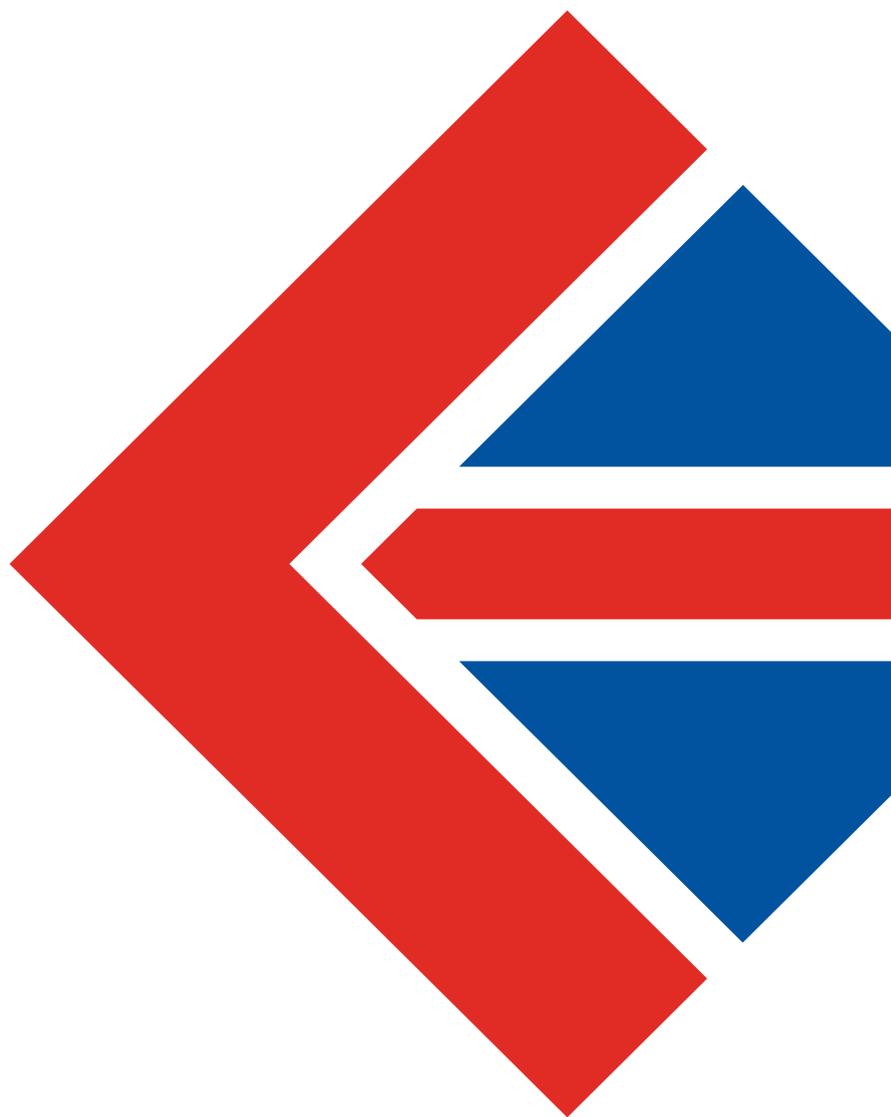


ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

For Agents and Educational Consultants



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STUDYING IN THE UK: WHAT AGENCIES AND THEIR CLIENTS NEED TO KNOW

In this section:

- a) About English UK
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-

The UK is one of the **greenest and most beautiful nations in the world**. Its glorious countryside includes rugged mountains, beautiful lakes, rolling green valleys and mile upon mile of stunning coastline.

It also boasts the evidence of more than a thousand years of history with a wealth of beautiful ancient buildings and settlements, a fantastic industrial heritage, and an unrivalled selection of art and cultural treasures.

All this, and yet the UK is compact enough for visitors to travel extensively during their stay. It's not surprising that students from all over the world want to come here, the birthplace and home of the English language, to improve their skills.

Living in Britain is a great experience for students, whether they are 16 or 60.

All the time they will be improving their English formally in some of the world's leading language centres, and informally with native speakers. And at the end of their stay they will have an internationally-recognised qualification and much valuable experience to help them in their careers.

But it's really important for students to make the most of this opportunity by making sure they choose one of the UK's best language centres. And that's why it's vital for them that their agent knows all about **English UK** and **Accreditation UK**, the two organisations which guarantee top-quality schools and the best possible learning experience.

a) About English UK

English UK is the world's leading language teaching association.

