K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in Thailand

A guide for international students & families — how Thai higher education works, the Non-Immigrant ED visa, affordable English-taught international programs, and the rules on work.

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, ENGLISH INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS, LOW COST OF LIVING

Thailand is one of Asia's most accessible study destinations — with **respected universities (Chulalongkorn, Mahidol, Thammasat), a growing set of English-taught "international programs," and a famously low cost of living**. Non-EU students study on a **Non-Immigrant ED (Education) visa**, sponsored via their university's acceptance letter. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Thai rules changed in 2025 (monthly attendance reporting; 80% attendance to keep the ED visa active), and figures vary. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Thai embassy/Thai E-Visa, Thai Immigration, and your university**.

1

STEP 01 OF 11

Understand Why Students Choose Thailand

WHAT TO KNOW

Thailand offers **affordable, English-taught international programs; respected universities; a very low cost of living; a safe, welcoming culture; and an international campus community** — in one of Asia's most popular destinations.

BY THE NUMBERS

Affordable	Respected universities	Low cost of living
+ English programs	Chula, Mahidol	safe & welcoming

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Thailand's **affordability and English international programs** against the strict no-work rule on the ED visa — for English-taught study on a budget, it's a strong Asian option.

GOOD TO KNOW

International programs at top Thai universities **undercut Western fees by 50–70%** — excellent value in English.

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STEP 02 OF 11

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Thailand's leading universities include **Chulalongkorn** (business, engineering), **Mahidol** (medicine, health), and **Thammasat**, plus Chiang Mai and Kasetsart. International students enrol in **"international programs" (English-medium)** or bilingual programs; Thai-taught programs require Thai proficiency.

BY THE NUMBERS

Chulalongkorn	Mahidol	International programs
business & engineering	medicine & health	English-medium

HOW TO HELP

Choose an **English-medium "international program"** at a top Thai university (Chula, Mahidol, Thammasat) — Thai-taught programs require Thai; top universities may have entrance exams.

WATCH OUT

Only **"international" or bilingual programs** suit non-Thai speakers — Thai programs require Thai proficiency.

3

STEP 03 OF 11

Get the Non-Immigrant ED Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

You need a **Non-Immigrant ED (Education) visa** (some bachelor's+ programs use "ED Plus"), applied for with your **acceptance letter** via the **Thai E-Visa system** or a Thai embassy. It's granted for ~90 days initially, then **extended annually within Thailand**; you must do **90-day reporting** to Immigration.

BY THE NUMBERS

Non-Immigrant ED	Acceptance letter	90-day reporting
the study visa	the anchor	+ annual extension

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **ED visa** with your acceptance letter (via Thai E-Visa or an embassy) — it's easy for genuine university students — then handle **90-day reporting** and annual extensions.

GOOD TO KNOW

Apply **only after you have your acceptance letter**; the university provides the documents — and don't miss 90-day reporting.

4

STEP 04 OF 11

Know the 2025 Attendance Rule

WHAT TO KNOW

Since 2025, schools sponsoring ED visas must **report monthly attendance**, and students need at least **80% attendance to keep the visa active**. Poor attendance can **invalidate your ED visa** — so treat class attendance as a visa requirement, not just an academic one.

BY THE NUMBERS

Monthly reporting	80% attendance	Attend
by your school (2025)	to keep the visa	it's a visa rule

HOW TO HELP

Maintain at least **80% attendance** — since 2025 it's a visa condition (schools report monthly), and falling short can invalidate your ED visa.

WATCH OUT

The **80% attendance rule (2025)** is a real visa condition — don't treat classes as optional.

5 STEP 05 OF 11

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to universities** for their **international program** intakes (deadlines commonly **May–October**; spring and fall intakes). Provide transcripts, English proof (TOEFL/IELTS where required), and program-specific documents. Always verify fees/deadlines on the **official university page**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	May–October	Verify
international programs	typical deadlines	on the official page

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to your chosen university's international program by its deadline, with transcripts and English proof — and confirm fees/deadlines on the official site, not third-party sources.

GOOD TO KNOW

Never rely on **fee or deadline numbers from agents/forums** — confirm on the official program page (and beware "guaranteed admission" scams).

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STEP 06 OF 11

Plan for Tuition & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

International-program tuition runs roughly **THB 117,500–282,000/year** (~$2,000–10,000; some MBAs higher) — far below Western fees, and Thai-taught programs are cheaper still. Scholarships include the **Royal Thai Government, TICA, and university awards** (mostly merit-based).

