

## Country and Education Guide : United Kingdom



# Content

## Country guide

General country information	p.2
Time zones and climate	p.3
Telecommunications	p.5
Transportation	p.6
Cost of living	p.7
Health and medical	p.8

## Education guide

Education in United Kingdom	p.10
Education system overview	p.11
Tuition fees	p.13
Student accommodation	p.14
Secondary education	p.15
Higher education	p.17
Applying to schools	
• General process	p.18
• Documentation	p.18
• Student visa application	p.20
• Required examinations	p.21
Frequently asked questions	p.23
Acknowledgements	p.24



# Country Guide



## General Country Information

United Kingdom, officially the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, also known as the UK or Britain, is made up of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, located off the north-western coast of continental Europe, and is one of the members of the European Union.

**Name of country:** United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**Capital city:** London

**Key cities:** Belfast, Birmingham, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Newcastle

**Population:** 63,181,775 (July 2011 national census)

**Language:** English

**Currency:** Pound sterling (£) – Great Britain Pound (GBP)

**Recognised regional languages:** Irish, Ulster Scots, Scottish Gaelic, Scots, Welsh, Cornish



# Time zones and climate

## Time zones

The UK time zone is the same as Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) and UTC\*+0. British Summer Time (BST) is observed from the last Sunday in March to the last Sunday in October (BST is UTC+1).

\* UTC = Coordinated Universal Time



## Climate

The climate in Central and Southern England is more humid with lots of rain, while it is cold in the North with a large temperature difference during the day. During winter, it can be as low as 1-4°C with snow; while in the summer it is around 14-25°C.

Regions	Full year	Summer (Average temp.)	Winter (Average temp.)
Scotland	-5 - 28°C	13°C	3.5°C
Northern England	-2 - 23°C	15°C	4°C
Central England	-3 - 26°C	15°C	5°C
Southern England	-3 - 28°C	16°C	5°C
Wales	-4 - 24°C	14°C	5°C
Northern Ireland	-4 - 22°C	14°C	5°C

# Telecommunications

## Calling United Kingdom

IDD	Major cities' code	
country code : 44	Birmingham: 0121	Bristol: 0117
	Coventry: 024	Edinburgh: 0131
	Glasgow: 0141	Leeds: 0113
	Liverpool: 0151	London: 020
	Manchester: 0161	Northern Ireland: 028
	Newcastle: 0191	Nottingham: 0115
	Portsmouth: 023	Reading: 0118
	Sheffield: 0114	Southampton: 023

Emergency numbers: 999 or 112



# Transportation

Public transportation in the UK is well established with both local and city-to-city services, except for very remote areas. There are good bus and train services linking most population centres. Most large cities have a bus terminal. Excellent railroad network allows for fast service to run from London and major cities. Train tickets are often much cheaper when bought in advance. Underground railways operate in Glasgow, Liverpool, London and Newcastle.

The motorway network is comprehensive while speed limits and road rules are strictly enforced. Traffic drives on the left. Major international car hire firms operate from most airport and city centres. Intending drivers should check the validity of their foreign driving licences.

Metered taxis are available in most urban areas and can be hailed on the street or called-in.

There is an excellent air service within the UK from a variety of carriers and international airports in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



# Cost of living

The cost of living in the UK varies, like most places, according to the lifestyle and aspirations of individual students. Central England, such as London, has the highest cost of living, while Southern and Northern England, Scotland and Northern Ireland have a comparatively lower cost of living. A range of prices is shown in the table while the UK has several supermarket and clothing chains that cater to low-budget customers.

## Average cost of living

		GBP	USD*
Daily transport	London Travelcard (adult)	(Zone 1-6) 3.30 to 6.10	5.08 to 9.39
	London Oyster card (students)	(Zone 1-6) 2.32 to 4.30	3.57 to 6.62
	Other cities (single journey)	1 to 2	1.54 to 3.08
Newspaper		0.35 to 1.40	0.54 to 2.16
Fast food set meal		1 to 5	1.54 to 7.70
Fresh milk per litre		0.88 to 1.33	1.36 to 2.05
Movie ticket per person		7 to 8.50	10.78 to 13.09
Museum entry fee		7 to 16	10.78 to 24.64

\* Exchange rate GBP1 = USD 1.54

Above costs are indicative only and current.

