



Applying to UK Universities

A guide for students in China and their families 2022

VISA



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Before you start reading the (extremely useful and well-written) information in this booklet, there is one really important thing to establish. Is the UK really the right destination for you? Note down your answers to each of the questions below with a Yes or No. Don't spend too much time thinking - go with your first instincts and then turn over!

YES
Do I like the idea of a three year undergraduate course or a one-year masters?
NO

YES
Do I want to study in a university with a strong global reputation?
NO

YES
Would I appreciate the freedom to roam around fantastic natural beauty spots on 180 000 miles of public footpaths in my free time?
NO

YES
Do I appreciate the quiet beauty of a well-shaped queue or a nice cup of tea?
NO

YES
Do I like historic buildings and wiggly road systems that don't make any sense?
NO

YES
Would I like to study somewhere that welcomes international students from around the world?
NO

YES
Do I like incredibly diverse and exciting live music, sport and/or theatre?
NO

YES
Do I want to have access to world class facilities and library holdings?
NO

YES
Do I have a tolerance for eccentricity and understatement?
NO

YES
Do I want to contribute to cutting-edge academic research while I'm studying?
NO

YES
Would I like to live in a vibrant multicultural environment?
NO

YES
Would I like to have a student visa that gives me the opportunity to work in the UK for two years at the end of my studies?
NO

YES
Would I like to study in a destination with an excellent safety record and strong support for mental health and learning differences?
NO

YES
Am I excited by the prospect of travel links to famous destinations all over Europe?
NO

YES
Would I be inspired to study in an institution where some of the finest minds and most famous figures in history have studied before me?
NO

YES
Do I understand that the word 'sorry' can be surprisingly versatile in the right hands?
NO

YES
Am I ok with both experiencing and talking about rain quite a lot?
NO

YES
Would I like to choose from over 50 000 undergraduate courses at over 395 providers?
NO

YES
Would I like a wide range of well-organised career and volunteering opportunities?
NO



Score 2 for Yes; 0 for No		Score 2 for Yes; 0 for No	
A		B	
C		D	
E		F	
H		G	
J		I	
L		K	
M		N	
P		O	
Q		R	
S			
Total		Total	

13-20

Your head thinks studying in the UK is a great idea! Look to the right to make sure your heart is in it as well!

12-18

Your heart is telling you that studying in the UK is a great idea! Look to the left to make sure you are really sure about the practical benefits!

6-12

Some of the benefits of studying in the UK may suit you, but it's worth keeping your options open and looking at other destinations too, as well as doing a bit more research to make sure it would really be the right choice for you, and not just something your heart is deciding for you. Try looking at a comparative site like www.hotcoursesabroad.com which allows you to look at the courses available in different locations at the same time.

6-11

There might be more to find out about life in the UK to make sure that you are able to make the most of the experience of studying there. If your decision is driven more by your head than your heart, you may risk feeling slightly detached from all that UK student life has to offer. A visit, or more engagement with British culture and ways of life is recommended before you go too much further - check out community events at your nearest British Chamber this year!

0-5

Your head might really be telling you that the UK is not the right destination for you. Ask yourself what has prompted your interest in studying there - is it really going to fit your practical, academic and career needs?

0-5

You may like the idea of a UK degree, but living there seems a bit underwhelming to you. If your 'head' score was higher, you might find it helpful to learn more about TNEs (Transnational Education) like the courses at the University of Nottingham - a UK university with campuses in Ningbo China and Malaysia as well as the UK.

Applying to the UK

- Questionnaire 2
- Why the UK? 5

Application Timeline

Research

- Asking the right questions 8
- Choosing courses 9
- Rankings 11

Application

- Checklist: What do you need for your application to a UK university? 12
- Aiming High - What are the most competitive universities looking for? 13
- Writing your personal statement 14
- Writing a Good PS 15
- Predicted Grades 17
- University offers and your predicted grades 17
- English Language Tests 18
- Extra assessments - after you have submitted your application 19
- Admissions Tests 20
- Law 20
- Medical courses 20
- Mathematics 20
- Thinking Skills Assessment 20
- SEN 21

Myths and Misconceptions

- Mythbusting 22

Advice for parents

- Supporting your child: advice for parents 24
 - Communicating with the school 24
 - Keeping your child on track 24
 - Financial support 24

Trends in China

- What are students from China doing? 27

COVID

Further information

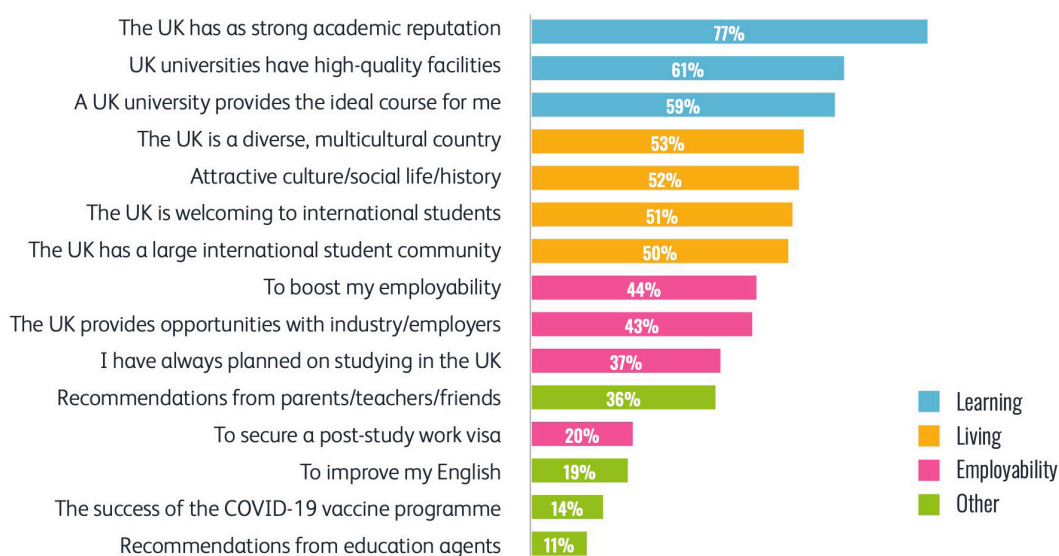
Why the UK?

China and the UK have a long and fruitful history of academic friendship and exchange and there are very good reasons why, year after year, so many Chinese students opt to study in the UK, in numbers that have been steadily increasing over decades and which are now approaching 180 000. Numbers of UK university applicants from China have tripled in the last decade.

