

Studying in Chile

A guide for international students & families — how Chilean higher education works, the temporary residence student visa, tuition, Spanish & English programs, and work rules.

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

LATIN AMERICA'S TOP UNIVERSITIES, STABLE & HIGH-QUALITY

Chile is home to **Latin America's top-ranked universities** — Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC, #1 in the region) and Universidad de Chile — in a stable, high-quality system strong in engineering, medicine, and business, with some English-taught (MBA) options. Students apply for a **temporary residence student visa** via the SERMIG portal. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Chilean rules, tuition, and the funds requirement change and vary by consulate. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Servicio Nacional de Migraciones (SERMIG) and your university.**

Understand Why Students Choose Chile

WHAT TO KNOW

Chile offers **Latin America's top universities** (UC Chile, Universidad de Chile), a **stable economy**, **quality research**, some **English-taught (MBA) programs**, and **diverse landscapes** — at costs well below the US/UK/Europe.

BY THE NUMBERS

Top universities

UC Chile #1 in region

Stable

+ quality research

English

MBA options

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Chile's **quality, stability, and value** against paid tuition and a student visa that doesn't permit work by default — for top-ranked Latin American study, it's a strong choice.

GOOD TO KNOW

UC Chile ranks **#1 in Latin America**, and Universidad de Chile is close behind — the region's leading universities.

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

The leaders are the **Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC Chile — #1 in the region)** and **Universidad de Chile (public)**, plus Universidad de Santiago (USACH), Universidad de Concepción, Universidad Técnica Federico Santa María, and Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez (business/MBA). Unlike some neighbours, **tuition is charged** at both public and private universities.

BY THE NUMBERS

UC Chile / U de Chile

the leaders

USACH / Concepción

+ others

Tuition

charged (no free route)

HOW TO HELP

Choose among Chile's **top universities** (UC Chile, Universidad de Chile, and others) by field, noting that **tuition is charged** — there's no free public route for internationals.

WATCH OUT

Chile has **no free public university route** for international students — budget for tuition at both public and private universities.

Get the Temporary Residence Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

You apply for a **Temporary Residence Student Visa from OUTSIDE Chile**, through the **Servicio Nacional de Migraciones (SERMIG) digital portal** — at least three months before travel. After arriving, **register with the PDI (police) and obtain your ID card (Cédula de Identidad para Extranjeros) within 30 days.**

BY THE NUMBERS

Student visa

via SERMIG portal

From outside Chile

apply ~3 months ahead

PDI + ID card

within 30 days

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **Temporary Residence Student Visa via the SERMIG portal** (from outside Chile, ~3 months ahead), then **register with the PDI and get your ID card within 30 days** of arrival.

GOOD TO KNOW

Apply **from outside Chile via SERMIG**, and note approval isn't guaranteed even if you meet the requirements — apply early with complete documents.

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to universities**. Some undergraduate admissions use the **PAES (Prueba de Acceso a la Educación Superior)**; the main intake is in **March** (apply the prior August–October). Provide transcripts, a personal statement, and **Spanish proof (DELE/SIELE)** or English for English-taught programs; documents need apostille and translation.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly

March intake

PAES

for some undergrad

Spanish/English

DELE/SIELE or English

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to your chosen universities for the March intake (apply Aug–Oct prior), with transcripts and Spanish proof (DELE/SIELE) or English for English-taught programs.

GOOD TO KNOW

The main intake is **March** — plan applications for the prior August–October, and check whether your program uses the PAES.

Plan for Tuition & Scholarships

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is **charged** but generally **below the US/UK/Europe** (varying by program — for example, master's programs commonly run \$4,000–10,000, MBAs \$8,000–18,000). Funding includes **AGCID** (the Chilean government cooperation agency) and university scholarships, especially for postgraduate study.

BY THE NUMBERS

Tuition

paid; below Western fees

Master's

~\$4,000–10,000

Scholarships

AGCID + university

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **tuition** (below Western fees; varies by program) plus living costs, and pursue **AGCID** or university scholarships (especially for postgraduate study).

GOOD TO KNOW

Chile's **gratuidad (free tuition)** applies to eligible Chileans, not international students — budget for tuition.

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the visa you show **proof of financial solvency** — typically evidence of about **\$500–800/month** plus tuition — via bank statements, a scholarship letter, or a sponsor. You also need a **police/criminal clearance and a health certificate**, and apostilled/translated documents. The fee varies by nationality (~\$15–150).

