

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

Supported by



BRITISH
COUNCIL

GREAT
BRITAIN & NORTHERN IRELAND

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 about studying in the UK on the [Study UK](#) website. The website offers support on [finding a university](#), an overview of [subject areas](#) in the UK, [scholarships and funding](#) and [tips](#) on how to prepare for your studies.

UKCISA

The UK Council for International Student Affairs [UKCISA](#) is a helpful source of information for international students. Its website contains

information and guidance on all aspects of the international student experience, and advice on applications and immigration.

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 4 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

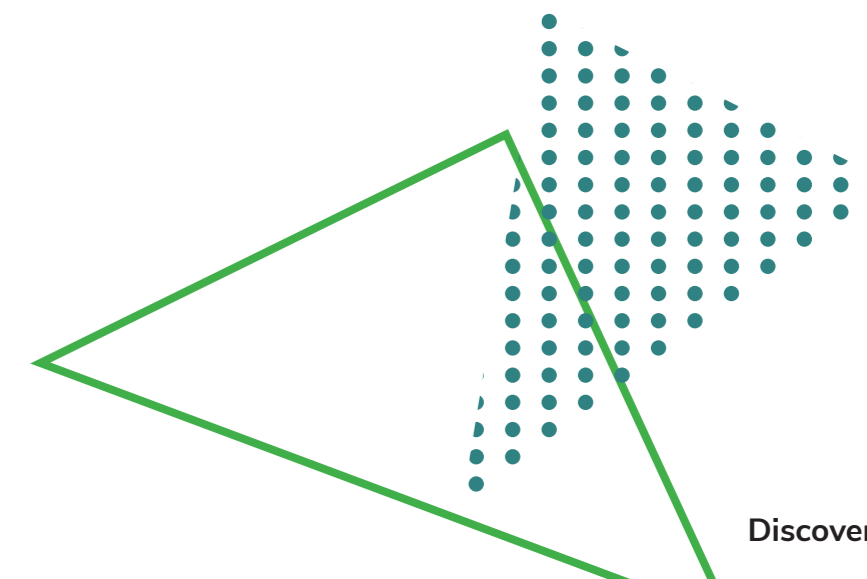
or WeChat where you may be able to find videos, live events, and question and answer sessions. This will help you to see what it is like to be a student there.

5. Options after graduation

The Home Office has recently announced a new graduate route for international students who want to work following the completion of a UK bachelors' degree. This will open on 1 July 2021.

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. Applicants who began their studies in autumn 2020 will now have until 21 June 2021 to enter the UK in order to be eligible for the route. Students who began their studies in January or February 2021 will need to be in the UK by 27 September 2021.



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 centre. More information can be found on the [UK Government's website](#) and [UKCISA](#).

There is further information on applying for a visa on page 8.

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. Find out more about the different regions of the UK in [Study UK's blog](#).

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. Hear from students about life in the UK in [Study UK's blog](#).

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 on [page 10](#) of this guide.

Financial support

If you 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.

For information on scholarships, see the [Study UK](#) 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.

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](#).

You will also be able to find additional support from:

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

COVID-19

When you are able to travel to the UK, you may find that you need to quarantine for a period. Make sure to keep checking the [UK Government's website](#) for information on travel and quarantining regulations.

The student support team at your university or college will be able to provide information on their specific social distancing measures or policies. Make sure you check in with them before you set off and let them know your planned arrival date. Find out more about the [impact of COVID-19](#) on international students in the UK.

Applying

If you are planning to study an undergraduate course, you will usually need to apply via UCAS. Once you have made an application through UCAS, you will be able to get updates through their [Track system](#).

If you have already applied to university or college, you should receive a reply by 20 May 2021. You should respond to any offer through the UCAS website by 10 June 2021.

You have until 30 June to apply for courses that still have places. You should check the UCAS site for more information on which courses are available.

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 website 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 after 31 December 2020.

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.

If you are from the EU and you started your course before 31 December 2020, you can apply under the EU Settlement scheme to remain in the UK after this date to complete your studies.

