

# The Context of International Education For Certified International Student Advisor Programme



for education agents, counsellors and consultants  
CISA Passport

## Overview

This lesson examines the factors to look for in order to understand destination countries.

**IMPORTANT NOTE** Student counsellors taking the CISA will not be tested on the specific destination countries. We realise that student counsellors will have different country focuses, and may not want to study all countries included in the CISA. We hope that you will find your particular country/countries addressed, and even if not, you can use our country profiles as a template for your own research and files, or as a general reference tool. Because specific destination countries will not be on the CISA test, we have not included Activity questions in them.

## Focus Questions

- What kinds of education services are offered in destination countries?
- What information does the student counsellor need to understand a destination country?
- What advice are students likely to want about a destination country?
- What are the main destination countries?

To market international education, the student counsellor needs to know the types of education services available and the countries in which they are available.

Education markets can be divided into [Formal Education](#) and [Study Travel and Tours](#).

## Formal Education

Formal education consists of courses leading to a recognised qualification. Formal education providers normally must be accredited by the government or an industry accreditation authority. Accredited education may include:

- Elementary, middle, secondary schools
- Vocational education and training
- Industry and professional training
- Polytechnics, institutes of technology
- Universities and advanced education
- Language schools.

The main types of formal education services are discussed in A2 Education Systems in this book.

Normally there are prescribed processes for acceptance and enrolment. Prospective students must meet academic and language prerequisites set by the educational institution, and be able to pay the relevant tuition fees. Enrolment must meet the legal requirements of the destination country. Legal systems and requirements are discussed in A3 Regulatory Systems and A4 Legal Requirements.

In most cases – although not generally for distance or online courses – prospective students will need a student visa for study in the selected country. To obtain this student visa, he/she will have to prove enrolment acceptance by a recognised education provider, sufficient funds for travel and living expenses, suitable accommodation, and good health and character. Student visas are discussed in A5 Student Visas.

For example, the country's location relative to the student's home country will largely determine the cost

## Study Travel and Tours

Non-formal education tours refer to study travel and tours with an educational component, such as:

- School groups
- Hobby groups
- Language courses abroad
- Special interest groups (e.g., people over the age of 50)

Such study tours are generally short (one to four weeks) and involve a range of tourist activities in addition to the education component. Study tour groups normally do not need a student visa.

### Activity:

#### Exercise A1.1a

##### Question

##### Answer

Formal education leads to a recognised qualification

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Formal education must be accredited

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Study tours require a student visa

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose correct option



In order to properly advise prospective students, the student counsellor needs to understand the destination countries. When researching a country, consider:

- [Location, Geography, Climate, and Environment](#)
- [Population and History](#)
- [Society and Culture](#)
- [Government and Economy](#)
- [Education System](#)
- [Immigration and Visas](#)
- [Living Conditions and Cost of Living](#)
- [Pros and Cons](#)

## Location, Geography, Climate, and Environment

Students vary widely in their criteria for what makes a study destination attractive. The location, geography, climate, and environment of a country may be significant factors in a student choosing it over other options.

of travel for the student, the number of visits home, and so on. Its geography will influence the cost and ease of travel within the country, sightseeing opportunities, and other non-study activities. Its climate and environment are important in terms of comfort and quality of life for students.

Information can be gathered from the country's national museum and library, bureau of meteorology, tourism websites, government departments.

**Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

Where is the destination country located? How easy is it to travel to and in?

What are the major states/regions/cities? What are their attractions?

What variations exist in temperature, rainfall, pollution, and any other climatic features?

What environmental factors affect quality of life?

## Population and History



Information about the population and history of a country is essential to understanding its character.

When considering a destination country, the student counsellor should advise prospective students about its demographics and the options for living in a large city, small city, or the countryside. Students may have preferences when it comes to how much they want to immerse themselves in local life, and so information regarding cultural diversity, cultural highlights/drawbacks, and how densely populated a destination is will help them focus their choices. The student counsellor should also possess some knowledge of the country's history to give students a foundation for understanding the country's character and social and cultural idiosyncrasies.

Information can be gathered from the country's national museum and library, census bureau, tourism websites, and government departments.

**Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What is the destination country's population and how is it distributed among main regions and cities?

What is the composition of the population? How has it developed into its current state?

What are the major and defining events in the country's history?



## Society and Culture

Each society has its own unique values and logic. The student counsellor should advise prospective students on how these may differ from those of their home country.

If they are to live successfully in a foreign country while studying, students will need some understanding of the structure and institutions of its society, its socio-economic groupings, and its sub-cultures and communities. They will need to be aware of differences in etiquette and taboos, and what constitutes acceptable public language and behaviour.

Each country offers a range of cultural experiences, which may constitute a primary motivation for a student to choose it as a study destination. A country's culture and society may attract one student but be unattractive to another – every student is different.

Some students may prefer a country where there are few cultural differences to distract them from their studies, but many will want to explore a country's culture, arts, history, sports, or other dimensions. Again, this can be a prime motivating factor in many students' choice of study destination, so the student counsellor should have a grasp of these elements of the study destination.

Information can be gathered from the country's national museum and library, census bureau, tourism websites, and government departments.

### **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

How does the country's society structure itself?

What characteristics define its society and culture(s)?

What are its taboos?

What are its cultural attractions and achievements?

How do the country's values and logic differ from those of prospective students?

# Government and Economy

## Education System



A stable government and healthy economy are highly desirable in a destination country.

Most countries have national, regional, and/or local levels of government. Each has its own powers and jurisdictions. For example, the national government usually manages migration matters, including student visas, whereas local government's building codes and fire and safety regulations directly affect the quality of education premises and student accommodation.

The legal and judicial systems in the destination country may be quite different from those in the student's home country. Laws may be stricter and penalties harsher. The student counsellor should ensure students are aware that they will be subject to the destination country's law while there.