They choose the UK for the following reasons:

- As a world-class destination, the UK is an international hub for education with a great many UK universities that offer prestige and recognition for their graduates that can open doors for life.
- UK has many universities featuring in worldwide rankings for research and teaching. Students enjoy unparalleled access to well-stocked libraries with top quality holdings and also 3 copyright libraries for their research.
- UK universities support vibrant links with European universities and many courses provide opportunities for exchange study periods as part of the degree.
- UK undergraduate degrees can be completed in 3 years (4 in Scotland) and masters degrees in one year and the relative cost compared to the many countries with longer periods of study is often lower overall in the UK.
- Many universities provide opportunities for work experience and networking for internships and a UK degree affords international students visas which allow them to work there for up to two years after graduation.
- The UCAS application is straightforward and fair minded, with students competing for places on aptitude only.
- A UK university place gives students a truly global international experience, the opportunity to perfect their English and the chance to build friendships and connect with people all over the world.

As a destination, the UK fulfils a set hierarchy of needs related to learning, living and employability.



This research from UCAS shows some of the reasons international applicants cite for applying to study in the UK.

source: <https://www.ucas.com/file/560406/download?token=TnQfUxAL>

Your Application: a Timeline

- Good questions to ask yourself and people you meet
- Actions you take
- Actions your school may take
- Actions universities or UCAS might take

4 YEARS OUT

What subjects do I really like?

Enjoy school and try lots of hobbies and extra-curricular activities.

General careers education and life skills.

Read, read, read! Listen to talks. Seek intellectual challenges.

How do my hobbies align with the subjects I like best and do well in?

Start thinking about your possible career. Why do you like it? How can you get there?

If I know which career I want to pursue, will this affect my subject choices in G11/Y12?

Study, study, study!
(Remember to enjoy it!)

Start your personal research into courses and universities.

What subjects really suit me and will help me succeed and be happy in the world of work? What do I already know about what I want to do as a career?

Consider taking a well-regarded profile assessment such as Morrisby.

University fairs and support and advice with choices.

Who will my support network be as I apply?

Take an English language test.

Seek internships, voluntary work and other activities over the summer that may help give you insight into your future university course.

Read, read read!

Make a preliminary shortlist of courses and universities.

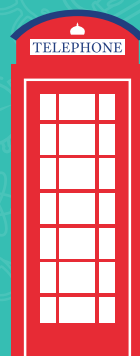
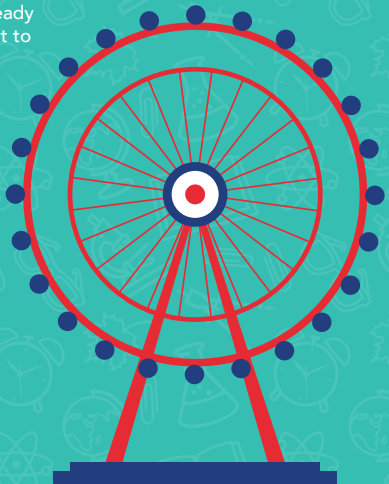
Complete a rough first draft of your personal statement.



START OF G11/Y12

VISA

Talk to your family about the initial plan and a budget. Suggest them to apply for a bank card such as Visa which will help you enjoy card benefits during the journey of application.



**SUMMER BEFORE
G12/Y13**

Read, read read!



Get some work experience, and work on any troublesome subject areas.

Does the way I see my strengths match the way people who know me best see them? Or my school report?

G12/Y13

Review and advise on your personal statement (PS) draft and course choices. Oxbridge/G5 applicants identified.

Study, study, study! (Remember to enjoy it!)

VISA

Retake English language tests if necessary.

Register and pay for UCAS. (£26.50) Visa card accepted.

School shares UCAS buzzword with applicants.

Make a checklist of extra requirements for the courses on your shortlist.



Mock exams and predicted grades.

Register for extra requirement exams.

Schools submit references and predicted grades for Oxbridge candidates.

Do my grades match the offer expectations of the courses on my shortlist?

Oxbridge candidates complete final draft of PS, write SAQ (if required) and complete UCAS applications.



Read, read read!

All remaining candidates complete final draft of PS and complete UCAS applications.

Complete extra requirement exams.

Am I getting enough sleep and exercise?

Offers may start to come in for early applicants.

Shortlisted candidates called for Oxbridge interviews.



Schools submit references and predicted grades for all remaining candidates.

Financial education and life-skills.

Decisions and offers come in via UCAS portal for all applicants.

Choose a first and insurance offer and accept via your UCAS portal. Note: You may need to pay for a deposit fee to secure your offer. (Visa card accepted)

Are there any work options that will give me useful experience or help me save money?

SUMMER

On results day accept your university place on UCAS. If you have not met either of your offers, go into clearing to find an alternative course

VISA

Study, study, study! (Remember to enjoy it!)



Work experience, volunteering, spending quality time with your family.

Does my university run early contact schemes or social media platforms to meet other students?

Do I know how to cook, budget and use a washing machine?

Work out a timeline for UK student visa applications and flights for travel to the UK. Consider travel insurance, flights, local transportation and easy methods of payment such as a Visa card.

VISA

Why is it so important to apply for a subject you are really passionate about?

What we really want to know about are a student's interests and motivation.

Cambridge Admissions Officer

Decide where your academic interests lie and make that your priority.

LSE Admissions Officer

We are looking for students with a genuine interest in pursuing the course, and people who want to stretch their ideas and what they might do for their futures.

Imperial College Admissions Officer

Asking the right questions

Before beginning an application to a UK university, it is important to ask yourself the right questions. These questions will have an impact on your success. They are very simple:

What makes me curious?

What am I good at?

What do I enjoy?

UK universities want to give places to students who display a hunger for knowledge, and who can show an ability to acquire the skills for their discipline. It is a proven fact that students who enjoy their subject have a greater chance of success in their studies.

Subject Enjoyment vs. Academic Achievement

Studies have shown that enjoyment is a significant predictor of achievement. Students reporting enjoying their subject are found to earn higher marks, and find their study less of an effort than those who report less enjoyment. Other studies echo this strong relationship between student satisfaction and their academic achievement, and note a significantly greater likelihood of completing degree study.



[Ghaderizafreh, S., & Hoover, M. L. \(2017\). Graduate Students' Emotions and Achievement in Statistics.](#)

[Dhaqane, M. K., & Afrah, N. A. \(2016\). Satisfaction of Students and Academic Performance in Benadir University. Journal of Education and Practice, 7\(24\), 59-63.](#)

Choosing courses

Almost more important than which university you go to is the course you choose. Although there are many places to find useful information, the best place to start finding out about these is UCAS. Its comprehensive website will lead you to a wide range of rich information about every university and every undergraduate course offered in the UK along with a wealth of supporting information about how to apply, student life and experience and much more. Go to www.ucas.com and start exploring!