It has around 450 member centres¹ in British private schools, educational trusts and charities, further education colleges and universities. Members must be accredited under the Accreditation UK scheme which is run in partnership between the British Council and English UK.

English UK was formed in 2004 from two previous associations (the Association of Recognised English Language Services and the British Association of State English Language Teaching).

Since 2004 we have established ourselves as the voice of the UK English language teaching sector and now work with a wide range of partners and stakeholders worldwide to represent the interests of the English language profession.

¹ We often use the word 'centre' to describe an English language teaching provider. This could be a private language school, independent school, Further Education college or Higher Education institution. Please see pages 12-13 for more information on the different types of course provider.

Our activities are diverse. In any one week we may be lobbying in support of international student mobility, running a training event on managing homestay accommodation, and attending a student recruitment exhibition in Brazil. As a UK registered charity, our work is governed by the key aim of advancing the education of international students.

Student complaints procedure

Complaints against English UK member schools are rare, but we have procedures in place to help in these cases. The first step for students is to use the internal complaints process at the member school. If the student is unsatisfied with the response, they can contact us for more advice. English UK will mediate in complaints against private schools and language centres, referring on to an independent Ombudsman if mediation fails.

There are external processes for universities and further education colleges.

You can find detailed information about the student complaints procedure on our website - www.englishuk.com/en/students/english-in-the-uk/student-complaints-procedure.

Student Emergency Support Fund

It is very rare that an accredited centre closes before students have finished their courses. But, if this does happen, the Student Emergency Support Fund can help. The fund aims to minimise the effects of closure when students have paid fees for language courses at English UK member centres. It ensures students can complete their learning and also covers money lost on accommodation fees.

English UK members are expected to help provide alternative language courses at no additional cost to students affected by the closure of another member school. We will act quickly to find the student a suitable course so that their learning continues uninterrupted. This is one more reason why choosing an English UK centre is both a guarantee of quality and a secure investment.

Working with agents

We can keep you up to date with relevant developments in the UK's English language teaching sector and help you to build connections with quality educators. Every year, we run a programme of briefing events and activities that inform agents about developments in the UK's English language teaching sector. We produce a regular newsletter for agents and deliver up-to-date news on our website, www.englishuk.com.

We also host or participate in events that help you to build solid partnerships with accredited English language member centres.

StudyWorld

StudyWorld London is our annual international student recruitment event, attracting over 900 delegates from 60 countries. It is an established forum where you can schedule one-to-one meetings with in the full range of education providers, including international universities and colleges. (www.studyworldfair.com).

The English UK Fairs

The English UK Fairs are organised by English UK, the world's leading language teaching association, in partnership with the British Council, UK Trade & Investment and VisitBritain. Participation in these 3-day events is limited to just 70 organisations

(30 educators and 40 agencies) and is only open to English UK member centres and selected top quality agents.

Inward Missions

Our missions give agents opportunities to gain direct experience of English language education in the UK. Trips are free once you have travelled to the UK, and they include visits to language centres and locations, workshops and networking.

Overseas Events

We take part in major education fairs around the world, schedule overseas visits and run briefing sessions on developments in the UK's English language training sector.

Special interest groups

English UK has a number of special interest groups that showcase the diversity of what the UK has to offer:

Business English UK

The group of accredited training centres that specialise in English courses for business and professional purposes (www.businessenglishuk.org.uk).

Work Experience UK

The group of accredited English UK members that provide study and work programmes (www.workexperience-uk.com).

Young Learners English UK

Representing English UK members that provide English language courses for young learners aged 7 to 17.

Regional/National Groups

English UK Central (www.englishukcentral.com)

English UK East (www.englishukeast.com)

English UK London (www.englishuklondon.com)

English UK North (www.englishuknorth.com)

English UK Northern Ireland

English UK Scotland (www.englishukscotland.com)

English UK South West (www.englishuksouthwest.com)

b) About Accreditation UK

Accreditation UK is the oldest accreditation scheme in the world, originally founded by the British government in 1957. The scheme is now run by the British Council and English UK.

Accreditation UK aims to develop, establish and maintain quality standards for English language teaching for international students. It provides an assurance of the quality of English language providers to agencies and their students.

What does an Accreditation UK inspection cover?