# Health and medical



## Healthcare overview

UK residents are entitled to free medical services from the National Health Services (NHS). Expatriates can join the NHS under certain conditions. Private health care is also available and most hospitals are run by the NHS or large health groups such as General Healthcare Group Ltd, Nuffield Nursing Homes Trust Ltd, BUPA Hospitals Ltd, Community Hospitals Group PLC and HCA Columbia Healthcare Ltd.



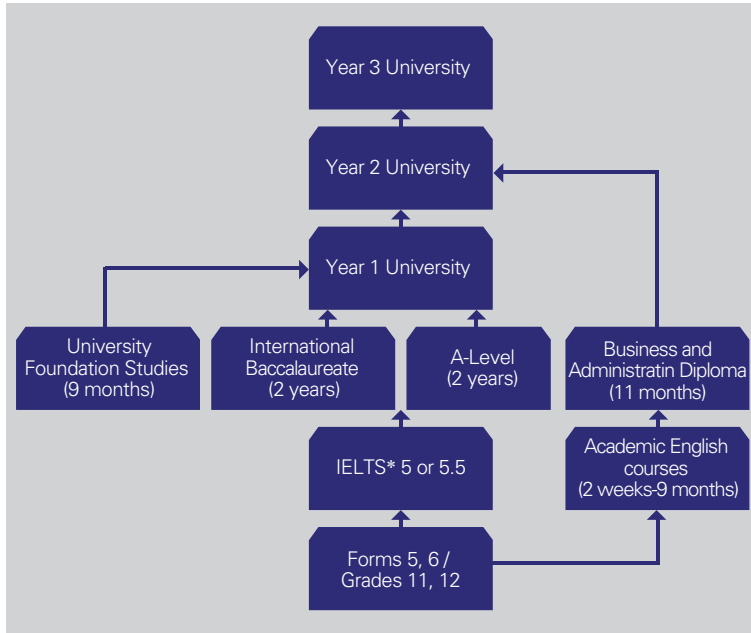


# Education Guide

## Education in United Kingdom

The United Kingdom has over 3,000 education institutions which include over 100 universities. The UK government monitors the education system closely. Regardless of language courses or tertiary education, all courses must be recognised by the authorities, which is why most courses from the United Kingdom are generally accepted by various institutions and organisations overseas. The British education system is under strict quality control by various organisations such as the British Council, English UK and the British Accreditation Council, which overlooks the operations of both public and private education institutions.

# Education system overview



\* International English Language Testing System



# Education system overview

The British education system is strictly monitored by a number of organisations to ensure quality. Students seeking entry to universities in the UK must apply through the Universities and Colleges Application System (UCAS).

The United Kingdom consists of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, which have separate school systems. Children aged between 5 and 16 are entitled to a free place at a state school in England. All children in England and Wales between 5 and 16 must receive a full-time education, while in Northern Ireland, children must begin at age four.

The UK introduced a National Curriculum in 1992 and state schools must adhere to it until students reach age 16. The Education and Skills Act of 2008 raised the compulsory age to 18, effective in 2013 for 17-year-olds and in 2015 for 18-year-olds. (Independent schools are not obliged to adhere to the National Curriculum.)

National Curriculum core subjects are: English (Welsh is also a core subject in Welsh-speaking schools), mathematics, science, design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, modern foreign languages, music, art and design, physical education, and citizenship. There are some other compulsory courses, such as religious education. Northern Ireland follows a similar framework.

After five years of secondary education, students take examinations in a range of subjects at the level of General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). This is a single-subject examination set and marked by independent examination boards. Students usually take up to ten (there is no upper or lower limit) GCSE examinations in different subjects, including mathematics and English language.

After taking GCSEs, students may leave secondary schooling. They can also choose to continue their education at vocational or technical colleges, or take a higher level of secondary school examinations known as AS-Levels after an additional year of study. Following two years of study, students may take A-Level (short for Advanced Level) examinations, which are required for university entrance in the UK.

Scotland's qualification framework is separate from that in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, students aged 15 to 16 may take the Scottish Certificate of Education (SCE) after seven years of primary education and four years of compulsory secondary education. This is recognised throughout the UK as the equivalent to GCE A-levels and is usually the entry qualification for university.

# Tuition fees

Tuition fees have been subject to review and are higher for foreign nationals than for UK and EU citizens. Ranges are shown in the table.

