted by them with any offers from your chosen universities or colleges.



Application deadlines

Mid October

For courses at the University of Oxford and the University of Cambridge and for most courses in medicine, veterinary medicine, science and dentistry.

End of January

For most undergraduate courses.

30 June

Late deadline for most undergraduate courses. Applications received after this deadline will automatically go into “clearing”, so you will not be guaranteed your first choice.

While you will be able to apply after the January deadline right up until 30 June, it is better to apply early.

What is Clearing?

Clearing is how universities and colleges in the UK fill any places they still have on their courses. From early July to mid October, you can apply for a course using Clearing if you're not already holding an offer from a university or college, and the course still has places.

You can use Clearing if:

- you're applying after 30 June
- you didn't receive any offers (or none you wanted to accept)
- you didn't meet the conditions of their offers
- you've declined your firm place using the 'decline my place' button in Track.

Useful tips for applying through Clearing:

- Ask for advice.
- See what courses are available by using the search tool on UCAS and check entry requirements.
- Consider different subjects.
- Talk to the universities you are interested in.
- Attend a virtual open day.

For more information about Clearing and dates for each year, visit the UCAS website <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/results-confirmation-and-clearing/what-clearing>

For more information about applying for undergraduate courses in the UK, visit <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/apply/undergraduate>

Postgraduate studies

Many UK universities handle their own postgraduate applications and you can often apply directly through their websites.

Many postgraduate courses do not have a fixed application deadline. However, it is always best to apply early to make sure you have the best chance of being accepted – from six months to a year before your course begins.

For more information about applying for postgraduate courses in the UK, visit <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/apply/postgraduate> and <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>



What you will need when applying to a UK University or College

Your qualifications

You can check the equivalence of your country's qualifications with those in the UK by contacting the UK National Information Centre – <https://www.enic.org.uk/>

Personal Statement

You will be required to provide a personal statement as part of your application to study at a UK university. This document is your opportunity to explain why you would like to study your chosen subject, and to outline the skills and experience that make you well suited to this field.

Here are some tips to help you.

The course description on the university website will explain the qualities, skills and experience it requires. Be sure to explain how you match each of these requirements as you write your statement.

State why you are applying for the course. Be specific about which aspects interest you most, and how you believe the course will help you in your future ambitions.

As well as explaining why you are academically suited to the course, also describe any work experience you may have – or any extra-curricular activities you take part in.

For more advice on writing a personal statement, you can visit <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-to-university>

You can also find out more information on the Study UK website <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/apply>

Additional documents and information

While UCAS can send results (including the International Baccalaureate) for most international qualifications, you may need to send proof of those results yourself.

You should check with your chosen university, to understand what their policy is on this issue. You may be required to provide proof in the form of certificates or transcripts.

Student visas

Most international students need a visa to study in the UK. Finding out whether you need a visa to study is easy – simply check the UK government's website <https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa>

Student route (previously Tier 4 visa)

It is likely you will need to apply for a student route visa to study in the UK, and you should check with your country's governmental information to confirm this.

It costs £524 per applicant. If you want a priority or super-priority service, it will cost more.

Please note: you must register with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and apply for an eVisa.

For a step by step guide to applying for your visa, you can visit: <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/student-visas>



Graduate route

The UK's Graduate route welcomes international students to apply to stay in the UK and work, or look for work, upon graduation. You can find more information about the Graduate route on the Study UK website

<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/after-your-studies/graduate-route>

You can also find out more information about working after your studies here

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/Working-after-studies>



Money, budgeting and scholarships

Course fees

Fees for UK courses vary depending on your study level and where in the UK you are studying (as there are different rules for England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales).

International students can expect to pay between £11,400 and £38,000 annually, and typically an undergraduate degree course will last for three years. Medical degrees may cost more and many UK master's degrees can be completed in one year, meaning lower living costs and faster entry into employment.

Always be sure to check the cost of course fees with the University or college you are applying to. Most often, this information will be listed on their website.

Living costs

No matter which country you're from, the UK is an affordable study destination. Knowing what kinds of costs you can expect will help you to plan your finances.

The cost of living varies, depending on where in the UK you decide to study. London and other big cities are more expensive than other areas, for example. But depending on where you study you should expect to budget from between £1,500 and £1,700 per month in London and between £1,100 and £1,500 in the rest of the UK per month to cover your rent, bills, entertainment and other living costs.