To pass the initial inspection, language centres must **meet high standards** set down in the inspection handbook. There are 119 inspection criteria in four main areas, which are management, resources and environment, teaching and learning, and welfare and student services.

There are further criteria for students aged under 16.

At least two inspectors will carry out each inspection. Each centre will have an initial inspection, a full re-inspection every four years, a spot check in the first year and additional checks at random.

The inspection team will observe classes, visit accommodation, look at the premises, the resources and the records, interview staff from every area and talk to teachers and students.

They will be looking for clear English or translations to be used in information about the centre and its courses. This information must accurately reflect what is provided.

Accommodation should be regularly inspected by the centre (every 2 years) and meet the high standards of the scheme.

All accommodation must be comfortable, clean and in good repair, with adequate space, heat and light. Baths or showers must be available every day, bedding and towels changed weekly and students must have access to laundry facilities.

In homestays, the student must be treated as a member of the household. Private homes will have a host who lives on-site, and English will be spoken.

For more detailed information on the Accreditation UK scheme, visit www.britishcouncil.org/accreditation

LIFE IN THE UK

In this section:

- a) Geography
 - b) History and politics
 - c) People in the UK
 - d) Languages
 - e) Family Life
 - f) Media and Communications
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a) Geography

The United Kingdom is made up of four separate countries: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. 61.4 million people live here.

England, Scotland and Wales share the island of Great Britain, whilst Northern Ireland occupies the northern end of the adjoining country of Ireland.

At its longest point, Great Britain measures 874 miles (1,407 km) end-to-end by road. This is from John O’Groats in north-eastern Scotland to Land’s End at the western tip of Cornwall. The total land area is 93,000 square miles (244,820 sq km).

England is the largest of the four nations, and the most densely populated, especially in the South East in and around London. Western areas of Great Britain tend to be mountainous and rugged. The countryside becomes flatter and more fertile to the east.

Although the UK is a northerly nation, it has a mild and damp climate. Winters are wet rather than cold, and snow is rare.

The weather varies according to region. Scotland and Northern Ireland, the most northern parts of the country, have the coldest winters and most snow. The South tends to be the warmest and driest part of the country. Western areas get the most rainfall. But wherever a student chooses to live, it’s important to note that the British climate is temperate and changeable – it can be raining one day and warm and sunny the next.

London is the biggest city in the UK, and also the most multicultural. Edinburgh is the capital of Scotland, Belfast the capital of Northern Ireland and Cardiff the capital of Wales. There are other major cities all over the UK, each with its own unique character and attractions. See www.visitbritain.com/en/Destinations-and-Maps for more information.

b) History and politics

Britain and the English language have been shaped by other cultures. The benefits of early Roman and French invasions included roads, law, and a strong Latin and French input to the English language.

The absolute power of the King was curbed in 1215 by a revolt of high-ranking citizens. Parliamentary government was established in 1689 by a Bill of Rights.

Scotland and England were joined in an Act of Union in 1707. Men and women got the right to vote in 1918, although this was not on an equal basis until 1928.

The Queen is officially head of state and has an active role in Government. Britons are not citizens, but subjects of the Queen.

The London-based government and Parliament ruled the whole of the UK until 1999 when The Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, and the Northern Ireland Assembly were established.

The UK is an active member of the European Union (EU) although it has not joined the Euro currency system.

The UK Parliament, which sits in the House of Commons in London's Westminster, has Members of Parliament (MPs) representing every area of the UK, including Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

There are 646 MPs, each representing an area (constituency). Most belong to one of the three main political parties (Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats) and will usually vote with their party.

Each parliament can last for a maximum of five years, when a general election must be held. Elections may be held more often if a Government is weak, has a very small majority, or thinks it would be a good time to win an election.

The UK's voting system means that in each constituency the person who gets the most votes becomes the MP. The political party with most MPs then forms a Government. The party's leader becomes the Prime Minister, who then chooses who will join the Government (called the Cabinet) and lead the different departments of state.

The Government will propose legislation and introduce Bills to the House of Commons. Here, they are debated and changes sometimes made, depending on the size of the Government's majority. Bills must then go to the upper chamber, called the House of Lords, for further debate.

Members of the House of Lords are not elected. They are senior members of the Church and people who have either inherited or been given a title such as Lord or Lady. Their powers to change legislation have been reduced.

