

Study Abroad

Ten years ago, studying for a Bachelor's degree at an overseas university was an unusual choice for a UK student. Today, things are different and many young people are starting to apply to international universities alongside (or even instead of) their UCAS application. Rather than taking a gap year to see another part of the world, some shrewd youngsters are opting to move overseas for their full degree.

Why study abroad?

Initially, the rise in interest stemmed from the increase in tuition fees introduced in 2012, but the young people who choose this path are discovering many benefits: academic, personal and sometimes financial.

There are differences to consider and the sources of information and application processes may be unfamiliar, but it's worth taking the time to investigate further.

Funding study abroad

Let's start with a really important point. Students taking a full degree overseas can't access the UK system of grants and loans. Some EU countries (most notably the Netherlands) offer grants or loans to EU students, but this option looks likely to disappear when the UK formally leaves the EU. In most cases, students use a combination of savings, scholarships or personal loans to fund their studies.

What can your son or daughter expect from higher education overseas?

There are thousands of university courses taught in English outside the UK. Bachelor's degrees from across the EU and most of the western world are of a comparable standard, but there are differences in length of study and a four year undergraduate (honours) degree is common in many countries. Entry requirements tend to be more relaxed than we're used to in the UK, but this often means increased pressure to achieve well in the first year.

If cost is a concern, then Europe offers good value. Even after the UK leaves the EU, studying in Europe may still work out cheaper than studying in the UK, as fees for international students in Europe can be lower than fees for home students in the UK.

There are other benefits to be considered elsewhere. Eastern Europe, South Africa or China offer a far lower cost of living. In the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, you'll discover higher fees in most cases, but different benefits. Some US universities offer generous scholarships and financial aid packages, while Canada, Australia and New Zealand have schemes for students who choose to stay on after graduation as long as they can contribute economically.

What if things go wrong?

You might have concerns about the distance if things go wrong. Adjustment to a new language, style of education and culture might be needed and there will be practical considerations around accommodation, bank accounts and visas. Universities take the care of their international students seriously, so there will be staff to turn to if problems arise.

Alternatives to a full degree overseas

If, after a bit of research, your son or daughter decides that they don't want to take their full degree overseas, an exchange or study abroad scheme as part of a UK degree might be a worthwhile alternative. Look out for Erasmus Plus schemes, language assistantships or study abroad options. If these are linked to a UK degree, UK student loans and grants are available, along with the possibility of reduced tuition fees and additional grants and scholarships.

The Study Abroad offices of UK universities will have details of the opportunities they offer.

The benefits

The personal benefits of studying abroad are plentiful and students report returning home more adaptable, mature and independent. In today's global marketplace, international awareness can significantly enhance employability, just as long as your young person can clearly articulate what they've gained from their experiences. Lifestyle differences can be dramatic too, providing access to exciting sports and activities, a different climate or even a new way of life.

You can find out more here.

British Council

www.britishcouncil.org/more/study-work-create/study-abroad

US-UK Fulbright Commission

www.fulbright.org.uk

A Star Future

www.astarfuture.co.uk

EUNICAS

www.eunicas.co.uk

Student World

thestudentworld.edufindme.com

Study Options

www.studyoptions.com

The Times Higher Education World University Rankings

www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings

Erasmus

www.erasmusplus.org.uk

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