

Study and Plan Your Future in Britain

What better way to prepare for a Degree Programme?

Where should I study?

Britain has many different educational establishments offering courses to international students, each of these with particular attractions for you.

What is a College of Further Education?

These are generally larger than schools and are well-equipped institutions, many with outstanding computer, science and specialised facilities.

These colleges are funded by the government and offer a wide range of academic and applied courses to students over 16 years of age on a full or part-time basis. For specialist study there are general agricultural, art and technical colleges and a few Sixth Form Colleges.

Due to the diverse population in most Further Education Colleges there is always something going on and international students have the opportunity alongside their British counterparts, to play organised sport, participate in drama productions and musical activities and generally extend existing interests and hobbies or to start something new.

A College of Further Education offers a student a working environment similar to that which will be experienced at University, leaving the student to take an independent approach to study and time management. Sixth Form Colleges (like Richard Huish College) are usually specialist providers of AS/A level and Applied A Level courses with a smaller and more intimate environment for 16-19 year-old students, most of whom expect to progress and read for degrees at University.

How does a private college differ?

Like the network of private schools, private colleges function totally independently of government funding and support. These institutions usually offer a range of advanced level courses aimed at preparing students for undergraduate study. A great many international students choose to study at private colleges which have considerable experience in catering for them, acknowledging diverse backgrounds. They may offer courses to include an accelerated programme of study allowing international students to enrol at varying times throughout the year, also suiting the modular assessment format. Due to the independent financial nature of these institutions fees may be considerably higher than at those which are funded by the government.

Can I join a school?

Similar to the post-school college structure, Britain offers both government-funded (state) schools and private sector schools. Again, those in the private sector have more experience in providing for international students and subsequently charge higher fees. Accommodation is usually within their existing boarding houses which are monitored by either school tutors or house staff.

Like a Further Education College, international students become part of a community that extends beyond the academic course and is within a structured and caring environment. Students who choose this option will be part of an institution catering for younger pupils rather than specifically the 16+ population.

Are there qualifications to suit everybody?

AS/A level & applied A levels

This traditional structure is the main route of study for entry to University. A programme of four 'A/S' levels leading to full A levels in year 2 is a common profile, appropriate for progression to a degree course. A/S and A level courses are offered in a wide range of subjects, and normally run for a two-year period of study.

A/S levels are now the foundation studies for 'A' level but allow a more diverse range of subject options to be studied. Some Universities specify subjects to be studied in order to follow certain degree courses. However, students may find that a diverse programme allows them to offer a wider portfolio when making an application to University. For students wishing to study for Accountancy, Economics and Law degrees a combination of these subjects, with the possible addition of Mathematics, should be chosen at AS/A level, whereas applicants to Medicine and Science degrees should consider a combination of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics.

What about a applied method of study?

There is a growing number of subjects which are now being assessed at Applied A level standard. These are offered as an alternative method of study but with the understanding that a Dual Award Applied A carries the equivalent achievement of two 'A' levels and may offer a more specialised route to Higher Education or prepare students more thoroughly for a related employment opportunity.

The nature of Applied A Level programmes allows the students options within their subject to develop, specialise and relate their learning to the working environment. Students will be expected to show application in numeracy, IT, independence of learning, teamwork, commitment and self-evaluation. Many students combine their Applied A Level studies with the traditional 'A' or A/S levels alongside choosing subjects complimentary to their specialist Applied A Level.

At present Applied A Level Advanced level courses are available in a wide range of subjects and as either Double, Single Awards or Part awards. These may combine with A/S and A levels to contribute to a programme of study.

And what can come next?

Some institutions are able to offer returning adults and international students an alternative route into degree study through a foundation programme. Those that are designed specifically for international students allow, and actually encourage, those students to progress naturally onto a local university which has co-ordinated the running of these courses. More and more British Universities are actively involved in these courses to ease the transition to university life and level of study.

Of course, not all places and options will suit all people and it is essential that an informed choice be made considering all aspects of life and study. The correct questions need to be asked in order to gain accurate and appropriate information.

Some points to consider

- Geographical location - Do I want to be in a rural, semi urban or cosmopolitan area?
- Local facilities - Are there theatres, cinemas and other forms of entertainment within easy distance?
- Local climate - Although Britain is a relatively small country it has a fairly diverse climate. It may be quite cold or very wet.
- Student population - Are my contemporaries also international students or from the local population?
- Language - Is there a distinguishable local accent that I may find difficult?

Questions for your chosen institution?

- Is there a payment structure for fees?
- Will I need any further costs?
- Does the college/school have an 'open door' policy?
- Has the institute been inspected recently?
- What were the outcomes of the inspection?
- Who funds the school/college?
- Are there opportunities available beyond academic courses?
- What are they?
- Are special needs considered?
- What about diet and religion?
- Is Internet and E-Mail open to all students?
- What is the level of study and effective support?
- What is the tutorial structure?
- Will I be given advice and help with University application?
- What are the exam results?
- Can I be assured of continued support?
- How will my induction programme be structured?
- Is there an opportunity for work experience as part of a course?
- Are diverse teaching and learning styles in place?
- Does the college/school have developed links with a developed university for progression?
- How will my progress be monitored?
- Will my sponsors/parents be informed of my progress?

So, where will I live?

Wherever a student chooses to study he/she will be anxious to be settled into a comfortable environment which takes into consideration any cultural needs. A range of accommodation may be available according to preference, finance and the institution chosen.

This is a factor that colleges and schools recognise as important to international students and must be explored fully. Homestay families, school boarding and organised lodgings are most common. It is your choice.

Any commitment to study at 16+ must be made with as much information as possible available, and for an international student to make the decision to come to Britain that commitment is even greater. It will, however, prove to be an exciting, stimulating and challenging experience. New and diverse opportunities will become available, special, long-lasting friendships will be forged and the world will begin to become a smaller and more friendly place. Go for it!