



## The British Education System

The UK is a country with a rich history of education. Its education system has been adapting and evolving for hundreds of years; slowly becoming more complete and complex, and developing a great level of flexibility. Altogether, there are three stages of education: Compulsory Education (Primary and Secondary), Further Education and Higher Education.

Throughout the UK – England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland – each country has its own independent education system. The methods and regulations in each of these areas are not entirely the same. The ages at which children undertake each level of education in England are:

- 3-4 years old: Foundation level “pre-school” education
- 5-16 years old: Compulsory education (5-11 Primary School, 11-16 Secondary School)
- 16-18 years old: Further education (Sixth Form A Levels/International Baccalaureate)
- 18 years and above: Higher education and Lifelong Education

Age on 31 Aug (before school year)	Year of Study	Curriculum Stage England and Wales	Schools/Qualifications		Curriculum Stage Scotland
3	Nursery	Foundation Stage	Pre-School		Nursery
4 - 5	Reception	Primary	Primary School		Nursery
5 - 6	Year 1	<b>Key Stage 1</b>			<b>Primary P1</b>
6 - 7	Year 2	<b>Key Stage 2</b>			P2
7 - 8	Year 3				P3
8 - 9	Year 4				P4
9 - 10	Year 5				P5
10 - 11	Year 6				P6
11 - 12	Year 7	<b>Key Stage 3</b>	Secondary School with Sixth form	P7	
12 - 13	Year 8	<b>Key Stage 4/ GCSE</b>		<b>Secondary S1</b>	
13 - 14	Year 9			S2	
14 - 15	Year 10	<b>Key Stage 4/ GCSE</b>	GCSE	S3	
15 - 16	Year 11		GCSE	S4	
<b>End of Compulsory Schooling</b>					
16 - 17	Year 12	Sixth form/ A Level, International Baccalaureate	AS / IB Year 1	Further Education (from aged 16)	S5
17 - 18	Year 13		A2 / IB Year 2		S6
18		Bachelor Degree (3-4 years)	Bachelor of Art or Bachelor of Science	Higher Education	Bachelor Degree (4 years)
19					
20					
21					
22		Master Degree (1-2 years)	Master of Arts, Master of Science, MBA, Master of Research, Master of Philosophy		Master Degree (1-2 years)
23		Doctorate (3-5 years)	Doctor of Philosophy (Phd or Dphil)		Doctorate (3-5 years)
24					
25					
26					
27					



### General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Curriculum

- This stage of the British education system comprises the final two years of compulsory education, and is equivalent to Years 1 and 2 of Senior High School in the Chinese curriculum.
- Age of Students: 14-16 years old
- Period of Study: Two years
- Suitable for Chinese applicants of which level: Year 3 of Junior High or Year 1 of Senior High (初三高一)
- Main Curriculum: Students will generally select between 7 and 10 subjects. These subjects include Economics, Maths, Accounting, Biology, Science, Business, History, Geography, ICT, Philosophy etc.
- Final Exams: After two years of studying students will sit their GCSE exams, which will inform their A level study and even university applications.

### General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A-Level) Curriculum

- A-Level study is equivalent to Year 3 of Senior High School in the Chinese Curriculum. The A-Level exams are equivalent to China's University Entrance Examinations (高考)
- Age of Students: 16-18 years old
- Period of Study: Two years
- Suitable for Chinese applicants of which level: Year 2 or 3 of Senior High School (高一高二)
- Main Curriculum: Students will generally select 3 or 4 subjects. These subjects include Economics, Maths, Drama, History, Modern Languages, Media Studies, Music, Law, Physics, Biology, Accounting, Geography, Business etc.
- Final Exams: After two years of studying students will sit their A-Level exams. For Chinese students who study for their A-Level and sit the exams, they may directly apply for British university undergraduate programs, and do not need to take university preparatory classes. The top level British universities will generally only admit A-level graduates, and will not consider students who have only sat preparatory courses.

### 2017 UCAS Application Timeline

- **15/10** – Deadline for Oxford and Cambridge applications, and for applications to Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary courses.
- **15/1** – Deadline for the majority of UCAS applications
- **25/2** – UCAS opens its "Extra" service
- **24/3** – Deadline for applications to Art and Design courses
- **4/5** – For applicants who received offers before the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, the deadline to respond is the 4<sup>th</sup> of May.
- **8/6** – For applicants who received offers before the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, the deadline to respond is the 8<sup>th</sup> of June.
- **22/6** – For applicants who received offers before the 8<sup>th</sup> of June, the deadline to respond is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June.



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- **4/7** – Deadline for UCAS Extra applications
- **5/7** – UCAS opens “Clearing”
- **5/7** – IB results announced
- **20/7** – For applicants who received offers before the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, the deadline to respond is the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July.
- **17/8** – A-level results announced
- **31/8** – Deadline to meet offer conditions, deadline for adjustments
- **20/9** – UCAS applications officially close



**British University Education**

British University education consists of Foundation courses, Bachelor’s, Master’s and Doctorate studies.

