

## A smoother journey

The British Council's role in  
visas and immigration

# Enhancing the international student experience: pre-departure, immigration and orientation

## Introduction

Working closely with key partners across the UK government and education sector, the British Council aims to help international students have a positive experience of UK student life.

We do this by helping students to:

- Plan their UK studies.
- Prepare for their departure to the UK.
- Settle in to UK student life.

Here is an overview of our work in this area:

## Guidance for students, agents and the education community worldwide

The British Council provides information about studying, living and working in the UK to international students, agents and education providers.

## Education UK website

[www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) is the official website for international students who want to study in the UK.

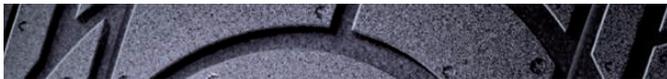
On the site, students can:

- Search through thousands of courses and scholarships.
- Find out what it is like to study and live in the UK.
- Get advice on planning and preparing for UK student life.

## Student outreach events

Each year, the British Council runs over 100 Education UK exhibitions in countries around the world. We also run many more student outreach events – such as pre-departure briefings and school roadshows.

At these global events, we give students advice about studying in the UK, and how to prepare for their experience: [www.educationuk.org/global/articles/events-and-exhibitions/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/events-and-exhibitions/)



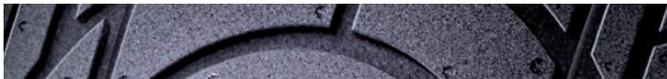
## Visas and immigration

The British Council works closely with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) to help students, agents and audiences worldwide understand the UK's student immigration system.

- For students and parents – UKVI regularly give presentations and seminars at Education UK exhibitions and events. We also direct students to the UKVI website via the Education UK website and social media channels.  
[www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org)
- For agents – The British Council works to train agents so that they understand the UK education system, visa and immigration requirements and are better equipped to advise and guide students who want to study in the UK. We make available a list of all agents who have passed our training course.  
[www.britishcouncil.org/education/education-agents/training-agents](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/education-agents/training-agents)

## Publications

- **First steps – a pre-departure guide for international students coming to study in the UK.** Covers immigration, fees and maintenance costs; preparing for their travel to the UK; arrival in the UK; settling in; and useful organisations. This guide is sent to all British Council overseas offices and given to students at pre-departure briefings. Latest issue 2015. Available from:  
[www.educationuk.org/global/articles/predeparture-briefings/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/predeparture-briefings/)
  - **Entry Clearance and Immigration – for all international students coming to study in the UK.** This guide is sent to all British Council offices overseas and given to students and Tier 5 applicants applying for visas overseas. Latest issue 2015. Available from:  
[www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk)
  - **Creating confidence: The essential personal safety guide for international students studying in the UK.** This booklet was produced by the British Council, in partnership with the Home Office and the Police Association of Higher Education Liaison Officers (PAHELO).  
[www.educationuk.org/global/articles/safety/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/safety/)
  - **Safety first: The essential personal safety guide for international visitors and workers to the UK.** Again, this booklet was produced by the British Council in partnership with the Home Office and PAHELO (Police Association of Higher Education Liaison Officers).  
[www.educationuk.org/global/articles/safety/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/safety/)
  - **Interview with a Police Officer**
  - **Interview with a Door Supervisor**
- Both interviews available from:  
[www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk)
- **Creating confidence International student safety surveys** – The 2015 survey has received responses from over 2,000 international students in the UK, giving an independent and objective review of students' experiences and thoughts about safety issues in the UK. Two other survey results published in 2007 and 2010 are also available to download.  
[www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk)
  - **Cultural connections – For educational institutions, a guide to cultural issues for staff working with students.** Latest issue fourth edition 2007:  
[www.britishcouncil.org/cultural\\_connections\\_order-form.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.org/cultural_connections_order-form.pdf)
  - **Welcome to the UK: briefing material for scholars and fellows** – For British Council staff in the UK regions and overseas. Latest issue 2015.



## Sharing information and best practice

UK visas are managed by the UK government Home Office department – UK Visas and Immigration.

UKVI's Joint Education Taskforce (JET) and the Sponsorship Working Group (SWG) brought together UK education sector bodies – such as UKCISA, NUS, the British Council and other stakeholders – to help ensure that the student visa system works effectively for students, education providers and government alike. JET was replaced in 2015 by the Education Sector Forum (ESF), which is run by the Home Office rather than UKVI and the SWG has now finished.

Feedback on visa issues from our overseas offices and educational institutions in the UK are fed through to Home Office and UKVI senior staff, which helps to highlight the main issues worldwide. British Council staff in the UK and overseas are also trained and informed of all immigration rule changes and have access to an internal staff Education I Centre Visa Section where they have visa alerts, a publications library and access to podcasts.

The Home Office has reviewed official consultation documents and listened to our views and those of other ESF members at Home Office meetings and at meetings with government ministers. As a result of this feedback, a number of changes have been implemented to their policy guidance in relation to Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

We also provide evidence to parliamentary enquiries to support the passage of genuine international students to the UK including:

House of Lords Enquiry (report has been published and highlights influence of British Council).

[www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/science-technology/IntIStEMstudents/IntIStEMstudentevidence.pdf](http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/science-technology/IntIStEMstudents/IntIStEMstudentevidence.pdf)

All Party Parliamentary Group – enquiry into removal of PSW route (yet to report).

[www.appmigration.org.uk/content/parliamentary-inquiry-closure-post-study-work-psw-route](http://www.appmigration.org.uk/content/parliamentary-inquiry-closure-post-study-work-psw-route)

## Safety in the UK

Safety in the UK for students, dependants and visitors coming to the UK is a duty of care we take very seriously and we all work together to help students and visitors

take care of themselves and settle happily into their local community. The British Council is represented on the National Student Crime Group and ProtecED Stakeholder Board and works closely with organisations in the UK to exchange knowledge, keep up to date with crime trends, legislation and other safety issues to help protect international students, their dependants and visitors to the UK against crime.

## Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange

The British Council has licences for a number of projects, under Tier 5 Government Authorised Exchange (GAE), to support specific UK government objectives. We offer colleagues (project managers) guidance and support with registering for sponsorship. We also maintain a database with details of all British Council Tier 5 projects, which includes dates licences were issued, rating, clients, key contacts and other 'sponsor management' roles.

[www.gov.uk/tier-5-government-authorised-exchange/overview](http://www.gov.uk/tier-5-government-authorised-exchange/overview)

Tier 4 students can now transfer into Tier 5 after their studies. For a full list of Tier 5 sponsors who can offer internships, (including the British Council) see the list of Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange) schemes and contact relevant sponsors to obtain full details of their internship programme.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-5-government-authorised-exchange-schemes](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tier-5-government-authorised-exchange-schemes)

*For further information, please contact:*

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[www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

**Immigration, pre-departure and orientation**

We aim to help all international students have a positive experience in the UK. We do this by giving them guidance on preparing for a visa, preparing for coming to the UK and settling in safely once they arrive. For full details of our work in this area, please see the following web page:

[www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk](http://www.britishcouncil.org/education/ihe/what-we-do/preparation-study-work-uk)