

Studying in Malaysia

A guide for international students & families — how Malaysian higher education works, the EMGS Student Pass, affordable tuition, branch-campus (UK/Australian) degrees, and work.

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VERY AFFORDABLE, ENGLISH-MEDIUM, BRANCH-CAMPUS DEGREES

Malaysia is one of Asia's most **student-friendly and affordable** destinations — with **English-medium teaching, globally recognized degrees, and foreign branch campuses (Monash, Nottingham, Heriot-Watt) that award the parent university's degree at a fraction of the cost.** Over 170,000 international students study there. The visa runs through one gateway: **EMGS**. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Malaysian rules (all processed through EMGS), tuition, and requirements change. The figures here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with EMGS (educationmalaysia.gov.my) and your institution.**

Understand Why Students Choose Malaysia

WHAT TO KNOW

Malaysia offers **very affordable, English-medium education; MQA-accredited, globally recognized degrees; foreign branch campuses awarding UK/Australian degrees at lower cost; and a warm, multicultural, English-friendly society** — with a high (~90%) visa-approval rate.

BY THE NUMBERS

Very affordable

+ English-medium

Branch campuses

UK/Australian degrees

Multicultural

English-friendly

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Malaysia's **affordability and branch-campus degrees** against its stricter work rules and harder post-study pathway — for a recognized degree on a budget, it's a leading choice.

GOOD TO KNOW

Branch campuses (Monash, Nottingham, Heriot-Watt) award the **parent university's degree** — a UK/Australian qualification at a fraction of the cost.

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Two tracks: **public universities (IPTA)** — University of Malaya (UM, QS ~top 65), UKM, USM, UPM, UTM — with the lowest fees and real prestige; and **private universities and foreign branch campuses (IPTS)** — Monash Malaysia, Nottingham Malaysia, Heriot-Watt, Taylor's, Sunway, Xiamen. Verify **MQA accreditation**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public (IPTA)

UM, UKM, USM

Private/branch (IPTS)

Monash, Nottingham

MQA

verify accreditation

HOW TO HELP

Choose between **affordable public universities (UM and others)** and **private/branch campuses** (for a UK/Australian degree), and confirm the program is **MQA-accredited**.

WATCH OUT

MQA accreditation is what makes your degree recognized (at home and for the Student Pass) — check the MQA register before enrolling.

Get the Student Pass via EMGS

WHAT TO KNOW

Everything runs through **EMGS (Education Malaysia Global Services)**. After your offer, the institution applies to EMGS on your behalf; EMGS screens it and issues the **VAL (Visa Approval Letter / eVAL)**. You then get a **Single-Entry Visa (if your nationality needs one)**, enter Malaysia, and get your Student Pass endorsed — you must be **outside Malaysia** when applying.

BY THE NUMBERS

EMGS

the single gateway

VAL / eVAL

the approval letter

Outside Malaysia

when applying

HOW TO HELP

Let your institution apply to **EMGS**, receive your **VAL/eVAL**, obtain a Single-Entry Visa if required, then enter and get your Student Pass — allow 4–8 weeks and apply from outside Malaysia.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **VAL is not the final pass** — the Student Pass sticker is endorsed after arrival and your post-arrival medical.

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to each institution** (there's no single national portal). Main intakes are **February and September** (some add May/June); apply **3–6 months ahead** to allow for admission and the EMGS Student Pass. Documents may need certified English/Malay translations.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly

to each institution

Feb & Sept

main intakes

3–6 months ahead

for the pass

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to your chosen universities for the February/September intakes, **3–6 months ahead**, with translated documents where needed.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **September intake is the largest** — target it, and start early to allow time for the EMGS process.

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is **affordable**: **public universities ~RM 10,000–30,000/year**; **private universities and branch campuses ~RM 30,000–90,000/year** (still far below the parent campus abroad). Scholarships come from universities, branch campuses, and some government programs.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public

~RM 10k–30k/yr

Private/branch

~RM 30k–90k/yr

Scholarships

university & branch

HOW TO HELP

Budget the tuition (public is cheapest; a branch campus gives a UK/Australian degree at ~half the home-campus cost) plus low living costs, and pursue university scholarships.

GOOD TO KNOW

A branch-campus degree costs **far less than the same degree at the home campus abroad** — a major value proposition.

