K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in the United Kingdom

A guide for international students & families — how UK higher education works, the Student visa, applying through UCAS, English and financial requirements, and the post-study Graduate Route.

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.

WORLD-CLASS, AND SHORTER THAN YOU THINK

The UK is one of the world's top study destinations — home to globally renowned universities, taught in English, with famously **short degrees** (often a 3-year bachelor's and a 1-year master's). It comes with a clear process: the **Student visa**, UCAS applications, and English and financial requirements. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. UK visa rules, fees, thresholds, and requirements change — the figures here are recent examples and **must be confirmed on GOV.UK, Study UK (British Council), and with your university** before you rely on them.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose the UK

WHAT TO KNOW

The UK offers **world-renowned universities** (Oxford, Cambridge, and the Russell Group among them), teaching in English, a **shorter and cheaper-per-year** path thanks to compressed degrees, and a rich cultural experience — plus post-study work options.

BY THE NUMBERS

Top universities	Short degrees	In English
globally renowned	3-yr & 1-yr master's	+ post-study work

HOW TO HELP

Weigh the UK's **reputation and shorter degrees** (which can lower total cost) against tuition and living costs, to see if it fits your goals and budget.

GOOD TO KNOW

Shorter UK degrees mean **less time and often lower total cost** than a four-year degree elsewhere — a real advantage.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the UK System

WHAT TO KNOW

UK higher education is **specialized from the start**: you apply to a specific subject (course), not a general college. Undergraduate degrees take **three years** in England, Wales & Northern Ireland (**four in Scotland**); taught master's often take **one year**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Specialized	3 years	1-year master's
choose your subject upfront	4 in Scotland	common

HOW TO HELP

Know that you'll **apply to a specific course/subject** from the outset — so explore programs carefully, since you commit to a field earlier than in some countries.

GOOD TO KNOW

Unlike the flexible U.S. system, the UK expects you to **choose your subject when you apply** — pick programs, not just universities.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Understand the Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

Most international students need a **Student visa** (the "Student Route", formerly Tier 4). The key document is a **CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies)** from your licensed university. From **January 2025**, students register with UKVI for an **eVisa**; you can apply up to **6 months** before your course.

BY THE NUMBERS

Student Route	CAS	eVisa
the main visa	from your university	apply up to 6 months early

HOW TO HELP

Once you have an offer and a **CAS**, apply for the **Student visa on GOV.UK** — following the official steps exactly, as this is where accuracy matters most.

WATCH OUT

A recent Student visa application fee was around £490—, plus the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) — confirm current fees on GOV.UK, as they change.

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STEP 04 OF 10

Apply Through UCAS

WHAT TO KNOW

Undergraduate applications go through **UCAS** — a single application where you choose up to **five courses**, write one **personal statement**, and provide a reference. Postgraduate applications are usually made **directly** to each university.

BY THE NUMBERS

UCAS	Personal statement	Postgrad
one application, 5 choices	+ reference	apply directly

HOW TO HELP

For undergraduate study, create a **UCAS** application, choose your five courses, and craft a strong personal statement — note the deadlines, which fall in the autumn/winter before entry.

WATCH OUT

Oxford, Cambridge, and medicine/dentistry have **earlier UCAS deadlines** (often mid-October) — check dates carefully and apply early.

5 STEP 05 OF 10

Meet Admissions Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

UK admissions weigh your **academic qualifications** (against the course's entry requirements), your **personal statement**, and a **reference** — plus, for some courses, an **admissions test or interview**. Requirements are listed per course.

BY THE NUMBERS

Qualifications	Personal statement	Some courses
meet course requirements	+ reference	test or interview

HOW TO HELP

Check each course's **specific entry requirements** and gather your qualifications, a strong personal statement, and a reference — and prepare for any test or interview a course requires.

GOOD TO KNOW

Entry requirements are **set per course**, not per university — always read the individual course page.

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STEP 06 OF 10

Meet English-Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

You'll need to prove **English proficiency**, commonly with **IELTS Academic**. If you need a visa, it may need to be a **UKVI-approved Secure English Language Test (SELT)**. Degree courses typically require around **CEFR B2 (roughly IELTS 5.5–6.0+)**, higher for postgraduate.