The Queen, who is the head of State, has a major role in the political process. She is consulted each week by the Prime Minister, and also when Parliament is to be dissolved or there is a change of Government. She attends the State Opening of Parliament each autumn. She wears a crown and reads out the laws the Government hopes to pass in the coming year.

c) People in the UK

21st century Britain has a very diverse population.

The UK has always welcomed immigrants and numbers increased dramatically in the last half of the 20th century. Many of the people who came to live and work here then were from countries which were part of the British Empire in the 19th and 20th centuries.

More recently, European Union regulations allowing citizens to settle and work in any member nation have also led to population changes. Many people have come to work from Eastern European countries such as Poland.

Britain has also welcomed many refugees from all over the world.

Cities have seen the biggest changes in population. Some schools in London will have pupils who have more than 50 different home languages, and shops and restaurants selling food from many different cultures.

Smaller, more remote towns and villages may retain a more traditional British culture.

It is illegal to discriminate against people in the UK because of their race, gender, sexuality or disability. The UK is a very tolerant society and most people live happily side by side.

d) Languages

English is the official language of the UK. In Wales, around 20 per cent of the population also speak Welsh, and most official communications, including road signs, are in English and Welsh.

In Northern Ireland about 7 per cent of the population speak Irish. In Scotland a small percentage speaks Scottish Gaelic and a third speak Scots.

The most common other languages spoken by people living in the UK include Punjabi, Bengali, Urdu, Sylheti, Cantonese, Greek and Italian.

Students often ask about the different regional accents in the UK.

These do exist but the pronunciation differences are smaller than would be found between British, Australian and American English. Teachers and host families will always speak very clearly for students, and they are unlikely to encounter any problems with local accents.

e) Family Life

Two-thirds of mothers of young children go out to work in the UK, though they are more likely than men to work part-time. Their children are usually cared for in private nurseries or by childminders, who look after small numbers of children in their own homes.

Marriage rates are at their lowest since records began. On average, women marry at nearly 30 and men at 32. Women are less likely to marry and more likely to live with a partner.

Civil partnerships are legal ceremonies which give same-sex couples the same rights as marriage. Since civil partnerships became law in 2004, around 8,000 couples a year have gone through the ceremony.

f) Media and Communications

The British media is dominated by the public service broadcaster, the [BBC](#). Anyone who owns a television set must buy an annual television licence, which funds the BBC.

The BBC broadcasts four main television channels, six national radio channels and has a widely-respected website which covers news, current affairs and entertainment. It does not broadcast advertisements.

There are **several other main television channels** available on all television sets, and a large selection of **digital channels** only available with special equipment or through a satellite dish.

National newspapers range from the more serious titles to the very sensational tabloids. These carry more trivial stories about celebrities and ordinary people. British people love word jokes – puns – and this is reflected in the headlines of newspapers.

Mobile phones are more popular in Britain than most other countries. Most people have one, and often spend a lot of time texting their friends.

Public phones are less common than they were but phone boxes (often the iconic red telephone boxes) are still available on city centre streets and sometimes in pubs and hotels. They are coin or card operated.

Stamps for letters and cards can be bought in supermarkets and small shops as well as post offices. You can buy either first class or second class: first class is faster but more expensive. It is a good idea to check in a post office or on the Royal Mail website before sending letters overseas for the first time, to ensure the correct stamp is being used.

Letter boxes are red and available on many streets. Letters are collected daily.

g) Getting Around

Transport links are good and it is possible to get to most places by plane, coach, bus and train. There are also cycle tracks in many towns and cities, and also long distance routes across the countryside.

Flying: There are now airports serving the UK's cities and many major towns, and it can often be cheaper to fly than take the train. Many international routes also connect places from around the world to the UK's regional airports. This can often be quicker and more convenient if your destination is away from the capital than flying into a London airport.

Train travel: All cities and most of the major towns have a train service. Most of the lines radiate out from London, which has four major railway stations sending trains to different areas. Long-distance services, such as between London and Edinburgh, are very fast: local services can be slower.

Train travel can be very expensive. It is worth advising students to buy student travel tickets or to book in advance to get the best deals.

www.nationalrail.co.uk

Coach travel: National Express coach services cover most of the UK and are a very cheap way to travel.

www.nationalexpress.com

Driving: Unlike most of the world, cars drive on the left in the UK. Students hiring cars may need to specifically request one with an automatic gear change if this is what they require. Major roads and those in the cities can become very crowded at peak times in the morning and evening, particularly on Fridays and before national holidays. Radio traffic reports are broadcast regularly.

