

Doing your research

This guide will help international students to research the higher education courses and opportunities available in the UK. Researching your options will help you to decide what and where you might want to study and things you need to think about before you apply.



**Discover
Uni**

working with

UK Council
for International
Student Affairs

UKCISA

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**STUDY
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How to research your options

1. Search websites and resources to help you with your decision

The websites below will help you to find courses you might want to study:

Discover Uni

[Discover Uni](#) is a website which allows you to search and compare courses from across the UK.

Discover Uni is the official source of information for applicants in the UK. It includes helpful insights, such as student satisfaction data which shows the percentage of students who are satisfied with the course. It also provides information on how much money graduates will earn 15 months after completing their course. These official statistics give an insight into the course and opportunities after graduating to support with your decision making.

Check out our [short video](#) to help you to search for courses.

Study UK

You can find lots of practical information and insight through [Study UK](#), a website created by the British Council. The website offers lots of support to find a university, tips on how you can prepare for studying in the UK and a list of free online courses which offer university taster courses and careers advice for students.

UKCISA

The UK Council for International Student Affairs [UKCISA](#) is a helpful source of information for international students where you can find latest news and lots of support.

UCAS

[UCAS](#) is the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service which you can use to search and apply for undergraduate courses.

You will receive updates on your application through [Track](#). Track will help you to see and reply to offers you have been given.

UCAS also has lots of helpful [guidance](#) to support you to fill in your application and write a personal statement. You can also find guides to the [subjects available](#) to study in the UK and some details of courses.

2. Research individual universities and colleges

Once you have an idea of the courses you might want to study, you can explore the university or college websites you are interested in.

This will help you to understand what the university or college is like, where it is located and what type of experience and opportunities you might have as a student.

University and college websites also provide information on the facilities, equipment, and opportunities to join sports or societies.

Many universities and colleges have virtual tours, open days and discussion sessions available – see the list of [virtual events](#) on the UCAS website.

3. Rankings

The UK has a global reputation for the high standard of education you can experience. Many universities in the UK form part of the international university rankings each year. You could search global university rankings to support you in your search for the right university or college for you.

Looking at rankings should only form one part of your research. It's important that you consider other aspects – such as what you want to study and what experience you'd like to have – to make the choice that is best for you. The checklist on page_ will support you to consider all the evidence and help you decide what and where you want to study.

4. Decide on which courses you might want to study and which universities or colleges you would like to go to

Talking to students

Talking to current students is a great way to understand what university life is like. Through UCAS you can find and [chat to students](#) who study at a specific university or college to ask them questions about their experience.

You could also use [The Student Room](#) to talk to current university and college students.

Exploring social media

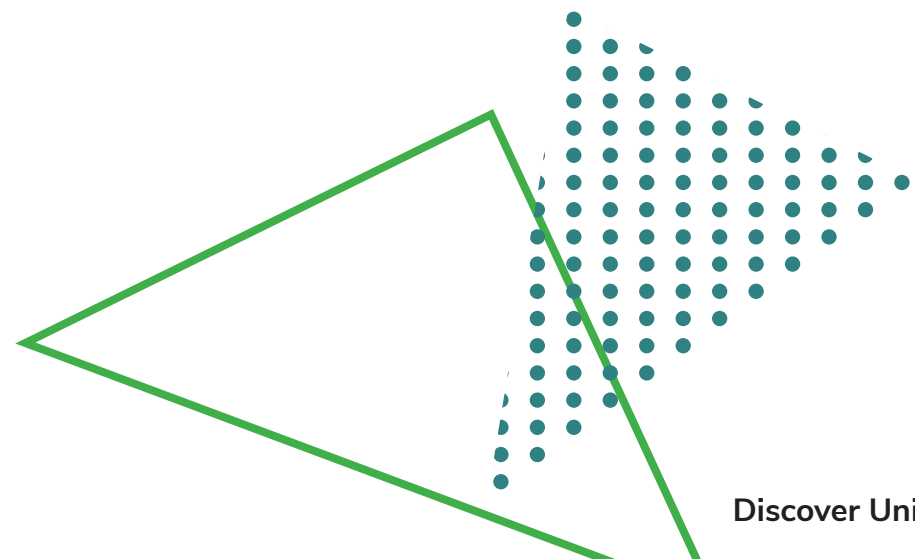
You may also want to explore the university or college's social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube or WeChat where you may be able to find videos, live events, and question and answer sessions. This will help you to see what it is like to be a student there.