The institution where you choose to study will be able to advise you on more detailed local costs of living and where to shop locally. You can use the UKCISA international student budget calculator to help you plan your budget: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/How-much-will-it-cost-to-study-in-the-UK>

The National Union of Students card and the International Student Identity Card offer great student discounts in many shops, restaurants and businesses. You can find out more about these cards at <https://www.totum.com/campaigns/wearetotum> and <https://www.isic.org/get-your-card>

Scholarships and financial support

There are often funding options available for international students who want to study in the UK. These range from part-funding, for example paying part of your fees, to full-funding which covers programme fees, living expenses, and return flights to the UK.

You can search our database of scholarships at <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/scholarships-funding> and check with individual university websites for institution-specific opportunities.

GREAT Scholarships

GREAT Scholarships are for international students who want to study at a UK university for a one-year postgraduate course. Each scholarship offers £10,000 towards tuition fees.

The scholarships are jointly funded by the British Council, the GREAT Britain Campaign, and participating UK higher education institutions. Find out more here: <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/scholarships-funding/great-scholarships>

Global scholarships

You can apply for any of the following scholarships, provided they are appropriate for your course.

Chevening Scholarships: Postgraduate scholarships from the UK government aimed at students with potential as future leaders: <https://www.chevening.org/>

Commonwealth Scholarships: Postgraduate scholarships for nationals of Commonwealth countries, funded by the UK government and intended to support individuals who will subsequently make a contribution to the development of their home country: <https://cscuk.fcdo.gov.uk/apply/>



Living in the UK

Accommodation

Most universities and colleges have their own accommodation office, and this should be the first place you go to ask about accommodation. Most institutions provide accommodation for international students in a hall of residence (either full-board or self-catering) or a self-catering shared house or flat. Space is usually limited, so applications for such accommodation should be made as soon as you have been accepted on your course and certainly before the required deadline.

Private accommodation

The accommodation office at your institution may be able to help with this, too. The office may keep lists of private accommodation available in the area, and some offices may even help you arrange a booking.

The most usual type of private accommodation is a room in a house with shared facilities. Renting a furnished house or a flat is likely to be expensive, especially in city centres, and quite difficult to find. A good way of making this affordable is to share with other students. If you do this, make sure you agree beforehand on how you will share costs.

Food

Food is near the top of the list of things you might miss when away from home. But food can be one of the best parts of living in the UK. University provides a great opportunity to build a positive relationship with food and cooking, to create some interesting, delicious meals and to really enjoy yourself.

The average weekly food shop for one costs around £40 to £50. Although you will always find a selection of supermarkets with plenty of choice for students on different budgets.

An increasing number of UK supermarkets offer international food products, so you will always be able to get together with friends and cook the food you love. And by living among people from all backgrounds and cultures, you can also try out many new and different cuisines, so why not ask your flat mates for a few tips, and learn to make some quick and easy dishes from a different culture?

Living in catered halls at university usually means that breakfast and dinner are provided for you from Monday to Friday. It makes life a lot easier having meals ready and made for you when you need them and it can be a sociable time.

Leisure time

On campus, the students' union usually organises all kinds of social functions and there will be many clubs and societies that you can join.

If you are interested in arts and culture, you will find the UK packed with museums, theatres and other cultural attractions just waiting to be discovered.

The restaurant scene in the UK is thriving, and increasingly diverse. Pubs are also popular social destinations for many university and college students in the UK. You don't have to drink alcohol to go to a pub – you will find lots of non-alcoholic drinks on offer, and many pubs also have food and entertainment such as karaoke, football match screenings, or pub quizzes (weekly events where you compete as a team).



Some of the world's largest music venues and events are in the UK, such as the O2 Arena in London and the world-famous Glastonbury Festival, but many world-renowned artists and bands also play at UK universities and colleges, and small bars and cafés often host live music and dancing.

Almost every town will have a cinema with films from around the world. Hollywood releases will be easy to find, but major cities also have cinemas specialising in foreign and independent films, and universities often have a student cinema that shows films on campus at student-friendly prices.

If you love sport, the UK offers a range of ways to explore your passion. We're fanatical about every kind of sport here, and many of our athletes and clubs lead the world. Whether it's global team sports, like football, or individual sports like athletics, you will find ways to compete in and celebrate the sports you care most about alongside your studies.

UK weather and clothing

Although UK weather is unpredictable, it is rarely extreme. Wear several layers so that you can put them on or take them off as the weather changes, and always carry an umbrella.