Average tuition fees per annum (for reference only)

Institution		GBP	USD*
Secondary School		12,000 - 18,000	18,480 - 27,720
Certificate/Diploma		12,000 - 18,000	18,480 - 27,720
Community College		13,000 - 25,000	20,020 - 38,500
University	Arts/Business	11,500 - 16,600	17,710 - 25,564
	Medicine/Sciences	16,000 - 23,500	24,640 - 36,190
Cost of living		8,000 - 14,000	12,320 - 21,560

\* Exchange rate GBP1 = USD 1.54

Above fees are current as of the 2013-2014 school year.



# Student accommodation

Accommodation Types	Description	Price Range
Halls and university	Many first year students opt for halls as a good way to meet other students and the convenience of being on or near campus.	Accommodation in a hall of residence: GBP290-320 a month Accommodation in a self-catering hall: GBP160-300 a month
Private housing	Living in a hostel, lodgings or a bedsit	GBP300-350 per month
	Sharing a flat or a house with fellow students	GBP160 - 280 per month

The choice of student housing will affect the university or college experience you are likely to have in your time there: the friends you make, the places you get to know, and your costs. It can also be the first time you deal with private landlords, or have to tackle issues such as deposits, bill-sharing and housing management and safety.

Most students in the UK need about GBP600 a month to live on. This will cover basic needs. It will cost more to live in London or the south-east (up to GBP768/month). Accommodation in the middle of any UK city will also cost more.

## Private accommodation

Students often move into private accommodation in the second year and later, often with groups of friends. Most student houses have between three and six bedrooms. Students should agree from the start on how the household bills will be paid. These include rent, telephone, television and broadband connection, electricity and gas. Other options include an individual bedsit or flat, or lodging in the landlord's house.

- Housing offices: Most universities and colleges have student housing offices to talk you through your options and help you find somewhere to live. Many offices put together lists of landlords and available properties.
- Letting agencies: Letting agencies can help locate a suitable property for you to rent and will then usually charge a fee if you accept any accommodation they find for you. Check that the letting agent is accredited with the National Approved Letting Scheme or that it belongs to a trade body such as the Association of Residential Letting Agents or the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors.



# Secondary education

## Types of schools

### Mainstream state schools

There are several types of state schools. They all follow the National Curriculum and are regularly inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the relevant authority.

- Community schools run by the local authority and have strong links with the local community.
- Foundation schools are run by their own governing body, which employs the staff and sets the admissions criteria.
- Trust schools are a type of foundation school with a charitable trust.
- Voluntary-aided schools are mainly religious or 'faith' schools, although anyone can apply for a place while voluntary-controlled schools are similar in nature but are run by the local authority.

### Specialist schools

Though they follow the National Curriculum, specialist schools focus on a particular subject area. Examples include sports, technology or visual arts.



# Secondary education

## State schools with particular characteristics

- Academies: These are independently managed, all-ability schools set up by sponsors from business, faith or voluntary groups in partnership with the Department for Education (DfE) and the local authority.
- City Technology Colleges: Independently managed, non-fee paying schools geared towards science, technology and the world of work. They offer a range of vocational qualifications as well as GCSEs and A-Levels.
- Special schools: Special schools cater for children with specific special educational needs, such as those with physical disabilities or learning difficulties.
- Faith schools: Similar to other state schools. However, their faith status may be reflected in their curriculum and admissions criteria.
- Grammar schools: These schools select all or most of their students based on academic ability.
- Maintained boarding schools: Maintained boarding schools offer free tuition, but charge fees for board and lodging.

## Independent schools

There are around 2,300 independent schools in England. These schools set their own curriculum and admissions policies. They are funded by fees paid by parents and income from investments. Standards are regularly monitored by either Ofsted or an inspectorate.

# Higher education

Universities and colleges offer academic and work-related courses. Depending on the subject and the type of job you are interested in, you can gain one of many types of qualifications - higher education is not just about getting a degree.