5. Options after graduation

A graduate visa gives you permission to stay in the UK for at least two years after successfully completing a course in the UK.

Students on the graduate route will be able to work or look for work after their studies for a maximum period of two years, or three years for doctoral students.

The graduate route will work for the whole of the UK, and will be unsponsored, so applicants will not need a job offer to apply. Check the UK government advice on whether you are eligible for this route. If you're not eligible for a graduate visa, you may be eligible for another type of visa to stay in the UK.



How to research options

Moving to a new country to study is a big step. You should research your opportunities to make sure the course and location is right for you. The table below helps you see which university or course can offer the things that are most important to you.

University and college entry requirements

Each course will have an 'entry requirement' which means that you will need specific results or qualifications to be accepted onto the course.

Your qualifications may be different to the ones listed for the course.

You should check universities' websites for information on international qualifications. You can find out how your courses compare at the [UK National Recognition Centre](#).

Remember to consider different options – why not include some courses that are above your grades, some that match and one that is lower as a backup?

International students often need to take an English language test to study in the UK. Contact your university or college for more information on their specific course requirements. You can also find information on English language exams at [UKCISA](#).

You may also be required to sit an admissions test for your university or college. Many of these have an October deadline. For information on admissions tests, check the institution's website. You can also find a list of admissions tests on [UCAS](#).

Visas

To study in the UK, you may need to apply for a visa through the student route.

To apply, you will need to show that you have:

- an offer to study at a university or college
- the level of English which is required to take the course
- finances to pay for your course and living expenses.

You will need to apply through the government website or through a local visa application center. More information can be found on the [UK Government's website](#) and [UKCISA](#).

There is further information on applying for a visa on page X.

You can find more information about English language requirements on the [UK Government's website](#).

Course content

On the university or college website you should be able to find information on the modules which are available for your course.

Some modules will be compulsory which means you will need to complete them. You may also be able to choose other modules which you are interested in from other courses.

Location

You should consider what type of institution you might like to study at. Would you prefer to go to a campus-based university where all of your lectures and seminars are in the same area as your accommodation, or would you prefer for your university and college buildings to be located in a city or town?

Which region of the UK would you like to live in? Would you like to live in a big city or a smaller town? Or would you like to study from home? You should consider this before you make your decision.

Study UK has produced [information](#) on the different regions and nations of the UK.

To find information on the cost of living in the UK, you can look at the [University Budget Calculator](#) on WhichUni.

Course accreditation

An 'accredited course' is one that has been approved by a professional body.

For some subjects you will be accredited when you graduate. This means you will be able to work in a certain profession or continue your studies at postgraduate level. For example, a nursing degree may be accredited by the Royal College of Nursing.

Course information on the university websites should indicate whether a course is accredited.

Delivery

Each course may be taught differently. You should research if the course is mainly online, in person, or a mixture of both.

Is the course taught through lectures and seminars, or is there an opportunity to gather practical experience, such as lab work or internships?

You should consider which format would be best for you.

Assessment

You may want to research how students are assessed on the course. Will you be assessed through essays, exams, group project work or presentations? Or will there be a mixture? You should consider which assessment methods you prefer.

Work experience

You may have opportunities to gain work or volunteering experience. This will help you to develop many skills which will add to your experience and confidence.

You should think through how your degree might give you skills for your future job. Does your course offer field or study trips, or internship opportunities to help develop these skills? Or can you get this experience through your uni or college, or in the local area?

