

Studying in Portugal

A guide for international students & families — how Portuguese higher education works, the study visa and AIMA residence permit, affordable living, English programs, and post-study options.

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AFFORDABLE, SUNNY, INCREASINGLY INTERNATIONAL

Portugal has become a fast-rising study destination: **affordable living, a welcoming culture, a growing range of English-taught programs, and one of Europe's better post-study pathways**. Non-EU students get a **national study visa** and, after arrival, a **residence permit via AIMA**. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Portuguese rules changed recently (2022 immigration reform; AIMA replaced SEF; 2025 CPLP changes) and figures vary. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Portuguese consulate, AIMA, and your institution**.

Understand Why Students Choose Portugal

WHAT TO KNOW

Portugal offers **affordable tuition and living, a sunny and safe environment, a welcoming culture, growing English-taught programs, and a good post-study pathway** — plus historic universities (Coimbra dates to 1290) and vibrant cities.

BY THE NUMBERS

Affordable

tuition & living

Welcoming

safe & sunny

English programs

and growing

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Portugal's **affordability, lifestyle, and post-study options** against the newer (and evolving) immigration system — it's an increasingly popular, good-value choice.

GOOD TO KNOW

Portugal combines **low costs with a high quality of life** — a big reason international student numbers are rising.

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Portuguese higher education has two types: **universities** (academic and research) and **polytechnic institutes** (practical, professional). Leading names include **Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra, Nova Lisbon, and Minho**. Degrees follow the European structure.

BY THE NUMBERS

Universities

academic & research

Polytechnics

practical & professional

Lisbon / Porto / Coimbra

the leaders

HOW TO HELP

Choose between a **university** and a **polytechnic** based on whether you want academic depth or practical, career-focused study — both are quality-assured.

GOOD TO KNOW

Polytechnic institutes offer **practical, employment-focused** programs — a strong route for applied fields.

Get the Study Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

Non-EU/EEA students staying over 90 days need a **national study visa (Visa D)** from a Portuguese consulate — a **Temporary Stay Visa** (courses up to a year) or **Residence Visa** (longer programs). Apply with your acceptance, funds proof, insurance, and a criminal-record certificate.

BY THE NUMBERS

Visa D

national study visa

Temporary or Residence

by course length

At the consulate

before travel

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **Visa D** at a Portuguese consulate with your acceptance letter, **funds proof, insurance, and a legalized criminal-record certificate** — apply early, as slots fill.

WATCH OUT

Consulate appointment slots are **limited, especially in summer** — book well ahead of a September intake.

Get Your AIMA Residence Permit

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving on the Residence Visa, you apply for a **residence permit via AIMA** (formerly SEF), generally within a few months. It's valid for a period and **renewable** (standard degrees can receive multi-year permits). AIMA no longer accepts incomplete applications.

BY THE NUMBERS

AIMA

the migration agency

After arrival

apply for the permit

Renewable

multi-year for degrees

HOW TO HELP

Apply for your **AIMA residence permit** after arrival with complete documents (enrollment declaration, funds, insurance) — incomplete files are rejected, so prepare carefully.

WATCH OUT

AIMA (which replaced SEF) **rejects incomplete applications** — double-check every required document before submitting.

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

Tuition is **affordable**: EU/Portuguese students pay low fees (~€700–1,250/year); non-EU students under the **international-student statute** pay more (often €3,000–7,000/year, varying by program). Scholarships come from the government, universities, and Erasmus+.

BY THE NUMBERS

EU

~€700–1,250/yr

Non-EU

higher (int'l statute)

Scholarships

govt & university

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **international-student tuition** (higher than EU rates) plus (low) living costs, and pursue government and university scholarships.

GOOD TO KNOW

Portugal's **living costs are among the lowest in Western Europe** — a real advantage even where tuition is higher for non-EU students.

