



KEYSTONE TUTORS TUTORING & EDUCATION ADVISORY

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Considering UK Universities from Abroad

‘What shall I do when I leave school?’ is just one of several important questions students make during their final three years at school. But it is one that they shouldn’t feel daunted by as this is an exciting time and, typically, the final step in their formal education. The most salient point to remember is that there is a spider’s web of people from whom they can seek advice: teachers, parents, friends and even current university students. Importantly, the final decision must be the student’s, and one that they are ultimately happy with.

Below are some important considerations which hopefully prove useful for students to review as they navigate this part of their educational career.

WHY choose the UK?

UK Universities ...

- are recognized and respected throughout the world.
- have a long history of providing the highest quality of undergraduate level study.
- offer lots of choice: 50,000 undergraduate courses at more than 350+ providers.
- offers degree qualifications that will ensure you are well-placed to secure global employment.

WHEN applying from abroad?

Unlike the other university systems around the world the UK is a lot more focused on a candidate’s academic credentials when considering their application. Thus, it is important you check:

- you meet the entrance requirements
- which subjects, if any, you need to be studying (e.g. Engineers MUST study Maths)
- if you need to demonstrate your English Language Skills as a part of your application, typically relevant for those not studying the International A Level or IB.
- the transferability of the vocational qualification if you want to return to Singapore to practice (i.e. if you want to train to be a doctor in the UK but practice in Singapore).

UK universities have satellite or franchised campuses in other parts of the world, e.g. [Newcastle Medical School Malaysia](#), [University of London Singapore](#), which afford students a UK degree from prestigious universities at up to 60% of the cost of studying in the UK.

And for those required to complete National Service, it is worth noting that UK universities typically ONLY allow a 1-year deferral. HOWEVER, speak to the university admissions team and they will be best placed to advise you on when to apply and what deferral to apply for.

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WHAT to study?

With either option there is plenty of choice: there are 50,000+ courses offered by over 300 UK universities and colleges! When considering options, it might be helpful to try and answer the following questions:

- Do your studies tell you anything? [A Level Explorer](#) (can be used for IB as well)
- Is there a subject you particularly enjoy?
- Do you have any potential career ambitions? [Career Test – What career should I have?](#)
- How many lectures will you receive and what other contact time does the course offer?
- How is the course assessed?
- Which courses stand out and grab my attention? And, which of the ‘stand out courses’ could you see yourself studying and enjoying for 3 or 4 years?

It is also worth noting that some courses are vocational, leading to a particular job like medicine or veterinary science, whilst others are more general - English Literature or History - leading to a wider range of employment options. If you are still unsure the ‘[Buzz Quiz](#)’ on [UCAS website](#) might help, as it matches interests and abilities with relevant courses.

Key Considerations:

- Do choose a subject you’ll enjoy.
- Don’t make your selection based on the university alone as the course you’re going to be studying is an important factor!

WHERE to study it?

Once you’ve established what you want to study you need to work out where you’d like to study it. Remember, it’s not all academic; think carefully about the whole student experience and whether it will suit you. If you don’t like your surroundings or the educational environment you’re unlikely to do well. It’s worth bearing the following in mind when considering your options:

1. **Character:** Britain’s universities and colleges are hugely diverse, but it is possible to crudely place them in to three distinct categories:

- **Campus universities**, such as [Warwick](#) or [Bath](#), are essentially self-contained towns, with their own accommodation, academic and leisure facilities on a single site.
- **City universities**, such as [King’s College London](#) or [Edinburgh](#), are set in the heart of a city with the accommodation, academic and leisure facilities dotted around the place.
- **Collegiate universities**, such as [Durham](#), [Oxford](#) and [Cambridge](#), are special cases as your college, rather than your university, is at the centre of your university experience.

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Other things to consider when selecting universities:

- **The size of the university?** Some can offer a small intimate experience (Queens College, Oxford – 425 students) whilst others are enormous (e.g. Nottingham – 28,000 students)
- **Who will be teaching you?** And are they experts in areas you want to learn about?
- **What facilities and societies do they have?** Review the Student Union webpage & social media feeds.
- **Distance from home/major transport links etc.?** You may want to travel home regularly.

2. **Research vs. Teaching Universities:** Typically, in the UK there are two types of university: research universities and teaching universities. Whilst their foci are obvious it is important that you appreciate how each will affect your academic programme. Research universities tend to offer less teaching in comparison to their teaching counterparts. If you're not easily motivated and don't enjoy working by yourself, opt for a teaching university!

3. **Content Offering:** Like schools, universities are very good at advertising the breadth and depth of the experiences that they offer in their promotional literature, on their websites and via open days. It is important that you drill down into exactly what opportunities you will receive when you start as a student. Focus on the Core modules as these will be the ones you have to study and are likely to form the majority of your degree course.

4. **League Tables:** Parents and students spend a disproportionate amount of time looking at university league tables, working out which was the best university. This is not always useful, as league tables often rank universities by research output rather than other metrics more relevant to undergraduate study, such as student satisfaction. It is also worth noting that comparing universities in a whole scale way can be futile as universities have strengths and weaknesses in terms of departments. Thus, it is important to compare universities based on specific courses. Helpful online tools include:

- [UNITSTATS](#): A government run comparison website.
- [QAA](#): Read course provider reviews.
- [The Complete University Advice](#)
- [Which? University](#)

Key Considerations:

- Do visit universities before applying to them as it is the best way to get a feel for what they offer.
- Don't take league tables at face value, make sure you understand how universities are being compared.

Do [get in touch](#) if you would like further assistance with your university application.

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