Top Tips

 <p>Subjects that are subjects that are closely related can have different names, so take the time to search up a list of related subjects before you start to search for courses: https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects</p>	 <p>Equally, courses with the same or similar names may cover very different modules, materials or approaches. After a first sift of courses that sound like they might suit you, take the time to look at what to expect in each year of study, how much module choice you will have (and how much you want to have), and what main topics will be covered.</p>	 <p>As well as the content, it's also worth considering how it will be assessed. Will this be mostly by exams or essay assignments? presentations or practicals? Individual or group assessments? And how well will this suit your own learning style and how you best achieve?</p>	
 <p>Another key question as you explore is whether your school subjects are the right fit for the subjects you are looking at. Each course page has a section marked 'entry requirements' – look closely at these for subjects, extra qualifications and grades to avoid disappointments later.</p>	 <p>It's also well worth taking a look at the Unistats information towards the bottom of each course page to see how previous students have rated the course for satisfaction and job prospects.</p>	 <p>Don't apply for more than 2 different types of course in your application: it makes writing your personal statement unfocussed and difficult.</p>	 <p>Universities are often aware that candidates of the same quality might have different experiences and knowledge backgrounds, affecting where they need to begin their undergraduate study. As a result, some offer international foundation courses to help students bridge the gap linguistically and academically between school and their undergraduate study. Most of these take an extra year, are open with lower grade offerings, and, provided you pass the year, lead directly on to the undergraduate course.</p>

Choosing universities

Once you have a list of courses you are interested in, there are some things to consider about the universities offering them. There are a great many questions you can ask – all of which are more or less relevant depending on who you are, what you most like and need and where you want to go next. Try choosing the 4 most important for **you** from the ones below:

PRESTIGE

Where do the course and the university place in overall rankings?

LOCATION

City? Collegiate? Campus? What does the UCAS city guide say?

FACILITIES

What sort of culture or night life? What sorts of sports and societies?

BIAS

Am I being blinded by features that really don't matter too much?²

RESEARCH FACILITIES

What are the library holdings look like?

TRAVEL

How good are transport links and travel destinations?

STUDENT LIFE

What do other students say about life at the university?

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Do I like the look of the university buildings?

EXPENSE

What kind of budget is typical?¹

CAREER

How much practical help and experience will I get for my career goals? Would a more general or a more specific or professional degree suit me?

¹ It's worth bearing in mind for example that London tends to be a lot more expensive for rent and some other living costs, or that some universities have a reputation for attracting students with more expensive tastes.

² Like, for example, knowing someone who has been there, or not having heard of it before.

The main reason I chose to study in the UK is because I like British culture, the architecture, language, local conditions and customs and so on. In addition, I thought the curriculum model of UK universities and the application process were a lot more reasonable than the US.

Student applying to UK

Rankings

There are an almost bewildering number of ranking systems for universities across the world and in the UK. While they can be a useful tool in helping you to make informed choices about where to go and what to do, it's worth remembering that a university's overall ranking may have been based on factors which have little or nothing to do with your day to day experiences as an individual undergraduate, (though they may still look good on your CV later).

We recommend:

- always looking at more than one dimension - eg checking the course, teaching and student satisfaction rankings, as well as overall university rankings.
- bearing in mind that rankings can only give you a snapshot in time - not only can they never tell the whole story of what life at university is like, they change every year and what may be on top now, may not be when it comes to finding a job.
- talking to people, reading students' honest accounts on good student websites, and attending open days and visits. These are all ways to get to a more rounded sense of how a course or university is going to suit you.



Useful sites to compare rankings:

<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>

the official comparison site from the UK government, offering detailed insights and comparative data on each course including student experience, graduate pay, entry requirements, and how meaningful graduates find their current work

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>

another well-known site comparing rankings for universities across the world, focusing on, among other things teaching, research and international outlook

<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2022>

QS world university rankings, one of the better-known rankings for universities across the world.

<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables>

user-friendly and independent site for students to compare UK universities for a range of different qualities including facilities, student satisfaction, funding and employability

<https://www.hotcoursesabroad.com/>

useful site showing courses available by subject across the world and including comparative ranking information

www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide

easy-to-read rankings published every year with a range of dimensions from feedback, teaching quality and a 'value-add' score for how well students score compared to their academic standard when they arrived.

Checklist: What do you need for your application to a UK university?

All Chinese applications require the following:

	Completed
Your UCAS registration and fee	
Your UCAS form completed online before the January deadline at www.ucas.com which will include your choice of 5 selected courses in 5 universities	
Your Personal Statement (Prepare this most carefully as your offers will be based on this as well as your grades)	
Your IELTS Grade (Do the test in good time as failure to reach the IELTS standard will mean you are refused for your course)	
Your Exam Grades and/or Predicted Grades from your school exams (which your teachers have to provide when you submit your application)	
Your School Reference (which your teachers have to provide when you submit your application)	
Financial Details for future payment of your course	

Some applications have **extra** requirements which will be specific to your course and to the different universities to which you are applying

Check whether you will need to:

	Required for me	Completed
be aware of earlier application dates in October for subjects such as Medicine, Veterinary Studies and all subjects at Oxford or Cambridge		
have an interview , usually online		
complete subject-specific testing		
submit a portfolio of work for arts subjects		
complete an additional essay after application		
send transcripts detailing your grades so far		
fill in an equality of access form , such as SAQ, for a particular university		
provide information regarding Special Educational Needs		

Universities provide information on the course pages of their websites about their extra requirements and they will contact you if you have to prepare for an interview, send extra work or complete extra forms.

Because of the upheaval of the pandemic and the disruption of school exams more universities are now contacting students with requests to see examples of their school work so that they can make fair decisions on offers so be prepared for this!

Aiming High - What are the most competitive universities looking for?

“What we really want to know about are a student’s interests and motivation.”

- Cambridge admissions officer



good grades

“Decide where your academic interests lie and make that your priority.”

- LSE admissions officer



wider reading and evidence of critical engagement



ability to work through new problems and challenges



a sense of direction for the future

“Do as much reading as you can. And not just reading - podcasts, videos, online lectures. Discover your subject!”