BY THE NUMBERS

International	Undercuts West	Scholarships
~THB 117k–282k/yr	50–70%	Royal Thai, TICA, university

HOW TO HELP

Budget the **international-program tuition** (well below Western fees) plus low living costs, and pursue Royal Thai Government, TICA, and university scholarships (often merit-based).

GOOD TO KNOW

Many university scholarships require **at least one completed academic year** before eligibility — plan funding for year one.

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STEP 07 OF 11

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

You must show **proof of funds** to cover tuition and living, plus **mandatory medical insurance** (~$300–600/year). Bring your acceptance letter, financial documents, and insurance to the visa application. Confirm the exact checklist with the relevant Thai embassy.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Insurance	Checklist
tuition + living	mandatory (~$300–600/yr)	per your embassy

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds and medical insurance**, and follow the **official checklist from your Thai embassy** — requirements vary by nationality and consulate.

GOOD TO KNOW

Use the **official embassy checklist**, not general online lists — required documents vary by nationality and course length.

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STEP 08 OF 11

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

For **international programs** you prove English (TOEFL/IELTS, where required); **Thai-taught programs** require Thai proficiency. English requirements vary by university and program. Learning basic Thai makes daily life much easier.

BY THE NUMBERS

International programs	Thai programs	Basic Thai
English (TOEFL/IELTS)	Thai proficiency	eases daily life

HOW TO HELP

Prove **English** for an international program (Thai programs need Thai), and pick up some Thai — it makes daily life and communication much easier.

GOOD TO KNOW

English requirements **vary by university and program** — check your specific program's threshold.

9

STEP 09 OF 11

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, complete **90-day reporting, keep up 80% attendance, arrange insurance, and open a Thai bank account**. On-campus dorms are cheapest (apply early). Living costs are low ($300–600/month); Bangkok is pricier, Chiang Mai budget-friendly.

BY THE NUMBERS

90-day reporting	Dorms	Low costs
+ 80% attendance	cheapest — apply early	$300–600/mo

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **90-day reporting, insurance, bank account, housing** — and enjoy Thailand—s low living costs (Chiang Mai is especially budget-friendly).

GOOD TO KNOW

In Bangkok, live **near a BTS/MRT station** — traffic makes proximity to transit important.

10 STEP 10 OF 11

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Be very clear on this: **employment is strictly prohibited on the ED visa** — including unpaid work, volunteering that resembles a job, and freelance work for Thai clients. Breaking this can mean heavy fines, visa cancellation, and a blacklist. **Plan to fund your studies fully.**

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Includes	Fund fully
strictly prohibited	unpaid/volunteer/freelance	don't rely on work

HOW TO HELP

Understand that the **ED visa does not permit any work** — plan to fund your studies fully (Thailand's low costs help), and don't risk your visa on unauthorized work.

WATCH OUT

Working on an ED visa — even unpaid or remote — is **illegal without a work permit** and carries serious penalties.

11 STEP 11 OF 11

Thrive & After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Make the most of internships (through faculty and career services) and Thailand's international community. Post-study work requires a **separate work visa and permit and a qualifying job**; sectors like IT, data, and international business offer opportunities — confirm the current pathway.

BY THE NUMBERS

Internships	Post-study	Sectors
via faculty/careers	separate work visa needed	IT, data, business

HOW TO HELP

Use **internships** during study, and plan for a **separate work visa and permit** if you want to work in Thailand after graduating — the ED visa doesn't convert automatically.

GOOD TO KNOW

Post-study work needs a **separate work visa and permit** — the ED visa is study-only, so plan ahead.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in Thailand: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules changed in 2025, so confirm everything with the Thai embassy/Thai E-Visa, Thai Immigration, and your university.

The system

Chulalongkorn (business/engineering), Mahidol (medicine/health), Thammasat, Chiang Mai, Kasetsart; international students enrol in English-medium "international" or bilingual programs (Thai programs require Thai).

Visa

Non-Immigrant ED (Education) visa (or ED Plus), applied for with an acceptance letter via Thai E-Visa or an embassy; ~90 days initially, extended annually in Thailand; 90-day reporting; since 2025, 80% attendance is required.

Tuition

International programs ~THB 117,500–282,000/year (undercutting Western fees 50–70%); Thai-taught programs cheaper; Royal Thai Government, TICA, and (mostly merit-based) university scholarships.

Money & language

Prove funds for tuition and living plus mandatory medical insurance; English for international programs (TOEFL/IELTS), Thai for Thai programs; verify fees on official pages.

Work & after

Employment is strictly prohibited on the ED visa (fund fully); post-study work requires a separate work visa and permit and a qualifying job.

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