A healthy economy enhances financial security for both education institutions and students. It fosters job markets, providing employment opportunities for students whose visas permit them to work. Students will need to know how money is used in everyday transactions (e.g., cash, credit, direct debit, cheque), how to transfer it from their home bank, and exchange rates.

Information can be gathered from the country's national accounts, census bureau, financial websites, and government departments.

### **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

How is the government structured?

What are its major institutions?

How effective and stable is the government?

How are its legal and judicial systems structured? How do they function?

What size is the economy? What are its characteristics? How strong is it? How stable is it?

How is money handled? What are the exchange rates?



Education systems are discussed in more detail in [A2 Education Systems](#).

The student counsellor needs to know the structure of the destination country's education system, its major institutions, the types of courses available to international students, and their cost. Students will need advice on the differences between the destination and home country's education systems, and the equivalence and convertibility of qualifications between the two.

The student counsellor should be aware of the reputation of the destination country for quality of educational outcomes, and be able to advise prospective students about the relative quality and cost of various course offerings.

The student counsellor should find, read, and understand any agent manuals and website information prepared for them by educational institutions in the destination country in order to understand their courses and enrolment processes.

Information can be gathered from the country's education websites, census bureau, and government departments.

**Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What is the structure of the education system? What are its major institutions?

What is the quality of its educational outcomes?

What is the cost of study?

How well are its qualifications recognised internationally?

Does it recognise equivalent international qualifications?

How attractive are its institutions and courses for international students?

## **Immigration and Visas**

Immigration and student visas are discussed in more detail in [A5 Student Visas](#).

The destination country's immigration and student visa regulations are essential knowledge for the student counsellor. He/she must know the types and requirements of visas available to prospective

students, how to prepare visa applications correctly, and the time frames and procedures for submitting visa applications.

Prospective students will want to know about their visa options and the benefits and requirements of those options. For many students, being able to work will be a critical issue. Students should be told what documentation or other evidence is required for a student visa, and be given a clear time frame for preparing and submitting their application.

Information can be gathered from the country's immigration department, consulates, education websites, government departments.

### **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What is the country's immigration policy?

What are the immigration laws relating to international students?

What types of visa are available and what are their criteria?

How difficult is it to obtain a student visa?

Does a student visa allow the student to work (e.g., to fund their studies)? If so, how much?

What is the application process for a student visa? What is the time frame?

What documentation is needed?

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

The quality and cost of living are important considerations when choosing a destination country.

The student counsellor should be able to advise students about the range of accommodation available and its cost. In particular, many students will be interested in home stay, others will want low-cost student accommodation (e.g., share house or apartment), and still others will want their own place. Students' preferences will vary regarding the balance between the quality and cost of their living arrangements.

In many countries, transport will be a significant cost for students. Unless they live close to their school, most students will have to travel daily by public transport. The student counsellor should advise them concerning its accessibility and cost, and any alternative and affordable daily transport options. In addition to travel to and from their home country, many students will wish to take the opportunity to

travel within the destination country (and surrounding countries) while they are abroad.

The personal health and safety of students is paramount. The student counsellor should advise prospective students about the risk of crime or any threats to their personal safety in the destination country. Unless the home and destination countries have a reciprocal health agreement, students will need health insurance (this is usually a visa condition).

Students' living expenses will vary with their personal budgets and spending habits. The student counsellor should advise prospective students about the general costs of accommodation, transport, health care, food, clothing, and entertainment in the destination country.

### **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What is the quality of housing and infrastructure? What is its cost?

What transport options are available? What do they cost?

What is the quality of health care? What is its cost? Is there a reciprocal health agreement with the home country? What health insurance is needed?

Are there any issues with crime rates or personal safety?

What living expenses will a student have?

## **Pros and Cons**

When marketing a destination country, the student counsellor should look at the pros and cons of the country from the viewpoint of the prospective student. A positive factor for some students may be a negative one for others. Prospective students may believe unwarranted stereotypes (positive or negative) about the destination country. Students will differ in their preferences regarding the balance between cost and benefit when selecting a destination. The student counsellor should ask the prospective student questions to find out what his/her priorities are in order to provide better guidance.

Understanding the students' perspective of the destination country allows the student counsellor to prepare more persuasive marketing material and advice for them. He/she can emphasise the perceived positives and correct any negative misconceptions, and better tailor advice to the interests and concerns of the prospective student. This will improve his/her ability to close the sale and provide better outcomes for students.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What are students' perceptions of the destination country? How accurate are they?

What are the positive and negative factors for students?

How can advice be improved by taking these into account?

### More information:

See [A1.3 Main Destination Countries](#) for information sources in the main destination countries. **Please note that we provide profiles of destination countries only for student counsellors' interest and in case they are specialising in one of our covered countries – student counsellors WILL NOT be tested on specific destination countries.**

### Activity:

#### Exercise A1.2a

Question	Answer
A country's location and geography affect	<input type="radio"/> Ease and cost of travel
	<input type="radio"/> Duty free allowances
A country's climate and environment affect its	<input type="radio"/> Lifestyle
	<input type="radio"/> Politics
A country's population and history reveal its	<input type="radio"/> Economic weaknesses
	<input type="radio"/> National character
Each country's society has its own	<input type="radio"/> Industrial output
	<input type="radio"/> Structure and institutions
A stable government and healthy economy provide	<input type="radio"/> Security for students
	<input type="radio"/> Cheap tuition fees
Each country's education system has its own	<input type="radio"/> Structure and qualifications
	<input type="radio"/> Cheap tuition fees
Immigration and visas are usually controlled by	<input type="radio"/> National government
	<input type="radio"/> Local government
The cost of living influences a country's	<input type="radio"/> Standard of behaviour
	<input type="radio"/> Standard of living

Choose answer



[A2 Education Systems](#), [A3 Regulatory Systems](#), [A4 Legal Requirements](#), [A5 Student Visas](#).