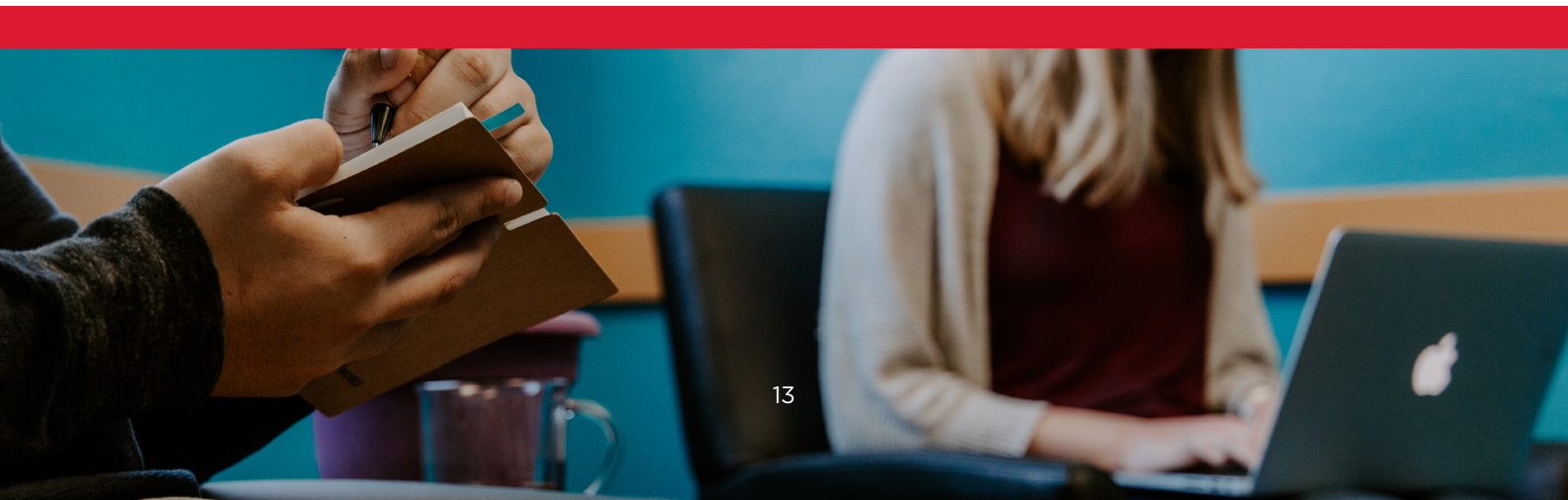
- Oxford admissions officer



research skills

“We are looking for students with a genuine interest in pursuing the course, and people who want to stretch their ideas and what they might do for their futures.”

- IC admissions officer



Writing your personal statement

At the heart of the UK application process is the personal statement, a one-page statement about you as a candidate. It requires students to explain in their own words why they are applying and what they have to offer the universities that choose them. After grades, it is probably the biggest factor in whether or not you will be offered a place at many universities.

In 2020, 26 710 Chinese students applied through UCAS to UK universities. 16 185 were offered places. It is a fair bet that at least some of the unlucky 10 525 students who did not receive offers were not considered because their personal statements weren't good enough.

Source: <https://www.ucas.com/data-and-analysis/undergraduate-statistics-and-reports/ucas-undergraduate-sector-level-end-cycle-data-resources-2020>

8 things that make the personal statement tough:

Your one statement must cover each of your 5 choices for university application.

You have just 47 lines and 4000 characters including spaces to make your case.

In that space, you need to cover: why you want to study your subject, your strengths, experiences and interests, all in your own authentic voice.

It should match up but not overlap with what your teachers' reference says about you. You will not see your teachers' reference.

You need to be original without sounding odd.

Almost nobody in the world likes talking about how great they are.

You should engage intellectually with one or two topic areas of your chosen degree subject.

You should show how you have extended your learning beyond the curriculum to prove your genuine interest.

The more competitive the application, the more important the personal statement

LSE admissions officer

Writing a Good PS

Every word of an application does count with us.

UCL admissions officers

Dos:

Write as authentically as you can about what really interests you and how you think, solve problems and engage with the world.

Focus on your subject, and align what you say about yourself with the subject you are studying.

Include some indications about how you want to use your studies in the future.

It's always a good idea to talk about **your EPQ or EE** in your personal statement when you apply for UK universities.

Show, wherever you can, not just what you have read but what you have learned from it, and how it has advanced your thinking.

Read and research the often copious and specific advice given on your target universities' websites.

Keep an eye on the word and line constraints as you write - and aim to be as concise as you can.

Draft, seek advice, and redraft until you have something you feel really reflects you.

Take ownership of your personal statement. Other people's advice is often very useful, but it is your mind you are describing, and your future you are working towards.

Save your drafts, preferably in in numbered word documents as you go along.

Proofread. Even after you are sure there are no mistakes. There are always it's a joke.

EPQ stands for Extended Project Qualification and is an optional extra project at 6th form. It is often offered with A Levels.

EE stands for Extended Essay and is a part of the IB diploma programme.

Writing a Good PS

Don'ts:

This can really be summed up as a lack of originality, either by using images and ideas that admissions tutors see over and over again, or by presenting yourself in a way that seems false. The opposite of cliché could be said to be authenticity, a word used very frequently in advice from admissions tutors and experts.

The first line of your personal statement is your chance to make a great first impression. We asked experts and admissions tutors from some of the top universities about how to make the most of this golden time to shine. They told us what not to do:

“Filling your personal statement with cliché is one of the easiest ways to get a personal statement wrong. But what is a cliché?”



cliché

The number one piece of advice across the board – starting with a cliché, or something that doesn't tell the admissions tutors anything about you is the best way to make their attention dip as they read your statement.



quotation

“Our head of admissions will audibly complain whenever another personal statement starting with a quotation comes in.”

- UCL admissions officer



tall stories

“Dramatic tales of how you want to become a doctor after seeing your mother collapse in a supermarket tend to make little headway with admissions tutors.”

- Cambridge admissions officer



shopping lists

Long lists of what you have read or achieved without explaining what their impact on your learning has been are also strongly discouraged.



ignoring your subject

“Mention the subject in your first line. You should aim to mention this from the very start of the statement.”

- Imperial College admissions officer



scattergun applications

Applying for several disparate subjects at once is likely to hamper your chances of making a clear case for your strengths in your personal statement.

Predicted Grades

Universities make offers to students based on the predicted grades their teachers think they will achieve in their final school exams.

- Predicted grades are the grades that your school thinks you will achieve at A Level or IB. They are based on your performance at school. In IB the predicted grades on UCAS include the marks for each subject at HL and SL.
- Teachers or university counsellors look at the students' track records of achievement, whether students are on an upward trajectory, improving year on year to give realistic predicted grades.
- Schools have varied approaches to predicted grades but most will tell you which tests will be contributing to the predicted grades. It may be tempting to lobby the school for higher predicted scores, especially if you find that their predictions don't match up to the courses you most want but lobbying almost never helps anyone. Most schools work very hard to be consistent and fair, and will often see this as an unfair request for special treatment.

A predicted grade is the grade of qualification an applicant's teachers or counsellor believes they're likely to achieve. These predicted grades are then used by universities and colleges, as part of the admissions process, to help them understand an applicant's potential.