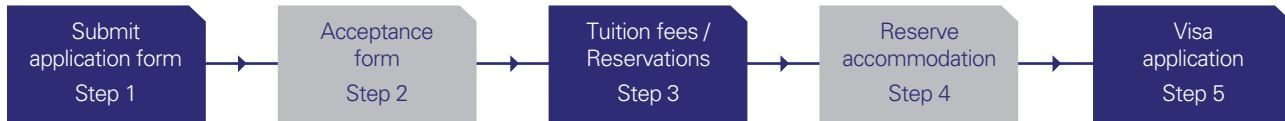
Bachelor's degrees	A bachelor's degree (sometimes known as an 'ordinary' or 'first' degree) can lead to a qualification such as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc). Depending on the subject you choose, it normally takes three or four years to complete full-time.
Foundation degrees	Foundation degrees combine academic study with workplace learning. They are broadly equivalent to the first two years of a bachelor's degree. They provide a route into university or college for a broad range of students from many different backgrounds.
Higher degrees	Higher (also called postgraduate) degrees, diplomas and certificates usually require that you already have a bachelor's degree. They lead to qualifications such as Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Science (MSc).
Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)	HNCs and HNDs are work-related courses provided by higher education colleges and further education colleges. They are available in a wide range of subjects from accounting to video production.
Higher education diplomas and certificates	As well as HNCs and HNDs, you can study for a range of higher education diplomas in subjects as varied as accounting, engineering, nursing and design. They usually take two years.

You can normally convert your higher education diploma to a degree with an extra year of study. Certificates of higher education are academic, rather than vocational qualifications. There are broadly equivalent to an HNC, and usually take a year of full-time study to complete.

# Applying to schools

## General process

Applicants may go through the following process:



There are several different ways to apply to institutions in the United Kingdom and many courses can be applied for online through the Universities and Colleges Admissions System (UCAS)

- Students usually apply in the academic year before they plan to go to college
- After applying to UCAS, applications are passed to the relevant institutions
- Application procedures differ with each university or college – some invite applicants for interviews or take a test. Others may offer you places based on the information on the application
- Offers from preferred universities are usually made by the end of March
- Offers are either conditional (dependent on getting certain grades) or unconditional (if you already have the qualifications)
- Once your place is sorted, you can start preparing for student life

## Documentation

- 1 College/university application form
- 2 Application fee
- 3 Public English exam results or the institution's own English exam results (original/certified copy)
- 4 School report (recent 2 years)/Secondary school public exam results
- 5 Passport (original/copy)
- 6 One recent photo



# Applying to schools

## Postgraduate or MBA study

Most UK institutions offer an online postgraduate application system on their own website. Some use the UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service (UKPASS) scheme, which permits applications for up to ten postgraduate programmes, tracks progress and correspondence on offers.

## Applying to a UK independent or state school

Some UK independent schools have formal application procedures and prefer students to apply up to a year before they wish to start. Other schools are less formal and welcome applications at any time.

Schools usually prefer new students to start at the beginning of the academic year in September, although most will admit students at the start of a new term in January or April.

You can apply directly to the school or through the Independent Schools Council International office (also known as ISC International).

Information about applying to state boarding schools is available from the State Boarding Schools' Association. Proof of UK or EU citizenship may be needed to qualify for a place. Demand for places is high and applications are usually assessed on need to board. Some grammar schools also assess on academic ability.

For Higher National Diplomas (HNDs), you can apply online through the course finder or through UCAS. If you want to apply for any other vocational or pre-university programme such as A-levels, BTEC or pre-university foundation courses, you should apply directly to the UK institution that offers the course.

There is no standard closing date for applications to vocational courses in the UK. However, you should leave enough time to apply for a visa, make travel arrangements and find accommodation.

# Applying to schools

## Student visa application

The UK Border Agency website outlines procedures and offers guides for intending students. International students need to obtain a student visa. The application process for a UK Student Visa generally takes up to 21 working days. Applicants must first submit the application online and then provide the following during the interview:

- A completed Student Self-Assessment Form
- An original passport valid for at least six months beyond the intended stay in UK
- One recent, passport-sized colour photograph
- A Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) from schools
- Evidence of education qualification
- Proof of Fund
- Other relevant information

Type of student visa	Who can apply?
Tier 4 (Child) student	Children aged between 4 and 17 can apply under a points-based system. Applicants must be planning to study at an independent fee-paying school.
Tier 4 (General) student	Students seeking a post-16 education can apply for this visa on a points-based system. Secured English Language Test (SELT) result is required for certain kind of course level.
Child visitor	This six-month visa is available to children aged 17 or younger. Applicants cannot switch to a Tier 4 (Child) student visa. Applications for the latter must be made from the home country.
Student visitor	A six-month visa available to students aged 18 or older. Employment is not allowed during the six months and visa holders cannot switch to a Tier 4 (General) student visa. Applications for the latter must be made from the home country.
Extended student visitor	An eleven-month non-extendable visa available for student whose English ability is below B1. This Visa is only applicable to English language courses.
Prospective student	This visa is available to applicants who want to enter the UK to decide on a course of study. Applicants are allowed to switch and apply for a Tier 4 (General) or Tier 4 (Child) student visa while in the UK.