[U.S.](#), [Canada](#)

**U.S.**

### **Five Quick Points About the U.S.**

- World's #1 destination for international students
- Third-largest country in world in terms of size and population
- Largest economy in world, and one of the most technologically advanced
- Some of the highest-quality educational institutions in the world, many with cutting-edge technological resources
- Huge range of educational options: some are broadly focussed, some are employment-focussed, some are niche (e.g., arts, social sciences, technical)

### **Location and Geography**

The United States of America (also referred to as the United States, the U.S., the USA, or America) borders Canada to the north, Mexico to the south, the North Atlantic Ocean to the east, and the North Pacific Ocean to the west. At roughly 9.8 million square kilometres, the U.S. is the world's third-largest country in size and population and one of the most ethnically diverse and multicultural nations.



The U.S. consists of 50 states (48 continental plus Alaska and Hawaii), a federal district, Washington D.C., and small territories in the Pacific and Caribbean. The capital city is Washington, D.C.

### **Climate**

With its large size and geographic variety, the U.S. includes most climate types from the tropical atmosphere of Hawaii and Florida to the semi-arid Great Plains; from the arid Mojave Desert to the snow-capped Rocky Mountains, not to mention the cold Arctic climate of Alaska. Because of the climate, the ecology in the U.S. is extremely diverse, with abundant flora and fauna and amazing natural habitats for nature-inspired visitors to explore.

### **History and Population**

The United States' earliest settlers were aboriginal natives (now referred to as Native Americans). The British then began settling on the east coast, and eventually established 13 colonies. These colonies

declared their independence in 1776 from Britain as a result of the American Revolution, a war that grew out of the colonists' protest of the fact that they were ordered to pay taxes but had no representation in the British government. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 officially recognised the United States of America as a sovereign nation, and the U.S. constitution was signed in 1787. The U.S. went on to become a superpower in the 20th century, and it is one of the world's most influential nations.

Today, the population of the U.S. is approximately 309 million. It is ethnically and culturally diverse, thanks to a long history of immigration, with Caucasians comprising 70% of the population, Hispanic or Latino 13%, Black or African American 12%, Asian 4%, and indigenous native Americans 1%. English is the main language, with Spanish the second-most common language.

## **Society and Culture**

A common metaphor used to describe American culture is “the melting pot,” which means that a variety of ethnicities and nationalities are represented in the population and blend to form a common culture. While it is true that there is a strong sense of “Americanness” among the population, most would agree that there are still very distinct sub-cultures, especially along ethnic lines (e.g., Hispanic or Latino).

The United States is a secular country, with a core principle being the separation of church and state and freedom for individuals to worship as they choose. Another distinctive factor is freedom of expression ensuring individuals the right to express themselves without fear of government reprisals. These individual freedoms help to shape a culture where an individual's interest and skills can be more important than family or connections in the marketplace – at least relative to other countries.

In recent decades, women, ethnic minorities, and gays and lesbians have made considerable progress in overcoming traditional barriers and prejudices in both the workplace and society at large.

Sports are quite popular in the United States. American football, baseball, and basketball represent the most successful professional franchises, while soccer is popular as a youth team sport. University sports, especially American football and basketball, are also very popular. Elite university football programs, for example, may draw regular crowds of 75,000.

## **Economy**

The U.S. is the largest economy in the world, and one of the most technologically advanced. The gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 was roughly \$14 trillion USD (U.S. dollar), with per capita GDP at \$47,000 USD. American firms are at or near the forefront of technological advances, especially with regard to computers and in medical, aerospace, and military equipment. The currency is the U.S. Dollar.

## **Government**

The U.S. is a federal republic with a strong democratic tradition founded on the concept of local control. The federal government shares power with strong local governments in each of the 50 states, the district of Columbia, the territories, and multiple counties, cities, and towns. At both the federal and local levels, there are three branches of government: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial, where each has authority over different governmental functions in a system of checks and balances. The U.S. legal code is based on English common law (except in Louisiana, which is still influenced by Napoleonic code).

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Living conditions and cost of living in the U.S. vary greatly depending on location and lifestyle, but in an overall sense, they are similar to what they are in other affluent nations. Consumer goods are certainly easy to find, and basic needs such as food and household items are affordable to almost all people who live in the U.S. What the visitor will notice is that there is a huge range of quality, and some brands and

entering the country, including documenting financial capabilities to support the programme of study items will be accessible only to the wealthy. There is a pronounced income disparity between the poorest and richest Americans, and the marketplace reflects these extremes of purchasing power. The income disparity also shows up in living conditions: most places in the U.S. are relatively safe (and some are very safe), but in poorer neighbourhoods, crime rates are higher. As in most nations, the cost of living is higher in big cities than in smaller towns; accommodation can be expensive in the cities.

## **Education System**

### **Structure**

The American higher education system is administratively managed at three levels: primary (generally ages 5–11 or 5–12), secondary (generally ages 12–18), and post-secondary or tertiary (generally ages 18 and up). Students are required to remain in school until the age of 16. Ninety-nine percent of the U.S. population is literate; 85% achieve a secondary school leaving certificate (diploma); and 27% achieve a post-secondary leaving certificate (diploma). In 2009, there were over 77 million students enrolled in some level of education.

### **Local Control**

To understand the American system of education, it is critical to understand the concept of local control. Local control means that locally elected education entities, typically in the form of governing boards, at the city, state, and institutional level, control issues including the nature of the curriculum, admissions standards, and funding for schools, colleges, and universities. This means that the federal government of the United States has relatively little say in how education is managed and does not govern or provide control over degrees, standards, or curriculum – which is typically the role of the Ministry of Education in other countries.