UCAS

University offers and your predicted grades

It is very important to apply to some courses that match your predicted grades so that you can be confident of getting offers for your courses.

However, it is also OK to apply for one of your courses which does not match exactly your predicted grades because if you write a great personal statement and have lovely references you may get an offer from your dream university and then it is just a question of working really hard to raise your final grades!

When checking the university entrance requirements and the offers you receive be aware of the following:

- **the offer range** - you are most likely to receive an offer of the higher level (contextual offers usually refer to UK applicants who have faced difficulty of access to education)
- **specific subject grades** - you may be offered A levels at A*AB for instance but you need to check if the A* has to be in a particular subject. Failure to reach the exact offer may mean you are refused a place.
- **IB general or specific HL balance offers** - some universities make offers with a global mark at IB and others offer specific HL requirements such as 665
- **Very occasionally there is room for generosity** on the part of the university: if for instance you are applying with IB to a course that requires 665 but you have chosen an HL you are not so good at and that is not connected with your chosen subject, you may be able to ask the university to accept your overall IB grade instead (in this case it would also help if your SL marks are strong). It is always worth writing to admissions officers in the subject to enquire if you find yourself in this situation.
 - Make sure you provide details of your **EPQ** or **EE** also as this may have an impact on your offer.
 - If you are applying with **Chinese or other international qualifications** UCAS provides information on equivalences [here](#) that you should check before you apply.

English Language Tests

If English is not your native language, and you are not taking a substantial enough English qualification through, for example GCSE, A level, IB or AP, you may be asked to provide evidence to show that your proficiency in the language is going to support your studies. Although there is some range in requirements and recognised tests from university to university and course to course, the grid below is a rough guide to the most commonly demanded tests and attainment levels you will need. Generally speaking (though not always), the higher the academic offer required by a course, the higher the English proficiency level will be too. It's really important to check individual course details to see what you will need.

Before committing to any English language test, it's a very good idea to check with your school to see: 1. if you will actually need one and 2. which will blend best with your school's curriculum and support if you do. If you are thinking of taking an art foundation course, it's worth being aware that this will come with central admissions tests of its own which include a language component.

Test	Stands for	Level range	Online/Offline	Find out more*
IELTS	International English Language Testing System	5.5-7.0	online and offline	https://www.ielts.org/
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language	75-100	usually online (IBT - internet based test)	https://www.ets.org/toefl/
PTE Academic	Pearson Test of English	50-70	online	https://www.pearsonpte.com/pte-academic/
C1 Advanced	Cambridge English qualification	160+	offline	https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/advanced/
Duolingo	/	95-110	online	https://englishtest.duolingo.com/
GCSE, IGCSE, A Level, IB (SL or HL), AP in English	International General Certificate of Education/ Advanced Level/ International Baccalaureate (Standard or Higher Level)/ Advanced Placement Tests	If you have completed any of these in English language, this may also be accepted as proof of your proficiency – again, check each individual course requirement carefully on the UCAS site.		

*please note – these websites will be focussed on persuading you that they are the best!

On the subject of English Language tests, UCAS offers these two paragraphs on its pages

IELTS is one of the most recognised English language tests around the world. The IELTS Academic test is generally the most recommended if you want to study an undergraduate or postgraduate course at a UK university.

TOEFL is another of the world's most recognised English language tests. It shows your potential university how well you can communicate in English at undergraduate level. You can take the test online.

Source: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/international-and-eu-students/what-level-english-do-i-need-get-uk-university>

Extra assessments - after you have submitted your application

Sometimes you will need to have extra assessments for your course. You may need to have an interview, take a test, send extra work or a portfolio.

You can go to UCAS or the university website to check if the course you are applying for requires an admissions test. If you apply for a course that requires an admissions test, you'll need to check the registration deadline for the test.

If you are called for interview consider the following statements by Admissions Officers:

Cambridge:

Admissions tutors are seeking an understanding of students' interests and motivation.

You WON'T know the answers to all the questions. When you're not sure, don't go silent. Try to relax and talk through a problem if you don't initially have an answer.

They want to see how you work through questions more than they want to see you being right about everything.

Try to build a rapport. Questions, rather than long silences, show that you are willing to learn, and show that you are likely to cope well with the tutorial system that the interview process is essentially modelled on.

Imperial College, London:

Admissions Tutors are looking for applicants with a genuine interest in pursuing the course.

People who want to learn and stretch their career paths are likely to be well-received, particularly if they have put some thought and research into the career pathways of previous graduates or are excited by factors like Imperial's Enterprise lab.

Most careers in science require the ability to step outside of your own discipline and understand others - be prepared to think and talk about this.

It's surprising how many applicants don't know that we are focussed exclusively on science, engineering and medicine at the undergraduate level.

Oxford:

Discover your subject! Try to show that you are really genuinely interested in it.

Academics are the most important thing; interest in specific colleges is not important.

Be prepared, and make use of the resources available - there are some very helpful youtube videos with very useful advice and demonstrations.

Read as widely as you possibly can.

For more information on interviews, go to:

www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations

Admissions Tests

As well as the traditional tests set by Oxford and Cambridge, there are tests for subjects such as Medicine, Maths, Physics and Computer Science as well as general Thinking Skills Assessments at more and more universities now. Do not be put off by these. They are designed to select talent from a global field of applicants like you.

Course-related admissions tests



Law

- [Cambridge Law Test](#)
- [LNAT - National Admissions Test for Law](#)



Mathematics

- [Mathematics Admissions Test \(MAT\)](#)
- [Sixth Term Examination Paper \(STEP\)](#)
- [Test of Mathematics for University Admissions](#)



Medical courses

- [BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#)
- [Graduate Medical School Admissions Test \(GAMSAT\)](#)
- [Health Professions Admission Test \(HPAT Ulster\)](#)
- [University Clinical Aptitude Test \(UCAT\)](#). Read [UCAT's 2020 update on how the test will be delivered this year](#).



Thinking Skills Assessment

- [Thinking Skills Assessment Cambridge \(TSA Cambridge\)](#)
- [Thinking Skills Assessment Oxford \(TSA Oxford\)](#)
- [Thinking Skills Assessment University College London \(TSA UCL\)](#)

It's important to remember that the personal statement is but one part of the university application at Oxford. Sometimes people with very good personal statements follow it up with insufficient preparation for the tests or by handing in a poor written work sample.

Oxford Admissions Officer

SEN

If you are an SEN student:

- Write to your universities and ask what you should do and what evidence they require of your Special Educational Needs.
- Don't feel you ought to hide your needs; your personal statement may in any case reveal them in ways which might make universities wary of your application if they don't have the full context.
- Be confident that your SEN status will not damage your chances of being accepted at a UK university.
- Be confident that the university will do their best to accommodate your needs whilst you are there.