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the visa/permit you must prove funds — recently about **€760/month (Portugal's minimum wage)**, **~€9,120 for a full year**. You'll also need **health insurance** (Schengen-valid) and, after arrival, a **NIF (tax number)**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds

~€760/month

~€9,120/year

for the stay

+ NIF & insurance

on/before arrival

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** at the minimum-wage amount, arrange **Schengen-valid insurance**, and get a **NIF** — all needed for the visa, permit, and daily life.

WATCH OUT

The funds figure tracks Portugal's **minimum wage** and is updated — confirm the current amount before applying.

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Programs are taught in **Portuguese** (requiring Portuguese proficiency) or, increasingly, in **English** (requiring IELTS/TOEFL). Admission generally requires **12 years of schooling plus proficiency in Portuguese or English**. Some Portuguese helps daily life.

BY THE NUMBERS

Portuguese-taught

Portuguese required

English-taught

IELTS/TOEFL

Some Portuguese

eases daily life

HOW TO HELP

Take the **right test for your program's language** (Portuguese or English), and learn some Portuguese — it helps with daily life and integration.

GOOD TO KNOW

English-taught programs are growing (especially master's), but everyday life runs in **Portuguese**.

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, complete your **AIMA permit**, get a **NIF**, register an address, and (once eligible) request an **SNS number** for low-cost public healthcare. Keep private insurance initially. Housing in Lisbon and Porto is competitive and rising — start early.

BY THE NUMBERS

AIMA + NIF

key first steps

SNS number

public healthcare

Housing

competitive in cities

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **AIMA permit**, **NIF**, **address registration**, **SNS** — and secure housing early in Lisbon/Porto, where demand is high.

GOOD TO KNOW

Lisbon and Porto housing is **competitive and rising** — arrange accommodation before you arrive if you can.

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Students with a valid visa/permit may work **up to 20 hours per week during term** (and full-time during breaks). Work should be **compatible with your studies**, not full-time employment alongside nominal enrollment.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work

20 hrs/week in term

Full-time

in breaks

Study-compatible

the requirement

HOW TO HELP

You may work **up to 20 hours/week** during term (full-time in breaks), keeping study as your primary purpose — useful for experience and extra income.

GOOD TO KNOW

Work must be **complementary to your studies** — keep enrollment and academic progress in good standing.

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Portugal's 2022 reforms created a **job-seeker visa allowing up to 180 days to find work** after graduating, plus simpler routes to residence. Its growing tech and startup scene (especially Lisbon) offers real pathways for graduates who stay.

BY THE NUMBERS

Job-seeker visa

up to 180 days

Simpler residence

2022 reforms

Tech scene

growing (Lisbon)

HOW TO HELP

Plan for the **180-day job-seeker visa** after graduating, build networks (Lisbon's startup scene is booming), and explore Portugal's routes to longer-term residence.

GOOD TO KNOW

Portugal's **job-seeker visa (up to 180 days)** and simplified residence routes make staying on relatively accessible — confirm current conditions.

Studying in Portugal: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules changed recently (2022 reform; AIMA replaced SEF), so confirm everything with the Portuguese consulate, AIMA, and your institution.

The system

Universities (academic/research) and polytechnic institutes (practical); leaders include Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra, Nova, Minho; European degree structure.

Visa & permit

Non-EU students get a national study visa (Visa D) — Temporary Stay (up to a year) or Residence Visa — then a residence permit via AIMA after arrival, renewable.

Money

EU tuition is low (~€700–1,250/yr); non-EU pay the international-student rate (often higher); prove ~€760/month (~€9,120/year); get a NIF and Schengen-valid insurance.

Language

Portuguese-taught (Portuguese required) or growing English-taught programs (IELTS/TOEFL); admission needs 12 years' schooling plus Portuguese or English.

Work & after

Work up to 20 hrs/week in term (full-time in breaks), study-compatible; a 180-day job-seeker visa and simplified residence routes support staying after graduation.

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