Based on the above, in the United States, governance and support of post-secondary educational institutions falls into one of two categories, public (government supported) or private. American colleges and universities are roughly evenly divided between these two types of institutions. Whether a higher-education institution is public or private has no relationship to educational quality, although the very most competitive ones tend to be dominated by privates. Whether an institution is public or private, it will set its own admission standards, and prospective students must apply separately for each.

For the same reasons, quality assurance for educational institutions is not the role of any branch of government. Rather, it is the responsibility of voluntary non-governmental accrediting agencies. There are two kinds of accreditation – institutional and programmatic. With both kinds, peer review means that standards are set and reviewed by volunteer boards composed of fellow educators and specialists, and not by government officials. Institutions that successfully complete this process at the total institution level gain either regional or national accreditation. In the U.S., “regional” is more prestigious than “national.”

Specific programmes, such as business, education, pharmacy, or engineering, have professional associations. These associations have the same kind of peer review process. If an institution completes that process successfully, it earns professional accreditation from the association. In a similar but separate process, core academic programmes, for example, architectural training, are also subject to accreditation.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

The U.S. has the world’s largest population of international students: nearly 600,000.

Since September 11, 2001, the United States has increased security at all of its borders and increased scrutiny for all visa applications to the U.S. Visitors must meet stringent criteria to obtain a visa prior to

and demonstrating compelling ties to the home country.

Visas are issued by the State Department (DoS) at U.S. embassies and consulates. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) oversees both Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agencies. CBP inspectors are responsible for admission of travellers to the U.S. at the port of entry, for a specified status and period of time. ICE is responsible for immigration enforcement and matters within the U.S.

International students pursuing degree programmes generally need an F-1 (non-immigrant) or student visa. After being accepted to study at an authorised institution, the student will need to apply with the Department of State at an U.S. embassy or consulate for an F-1 (student) visa. There are visa fees to be paid, an interview to schedule, and an application to fill out. The authorised school will issue a SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) I-20 form, which will also be needed to apply for the F-1 visa.

Those coming for cultural exchanges or those who are financially supported by their home government may qualify for a J1 exchange visitor visa. International students must have insurance to cover accident, illness, medical evacuation, or return of remains in case of death. They must be able to support themselves financially during their stay.

An F1 visa student is permitted to work part-time on-campus (20 hours per week) but not off-campus during the first year of study. After the first year of study, permission to work off-campus may be granted by the school in cases of curricular work requirements (those in co-operative education programmes or with required internships or other work needs necessary for degree completion). The DHS/ICE may grant permission for off-campus employment after the first year in cases of demonstrated economic hardship. F1 students are also eligible for 12 months of optional practical training. Students in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics fields may be eligible for up to 29 months of optional practical training. J1 students are eligible for 18 months of academic training (three years if completing a doctoral degree).

#### **Important U.S. Government Agencies/Departments**

- DoS (Department of State): Issues visas at U.S. embassies and consulates.
- DHS (The Department of Homeland Security): Oversees ICE and CBP.
- ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement): Responsible enforcing immigration and customs laws in the U.S. CBP (Customs and Border Protection): Responsible for border protection; inspectors at the port of entry.
- SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System): Online student tracking system. U.S. Institutions use the SEVIS system to issue the form I-20 for students.

#### **More Information**

<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ous/international/usnei/edlite-index.html> – U.S. Network on Education Information

[www.usastudyguide.com](http://www.usastudyguide.com) – Overview of the U.S. Education System

<http://educationusa.state.gov/> – Guide to U.S. higher education

<http://iienetwork.org/> – Institute of international education for education professionals

<http://www.linkroll.com/vocational-school/an-in-depth-look-of-todays-vocational-education.php> – In-depth look at vocational education

<http://www.internationalstudent.com/> – International student exchange and study abroad centre

[www.abroadplanet.com](http://www.abroadplanet.com) – International Students Portal

<http://profiles.studyusa.com> – Study in the U.S.

<http://www.airc-education.org> – American Independent Recruitment Council

<http://www.khake.com/page50.html> – Career and Technical Vocational Education Resources

<http://www.agri.wsu.edu/acter/> – Association for Career and Technical Education Research (ACTER)  
<http://www.elearners.com/resources/agencies.asp> – Accrediting Agencies  
<http://www.usastudyguide.com/accreditation.htm> – Regional Accrediting Organisations  
<http://educationusa.state.gov/home/accreditation-guide> – Higher education in the U.S.  
<http://museumca.org/usa/> – Museums in the U.S.  
<http://www.publiclibraries.com/> – Public libraries of the U.S  
<http://www.usahistory.info/> – History of the U.S.  
<http://www.usastudyguide.com/americanculture.htm> – American culture  
<http://www.census.gov/> – U.S. Census data – Statistics  
<http://www.weatherusa.net/> – Weather  
<http://www.state.gov/> – U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis> – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
<http://www.ed.gov/index.jhtml> – Department of Education  
<http://www.usa.gov> – Government information for the U.S.  
<http://www.internationalstudent.com/insurance/> – International Student Insurance  
<http://www.usastudyguide.com/immigration.htm> – Immigration information for students.  
<http://www.nafsa.org> – Association of International Educators  
<http://www.aaiep.org> – American Association of Intensive English Programs  
  
<http://www.state.gov/> – U.S. Department of State  
<http://www.dhs.gov/> – U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
<http://www.ice.gov/> – U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement  
<http://www.cbp.gov/> – U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
  
<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/> – Student and Exchange Visitor Programme

## Canada

### Five Quick Points About Canada

- Huge area, relatively small population, beautiful natural environment
- One of world's wealthiest nations
- Multicultural society with many immigrants
- Well-respected and sophisticated education system, and one of the top destinations for international study
- Safe and interesting place to study – students should begin planning early since admissions can be competitive

### Location and Geography

Covering most of the northern part of the North American continent, Canada is the second-largest country in the world (after Russia), with a total land area of 9.9 million square kilometres. It stretches from the Pacific Ocean on the west, and to the Atlantic Ocean on the east. Northern Canada reaches into the Arctic Circle, while southern Canada stretches below the northern points of the United States (with which it shares the longest border in the world). The capital city is Ottawa (in the province of Ontario).