In summer, the average temperature ranges from 9–18 degrees Celsius (48–64 degrees Fahrenheit), although on occasion, it can reach above 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) in a heatwave.

In winter the average is between 2 and 7 degrees Celsius (36–45 degrees Fahrenheit), but temperatures can drop below 0 degrees Celsius (36 degrees Fahrenheit). Most houses, buildings, trains and buses have good heating systems. In general, there is little difference between the regions of the UK, but you will experience more snow, rain and wind in northern and mountainous areas.

Most UK towns and cities have a large range of shops selling clothes to suit all styles and budgets. You will see all kinds of fashion at UK schools, colleges and universities, and almost anything goes. Students usually dress casually during the day – jeans and t-shirts are fine – and more smartly if you're going out in the evening. Very few student bars and pubs have a dress code.

Some courses require you to wear specialist clothing for health and safety. For example, if you are in a science laboratory, you may need to wear protective glasses and a white lab coat. Some universities will provide these, while others may require you to purchase your own.

The UK is a multi-cultural place and it is common for people to wear clothing associated with their culture and religion, for example a head scarf, kippah, turban, sari or long skirt. In major towns and cities, you will find specialist shops selling clothing from around the world, particularly Asian and Middle Eastern clothing.

Explore the UK

From bustling cities to snow-capped mountains, rolling green hills to highlands and islands, the UK is beautiful, and exploring is a must. Its relatively small size and good transport links mean that you can see a lot while you are here. Some highlights include London with its fascinating history, iconic buildings, cutting-edge fashion, theatre and food; northern cities like Manchester and Liverpool, which are well known for their famous football clubs and great nightlife; Scotland's stunning mix of wild beauty and buzzing cities; the stunning landscapes of Wales' national parks; and the spectacular coastline of Northern Ireland.

For more information about exploring the UK visit <https://www.visitbritain.com/en>



Health and safety

With one of the best healthcare systems in the world, and globally respected policing, studying in the UK is exceptionally safe and secure.

The UK's NHS (National Health Service) is one of the world's most advanced healthcare systems, offering safe and modern treatment.

To gain access to the NHS, you will be required to pay an immigration health surcharge as part of your visa application fee.

In a country with low crime rates, your safety is also key. Universities often have on-campus security and run safety briefings and orientation sessions to help you settle in with confidence. And a wide range of support is available to you, from our community police, to charitable and community organisations that can support you with your mental health, wellbeing, finances, accommodation, legal issues and more.



Religion in the UK

As an open, inclusive and multi-faith society, students of all religions can expect to feel welcome in the UK, along with plenty of places to practise their faith. With a history of multi-culturalism dating back hundreds of years, we have well-established communities representing all major religions, and a deep commitment to supporting students' religious needs on campus.

We are proud to be a very inclusive society in every way, and it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of their race, nationality or religion.



Further information

Useful links

If you would like to read more about studying in the UK, and what opportunities you will find here, here are some websites and links that can help you.

Moving to the UK

For the latest information on moving to the UK to study, please visit <https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk>

EU student advice:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/eu-student-advice>

Student visas

For information and guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/browse/visas-immigration>

For Visa Application Centre (VAC) information:
<https://www.vfsglobal.com/en/individuals/index.html>

Study UK website:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/student-visas>

General information

Study UK website:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/>

Find a university:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/choosing-university-college>

What subjects can I study?:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/plan-studies/choosing-course/subjects>

Sign up to the Study UK newsletter:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/newsletter>

Scholarships:
<https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/scholarships-funding>

Student advice:
<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/student-advice/>

Social media:

Study UK on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/StudyUK.BritishCouncil>

Study UK on Instagram

https://www.instagram.com/StudyUK_BritishCouncil/

Study UK on LinkedIn

<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/study-uk-british-council/>

Study UK on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/user/StudyInTheUK>

Study UK on TikTok

https://www.tiktok.com/@studyuk_britishcouncil

Study UK on Spotify

<https://open.spotify.com/user/fuz79snssaf2ilfqtbapdent>

Study UK on Weibo

<https://weibo.com/educationuk>

Universities and Colleges

Admissions Service (UCAS):

<https://wwwucas.com/>

The official website for comparing UK higher education course data:

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>

Association of Colleges:

<https://www.aoc.co.uk/about/general-further-education-colleges>

Prospects: Postgraduate course search:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study>

