

Key messages to international students for AY 2021/22

1. UK HE providers look forward to safely welcoming international students in the new academic year.

We expect students will continue to be welcomed onto campus for the new academic year.

Some universities may make use of technology to offer a blended experience to aid in the delivery of a high-quality academic experience that caters to the needs of international students.

Some students will have the flexibility to engage with their course online, and UK universities have proven that they can deliver high-quality education in this way. We have seen some excellent and innovative examples of high-quality online learning being delivered by universities across the UK.

If students are coming from overseas – especially from a [red list country](#) - it is very important that they contact their university to speak with them about the date of their travel. This is so that universities can ensure international students are properly and fully supported to join or re-join their course, and to make sure they are aware of the correct [arrivals procedure](#).

2. We have made excellent progress with our vaccination effort and many COVID-19 restrictions are lifting across the UK.

Thanks to the effort of our National Health Service, the UK is making great progress with vaccinating our entire adult population.

This has allowed us to safely and methodically unlock many areas of society, which will ensure students can enjoy a full and enriching experience while they are studying at a UK university.

3. Students don't need to have been vaccinated to come to study in England. All students enrolled on UK courses are eligible to register for medical services with a General Practitioner (GP) and will be entitled to receive a COVID-19 vaccination while here, in the same way as domestic students.

International students who live in the UK will be able to access the Covid-19 vaccine, just as they are currently able to access healthcare.

Individuals who are registered with a General Practitioner (GP) will be contacted by their GP to book their vaccine via an online or telephone system – there is no need for students to proactively contact their GP about the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID vaccinations are classed as primary care, and anyone who lives in the UK is entitled to receive NHS Primary Care medical services at a GP surgery for free. When students arrive in the UK, they should register with a local GP surgery as soon as possible. There may be a GP surgery attached to students' universities. GPs are trained and experienced in diagnosing and treating a range of health problems.

If international students have further questions regarding vaccines, they should consult the [COVID-19 vaccination FAQs for students in Higher Education Institutions](#) which has been published by NHS England and provides a range of important information. Students can also [read about being an international student in England](#) during the pandemic.

4. While a number of public health measures have been introduced to protect everyone in the UK, including some travel measures, students will be supported by their university to come to the UK.

For those arriving from [red list countries](#), quarantine in a [managed quarantine hotel](#) is in place to prevent the spread of potentially harmful COVID-19 variants in the UK, and there is a need to have strict rules in place.

If students are arriving from an [amber list country](#), they may be asked to complete a period of self-isolation in their university accommodation. This will depend on whether they have been vaccinated or not before they arrive, and the type of vaccine they have had. More information is available on [gov.uk](#).

Universities in the UK are working so that international students are well looked after during the pandemic, and the Government recognises that international students may need specific support whilst studying in the UK, particularly if self-isolating.

Government and providers have worked together to support students in quarantine in accessing food, medical and cleaning supplies. They have also ensured students have ongoing access to first points of contact for COVID-19 queries and concerns, and have made proactive wellbeing support available (including student support networks, mental health and academic support) where required.

Universities UK has published a commitment to student wellbeing and education, and they have also published a [checklist](#) to guide universities that are supporting students who are self-isolating. This builds on previous guidance which they published to reaffirm and clarify the actions universities should consider to best support students' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

Universities have been asked to ensure that self-isolating students have a range of choices available for access to food and other essential supplies. This includes providing food to those that need it and facilitating deliveries that will not require students to leave the accommodation where they are self-isolating.

UK residents (which includes international students due to their visa status) that are facing significant financial hardship as a result of the cost of hotel quarantine will have an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. Travellers who access hardship will be referred to our debt collection agency ("Qualco"), who will perform an independent financial assessment and determine an appropriate payment plan.

5. The UK has a world-leading visa and immigration offer for students and graduates, and since the start of the pandemic we have led the way in introducing immigration flexibilities where needed.

The UK was one of the first countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic by introducing comprehensive immigration flexibility. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the UK Government has implemented a number of measures to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions.

The measures introduced last year were introduced in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. Government has been clear throughout the pandemic that concessions will be kept under regular review and will be withdrawn once when it is appropriate to do so.

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We have demonstrated our commitment to international students through the new, internationally competitive Graduate immigration route for international students. The Government recently confirmed that this route will launch on 1 July 2021 and will provide a non-extendable period of leave to stay and work in the UK at any skill level.

With the new Graduate route, international students with valid Student (or Tier 4) leave who successfully complete a PhD from Summer 2021 have the opportunity to stay in the UK for three years after study to live and work, while those completing undergraduate or master's degrees will be eligible to apply to stay for two years after study, making our visa offer internationally competitive.

Students who have already travelled to the UK during their studies with permission as a Student, will be able to make a Graduate route application, as long as they are present in the UK before the end date of their permission, and meet the other requirements of the route.

While students whose course (lasting 12 months or less) started in 2020 are currently required to enter the UK by 21 June to remain eligible for the Graduate route if they have not previously entered the UK to study that course, we recognise that the current situation remains a fast-moving picture, with public health advice as well as immigration matters to take into account. Should this change, Government will clearly communicate this; at present, it should be assumed that this date continues to apply.

More information on the Graduate route can be found at [Fact sheet: Graduate Immigration Route - Home Office in the media \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

6. Whatever the mode of study, students will receive world-class tuition from UK universities that consistently produce top global graduates, with an excellent reputation for student experience.

UK higher education providers are globally recognised, with 4 universities in the top 10, and 17 universities in the top 100; they also have a stellar reputation for world-class research.

UK higher education has a reputation for high quality – our universities are among the best in the world.

UK degrees are of a high standard and are internationally valuable whatever form they take – whether they are delivered in person or online.

UK higher education providers are renowned for choice and flexibility – students can choose from over 50,000 undergraduate and postgraduate courses, including a number of world-leading STEM, finance and business subjects, among many others.

UK courses (particularly PG) are generally shorter than those in other countries, helping to reduce overall tuition fees and accommodation costs.

UK higher education degrees and qualifications, as well as the research conducted by our world-class universities, are recognised by employers and academics worldwide, and produce top graduates.

Over 50 serving world leaders have benefited from a British education. Almost one in seven countries around the world has a prime minister or head of state who studied

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in a UK higher education institution, according to an analysis by the British Council.

82% of international non-EU and EU graduates say their UK degree was worth the financial investment.

82% of graduates who studied in the UK report being satisfied or very satisfied with their careers so far.

7. Students' physical and mental health will be supported by their university while they are here

Universities in the UK are working hard so that all students, including international, are well looked after during the COVID pandemic – this includes those who need to remain on campus due to the current national restrictions.

Universities have been asked to ensure that students who remain in university accommodation have a range of choices available for access to food and other essential supplies. This includes providing food to those that need it and facilitating deliveries that will not require students to leave the accommodation where they are self-isolating.

Government recognises that international students may have specific support needs whilst studying in the UK, particularly when self-isolating. Government has asked providers to ensure students have ongoing access to first points of contact for COVID-19 queries, and to make wellbeing support available (including student support networks, mental health and academic support) where required. Student should speak to their providers for more information about these services.

In specific cases, immediate hardship funding can also be made available by universities for students in need – students should speak to their providers if they find themselves in need of hardship support. In total we have made an additional £85m of funding available for student hardship in the 2020/21 academic year.

Over £10 million has been provided by the government to leading mental health charities to help them expand and reach those most in need. Students struggling with their mental health can also access support via online resources from the NHS, Public Health England via the [Better Health - Every Mind Matters](#) website, and the mental health charity [Mind](#).