If you are a visitor, resident or student and have a driving licence issued in the country you have come from, there are certain conditions that affect how long you can drive, and what you can drive in the UK. [Click here for more information.](#)

Travelling locally

Inside London

London's underground train service, often called the **Tube**, is the quickest way to get around most of the city although it has limited stops south of the River Thames. It runs till late at night. There is also an extensive urban overground railway network.

The bus is a good way to see London and to travel to most areas, though it can be slower than the Tube. The cheapest way of using all three forms of transport is to buy Travelcards (daily, weekly, monthly or annual), or to get an Oyster card which can be topped up with cash. The Transport for London website has all the details – www.tfl.gov.uk.

Black cabs can be waved down from the pavement. These are fully regulated and much safer than any other car service in London.

Driving: There are lots of reasons not to drive in London. One is that there is a toll payable when entering the central area (called the congestion charge) which must be paid in advance. It is also very busy, parking is difficult, and there is good public transport.

Outside London

Major cities have good bus services and often a metro or tram. Cycle lanes are common on roads and pavements. Towns usually have bus services.

Taxis/private hire cars/minicabs: Taxis are the safest option for getting home late at night. Drivers are regulated and checked often. Taxis can be hired with a wave on the street. Private hire cars (also known as mini-cabs) are also regulated but must be booked.

Travelling outside the UK

The UK is a perfect base for travelling in Europe during or after a course. There are ferry ports along the east and south coasts, with direct services to Scandinavia, Holland and France. It is also easy to get to France through the Channel Tunnel, either on the Eurostar train from London St Pancras or driving from Dover.

Europe is a short flight from most airports and many airlines offer low-cost tickets at certain times of the year. Some even occasionally offer free flights – passengers pay the tax only!

A Schengen visa allows non-EEA nationals the right to enter any of the 25 Schengen countries as a visitor for a maximum stay of 90 days in a 6 month period. The United Kingdom is not currently a member of the Schengen Visa Scheme.

- If the student is visiting only one country in the Schengen area, they should apply to the embassy of that country.
- If visiting several of the 25 countries, they should apply to the embassy of whichever country is their 'main destination' - the country in which they plan to spend the most time during their trip.
- If visiting several countries in the Schengen area without having a main destination, they should submit an application to the embassy of the country where they will first enter the Schengen area.

h) Leisure activities

There are an enormous range of things to do in the UK during the evenings and weekends

British people like to socialise in **pubs and bars**, and this is usually a popular option with overseas students.

Eating out in the UK is also a fantastic experience. Britain now has some of the world's top restaurants. It is also possible to spend far less and get a really great meal. Since the UK is now such a multi-cultural society, it's possible to sample food from all over the world even in small towns.

Most towns will have at least a Chinese and Indian restaurant or takeaway, a fish and chip shop and a pub which will serve food. Pub food is often very good, especially in "gastropubs" which concentrate as much on food as drink.

Students staying in London, Leeds, Manchester and other major cities have the most choice of **cultural and entertainment options**. London has some of the world's top museums and art galleries, as well as leading orchestras, opera and theatre companies.

Outside the major cities there is **beautiful countryside** to walk in and very many **castles, preserved grand houses and formal parks**.

Language centres routinely organise student **social programmes** which will include visits to the UK's top attractions, as well as to local pubs and bars. Typical trips often include Stonehenge, Oxford, Cambridge, London, York and Leeds Castle. Many will also take students to Paris. Most schools will send a sample copy of their social programme on request.

i) Money Matters

Even the youngest students will use British currency.

One UK pound (£) is worth 100 pence. Every British coin and bank note has a picture of the Queen on one side. The most common banknotes are £5, £10 and £20. £50 notes are usually available from banks rather than cash machines.

Anything smaller than a pound can be called a pence or a pee.

£1 coins are fat and gold. £2 coins are larger.

Less valuable coins are the 50p, 20p, 10p and 5p which are silver coloured, and the 2p and 1p which are bronze.

Some students staying for longer courses (usually over 6 months) may wish to open **local bank accounts**. Their language centre will usually assist with any paperwork needed to show the student's status in the UK.

Banks are usually open Monday to Friday from 9-5, and sometimes on Saturdays. They are usually found in town centres.