SEN stands for special educational needs. You may have special educational needs if you have a disability, a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia or dyspraxia or a mental health condition such as long-term depression.

Sometimes, students worry that disclosing a special educational need might make it harder to get into university. This is rarely if ever true – and if it were to happen, would be actionable by law. The UK is protected by the Equality Act, which makes it illegal for employers or institutions to discriminate against someone because of a disability, specific learning difficulty or mental health condition. In fact, a great many universities have student charters specifically pledging to help any of their students who may need extra support, and take their responsibilities towards students with special educational needs very seriously. It will always be completely up to you whether you choose to reveal a special educational need on your application – you have the right to keep this information private if you want to. However, disclosing a special educational need can help to ensure that you get the extra help you need to thrive both once you arrive, and in any special consideration or extra financial help you might be entitled to as you apply.

For further information about this, try reading this helpful guide from [Disability Rights UK](#).

To learn more about how to get a formal assessment for a range of special educational needs, try contacting your local SENIA chapter [here](#).



Mythbusting

Myth 1. Some courses are not open to Chinese students or have student quotas limiting numbers

There are no undergraduate courses closed to Chinese students, or any other international students.

There is an outer limit on international student places on one type of course, and one type of course only – medicine. These quotas are in place to ensure that enough doctors are being trained every year to meet UK needs.

Even for this one area, the upper limit applies to all international students and no UK university has any specific restriction on Chinese undergraduates in any area.

Myth 2. My chances of a place are better/worse if I am taking A levels/ IB/AP programmes

Broadly speaking, universities make no distinction between them. University admissions officers understand very well that students don't choose their school's curriculum – and if you think about it, it would be pretty unfair to use this as a basis for finding the best students. The UCAS website has some very useful information on its pages on tariffs that will help to explain how universities work out the equivalent worth of different qualifications – this is the best place to start: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points>. One interesting descriptive distinction has been articulated by some universities about how well different qualifications seem to prepare students for undergraduate study, with some admissions officers saying that in their experience, the majority of the IB students cope better with the degree course, particularly at first year, while A level students learning three or maybe four subjects in depth, can find second- and third-year study easier.

Myth 3. There is an advantage to early submission

Oxbridge candidates have an earlier official deadline of Oct 15th. For all other applications, the official line from UCAS and admissions officers is that there is no advantage when it comes to receiving an offer. As long as candidates submit their application by the UCAS deadline, universities should give equal consideration to all candidates. This said, some argue there are benefits to submitting earlier: apart from the satisfaction of completing the application and giving schools enough time to give full support, students can receive earlier interview invitations, and for applicants to more practical or creative courses such as art or drama where you need a portfolio or audition, there is at least anecdotal evidence to suggest that an earlier application gives a better chance of being picked out from the pool. Seasoned university counsellors have suggested that late November is a sweet spot for getting applications in with a minimum of stress and maximum results. NB The UCAS deadline is usually Jan 15th every year. With COVID-19 disruptions this year, this was extended to 29th Jan. For 2022 entry, it is worth keeping up to date with UCAS changes by joining their WeChat platform.

Myth 4. A course with the same name = the same thing whichever university you go to.

This is something that often needs a lot more time than a lot of people give it. There are a number of different options for each broad subject area, and looking into the nuts and bolts of each course is really worth the time it takes to do. Some courses are more theoretical, while others pride themselves on practical real-world application. To take one subject discipline as an example, doing a more traditional English course versus a more progressive one results in a vastly different student experience – for example, if you look at the texts on offer for Durham and Sheffield, say, the same course name means basically studying a totally different subject. Choosing the right course names is the first step but checking out what students say about them, and what's actually on the syllabus is an essential second step.

Mythbusting

Myth 5. G5 universities are the only ones that matter

Currently in China, it's probably still true to say that G5 universities are the ones most likely to be recognised by potential employers in China. However, first of all, there are no guarantees that even these names will mean much to some, and in today's globalised world, a well-written CV should always explain the significance of all qualifications. 'I graduated in X, which was the most highly ranked course in the UK at the time' is always a better bet than gently name-dropping and hoping that your reader takes the hint. If you do think that a more traditional or prestigious university will provide a benefit for what you want to achieve, then it's worth getting to know the Russell Group universities, perhaps less well known as a group in China but highly respected across the world.

Myth 6. G5 and Russell Group universities are always top of the rankings

Nope. Although these universities are well-established and clearly excellent centres of learning, they are not the only game in town. Depending on what you want to study, you might find that finding the right course based on research into this might throw up some very competitive choices. Rankings have become ever more sophisticated over the past few years, and it is possible to find rankings for a range of different aspects of university life and study, teaching quality, research, graduate opportunities and employability, and quality of student life, to name just a few.

Myth 7. London is the best UK destination

London is wonderful. It can also be bigger, more impersonal, and as a result more prone to people playing it safe and sticking to their own national groups than other places. In terms of travelling, the distance from Southampton University at the bottom of Britain to Aberdeen at the top is about the same distance as Beijing to Suzhou, so wherever you go, most places in the UK and beyond will be pretty accessible for travel. Some people thrive in big cities, others do much better in campuses, collegiate systems and smaller towns. It's really worth doing some homework about the location, size and structure of your target universities, and if at all possible visiting to get a feel for the place, before you apply.

Myth 8. I don't have time to do extra reading

When it comes to writing the PS, the reading that students have done is a really important part of the puzzle, and something that a surprising number of strong candidates do very badly. Reading the right books for your course, actually having digested and understood what you've read, and being able to comment intelligently on this is also really important. This process is not always terribly well-supported, especially in schools with more students preparing for the US, where this is less central to the process, so being self-driven in your reading can often be a smart way to improve your chances of success.

Myth 9. Employability is limited for graduates who want to stay in UK

Recent changes to visa regulations have made significant changes to the landscape here. It is now possible to stay up to two years post-degree to find employment and build a life.

Myth 10. It matters if I choose an open application on Oxbridge college choice

These words come directly from an Oxbridge admissions officer: "It makes absolutely no difference."

Supporting your child: advice for parents

Communicating with the school:

Some schools have a Head of Year or Head of 6th form, many schools have tutors and nearly all schools have a university counsellor who will help to support students with their applications, help them stay on track and offer guidance, mentorship and support with personal statements and other application essentials. It's helpful to know who the key staff members will be in your child's school will be, and we highly recommend checking out both written guidance from your school and any information sessions about university applications they are running online or in person. One thing all schools are very clear about is fairness of access: in application terms, this means that they are likely to respond negatively to anything that might be seen as lobbying for higher predicted grades – by students or their families. This said, most schools are very happy to talk about their students' choices with families – and it can be very helpful to share information with each other at parents' evenings and consultations and in emails to ensure that everyone has the fullest picture of how to support students as they seek the perfect destination for them.