### 1. British University Foundation Courses

The British University foundation curriculum has been established especially for overseas students to help mutually integrate their studies in their home country with their studies in the UK. After graduating from the foundation programme, students are usually able to directly enter the university’s undergraduate or postgraduate courses.

As well as each university’s individual foundation courses - for example prep courses at UCL, Warwick, SOAS and Bristol will qualify you to enter Bachelor’s courses at each of these universities respectively – there are also several large groups established to provide education training and build connections to universities. In the British market at present, the most widely recognised and highly approved Education groups are: Study Group (Bellersby’s), Kaplan, INTO, CEG and Navitas.

- Course Start Dates: September, October, January and April
- Period of Study: One year

Course	Suitable Chinese Applicants
Foundation level	High School graduates
Pre-Masters	Vocational college graduates, students with sub-standard Bachelor’s grades and third year university students.

### 2. British Bachelor’s Degree Courses



- Age of Students: 18 and above
- Course Start Dates: September, October or January each year
- Period of Study: The English Bachelor's degree curriculum lasts three years, Scottish curriculum lasts four years and there are additionally some universities which offer two year accelerated Bachelor's programs for example Buckingham, Northampton and Anglia Ruskin Universities.
- Suitable Chinese Applicants: Chinese first year university students, or graduates of A-Levels, foundation courses or international first year university courses.

### 3. British Master's Degree Courses

- Age at Time of Study: 21 and above
- Course Start Dates: September or October. Some universities offer January start dates
- Course Types:

Course	Period of Study	Certificate Attained	Recognised by Chinese Education Board?
Master's Diploma	Usually 9 months	Master's Diploma Certificate	No
Master's Degree	Usually 12 months	Master's Degree Certificate	Yes

- **N.B. – International Students will generally apply to the Master's Degree course.**

### 4. British Doctorate Courses

- Period of Study: Length of study is three years, however the actual length may vary, since individual students method of study can vary greatly.
- Certificate Attained: PhD

**N.B. – As of 6<sup>th</sup> April 2012, students studying on a T4 visa for Bachelor's degrees and higher (NQF level 6 & 7) can stay for a maximum of 5 years; those studying NQF level 6-8 can stay for a maximum of 8 years; there is no maximum stay for those studying Architecture, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine and Science, or Music at CUK.**



## British University Grading System

	Bachelor's			"Taught" Master's	
<b>Credits</b>	120 credit/year			180 credit/year	
<b>Degree Class</b>	First Class	70+	Can apply to any of the UK's top universities for Master's	Distinction	70+
	2:1	60-69		Merit	60-69
	2:2	50-59	Generally suitable for universities below 40 in the ranking table	Pass	50-59
	Third Class	40-49	Choices are limited (often required to study a pre-Masters course)		

**N.B.** – British universities offer two types of Master's courses: - "taught programmes" and "research programmes". The vast majority of international students apply to "taught programmes"; "research programmes" are generally used to pave the way for doctorate studies.

These two different programmes both require one year of Master's study.

- 1) "Taught programmes" focus on classes, lectures and a thesis paper, and are more common for subjects of a practical nature.



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- 2) “Research programme” course applications are comparatively difficult, since they focus on one particular research topic as a core objective, and they need to know for sure that the applicant has the research ability and methods to achieve their goal. Research programmes are usually the year of study prior to a doctorate course, so students who wish to study towards a doctorate can plan an application. After one year they will attain a Master of Research degree, or a Master of Philosophy Degree.

### British University Groups

**The G5:** The G5 is a grouping of Britain’s absolute top level universities, comprising Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College, UCL and LSE;

**Russell Group:** Established in 1994, these have a reputation as the best of Britain’s universities, equivalent to a “British Ivy League”. The Russell Group is currently made up of 24 Universities, including the famous “Golden Triangle” of schools (Oxford, Cambridge and UCL. Altogether, they are:

Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial College London, King’s College London, Leeds, Liverpool, London School of Economics and Political Science, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford, Sheffield, Queen Mary University of London, Queen’s University Belfast, Southampton, University College London, York and Warwick.

**N.B:** Red Brick universities, although not an official University Group, are widely recognised as Britain’s “Old Elite” of schools, from early on including Birmingham, Bristol, Sheffield, Leeds, Manchester and Liverpool. Later, this term was used to refer to 27 universities with a similar architectural style to the aforementioned six, and which were built between 1800 and 1959, for example the University of Leicester and University of Nottingham.

### Required Application Materials

1. Passport Page & all UK visas
2. Current University Letter
3. Current Transcript
4. Previous Certificates
5. Previous Transcripts
6. English Certificate such as IELTS, PTE etc.
7. Two Reference Letters
8. Personal Statement
9. Internship Experience
10. Other documents such as your scholarship certificate



## Potential Application Problems

1. **Application Conditions:** The UK doesn't have one standardised university entry exam; every school sets the conditions and requirements for their individual programmes.
2. **Application timeframe:** British university courses usually start around September, with the application process beginning one year in advance; for the top universities, the optimal time to submit an application is July or August of the previous year. Most university application departments take 4 to 8 weeks to respond, with some universities, or particularly popular majors taking 10 to 12 weeks for a response, so applicants need to set aside the time to wait for their admissions notice. Before the application, though, there is a lot of work to be done, for example confirming your major, language training, preparing application documents and so on.
3. **Choosing a school and a major:** Generally speaking, the foremost 50 universities are all very good. Each school offers different subjects, and has its own strengths and teaching styles which can vary greatly. Applicants must carefully look at which degree is right for them, and not just apply to a school which is famous or a course which is popular.
4. **Application materials and preparation:** Transcripts, letters of recommendation, personal statements, CVs, internships, etc.