Cash machines are found outside banks and supermarkets. There are sometimes cash machines at petrol stations and inside small shops and pubs, but these may charge extra to withdraw money. Many accept international bank cards.

Britain has not adopted the Euro.

j) UK Laws and Safety Issues

Britain is a very safe place to visit, although visitors should take the same precautions as they would at home. Students all over the world like to socialise late at night, and they should be reminded to consider how they will get home safely as part of their plans for the evening.

The British Council publishes an excellent leaflet for international students which can be downloaded at www.britishcouncil.org/educ-comfort-zone.pdf.

British people are used to living in a multicultural society and are generally very tolerant of visitors.

Students should make sure they take care of belongings, and **buy insurance** before arriving. Language centres can often help organise this.

British laws are likely to be similar to those in the student's home country. But it is worth remembering that:

- It is illegal to **smoke** in public buildings and sometimes outdoors. Areas where smoking is banned includes language centres, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, public transport and railway stations.
- It is illegal to **discriminate** against anybody else because of their race, gender, sexuality or disability. It is possible to get into trouble if you insult anyone for their race, or because they are homosexual, for example.

The UK emergency phone number is 999. People calling this will be asked to say what the problem is, what their name is, and where they are. The operator will then

send the fire brigade, the police, or an ambulance if this is needed. It is important to use this number only in a real emergency.

LEARNING IN THE UK

In this section:

- a) How the UK education system works**
 - b) About the different course providers**
 - c) About the different courses**
 - d) Qualifications and careers prospects**
 - e) Choosing an English language school**
 - f) Accommodation choices**
 - g) Costs and fees**
 - h) Choosing where to study in the UK**
-

a) How the UK education system works

Most British children are educated in the state system from the age of four. The school leaving age is currently being raised from 16 to 18, but the final two years can be spent in college or work-related training. Most pupils move on to college at the age of 16 after taking GCSE or equivalent exams.

Both state and private further education colleges are open to fee-paying overseas students. Some colleges will specialise in academic courses such as A Level or the IB. Others run a full range of vocational courses.

Most British universities are public institutions, largely funded by the Government. They are increasingly popular with fee-paying overseas students as well as those from Britain. This is the only part of the state education sector for which UK students have to pay.

However, the UK also has a world-class high quality private education sector which is very popular with international students. This includes independent (public) schools, independent colleges for students aged 16 and up, and of course private language schools. Language schools should be accredited under the Accreditation UK Scheme. Private colleges should be accredited by the British Accreditation Council (BAC).

State-funded colleges and universities are officially inspected and regulated to ensure that they meet very high quality standards.

b) About the different course providers

English UK members meet the different needs of every student. Some English UK members specialise in short summer courses for teenagers, while other centres may concentrate on business English and the needs of different professionals. Centres range from family-run operations where students live and work as a group, through the well-known private language centre chains, to departments in further education colleges and universities.

Private language schools usually offer a range of different English language courses. They may specialise in different areas, such as business English or English Plus leisure courses. They can usually accommodate all skills levels and offer part time or full time courses, with flexibility about length and start dates.

Independent schools and tutorial colleges offer a range of subjects and activities all taught in English. Some offer summer programmes.

Further Education Colleges usually offer courses for students at all levels as well as career-based training and academic courses in classes where other students will speak English as a first language.

Higher education institutions and universities – are more suitable for students whose language skills are intermediate or better. Many specialise in teaching English for academic purposes or foundation courses.

c) About the different courses

If there isn't a course to suit your student, there will be an English UK member willing to organise something to meet their needs.

If you have a special request from a client that you're having difficulty fulfilling, email info@englishuk.com and we'll circulate your message to our member centres.

For more information on course types, visit www.englishuk.com/en/students/your-study-options/types-of-accredited-courses.

You can search the full range of courses and accredited providers using the course finder on the English UK website (www.englishuk.com/en/search).

d) Qualifications and careers prospects

Almost all of our accredited language centres offer courses that lead to internationally-recognised qualifications at all levels.

An English language course is a great **investment for the future**, whether the student wants to improve their CV and career prospects or is preparing for further study. The UK also offers a wide range of professional and vocational qualifications. Options include vocational training and programmes for pre-university, degree, postgraduate and doctorate level learning.

More details on **qualifications** are available on the British Council website at www.britishcouncil.org/learning-exams.

e) Choosing an English language school

Students should start by making a list of what is most important to them.