# Applying to schools

## Required examinations

### Secondary Schools

The Common Entrance Examination (CEA) is used to determine entrance to a particular private or independent school. This is the only examination in the UK school system that is standardised for independent schools before students sit the GCSE examinations.

Most fee-paying schools will test and interview potential students before admitting them. It is important to note that most independent schools set their own timetable of examinations twice a year in a bid to assess student performance and identify those areas where help is needed.

The CEA usually has the following subjects:

#### *Compulsory Subjects:*

- English
- Mathematics

#### *Science Additional Subjects:*

- History
- Geography
- Latin
- French
- German
- Religious Studies

# Applying to schools

## Undergraduate

Entry requirements for UK undergraduate study

- For Higher National Diplomas (HNDs):
  - Qualifications equivalent to one or two UK A-levels
  - OR a Higher National Certificate or BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) National Diploma
  - OR an International Foundation year
  - plus The International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Foundation Degree or Diploma of Higher Education
  - Qualifications equivalent to one or two UK A-levels
  - OR a National Diploma
  - OR an International Foundation year
  - plus The International English Language Testing System (IELTS)
- Degree
  - Qualifications equivalent to two or three UK A-levels
  - a Higher National Certificate or Diploma, or BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) National Diploma
  - OR an International Foundation year plus The International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

## Postgraduate/Professional schools

Many institutions require candidates to have obtained an undergraduate degree in their respective field and gained a certain pass level. Additionally, for international students they may require the IELTS (International English Language Test) for English proficiency.





# Frequently asked questions

## 1. Do I need to get medical insurance if I study in the United Kingdom?

International students staying in the United Kingdom for more than six months are under the protection of National Health Service (NHS). Registered students will receive a health card and family doctor information and would only need to pay medical expenses which are equivalent to the fees paid by British citizens. NHS does not cover accidents, injuries or deaths. It is advisable for students to obtain a comprehensive international medical and accident insurance before arriving in the UK.

## 2. Are the tuition fees in the United Kingdom very expensive?

Tuition fees are costly, but the three-year curriculum in England is one year shorter than in the US or Canada. Thus, the costs can be evened out.

## 3. Can overseas students work part-time?

Yes, they can. Overseas students are allowed to work part time (up to 10 hours per week) if they are enrolled in a full-time course that runs for more than six months. However, it is important to bear in mind that students have to pay salaries tax if income exceeds a certain amount.

# Acknowledgements

The content and information in this guide is largely provided by EF Education First, a world leader in international education.

## About EF Education First



Founded in 1965 in Sweden, EF Education First operates 400 schools and offices in over 50 countries and has a network of more than 35,000 teachers and staff. To date, EF Education First has helped over 15 million people to learn a new language, discover the world, or earn an academic degree.

As part of their mission to break down barriers in language, geography, and culture, EF Education First works with renowned organisations and educational partners on a global scale. Some of their collaborations include University of Cambridge ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) and being named the official learning provider for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2014 World Cup in Brazil.

Besides the diverse range of overseas academic education programmes EF Education First offers, including escorted language tours for young students to cultural exchange and university connection courses with guaranteed placement, the institution also provides tailor-made career courses for working professionals.

For more information, please visit their website at [www.ef.com](http://www.ef.com).

## EF Education First offices in Asia

- Australia
- China
- Hong Kong
- Indonesia
- Japan
- Korea
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Vietnam

## Disclaimer

While every care has been taken in preparing the information and materials contained in this guide, the information herein only serves as general reference. In particular, no warranty regarding non-infringement, security, accuracy, timeliness, fitness for a particular purpose with such information and materials is given by the Bank nor will the Bank take any responsibility for any information or material contained in this guide.

Published by The HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited

HSBC is one of the world's largest banking and financial services organisations, with around 6,900 offices operating in 84 countries and territories.

HSBC Group: [www.hsbc.com](http://www.hsbc.com)

March 2013

All rights reserved. This document is the property and copyright of The HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited ("the Bank"). It is not to be used for any other purpose, copied, distributed or transmitted in any form or by any other means without the prior written consent of the Bank.