## Climate



Because it's so big, Canada's climate varies considerably across its regions. But generally the country is known for its cold and sometimes long winters, beautiful and mild "shoulder seasons" (fall and spring), and hot but often short summers.

## History and Population

Canada's first inhabitants were Native Canadians, also known as aboriginal peoples, including Inuit peoples in the North. It was then settled by the British and French, and for a period of time was governed then heavily tied to England. In 1982 it formally severed its legal dependence on the British Parliament with the Act of Canada. Today's Canada has more real ties with the U.S. (its largest trading partner) than with Britain, though its foreign policy is distinct from America's and it enjoys strong historical links with Britain (see Government). Canada was a founding member of NATO and the United Nations.

Canada's population is now just over 33 million, which is relatively small for a country of this size. Because much of Canada's area is still wilderness, most Canadians live in highly urbanised centres in the south; nearly 90% of the population is concentrated within 160 kilometres of the U.S. border. Canada has two official languages: English (59%) and French (22%). Almost 20% speak another language.

## Society and Culture

Today, Canada remains home to a large number of aboriginal peoples, now called First Nations, but it is truly a multicultural and multi-ethnic country. Over the past century and a half, it has welcomed 15 million immigrants, thanks to a national policy of multiculturalism. Canada's diverse customs, cuisines, traditions, sports, and celebrations are a product of its aboriginal and European history combined with its recent waves of immigration from countries all over the world.

Canada is considered a peaceful, safe, and orderly country. Its violent crime rate decreased for 10 consecutive years from 1993 to 2003. Firearms are strictly controlled. Canadians enjoy a standard of living which is among the highest in the world.

## Economy

One of the world's wealthiest countries, Canada is a major industrialised trading nation. It is a member of the G7/8, the G20, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and many other international bodies. It boasts a highly educated workforce and an increasingly diversified economy, but it is unusual among developed nations in the continuing importance of its natural resources sector (e.g., logging and oil). The Canadian economy is market-oriented like that of the U.S., yet government tends to provide more support and intervention than does the U.S. government. International trade is an important part of the Canadian economy, especially with the U.S. The currency is the Canadian Dollar.

## Government

Formally considered a constitutional monarchy, Canada is governed by its own House of Commons. While the governor-general is officially the representative of Queen Elizabeth II, in reality the governor-general acts only on the advice of the Canadian prime minister. While two main political parties tend to go back and forth in terms of who is in power, Canada's government is overall incredibly stable and secure.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Many people find the cost of living in Canada is significantly lower than their home country, but of course this is not the case for all students (e.g., students from India or Nepal). Canadian housing is generally inexpensive compared with other developed nations – the average house price in Canada is around five times the average annual wage. Other costs are comparable or a little less expensive than other industrialised nations, with the exception of car insurance, which can be quite expensive in Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada estimates that international students require approximately \$10,000 CAD per year, not including tuition fees, to cover living expenses.

## **Education System**

Canada claims one of the highest rates of post-secondary education completion in the world. According to the 2006 census, six out of every 10 adults between 25 and 64 years of age had completed some form of post-secondary education. Enrolment in post-secondary education has grown significantly in recent years, due to increasing educational demands in the labour market rather than because of population growth. Post-secondary institutions are located throughout the country; there are approximately 70 universities and 80 colleges in Canada.

In Canada, the provinces and territories are responsible for all levels of education including colleges and universities.

In addition to post-secondary options, Canada offers a wide range of independent private boarding schools for younger students noted for their excellence in preparing young men and women for university and college placement.

## **University**

Canadian universities offer high-quality education and are very well respected around the world. A degree from a Canadian university holds substantial prestige, thus making Canada a primary target for many international students.

University degrees are offered at three successive levels – bachelor's, master's, and doctoral. Bachelor's degrees normally require three or four years of full-time study, depending on the province. An honours bachelor's degree involves a higher degree of concentration in the major subject, as well as a higher level of academic achievement, and in some cases, an additional year of study. A master's degree typically requires two years of study after completion of either a general or an honours baccalaureate program.

Virtually all Canadian universities are public institutions, which is the main difference between Canadian and American universities.

## **College**

A community college is a public post-secondary educational institution that offers a variety of programmes to high-school graduates and adults seeking further education or employment training. Public colleges offer vocational programmes in a wide range of professional and technical fields including business, health, science, agriculture, applied arts, technology, skilled trades, and social services.

Diplomas are awarded for the successful completion of two- or three-year programmes, while certificate programmes most often take one year to complete.

Many colleges offer university transfer programs, providing the first two years of a university

undergraduate program. Many also offer bachelor's and applied degree programmes.

Colleges are much cheaper than universities and more career-oriented.

### **Information Specific to International Students**

In 2008–09, there were over 80,000 international students in Canadian universities, constituting 7.7% of the total enrolment. The main countries from which students came were China, the U.S., France, India, and South Korea.

International students applying directly from high school to a university or college in Canada should begin planning early, since universities in Canada or particular programmes within a university can be competitive.

Due to the different laws and regulations in each province the correct visa information can be obtained by visiting the [Education in Canada website](#).

Students who want to work while studying in Canada must be registered as full-time students at an eligible post-secondary educational institution participating in the Off or On-Campus Work Permit Program. For part-time work on campus for the first six months of studies (maximum 20 hrs per week), students must prove that they are in good academic standing and are able to manage their studies first and foremost. Part-time on- and off-campus work permits are available after six months of studies provided students possess satisfactory academic standing. Work placements (co-op) are often available in the programmes of study. Students can get access to up to three years of full-time employment in Canada after graduation.