- Do they want to live and work in a city or a small town?
- What part of the country would they like to live in?
- Do they want to be in a good base for travelling around the UK, or have easy access to Europe?
- Do they have special needs or requirements?

They should also consider what kind of centre would suit them best. Do they want to be immersed in studying with staff and students in a building which may be some distance from a town or village? Would they prefer a small school? Or would a large school be better for their needs?

Once they have considered these preferences, it is time to use the course finder tool on www.englishuk.com. Unless they have very specific requirements, the website is likely to suggest several different centres for them to investigate further and consider.

f) Accommodation choices

Most students coming to the UK are likely to have a choice of **living with a family** – homestay – or in a **residence**.

There are many advantages to living with a family for at least the early weeks in the UK. It is a good way to learn quickly about British culture and to speak English all the time. Homestay means living with an ordinary family, eating home-prepared food and getting first-hand experience of how people live.

However, residences are becoming more popular options with some students – typically those in their 20s. Residences are likelier to be available in the major cities, and are usually shared flats in a purpose-built accommodation block. Students like these because they tend to be in the city centre, which makes it easy to go out for the night, and they don't have to worry about getting home late.

If a student wants to stay in a residence, it is a good idea to make sure that they are in a shared apartment with students from other countries. This will help ensure that they are not lonely, and will encourage them to speak English to each other.

Many language centres will suggest spending at least the first few weeks in homestay accommodation.

g) Costs and fees

Students often worry that it can be expensive to study in the UK, but their fears are often based on out-of-date information and old exchange rates. For visa students, the funds they are required to have under the points-based system will cover their costs - £800 per month outside London and £1000 per month in the inner London boroughs (Camden, City of London, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Haringey, Islington, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Newham, Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Wandsworth and Westminster).

Courses vary in cost between institutions and there may be special offers available at certain times of the year.

It can also be cheaper to live outside London and the South of England. For more information, they can use the [student calculator tool](#).

h) Choosing where to study in the UK

It can be hard to choose between the different areas of Britain when thinking about where to study. In some ways it doesn't matter too much as the country is small enough for easy travelling.

Everywhere has a lot to offer, and in many ways it can be more important to make the right choice between staying in a busy city or a quieter town.

It's impossible to give extensive information on every region here, and it is important for potential students to do more research.

We encourage you to browse VisitBritain's (Britain's national tourist agency) suite of websites to find out more about the great places to visit and study in the UK.

www.visitbritain.com

www.visitengland.com

www.visitwales.com

www.visitscotland.com

www.visitlondon.com

VISAS AND IMMIGRATION

On 31 March 2009, a new student visa system was introduced in the UK, called Tier 4 of the Points Based System (PBS).

The intention behind the new system is to base visa decisions on objective rather than subjective criteria. In other words, a student will be granted a visa if they can demonstrate they have enough points (40 points in total).

- 30 points will be awarded for having a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) – a valid offer of a place at a UK educational institution.
- 10 points will be awarded for having enough Maintenance Fees – money to live on in the UK and pay tuition fees.

There are two types of student visa under Tier 4:

- the General Student Visa (GSV)
- the Child Student Visa (CSV)

English UK members act as sponsors of students holding these visa types.

The Student Visitor Visa, Extended Student Visitor Visa, Child Visitor Visa and Prospective Student Visa are not part of Tier 4 and have a different set of rules. However you may wish to recommend these visas to your students depending on what course they intend to study and what their future plans are.

The following table summarises the key advantages and disadvantages of a GSV (Tier 4 visa) and a SVV, and may be useful when deciding which visa is most appropriate.

General Student Visa (GSV – Tier 4 PBS)	Student Visitor Visa (SVV)
Any course duration	For a maximum of 6 months (or 11 months if applying for an Extended Student Visitor Visa)
Can extend visa in UK	Cannot extend visa in UK
Can work (10 hours in term-time, full-time in holidays) but only if studying at a publicly funded institution	Cannot work
Costs £298	Costs £80 (£144 for ESVV)
Applicant must be CEFR level B1 or above	No minimum English requirement
Ties the student to the Sponsor institution (student cannot change schools without making a new visa application)	Students are free to change institution or course
Sponsor institution must be accredited AND on the UKBA Register of Sponsors	Sponsor institution must be accredited

Making an Application

To make an application, students should refer to the UKBA website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/. By following the links and/or prompts you will be able to download the latest application forms and find out where the nearest application centre is located.