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must prove you can cover **tuition plus living (~RM 1,500–2,500/month, about RM 18,000–30,000/year)**, via bank statements, a sponsor letter, or a scholarship. There are also **EMGS processing fees and a refundable security bond** (amount varies by nationality).

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds

tuition + ~RM 1,500–2,500/mo

EMGS fees

+ security bond

Bond refundable

on leaving

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** (tuition + living), and budget the **EMGS fees and security bond** (refundable when you leave and cancel your pass).

GOOD TO KNOW

The **security bond varies by nationality** and is refundable on departure — factor it into your upfront budget.



Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Most programs are taught in **English** (the medium at private universities and branch campuses, and widely at public universities), so you'll prove English (IELTS/TOEFL, sometimes waived for prior English-medium study). Malaysia is a very English-friendly country.

BY THE NUMBERS

English

medium of instruction

IELTS/TOEFL

or waiver

English-friendly

country

HOW TO HELP

Prove **English proficiency** (IELTS/TOEFL, or a waiver for prior English study) — most programs are in English, making Malaysia very accessible.

GOOD TO KNOW

Malaysia is **very English-friendly** — you can study and live largely in English.

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, complete your **post-arrival medical within 7 days** at an EMGS-panel clinic, then get your **Student Pass endorsed** and your **iKAD (student ID card)**. Bring a **Yellow Fever certificate** if **coming from a risk country**. Living costs are low (RM 1,500–2,500/month); Kuala Lumpur has the MRT and Grab.

BY THE NUMBERS

Arrival medical

within 7 days!

Student Pass + iKAD

endorsed

Yellow Fever

if from risk country

HOW TO HELP

Complete your **post-arrival medical within 7 days** (mandatory), get your **Student Pass and iKAD**, and enjoy Malaysia's low costs and easy transport.

WATCH OUT

The **7-day post-arrival medical** is mandatory — missing it delays your Student Pass and can complicate your legal stay.

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Malaysia's student work rules are **strict**: you may work part-time **up to 20 hours per week only during semester breaks and holidays** (not during term), and only in **limited sectors** (e.g., restaurants, mini-markets, hotels, petrol stations). Don't rely on work to fund your studies.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work

20 hrs/week — breaks only

Limited sectors

restaurants, hotels

Not during term

strict

HOW TO HELP

Plan to **fund your studies fully**: you can only work **during breaks (not term)**, up to 20 hrs/week, in limited sectors — it won't cover your costs.

WATCH OUT

Work is **only allowed during breaks, not during term**, and in limited sectors — a stricter rule than many countries.

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

After graduating, a **Graduate Pass (a Social Visit Pass)** lets you stay up to a year. To work, you need a job offer and an **Employment Pass** (employer-sponsored). Be honest with yourself: Malaysia's **post-study work pathway is harder** than in some countries.

BY THE NUMBERS

Graduate Pass

~1 year to stay

Employment Pass

needs a job offer

Post-study

harder pathway

HOW TO HELP

Plan for the **Graduate Pass** (up to a year) and, if you want to work, secure a job offer for an **Employment Pass** — noting the post-study pathway is harder than in some destinations.

WATCH OUT

Malaysia's **post-study work route is genuinely harder** than some countries' — plan your next step realistically.

Studying in Malaysia: The Essentials

A snapshot — everything runs through EMGS, so confirm details with EMGS and your institution.

The system

Public universities (IPTA — UM, UKM, USM, UPM, UTM) and private/foreign branch campuses (IPTS — Monash, Nottingham, Heriot-Watt, Taylor's, Sunway, Xiamen); English-medium; verify MQA accreditation.

The pass (EMGS)

All applications go through EMGS: the institution applies, EMGS issues a VAL/eVAL, you get a Single-Entry Visa if needed, enter Malaysia, complete a 7-day medical, and receive the Student Pass and iKAD (apply from outside Malaysia).

Tuition

Public ~RM 10,000–30,000/year; private and branch campuses ~RM 30,000–90,000/year (a UK/Australian degree at a fraction of the home-campus cost); university and branch scholarships.

Money

Prove tuition + living (~RM 1,500–2,500/month) via bank statements/sponsor/scholarship; budget EMGS fees and a refundable security bond (varies by nationality); English-medium (IELTS/TOEFL or waiver).

Work & after

Work up to 20 hrs/week only during breaks, in limited sectors (strict); a Graduate Pass allows ~1 year after graduation; an Employment Pass needs a job offer (post-study pathway is harder).

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