## How to Choose a Suitable University?

1. **Study factors:** Make sure you have chosen a major you are genuinely interested in, find schools that offer that major, check the teaching and research levels at the school matches your requirements and choose a university that is suitable for you personally.
2. **Non-study factors:** The university's location, size, education fees, public transport and entertainment options should also factor into your decision as to whether a school is suitable or not.
3. **Avoid just looking at overall rankings:** A large part of the overall rankings for universities is decided on their research capabilities. As such, universities with a focus on research tend to rank higher than universities with a teaching focus. There are also some universities which don't rank well in the overall tables, sitting around 80<sup>th</sup> place, but in certain types of subject may be in the top 10 (Leeds Beckett University, for example, is 98<sup>th</sup> in the overall University rankings, but for food science and tourism and hotel management majors ranks in the top 10 for individual subjects). Therefore, when choosing a university course, the rankings for individual subjects should be your primary concern.
4. **How it fits with your own circumstances:** There are some students whose personal management skills are somewhat lacking; when selecting a university, they will be better off



choosing ones which mainly focus on teaching. These universities tend to have more of a direct link to students, and more carefully manage their studies. Research focussed universities tend to look more at students personal studying abilities, and there is more scope for independent learning.

## British Student Visa

**Basic Requirements: You must meet the full requirements of the Immigration Rules and have 40 points in total**

- 30 points for having a “Confirmation of Acceptance” (CAS) from a British University.
- 10 points for “Maintenance” – proof of having requisite money available.

**30 points “Confirmation of Acceptance” Requirements**

- Original copies of Education and language qualifications at the time of CAS application.
- Original copy of grade transcript.
- **N.B. – Valid for 6 months after use, and can be used only once.**

**10 points “Maintenance” Requirements**

- Course fees
  - Living costs
- As of 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015, the cost of living in the London area is £1265/month, and outside of the London area is £1015/month, it is preferable to have 2 months of living costs available.**
  - Have you already paid dormitory fees to your university? This can be subtracted from the specified amount required for your living costs. However, UKVI only permits universities to charge a maximum of £1265 for dormitory fees in their CAS. As such, the most that can be subtracted from the deposit for dormitory fees is £1265.**

**New Policy: Immigration Health Surcharge**

As of 5<sup>th</sup> April 2015, the British government has begun charging an Immigration Health Surcharge to those applying for student visas for periods of longer than 6 months.

- The surcharge on student visas is £150/year
- Visa applicants, at the time of their application, must pay the fee to cover the full period of their visa; for example, a student applying for a 3 year study visa would need to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge to cover the full 3 year period up front.
- Be aware, if you haven't paid this fee then your application could be “refused” or “rejected (invalid)”. However, the home office also stipulates that if your application is rejected then it is possible to apply for a refund of the Immigration Health Surcharge.



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### **2015 Most Recent Changes to Student Visa Application Process:**

1. As of August, Further Education College students may not seek work, or give out private lessons of a similar level online.
2. University students are permitted to select a new course at the same level, so long as the new course is related to the previous course, or to the student's professional development. However, as of August, universities enrolling this sort of student may request an interview, to avoid abuse of this rule and the school being penalised.
3. Starting from the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, College students who have completed their studies are not permitted to extend their visa, unless they are studying at an embedded college with formal links to a university, and are studying one of the university's Pathway Foundation programmes. Such institutions must be on the list approved by the Home Office. If the students require to study another course, they must return to their home country and apply for a new visa.
4. As of November, college students may not stay in the UK by converting their visas to Tier 2 or Tier 5, but must return to their home country and apply for a new visa.
5. For further education courses below Bachelor's level (e.g. A-Level, BTEC, Foundation programme, Pathways programme), the visa limit has been reduced from three years to two years, consistent with the length of time for UK students to continue their education.
6. From autumn onwards, Tier 4 visa holders cannot engage in low level/unskilled jobs, but can work full-time or part-time jobs of a technical nature.
7. Starting from 10<sup>th</sup> August 2015, UKVI's policy towards Foundation Programme students on Tier 4 General visas has changed. Students who wish to transfer from one university's foundation programme to another university's foundation programme must now return to their home country to renew their visa. If the student wishes to transfer from one university's foundation programme to another university for a higher level course (for example NQF Level 3 Foundation to NQF Level 4 International Year One Diploma), one of two situations will arise:
  - a) If the student has completed the original course, they will be able to renew their visa in the UK
  - b) If the student fails to complete the original course (fails the classes or does not receive their diploma for any reason) then they must return to their home country to re-apply for their visa.