K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in Colombia

A guide for international students & families — how Colombian higher education works, the M-9 student visa, affordable tuition, Spanish & English programs, and the rules.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

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.

AFFORDABLE, RESPECTED UNIVERSITIES, RICH SPANISH IMMERSION

Colombia offers **affordable tuition, respected universities (Universidad de los Andes and Universidad Nacional are QS-ranked), rich Spanish immersion, and vibrant cities** like Bogotá and Medellín — with some English-taught graduate options. Non-EU students get an **M-9 student visa**, register with Migración Colombia, and obtain a Cédula de Extranjería. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Colombian rules (governed by Resolución 5477 de 2022), tuition, and the funds requirement change. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with Migración Colombia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and your university**.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose Colombia

WHAT TO KNOW

Colombia offers **affordable tuition and living, QS-ranked universities, immersive Spanish, vibrant cities (Bogotá, Medellín), and some English-taught graduate programs** — a welcoming, culturally rich destination.

BY THE NUMBERS

Affordable	QS-ranked	Spanish
tuition & living	Uniandes, UNAL	+ some English (grad)

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Colombia's **affordability, quality, and Spanish immersion** against a mostly Spanish-taught system — for immersive, affordable study, it's an excellent choice.

GOOD TO KNOW

Spanish immersion adds real value — a highly valued skill globally ' and some English-taught graduate options (e.g., at Uniandes) ease the transition.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Two categories: **public universities** (Universidad Nacional de Colombia — UNAL, highly competitive; Universidad de Antioquia; Universidad del Valle) and **private universities** (Universidad de los Andes — Uniandes; Pontificia Universidad Javeriana; Universidad EAFIT). Most teach in Spanish; some graduate programs are in English.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public	Private	Cities
UNAL, U de Antioquia	Uniandes, Javeriana, EAFIT	Bogotá, Medellín, Cali

HOW TO HELP

Choose a **public university** (competitive, affordable) or a **private university** (Uniandes, EAFIT), by field and city — confirming the language of instruction.

GOOD TO KNOW

UNAL is **highly competitive** (a rigorous entrance exam, low acceptance) — private universities offer more accessible international admission.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Get the M-9 Student Visa & Cédula

WHAT TO KNOW

For programs over 90 days you need an **M-9 student visa** (fee ~$67), applied for via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with your admission letter, a bank certificate, and health insurance. After arriving, **register with Migración Colombia within 15 days** and obtain a **Cédula de Extranjería** for stays over 90 days.

BY THE NUMBERS

M-9 visa	Migración	Cédula
>90 days (~$67)	register within 15 days	de Extranjería

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **M-9 student visa** with your admission letter, bank certificate, and insurance, then **register with Migración Colombia within 15 days** and get your Cédula de Extranjería.

WATCH OUT

Register with **Migración Colombia within 15 days** of arrival — an important deadline; the Cédula is your foreigner ID for longer stays.

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STEP 04 OF 10

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to each university**. Public universities (UNAL) run **rigorous entrance exams**; private universities have their own admissions. Prove **Spanish (DELE B2 or equivalent)** for Spanish programs, or English (TOEFL/IELTS) for English-taught ones. Foreign diplomas need translation and (often) apostille.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	UNAL	Spanish/English
to each	rigorous entrance exam	DELE B2 or TOEFL/IELTS

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to your chosen university (UNAL's exam or a private university's admissions), and prove Spanish (DELE B2) or English as required, with apostilled documents.

GOOD TO KNOW

Get foreign documents **translated and apostilled** early — they're needed for both admission and the visa.

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STEP 05 OF 10

Plan for Tuition & Scholarships

WHAT TO KNOW

At **public universities**, international students pay a standardised flat rate (affordable). **Private universities** run roughly **$6,000–15,000/year** (Uniandes's undergraduate semester is ~$7,300; medicine higher). Scholarships include **ICETEX, COLFUTURO, and Colombian government awards** (tuition, stipend, insurance for postgrad).

BY THE NUMBERS

Public	Private	Scholarships
flat rate (affordable)	$6,000–15,000/yr	ICETEX, COLFUTURO, government

HOW TO HELP

Budget the tuition (public flat-rate is affordable; private $6k–15k) plus low living costs, and pursue ICETEX, COLFUTURO, or government scholarships.