You will also be able to add these new skills to your CV which will help you get a job in future. Find out more about how a UK degree prepares you for your chosen career on the Study UK website.

Student experience

Being a student is more than an academic experience. As a student you may be able to join many clubs and societies which will support you to meet other students and develop new skills. You can search the university or college website to see what facilities they have, for example sports fields, swimming pools and art and design studios.

Many universities and colleges have a students' union which is where you can find which student societies and clubs are available. Within a students' union there are also opportunities to represent students and take on specific roles which support the student community.

You could search whether the university or college has a students' union to find out more.

Accommodation

The university or college website will provide information on the type of accommodation which is available.

The university or college website should have a range of options available, including options to live in quieter or alcohol-free accommodation.

Fees and costs

Course fees vary for international students. When researching your options, you should look into the course fees at each university or college. This will help you to decide where you might want to study.

Further information can be found in the 'fees and funding' section of this guide.

Financial support

If you were to experience any unexpected financial troubles while at university or college, you may be able to apply for a hardship fund through your university which provides an amount of money to support you. You should be able to find information about these funds on the university or college's website.

Additional support

You may want to research if the university or college provides any additional support. For example, if you have a disability, how will the university make sure the course is accessible to you? Or is the university able to offer year-round accommodation?

The university or college should support you with any individual needs or accessibility requirements.

You will also be able to find additional support from:

- The university or college's international office
- The students' union
- [UKCISA](#)
- [British Council](#)
- [Student Minds](#)
- [Student Space](#)

COVID-19

When you travel to the UK you should check the [UK Government's website](#) for up to date information on any travel requirements.

For any specific queries relating to COVID-19, the student support team at your university or college will be able to help you.

If you are a student with disabilities or with support needs, make sure you check your institution's disability service. You can find more details about student support on [Discover Uni](#).

Applying

If you are planning to study an undergraduate course, you will usually need to apply via UCAS. Details of the application process and deadlines for courses can be found on the [UCAS website](#).

Once you have made an application through UCAS, you will be able to get updates through their [Track system](#).

Discover Uni has further advice on its [international applicants page](#). If you want to study part time or by distance learning, you may need to apply directly to the university or college that you want to attend. Check the institution's websites and course pages for details about how and when to apply. If you decide to take a distance learning course, you will not need to apply for a visa.

Student visa

When you have been offered a place on a course in the UK, you will need to apply for a student visa to ensure that you are able to travel to and live in the UK for the duration of your course.

The student route is a points-based visa system for all international students, including EU, EEA and Swiss students, who want to study in the UK. All international students on degree courses need to apply through the student route, including those from Europe coming to the UK to begin a course.

You will be asked to evidence certain requirements in order to obtain a student visa when you first come to the UK:

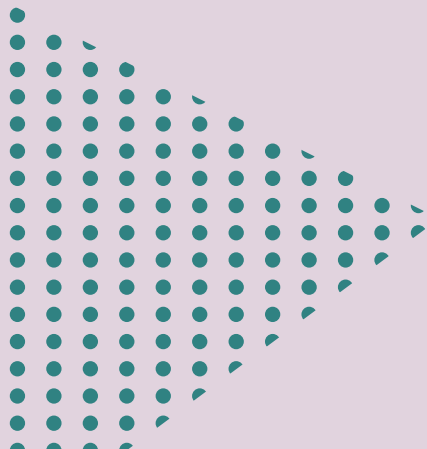
- Your student sponsor (the higher education provider that has offered you a place) will need to assess your ability to read, write, speak and understand English. Your student sponsor will tell you how it will assess your English, and the level of English you must have, which is subject to minimum levels set by the Home Office.
- You must be able to show that you have finances to pay for your studies and living expenses.

For more details on visas for EU and international students, please see the information provided by [UKCISA](#) and Study UK.

Official guidance on the student visa and how to apply can also be found on the [UK Government's website](#).