### **More Information**

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0107386.html> – Information about Canada

<http://www.canadianeconomy.gc.ca/english/economy/> – Canadian economy information

<http://www.cicic.ca/382/education-in-canada.canada> – Education Department of Canada

<http://www.cicdi.ca/395/directory-of-universities-colleges-and-schools-in-canada.canada> – List of Canadian university home pages

<http://www.educationau-incanada.ca/index.aspx?lang=eng> – Education in Canada

<http://www.international.gc.ca/international/index.aspx?lang=eng> – Canadian Foreign Affairs and International Trade

<http://www.educationau-incanada.ca/index.aspx?lang=eng> – Information related to cost of studying, immigration, courses and universities available

<http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/jl/index.html> – Department of Justice Canada

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/start-debut-eng.html> – Statistics Canada

<http://www.livingin-canada.com/cost-of-living-in-canada.html> – Cost of living in Canada

<http://canada.gc.ca/home.html> – Government of Canada website

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.asp> – Citizenship and Immigration

[www.aucc.ca](http://www.aucc.ca) – Association of university and colleges

[www.accc.ca](http://www.accc.ca) – Association of community colleges

<http://www.magma.ca/~harmony/MET/page3.html> – Bureau of Meteorology Canada

## [U.K., Ireland](#)

### **United Kingdom: England, Scotland, Wales, and N. Ireland**

#### **Five Quick Points About the U.K.**

- Second only to the U.S. as a study destination for international students
- London a major financial centre for the world
- Increasingly multicultural
- Old, rich, and tumultuous history for students with this kind of interest
- Scottish system of education quite distinct from the education systems in the rest of U.K.

### **Location and Geography**

The United Kingdom is a sovereign state situated west of continental Europe; its total area is 244,820 square kilometres. It comprises four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is the only part of the U.K. with a land border (with the Republic of Ireland); the rest of the state is surrounded by bodies of water (the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, the English Channel, and the Irish Sea). The English Channel separates the U.K.'s southern coastline from France.

The United Kingdom is renowned for its level plains and rolling green countryside. These predominate in the south and the east, whereas to the north and the west, the landscape includes rugged hills and low mountains. The capital is London.



### **Climate**

The U.K. has a temperate climate, and one that is remarkably varied due to all the water surrounding the area – conditions can change greatly from one day to the next. Scotland in the north tends to be cooler than England, while Wales is generally wetter with more cloud cover. Temperatures generally range from around 0° Celcius in winter to 32° Celcius in summer. In all parts of the U.K., waterproof jackets should be part of the wardrobe.

### **History and Population**

The U.K. has had a tumultuous history. In early times, the region's predominantly Celtic people were invaded and influenced by a range of different nationalities, including Romans, Norsemen, Vikings, Saxons, and Normans. While the U.K. was for a long time a major coloniser (i.e., during the time of the British Empire), exporting its culture, values, and the English language around the world, it is now increasingly a nation of immigrants, with a diverse mix of European, Asian, and African nationalities influencing the culture as a whole. At the same time, British values continue to find voice around the world in such institutions as the Commonwealth, and to varying extents in the systems and structures of the countries of the former British Empire.

The current population of the U.K. is around 62 million. England is the most densely populated (approximately 52 million), with the majority of people living in the south east; Scotland's population is around 6 million; Wales is about 3 million; and Northern Ireland is just under 2 million. English is the main language, but many other languages are also spoken due to immigration.

## **Society and Culture**

The development and formation of the United Kingdom has occurred in a way that the cultures of England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland overlap, yet still have their own diverse and clearly distinctive features. For more information on the distinct cultures, please check out the “More information” section of web links at the end of the U.K. write-up.

The average age is just over 39. The trend is for younger people to study for longer and for older people to spend more time in retirement. So the time spent in employment during a person’s lifetime has been reduced. Increased life expectancy and working women have also contributed to this trend.

## **Economy**

A member of the G7 and G20 groups, the U.K. economy is the sixth largest in the world by purchasing power – and among the top three in Europe. It was historically the lead nation in becoming industrialised, and London remains one of the world’s main financial centres, contributing to the U.K.’s very globalised outlook.

Services, particularly banking, insurance, and business services, contribute by far the largest proportion of GDP, with industry and manufacturing becoming increasingly less important (as in most affluent nations). While it accounts for a relatively small proportion of GDP, the agricultural industry in the U.K. is highly intensive and efficient, producing roughly 60% of food needs but employing less than 2% of the labour force.

While it has now joined the EU, the U.K. has stayed out of the European Economic Monetary Union, so the currency remains the Pound Sterling.

## **Government**

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy/parliamentary democracy, and it is proud of its establishment of the Westminster system of government and British common law, which have since been applied in many different countries in the world. The U.K. was the foundation member of the Commonwealth and remains its flagship country today. A founding member of NATO, the U.K. is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

The government of England is still solely regulated by the U.K. parliament. Since Devolution in 1999, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have their own legislative bodies and more independent authority in governing their own countries. The chief of state in the U.K. is the Queen, and the prime minister is the head of parliament. England, Scotland, and Wales have regional county councils responsible for local government matters and the large cities (especially London) also have councils (boroughs) that are responsible for local government.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

In the U.K., the cost of living can vary considerably depending upon location. Living costs can range from £120–£240 a week depending on accommodation. London is the most expensive area and can be up to 25% more than in other places in the U.K. Fees for overseas students studying in the U.K. can range from £4,000–£18,000 a year depending on the institution, the level, and the type of course. Further education fees are generally slightly lower than higher education fees.

Students from EU countries can receive National Health System (NHS) benefits while studying in the U.K., and may also be entitled to some financial or other forms of assistance. Non-EU students may be eligible for some health benefits under the NHS.

The U.K. lifestyle provides opportunities to experience a wide range of live theatre, museums, art

galleries, historical towns and buildings. Travel is available to most parts of the U.K. via train and/or bus and the U.K. abounds in bed and breakfast accommodation as well as backpacker hostels.