GOOD TO KNOW

Colombian government scholarships (for postgrad) can cover **tuition, a stipend, and insurance** — worth pursuing for master's/PhD.

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STEP 06 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the M-9 visa you show a **bank certificate with an average balance above ~COP 7,812,420 (about $2,000)**, proof of **health insurance**, and your admission letter. Present clean, consistent statements. Confirm the current figure with Migración Colombia.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Insurance	Admission letter
bank cert >COP 7.8M	required	+ clean statements

HOW TO HELP

Prepare a **bank certificate (>~COP 7.8M / $2,000)**, health insurance, and your admission letter — present consistent documents and confirm the current figure.

GOOD TO KNOW

Approvals are strongest when the file reads as **one coherent study plan** — matching dates and verifiable funds.

7

STEP 07 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Most programs are taught in **Spanish** (a **DELE B2** certificate or equivalent is often required); **English-taught programs** exist mainly at graduate level (e.g., Uniandes's Master's in International Management), needing TOEFL/IELTS. Spanish greatly enriches daily life and career reach.

BY THE NUMBERS

Spanish	English	Spanish
DELE B2 (most)	some graduate programs	enriches life & career

HOW TO HELP

Prove **Spanish (DELE B2)** for most programs or **English (TOEFL/IELTS)** for graduate English-taught options, and build Spanish for daily life and career value.

GOOD TO KNOW

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

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STEP 08 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, **register with Migración Colombia (15 days), obtain your Cédula, arrange housing, and set up banking and insurance**. Living costs are affordable ($600–800/month). Most students are in **Bogotá or Medellín**; check current regional guidance on safety.

BY THE NUMBERS

Migración + Cédula	Housing + banking	$600–800/month
first tasks	set up	living costs

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **Migración registration, Cédula, housing, banking, insurance** — and enjoy Colombia—s affordable, vibrant cities; check regional guidance.

GOOD TO KNOW

Universities often **help with housing and integration** — lean on the international office, and check current regional guidance.

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STEP 09 OF 10

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Be careful here: **student visas generally do not authorise employment** in Colombia (sources vary and rules have changed), so **don't assume you can work** — verify the current terms of your specific visa with Migración Colombia. Curriculum-linked internships may be possible; plan to fund your studies.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Don't assume	Internships
generally not authorised	verify your visa terms	may be possible

HOW TO HELP

Treat work as **generally not authorised** on a student visa — confirm your specific visa's current terms with Migración Colombia, and plan to fund your studies.

WATCH OUT

Reports on student work rights **conflict and have changed** — verify the current terms for your visa before any paid activity.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Colombia's growing economy and your **Spanish skills** open doors across Latin America; strengths include medicine, STEM, and social sciences. Confirm the current post-study visa/residency pathway if you want to stay — and use your Colombian networks.

BY THE NUMBERS

Spanish	Strengths	Post-study
opens Latin American doors	medicine, STEM, social sciences	confirm pathway

HOW TO HELP

Leverage your **Spanish and Colombian networks** across Latin America, play to strengths (medicine, STEM), and confirm the current post-study visa/residency pathway if you want to stay.

GOOD TO KNOW

Confirm the **current post-study options** — they can change, and vary by field and situation.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in Colombia: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules (Resolución 5477 de 2022) and figures change, so confirm with Migración Colombia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and your university.

The system

Public universities (Universidad Nacional — UNAL, highly competitive; Universidad de Antioquia; Universidad del Valle) and private universities (Universidad de los Andes — Uniandes; Pontificia Universidad Javeriana; EAFIT); mostly Spanish, with some English-taught graduate programs.

Visa & Cédula

Programs over 90 days need an M-9 student visa (~$67) via the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with an admission letter, bank certificate, and insurance; register with Migración Colombia within 15 days and obtain a Cédula de Extranjería.

Tuition & scholarships

Public universities charge international students a standardised flat rate (affordable); private universities ~$6,000–15,000/year (Uniandes ~$7,300/semester); ICETEX, COLFUTURO, and government scholarships.

Money & language

Show a bank certificate (average balance >~COP 7,812,420 / $2,000) plus insurance; Spanish (DELE B2) for most programs, English (TOEFL/IELTS) for graduate English-taught options; documents apostilled/translated.

Work & after

Student visas generally don't authorise employment (verify your visa's current terms; internships may be possible); Spanish skills open Latin American careers — confirm the post-study pathway.

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