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds

~\$500–800/month + tuition

Police clearance

+ health certificate

Fee

~\$15–150

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds (~\$500–800/month + tuition)**, a police clearance, a health certificate, and apostilled/translated documents — confirm specifics with SERMIG.

GOOD TO KNOW

The visa fee **varies by nationality** (reciprocity), ~\$15–150 — confirm your figure in the SERMIG portal.



Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Most programs are taught in **Spanish** (proficiency via **DELE/SIELE**; UC Chile expects around B2 / two years of college Spanish). **English-taught options** exist mainly at graduate level — several International MBAs are fully in English. Some Spanish greatly helps daily life.

BY THE NUMBERS

Spanish

DELE/SIELE (most)

English

International MBAs

Some Spanish

helps daily life

HOW TO HELP

Prove **Spanish (DELE/SIELE)** for most programs, or English for graduate/MBA options, and build Spanish for daily life and integration.

GOOD TO KNOW

English-taught degrees are **concentrated at graduate/MBA level** — most undergrad is in Spanish.

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, **register with the PDI and obtain your ID card (within 30 days), arrange housing, and open a bank account.** Note that UC Chile (and some others) **don't have university residences**, so plan private accommodation. Most students are based in **Santiago**; Chile is stable and safe.

BY THE NUMBERS

PDI + ID card

within 30 days

Housing

often private (no residences)

Based

in Santiago

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **PDI registration + ID card (30 days), housing, banking** — in stable, safe Chile; note many universities have no residences, so plan private housing.

GOOD TO KNOW

UC Chile and some universities have **no residences** — arrange private accommodation early.

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Be clear on this: the **student visa does not permit paid work by default** (a key difference from Argentina). To work, you must **apply for a change of visa or authorisation before starting employment**; a temporary work permit is sometimes granted during a transition. **Plan to fund your studies fully.**

BY THE NUMBERS

Work

not permitted by default

Change of visa

needed to work

Fund fully

don't rely on work

HOW TO HELP

Understand that the **student visa doesn't allow paid work by default** — you'd need a change of visa/authorisation, so plan to fund your studies fully.

WATCH OUT

Unlike Argentina, Chile's **student visa doesn't permit paid work** without a separate authorisation — budget accordingly.

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Chile's stable economy and strong universities offer opportunities, and graduates can apply for a **post-graduation temporary residence visa (Búsqueda de Oportunidades)** to seek work. Continuous legal residence can lead toward permanent residency and, in time, nationality. Confirm the current pathways.

BY THE NUMBERS

Post-graduation visa

Búsqueda de Oportunidades

Residency

a pathway

Confirm

current rules

HOW TO HELP

Plan for the **post-graduation visa (Búsqueda de Oportunidades)** to seek work after study, and note the pathway toward residency (and eventually nationality) — confirm current rules.

GOOD TO KNOW

Graduates can apply for a **post-graduation temporary residence visa** to look for work — a clear route to staying on.

Studying in Chile: The Essentials

A snapshot — figures change and vary by consulate, so confirm with SERMIG and your university.

The system

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC Chile — #1 in Latin America), Universidad de Chile (public), USACH, Universidad de Concepción, Federico Santa María, and Adolfo Ibáñez (business/MBA); tuition is charged (no free public route for internationals).

Visa & ID

Apply for a Temporary Residence Student Visa from outside Chile via the SERMIG portal (~3 months ahead); after arrival, register with the PDI and obtain your ID card (Cédula) within 30 days.

Tuition & scholarships

Tuition is charged but below Western fees (e.g., master's ~\$4,000–10,000, MBAs \$8,000–18,000); AGCID and university scholarships, especially for postgraduate study; gratuidad applies only to eligible Chileans.

Money & language

Show proof of funds (~\$500–800/month + tuition), a police clearance, and a health certificate (fee ~\$15–150); Spanish (DELE/SIELE) for most programs, English for graduate/MBA options.

Work & after

The student visa doesn't permit paid work by default (a change of visa is needed); a post-graduation visa (Búsqueda de Oportunidades) lets graduates seek work, on a pathway toward residency.

YOUR CHILE JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find Your Community.

Explore our other Studying in [Country] guides, Top Universities by Country, and country guides — among **1,297 free resources**.

tools.k12academics.com →