## **Education System**

The education system in the U.K. (except for Scotland) comprises four main sectors: primary, secondary, further education, and higher education.

Full-time education is compulsory for all children aged between 5 and 16 (inclusive). Students ordinarily attend primary until they are 11 years old and secondary until they are 16. They may then continue their secondary studies for a further two years (sixth form), leading most typically to an A-level qualification, although other qualifications and courses exist, including the BTEC and the International Baccalaureate. The Education and Skills Act 2008 raised the leaving age for compulsory education to 18. State-provided schools are free of charge to students, and there is also a tradition of independent schooling, but parents may choose to educate their children by any suitable means.

Higher education typically begins with a three-year bachelor's degree. Post-graduate degrees include master's degrees (usually one year and/or research) and PhDs (at least three years). Universities require a royal charter in order to issue degrees, and the state finances all but one with low fee-levels for students.

While the four countries of the U.K. have differing approaches to vocational education and training (VET), the training and qualifications are interchangeable and of the same standard. Three of the countries (England, Wales, and Northern Ireland) share a common system of external qualifications within the National Qualifications Framework. There are separate bodies within each country responsible for regulating these qualifications.

England has approximately one-and-a-half million full- and part-time students studying in higher education. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education monitors and assesses standards across the range of qualifications offered. Further Education (FE) focuses on development of business and work skills and encourages ongoing lifelong learning and a skilled, efficient and productive workforce in England. The Learning and Skills Council and associated bodies formulate policy and administer further education.

In England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, higher education bodies are independent, self-governing institutions active in teaching, research, and scholarship. The state, not the institution, issues degrees and higher education qualifications.

In Wales, the National Assembly is responsible for the broad direction of policy for further education through the Department of Education and Lifelong Learning (DELLS). There are 12 universities and 25 further education colleges and institutions in Wales. English-language programmes are offered within many of these and access to free language support is available at all Wales' institutions. Over 8,000 international students currently study in Wales, with about 10% of these from non-European Union (EU) countries. Most of the universities are located fairly close to the southern and western coasts.

## **Education in Scotland**

The Scottish system of education is quite distinct from the education systems of the rest of the U.K. From 1999, it has had its own legislative framework, curriculum framework, and qualifications system. The Scottish Parliament is responsible for the whole system and has established several agencies for education development. For example, the Scottish Qualifications Authority is responsible for issuing all qualifications. Scotland has one main university system: Scotland University, under which all of the individual universities operate.

Universities are located in all of the major cities of the country. Higher education courses in Scotland are

usually one year longer than in other countries of the U.K. Emphasis is placed on breadth in a wide range of specialised subjects. Scotland prides itself on the standard of education provided and flexibility allowed in selecting subjects within a course. The Scottish approach is attractive to many students, as they are more likely to be able to change mid-stream in their studies.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

The U.K. ranks second to the U.S. in international students' preferences for study destinations. Since the 1999 launch of the Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), the U.K. has focussed on providing more international student places in further and higher education. The U.K. has numerous further and higher education institutions for the international student to consider, and English-language courses are readily available throughout the four countries.

Visa applications for the four countries composing the United Kingdom go to the U.K. Border Agency. Students from the European Economic Area (EEA) and Switzerland do not need a visa to study in the U.K. However, they need to meet the entry requirements of the course they wish to undertake within further and/or higher education, including English-language level requirements (e.g., IELTS).

International students from outside the EEA must apply for a Tier 4 Points Based System Visa. They can apply for a student visa through the Visa Application Centres in other countries (See [www.visas.gov.uk](http://www.visas.gov.uk)). Non-EEA visa regulations are subject to ongoing review, so the student counsellor should make sure to check for the most current rules; but as of this writing, these are the following types of student visa (source: UKBA website, listed below in links).

- *Tier 4 (Child) Student*: Students can apply for this visa if they are between four and 17. If they are between 4 and 15, they must be coming to the U.K. to study at an independent fee-paying school.
- *Child Visitor*: Students can apply as child visitors if they are 17 or younger and want to study in the U.K. for up to six months. Students with this visa cannot switch and apply for a Tier 4 (Child) student visa while in the U.K.; they would have to apply for it from their home country.
- *Tier 4 (General) Student*: For students coming to the U.K. for their post-16 education. *Student Visitor*: Students must be 18 or older, want to study in the U.K. for up to six months, and not want to work while studying. Students with this visa cannot switch to a Tier 4 (General) student visa in the U.K.; they would have to apply for it from their home country.
- *Prospective Student*: For students coming to the U.K. to help them decide which course to study, or for those who plan to start a course of study within six months. Students under this category will be able to switch and apply for a Tier 4 (General) or Tier 4 (Child) student visa while in the U.K.

Once approved, a visa is issued for the length of the course of study. Students may receive a visa for both an English-language and a Level 3 (further education) or Level 4 (higher education) course. Some student visas permit work while studying in the U.K.

## **Education U.K. Training from the British Council**

In recognition of the work agents do to promote the U.K., a certificated online course has been designed for agents by the British Council. This global training programme is delivered and managed in-country. The purpose of the course is to:

- Develop agents' capacity to work effectively with U.K. institutions
- Improve knowledge and understanding of the U.K. as a study destination
- Increase knowledge of U.K. study programmes
- Enable agents/representatives to provide high-quality information, resources, and services to students seeking an international education
- Provide agents/representatives with the skills and resources needed to provide relevant, accurate, and trustworthy information.