Keeping your child on track:

This is an exciting time in your child's learning journey. They are taking their first steps towards an independent life, and one of the most potentially exciting periods of academic and personal growth they will experience. You know your child best, and probably have the best understanding of how much practical, logistical and emotional support they will need. Whatever they need currently, however, the aim of the game is to get them ready for the independent life they will soon be living – making their own choices, staying on top of their own deadlines and managing their own time – so slowly transitioning to full independence is a good thing to keep in the back of your mind this year. For practical support, taking the time to understand the timeline of application, and talking to your child about where they are up to can be a good way of helping them to do this – and discussing all they have achieved and are good at as they come to write their personal statements (in their initial drafts many students miss out highly relevant and impressive things about themselves until someone who knows them well reminds them). In terms of choosing courses, all older adults with any role in advising students (teachers included!) need to resist the urge to work from personal knowledge that may be significantly out of date or irrelevant. The UCAS website is open to everyone, and researching and discussing together can be a great springboard for all sorts of talk about the future as long as the student is clear that they are the one holding the mouse!

Financial support:

International payment can be tricky, and we recommend choosing an international credit card like a Visa card that you can use from the start of the application process to paying tuition fees, organising insurance and booking flights, to providing a card your child can use when they are in country. For more information about the benefits and help Visa offers students travelling overseas, connect here:



Start travelling before you leave with the British chambers of commerce in China

Community events at the British chambers of commerce help to connect a whole range of people in China with an interest in the UK



BEIJING HIGHLAND GAMES

To join this event, and others like it in Beijing, please scan here:



CHENGDU UK ALUMNI MIXER

To join this event, and others like it in South West, please scan here:



GUANGZHOU BRITISH DAY

To join this event, and others like it in Guangdong, please scan here:



Trends in China

For Chinese students and their families who consider studying at UK universities two main drivers often influence their decisions:

- Ensuring compatibility of their qualifications in both the Chinese and global marketplace.
- Accessing learning experiences that are significantly different to those offered in China that enhance their profile both in China and abroad.

In terms of UK application trends for students, there are distinct links between both the individual desires of students and the needs of China. In the past, for instance, students chose engineering and then with further national growth, economics and international business. With the rapid development of Chinese research institutions, the UK saw a huge growth in students of the sciences and more recently increasing numbers of Chinese students have been applying for a greater variety still, including law, humanities, language, literature, environmental sciences and art. This again, may link to national development, as an exponential growth in English fluency supports Chinese students' access to more essay-based subjects and an expanding digital and creative market in China play a role in young people's future plans.

“My child is very interested in research projects, so he has focussed on the relevant programmes in universities. I think the research quality is crucial for his further development and safety is my biggest concern when deciding the destination. Overall, UK universities can meet our expectations.”

Parent of applying student

“I chose to apply for the UK universities because I am keen to access the resource materials available there. As a literature student who concentrates on Medieval English, I am particularly interested in manuscripts. Cambridge library definitely has enough of those collections.”

Student applying to UK



What are students from China doing?

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-53>

Although the subject choices of all Chinese students are not officially separated from international students in general, the numbers in this extensive UCAS survey based on students living in the UK and describing themselves as Chinese provide some useful clues about what subjects have proved most popular for Chinese students in recent years (2019-21). The figures represent roughly half the number of successful Chinese applicants every year and the variety of subjects may surprise you!

Science subjects

6,780

1,185



Engineering and technology

1,040



Subjects allied to medicine

1,035



Computing

975



Medicine and dentistry

635



Mathematical sciences

365



Psychology

535



Physical sciences

525



Biological and sport sciences

305



Architecture, building and planning

100



Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences)

45



Veterinary sciences

35



Agriculture, food and related studies

*number of students surveyed

Non-science subjects

4,460

1,565



Business and management

875



Design, and creative and performing arts

825



Social sciences

459



Law

285



Language and area studies

235



Historical, philosophical and religious studies

175



Combined and general studies

100



Education and teaching

100



Media, journalism and communications

50



Geography, earth and environmental studies (social sciences)

*number of students surveyed

COVID

Planning for study abroad is a multi-step process any year, but since 2020 it has included some extra (and sometimes rather uncertain) steps due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Given the unpredictable progress of the virus, it's important to not get too fixed on any one plan: for now, it's better just to learn how to find out the details you may need later. Here is a brief run-down of what you may need to know about UK universities and COVID-19, and where to look for further details later.

- Travel restrictions are not currently in place in the UK, and self-quarantining is no longer controlled by law (though you are still encouraged to self-quarantine in your own accommodation if you find you have tested positive for COVID-19). These rules are made at government level so the best place to look for the latest information is to search the gov.uk website here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- Universities are very independent so approaches to teaching have been a little different from place to place. During periods of lockdown, most teaching moved online and some was cancelled. Post-lockdown, most universities have offered a blended approach to teaching, with online elements for large-group activities (like lectures) moving online, and smaller group activities (like seminars and tutorials remaining face-to-face). All universities have expressed a commitment to students unable to reach the university due to local lockdowns, underlying health conditions or travel restrictions, and most courses have at this point developed multiple delivery methods to support their students. The best place to find out how your university is handling or has handled the pandemic is by checking their individual websites and searching for their COVID-19 policies and procedures.
- As with teaching, pandemic measures for accommodation have varied from university to university, and it's worth checking individual university websites to see how students are managing.
- Fees have generally remained the same during the pandemic though online courses are usually cheaper to deliver, having to switch online halfway through a course is usually no cheaper for universities, and hence no cheaper for you. It is always worth checking your chosen universities' websites to see what financial support is available, and more general guidance here: <https://ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students#layer-6906>
- A wide range of support systems are in place from practicalities to things like looking after your mental health during periods of isolation. We recommend the UK Council for International Student Affairs for the former <https://ukcisa.org.uk/> and the NHS Every Mind Matters pages for the latter <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>. To find out about your rights as a student, and what rules all universities have to follow to support their students, have a look at the Office for Students pages here: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>.
- Visa and immigration requirements have at times been changed to accommodate students caught up in pandemic restrictions – there is useful and up-to-date information on the UKCISA pages <https://ukcisa.org.uk/> - just search COVID and visas.
- If developments in the pandemic lead you to deciding to defer or decline your offer, search COVID on the www.ucas.com site for up-to-date advice and deadlines before contacting your university directly.