BY THE NUMBERS

IELTS Academic	SELT / UKVI	~B2
widely accepted	if visa requires	IELTS 5.5–6.0+

HOW TO HELP

Take an **accepted English test** (checking whether your university and visa require the **UKVI/SELT** version), and aim for the specific score your course lists.

WATCH OUT

Make sure you take the **right version** of the test — a standard IELTS when a UKVI SELT is required is a common, costly mistake.

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STEP 07 OF 10

Plan for Costs & Funding

WHAT TO KNOW

International **tuition** varies widely by university and course (and is higher than for UK students), plus **living costs**. Scholarships exist — **Chevening** (UK government), university awards, and others — though funding is competitive.

BY THE NUMBERS

Tuition	Living costs	Scholarships
varies; higher for internationals	+ insurance	Chevening & university

HOW TO HELP

Budget **tuition plus living costs**, and actively pursue **scholarships** (like Chevening and university awards) — the shorter degree length helps keep the total down.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **Chevening** scholarships (UK government) and many university awards support international students — apply early and widely.

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STEP 08 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the visa, you must **prove you can pay**: your remaining tuition plus a set **living-cost amount**. Recent figures were about **£1,334/month (London)** or **£1,023/month (outside London)**, for up to 9 months, held in your account for **28 continuous days**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Prove funds	~£1,023–1,334/mo	28-day rule
tuition + living	outside/inside London	held continuously

HOW TO HELP

Prepare your **financial documents carefully** to meet the exact UKVI rules — the 28-day continuous-balance rule and document format trip up many applicants, so follow GOV.UK precisely.

WATCH OUT

A large share of refusals come from **financial-document mistakes** — funds dipping below the threshold, wrong dates or formats. Follow the rules exactly.

9 STEP 09 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

UK study means **independent learning** (lectures, seminars, tutorials, and lots of self-study), plus adjusting to culture, weather, and daily life. Some students also need a **TB test** or an **ATAS certificate** (for certain STEM courses).

BY THE NUMBERS

Independent study	Adjust	Maybe
self-directed	culture & weather	TB test / ATAS

HOW TO HELP

Prepare for **self-directed academics** and the practical move, and check whether you need a **TB test or ATAS certificate** — which can take weeks, so start early.

GOOD TO KNOW

ATAS (for sensitive STEM subjects) can take **30+ working days** — if your course needs it, apply well ahead.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work in the UK

WHAT TO KNOW

As a student you can usually **work part-time** during term (with limits) and full-time in breaks. After graduating, the **Graduate Route** visa typically lets you stay to work for around **two years** — a valuable path to UK experience.

BY THE NUMBERS

Part-time work	Graduate Route	Community
during term (limits)	~2 years post-study	get involved

HOW TO HELP

Make the most of the UK: **work part-time** within the rules, build community, and consider the **Graduate Route** for post-study work experience — confirming current terms on GOV.UK.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **Graduate Route** post-study work visa is a major draw — but its terms can change, so check the current rules before counting on it.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in the UK: The Essentials

A snapshot of the journey — figures are recent examples that change, so confirm everything on GOV.UK, Study UK, and with your university.

The system

Apply to a specific subject/course; undergraduate degrees are 3 years (4 in Scotland), taught master's often 1 year.

The visa

Student Route: get an offer and a CAS from a licensed university, then apply on GOV.UK (eVisa from Jan 2025), up to 6 months before your course.

Applying

Undergraduate via UCAS (up to 5 courses, one personal statement, a reference); postgraduate directly to universities; mind early deadlines.

English & requirements

Prove English (IELTS Academic; UKVI SELT if the visa requires), typically ~B2 / IELTS 5.5–6.0+; some courses add tests, interviews, TB test, or ATAS.

Money & after

Budget tuition + living; prove funds for the visa (28-day rule, ~£1,023–1,334/month living); seek scholarships (Chevening); the Graduate Route allows ~2 years post-study work.

YOUR UK JOURNEY STARTS HERE

Find Your Community.

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