Withdrawing or deferring

- If you decide you no longer want to apply to higher education, you can cancel your application via [Track](#). Please note that you can't get a refund unless your application has been cancelled within 14 days of being submitted to UCAS.
- If you are still interested in applying for university, but are unable to start this year, you may be interested in a deferred entry route. Deferring entry means applying for a course and then taking a gap year before going to university. You should check with the university or college that you're applying to whether you can do this.
- If you want to defer your place, you will need to check with your chosen university or college for information. You can also withdraw your application completely and apply for university or college next year, but please keep in mind there is no guarantee you will get an offer or place then.
- If you want to withdraw or suspend your studies after you've started, you should first discuss your options with your university or college. Please be aware that any changes to your attendance at your higher education course may affect your student visa conditions.



Student finance

International students can apply for access to student loans only if they meet particular conditions.

For the latest announcements on student finance access, see the [UKCISA website](#).

If you are an EU student, Irish citizen or UK national living in the EEA or Switzerland, please check the UKCISA explanation of the fees regulations and guidance for your relevant area of the UK:

- [England](#);
- [Scotland](#);
- [Wales](#); or
- [Northern Ireland](#).

Other international students

If you're a non-UK, EU or EEA student, universities and colleges will usually charge higher fees. You should check the fees for your course and any support at your uni or college website.

Arriving in the UK

Moving to a new country is exciting but can also be stressful. Please see below some helpful things to think about before you move.

Do I need to register anywhere before or on arrival?

If you have been granted a visa, make sure to check the details of the visa and whether you need to register with a police force in the UK. To see the details of this, check the visa sticker in your passport. There is also information available from [UKCISA](#).

Are there restrictions in the UK due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

There may be restrictions in place in the UK due to COVID-19. Check the latest guidance for [England](#), [Northern Ireland](#), [Scotland](#) or [Wales](#). Before you travel, check your university or college's webpages for any support or advice they can offer you.

What if my travel is disrupted?

If your flight is cancelled during the pandemic, you can find advice on your travel rights from the [Money Saving Expert website](#).

Where can I find information about accommodation?

You will need to ensure you have suitable accommodation arranged for when you start your course. There is a wide range of student accommodation available in most areas of the UK. Your university may offer accommodation, or you may wish to consider privately owned properties. UKCISA provides [useful information](#) on comparing different providers of accommodation while you study in the UK

How do I open a UK bank account?

When you get to the UK, you will need to open a bank account to have access to money in the UK. Most UK banks require a 'bank introduction letter' from your university and you will need to provide some identification and visa documents. [UKCISA](#) gives details on how to open a UK bank account as an international student.

Links to further support

Researching your options

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

Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>

The Student Room: <https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/>

UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

Unibuddy: <https://www.ucas.com/chat-to-students>

What Uni: www.whatuni.com

Qualifications information

UK ENIC (formerly NARIC): <https://www.enic.org.uk/>

UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/international-and-eu-students/tips-international-applications>

Student finance information

UK Government (England): <https://www.gov.uk/apply-for-student-finance>

Student Awards Agency Scotland: <http://www.saas.gov.uk/>

Student Finance Wales: <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/>

Student Finance Northern Ireland: <https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/>

UK Council for Student Affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/information--advice/fees-and-money/government-student-support>

EU Settled Status (EUSS) guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/settled-status-eu-citizens-families>

Applying for a visa

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

UK Council for International Student Affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Visas-and-Immigration/Applying-for-a-Student-route-visa-outside-the-UK>

Life in the UK

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

Moving to the UK

UK Council for International Student Affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students#layer-6726>

Travel guidance during the pandemic

UK Government COVID-19 guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

Discover Uni COVID-19 information: <https://discoveruni.gov.uk/corona-covid-19-information/>

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

Accommodation guidance

UK Council for International Student Affairs: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Preparation-and-Arrival/Planning-your-housing>