Only people currently holding visas in certain categories are allowed to apply for a Tier 4 visa from within the UK. These categories include:

- Tier 4 (GSV and CSV)
- Tier 2, the Prospective Student Visa
- Tier 1 (Post-study Work)
- And anyone who still has a student visa that was granted under the pre-Tier 4 rules

It is important to remember that students cannot make an application for a Tier 4 visa:

- more than 3 months before the start of their course
- if their CAS was assigned (created) by their educational institution (sponsor) more than 6 months ago – it expires
- if their CAS has already been used once in a visa application
- if their sponsor decides to withdraw sponsorship and cancels the CAS

Students will need to know what qualifications and test results their sponsor used to assess their suitability for a course, because these documents must be included with their visa application. English UK member centres will provide this information to students.

English UK's Activities

While English UK does not provide assistance with making visa applications, we work with member centres and agents to try to influence the UK Border Agency at a policy level.

English UK is part of the UK Border Agency's Joint Education Taskforce and UK Visas User Panel and provides regular feedback to government on the Tier 4 visa system. English UK also responds to UK Border Agency consultations and reviews.

In December 2009, we produced a response to the Tier 4 Review called by the previous Prime Minister, Gordon Brown. We then lobbied the UK Border Agency on behalf of our members to ensure the best possible outcome for the sector.

Following the result of the Review and in particular after the minimum English language level for Tier 4 visas was raised, causing considerable damage to our members, English UK took the UK Border Agency to court. The B1 level, which was originally imposed by the Government on March 3 2010, was overturned on July 9 2010 after English UK won a judicial review of the process by which the rules were changed. The High Court judge, Mr Justice Foskett, ordered that the language rules should revert immediately to the "basic" level of A1.

Unfortunately, the UK Border Agency then decided to again raise the level of English proficiency required for British student visas. As of July 23 students below degree

level must prove that they have reached level B1 - this includes students who want to learn English in the UK.

English UK will continue to lobby and represent the interests of both our members and agents to government and the UK Border Agency. We will regularly update the English UK website with visa-related information of interest to agents.

HOW TO SELL A UK EDUCATION

Around 600,000 people travel to the UK every year to learn English, an estimated 43% of all students who travel abroad to study English. There are many reasons for this, but most people want to come here because Britain is the **home of the English language**, and it is renowned for the **high quality** of the education system.

But there are many other reasons for choosing Britain that your students and their families may not have considered.

It has the **best choice of English language courses** anywhere in the world. Our accredited courses **guarantee quality**, and are great **value for money**. British qualifications are recognised worldwide as well.

The UK is an **exciting place to live**, with a rich mix of history, culture and global influences. Most students love it here. They are often surprised, too, by how friendly British people are, and the diverse backgrounds and cultures of the people they meet.

Students will discover **many opportunities to learn and progress** in any chosen career, perhaps moving on to further study or having the opportunity to work while they learn.

The UK is a fantastic **base for travelling and exploration**. Britain is a comparatively small country with good travel links: there is lots to do and see here, whether your students want to enjoy the varied and beautiful countryside, immerse themselves in centuries of art and culture, or take advantage of a thriving modern music scene. Excellent transport links also make the UK a perfect base to explore Europe.

Ask an expert... one of the students

But don't just take our word for it. Here's what students have told English UK about their experiences studying at one of our member schools:

Fred Shi Shengchao, 21, from China, studied English for a year before moving to the University of Exeter to study Business Management: "I would recommend coming here. It's a great opportunity and a completely different culture. Sometimes I go back to my friends and they don't understand what I am talking about. I would say to my friends, look, it's a great opportunity to speak English with native language speakers. You learn really fast as well."

Police Captain Etienne Martins from Brazil spent two weeks studying in London: "Before, it was difficult for me to express feelings and ideas in English. From what I had heard in Brazil I didn't expect a warm welcome in Britain, but if you don't know something everyone will try to help you. People are very friendly – quite different to what I had heard."

Begüm Karaci, 17, from Turkey spent two weeks studying in Harrow. She said: "I had the best two weeks of my life in the UK. I had so much fun with my new friends from all over the world, who I still keep in contact with via email and I have learned so much. I want to go to the UK again and I would recommend it to everyone."

For more student profiles, see www.englishuk.com/students.



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