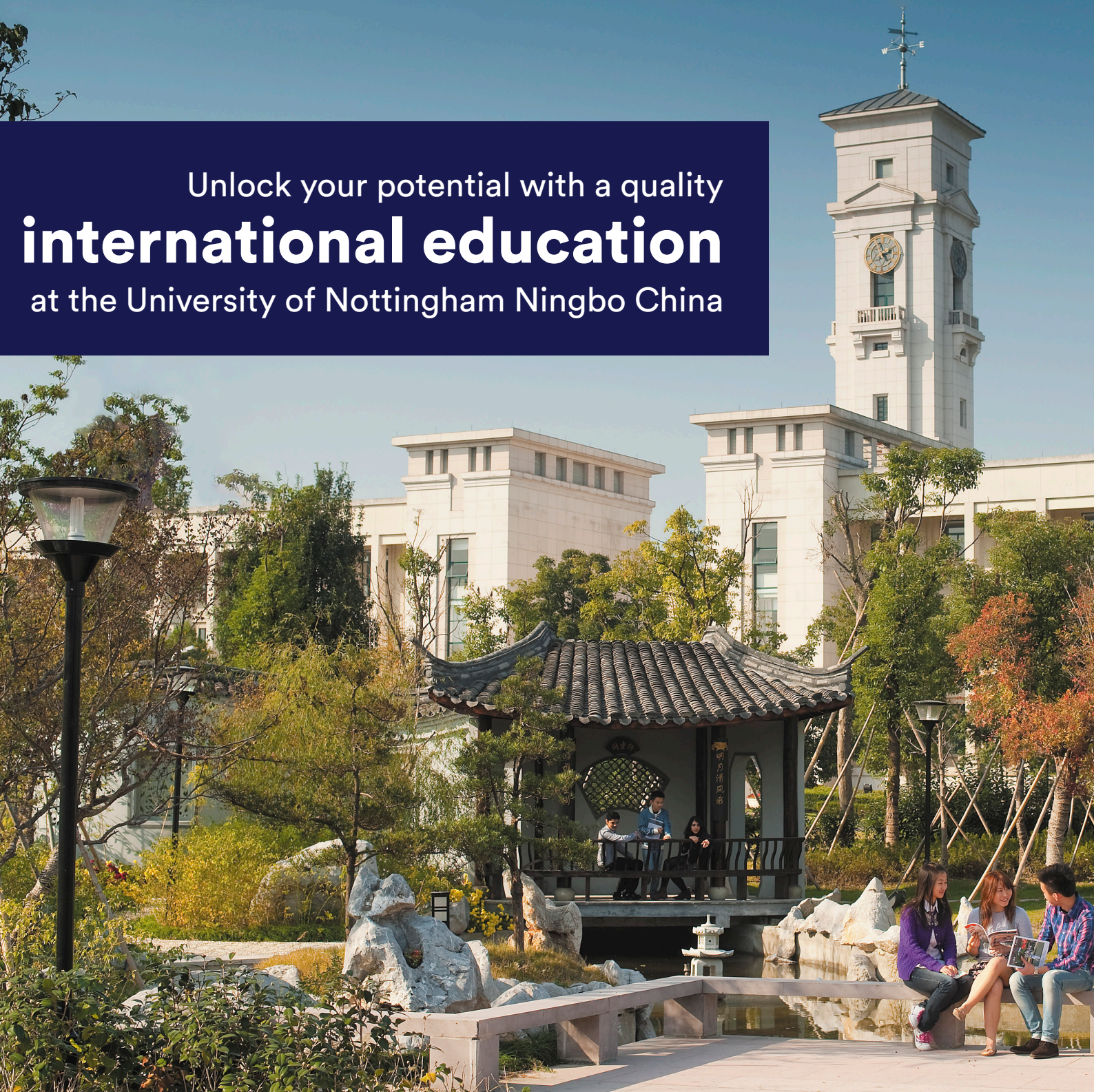
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[BioMedical Admissions Test \(BMAT\)](#)
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[Thinking Skills Assessment Cambridge \(TSA Cambridge\)](#)
[Thinking Skills Assessment Oxford \(TSA Oxford\)](#)
[Thinking Skills Assessment University College London \(TSA UCL\)](#)
<https://www.ielts.org/>
<https://www.ets.org/toefl/>
<https://www.pearsonpte.com/pte-academic/>
<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/exams-and-tests/advanced/>
<https://englishtest.duolingo.com/>
<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/international-and-eu-students/what-level-english-do-i-need-get-uk-university>

Applications

Virtually all you need to know about applying to university
www.ucas.com

Choosing Courses

<https://www.ucas.com/explore/subjects>
www.gov.uk/browse/education
www.Hotcourses.com
<https://discoveruni.gov.uk/>
<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>
<https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2022>
<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables>
<https://www.hotcoursesabroad.com/>
www.theguardian.com/education/universityguide
Choosing 6th form subjects: www.russellgroup.ac.uk/informed-choices
Student reviews: www.whatuni.com
Online courses: www.coursetalk.com
tariffs for courses: <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/entry-requirements/ucas-tariff-points>
UCAS city guides: <https://www.ucas.com/explore/locations>

Careers

www.nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk
www.icould.com
www.Careersbox.co.uk
www.INSIDECareers.co.uk/bookstore
www.Targetjobs.co.uk
www.Prospects.ac.uk
www.push.co.uk

COVID-19

www.gov.uk/coronavirus
www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students#layer-6906
<https://ukcisa.org.uk/>
<https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters/>
www.officeforstudents.org.uk/
search COVID on www.ucas.com

Finance

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice> (fees and money section)
<https://www.visa.cn/>
www.Scholarship-Search.org.uk

Foundation Courses

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/what-and-where-study/choosing-course/foundation-degrees>

Oxbridge

www.oxbridge-admissions.info
www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/undergraduate-interview-invitations
<https://www.ox.ac.uk/admissions/undergraduate/applying-to-oxford/guide/interviews>

SEN

<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/telling-people-youre-disabled-clear-and-easy-guide-students>
<https://www.seniainternational.org/>

Further information

Support

www.TheMix.org.uk
for those 18 and under www.Childline.org.uk
www.TheStudentRoom.co.uk

Travel in Europe

www.gov.uk/guidance/gap-year-foreign-travel-advice
www.backpackeradvice.com

University visits

www.OpenDays.com

This guide was produced following our annual UK University Path events in September, co-hosted by BCCC (British Chamber of Commerce in China) and Venture Education. A number of quotations, suggestions and statistics are drawn from the talks at the event.

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The University of Oxford

University College London

UCAS

UK Visa & Immigration

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If you are a school-based university counsellor, or potential sponsor, interested in UK University Path 2022 hosted in September, please contact education@britishchamber.cn



This guide was compiled and designed by Venture Education

Venture Education empowers K12 education in China through research, student activities, industry events and professional development. We also support schools with overseas admissions and careers education.



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www.ventureeducation.org