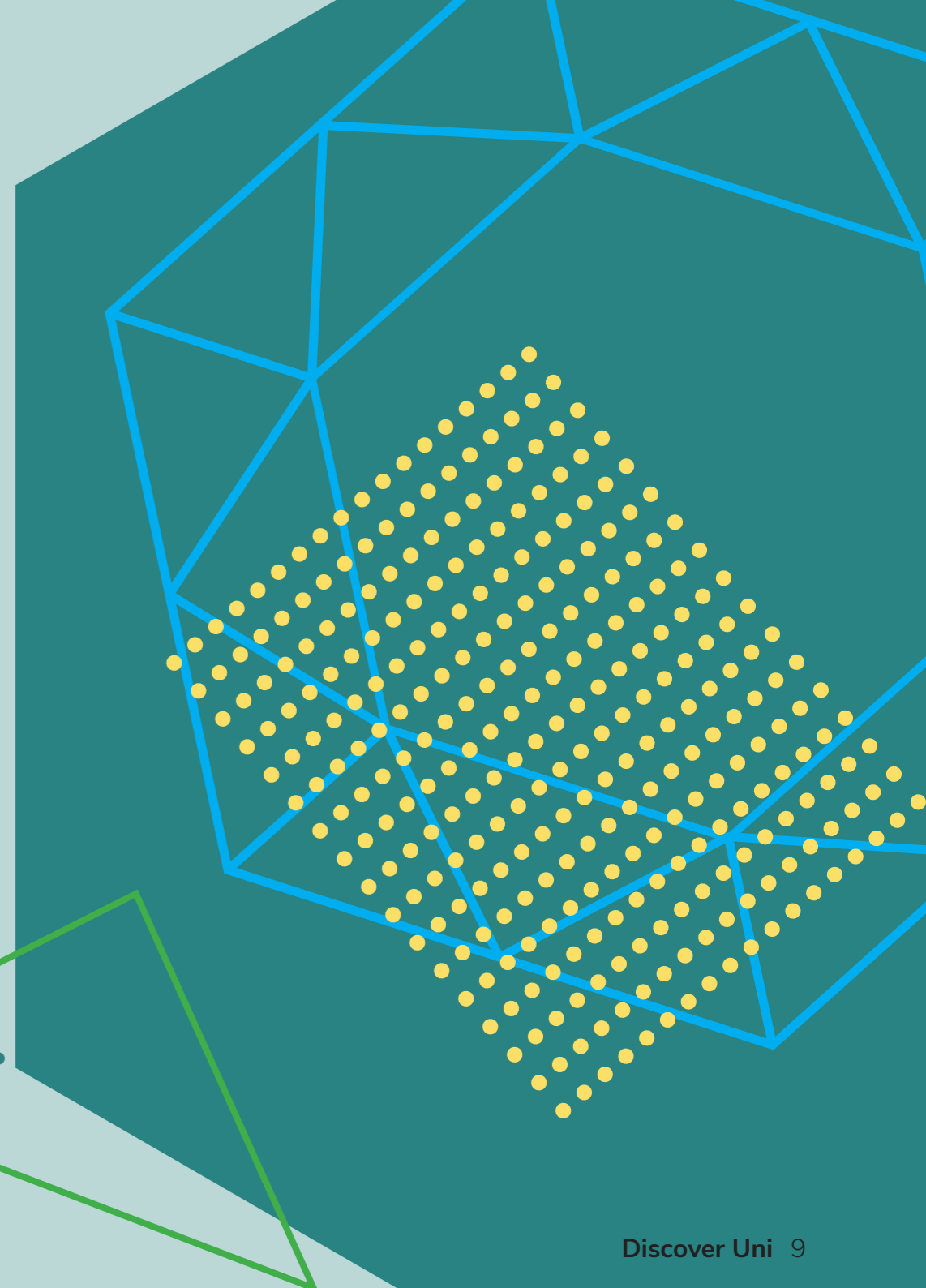
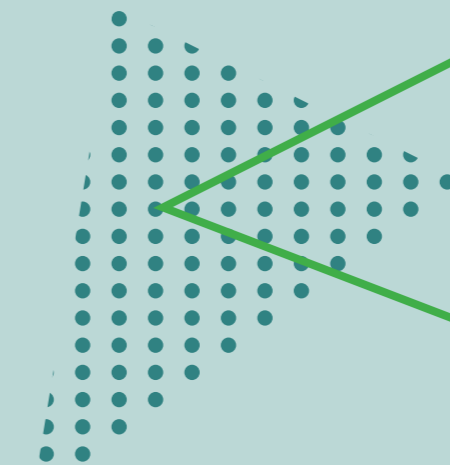
For more details on this, and the other requirements of the student visa, please see the [UKCISA website](#).

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](#).

EU students

Any EU student who started a course on or before 31 July 2021 will be able to access financial support for the duration of their course. This includes students in the European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss citizens. To be eligible for this, you must also have lived in the EEA or Switzerland for at least three years.

For EU students beginning a course on or before 31 July 2021, you can also apply for a cost of living loan if you have lived in the UK for at least three years before the start of your course. If you are applying for a course in England, you must have been resident in the UK, the European Economic Area, Switzerland or Gibraltar for at least three years before the start of your course.

If you're applying for a course which starts on or after 1 August 2021, you must have settled or pre-settled status under the [EU Settlement Scheme](#) (EUSS) to receive student finance support. This will enable you to be charged home fees rather than international fees. It may also allow you to have access to additional forms of financial support, depending on which type of

settled status you are given after applying for EUSS:

- If you are granted settled status, you will be eligible for tuition fee and maintenance support if you've lived in the UK for at least three years.
- If you are granted pre-settled status, you will be eligible for tuition fee support if you have been in the UK, Gibraltar, the EEA or Switzerland for at least three years.
- Some pre-settled status EU students may qualify for maintenance support in some UK nations, although this does not apply in England.

Irish citizens

If you're an Irish citizen, you will receive home fee status and tuition fee support if you have lived in the UK or Ireland for the three years before the start of your course. You may also be able to access maintenance support if you have lived in the UK or Ireland for the three years before the start of your course.

UK nationals living in the EEA or Switzerland

If you're a UK citizen living in the EEA or Switzerland, you must meet the following conditions to be eligible for home fee status, tuition fee and maintenance support:

- You were living in the EEA or Switzerland on 31 December 2020
- You have lived in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar for at least the last three years

- You have lived continuously in the EEA, Switzerland, the UK or Gibraltar between 31 December 2020 and the start of your course.

Other international students

If you're an international, 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. Below are 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 are currently restrictions in place in the UK due to COVID-19. Make sure to look at the [latest travel guidance](#) for

information about self-isolation and travel rules. Isolation normally lasts for 10 days. 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>