The course is delivered online over a period of eight weeks with secure access. It comprises two units:

#### Unit 1

- Studying and living in the U.K.
- Lifestyle
- Costs and finance
- Working while studying
- Visas, immigration, and dependants
- Accommodation

#### Unit 2

- Why choose a U.K. education
- How the U.K. education system works
- English-language learning
- School and tutorial college education
- Further and work-based education
- Higher education – undergraduate study
- Higher education – post-graduate study
- Study for a U.K. qualification in your own country
- Resources and support

Candidates complete online assessments following each unit and the course culminates in a final (written) formal assessment conducted under exam conditions at the local British Council office. Please visit the [British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org) or contact [Agent.Enquiries@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Agent.Enquiries@britishcouncil.org) for further details.

### More Information

#### General

[www.directgov.uk](https://www.directgov.uk) – Public services in the U.K.: info on education and student finances for EU citizens  
[www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/](https://www.scit.wlv.ac.uk/ukinfo/) – Interactive map locations of universities throughout U.K.  
[www.educationuk.org](https://www.educationuk.org) – British Council website with links to the different countries in the U.K.  
[www.ukstatistics.gov.uk](https://www.ukstatistics.gov.uk) – Office for National Statistics, U.K.  
[www.economywatch.com](https://www.economywatch.com) – Economy Watch site – Economy, Investment, and Finance Reports  
[www.britishcouncil.org](https://www.britishcouncil.org) – British Council  
[www.culture.gov.uk](https://www.culture.gov.uk) – Department of Culture, Media, and Sport  
[www.dius.gov.uk](https://www.dius.gov.uk) – Department of Innovation and University Skills (Department of Business and Skills) – covers both further education and higher education  
[www.ucas.com](https://www.ucas.com) – UCAS manages all applications for university-level courses in the U.K.  
[www.ukcisa.org](https://www.ukcisa.org) – U.K. Council for International Students Affairs – info on fees, funding, and support  
[www.iefaf.org](https://www.iefaf.org) – International Education Financial Aid website  
[www.i-studentadvisor.com](https://www.i-studentadvisor.com) – I-Student Advisor website – international interactive education guides  
[www.uk.internationalstudent.com](https://www.uk.internationalstudent.com) – Comprehensive information for prospective international students  
[www.nus.org.uk](https://www.nus.org.uk) – National Union of Students: advice on living in the U.K.  
[www.ukvisas.gov.uk](https://www.ukvisas.gov.uk) – Home Office – U.K. Border Agency: general information on student visas  
[www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.au/studying-in-the-uk/](https://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.au/studying-in-the-uk/) – Detailed information on student visa requirements  
[www.ielts.org](https://www.ielts.org) – International English Language Testing System: English language proficiency testing

#### England

[www.collegesinbritain.co.uk](http://www.collegesinbritain.co.uk) – Search facilities for all colleges in the four U.K. countries  
[www.EducationinBritain.info](http://www.EducationinBritain.info) – Information for international students on courses  
[www.enjoyengland.com](http://www.enjoyengland.com) – Official website for tourism in England  
[www.visitlondon.com](http://www.visitlondon.com) – London tourism

## Scotland

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) – Higher education website  
[www.universities-scotland.ac.uk](http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk) – Universities Scotland  
[www.sfeu.ac.uk](http://www.sfeu.ac.uk) – Scotland Further Education Unit – information on Scotland's colleges  
[www.scotland.org.uk](http://www.scotland.org.uk) – Scottish business and economy  
[www.scottishlaw.org.uk](http://www.scottishlaw.org.uk) – Collection of websites with information on Scottish law  
[www.visitscotland.com](http://www.visitscotland.com) – Official website of Scottish Tourism Board

## Wales

[www.walesinternationalconsortium.com](http://www.walesinternationalconsortium.com) – Information on study in Wales for international students  
[www.newydd.cymru.gov.uk](http://www.newydd.cymru.gov.uk) – Welsh Assembly Government website – click on Education and Skills  
[www.hefew.ac.uk](http://www.hefew.ac.uk) – Official website of Higher Education Funding council for Wales  
[www.visitwales.co.uk](http://www.visitwales.co.uk) – Official tourism website of the Welsh Assembly Government  
[www.wales.com](http://www.wales.com) – Official gateway to Wales site including living and studying in Wales

## Northern Ireland

[www.delni.gov.uk/](http://www.delni.gov.uk/) – Department for Employment and Learning – Northern Ireland  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/) – Official government website for Northern Ireland citizens  
[www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) – British Council education website: link to Northern Ireland homepage  
[www.ukcisa.org.uk/](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/) – U.K. Council for International Student Affairs: visas, working in the U.K.  
[www.qcda.gov.uk](http://www.qcda.gov.uk) – Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency, U.K.  
[www.equalityni.org](http://www.equalityni.org) – Equality Commission of Northern Ireland  
[www.nisra.gov.uk](http://www.nisra.gov.uk) – Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency  
[www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ni/](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/weather/uk/ni/) – Met Office U.K. – Northern Ireland  
[www.discovernorthernireland.com](http://www.discovernorthernireland.com) – Northern Ireland Tourism Board website  
[www.culturenorthernireland.org](http://www.culturenorthernireland.org) – Cultural atlas and events information website

## Republic of Ireland

### Five Quick Points About the Republic of Ireland

- Dynamic, modern country with a young population
- Internationally recognised for being safe and friendly
- Huge emphasis on education
- Technologically oriented economy
- Despite modern direction of recent years, respect for tradition continues

### Location and Geography

The Republic of Ireland includes 26 counties, and represents five-sixths of the total area (84,421 square kilometres) of Ireland (the other sixth is Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom and covered in that destination section of the IATC).



The capital city is Dublin.

The Republic of Ireland consists of a mostly level to rolling interior plain surrounded by rugged hills and low mountains, with sea cliffs on the west coast. The River Shannon separates the midlands from the west. To the northeast is Northern Ireland (U.K.); otherwise the Republic of Ireland is surrounded by water.



## Climate

The climate is “oceanic” or “maritime temperate” – mild, moist, and changeable with abundant rainfall and lack of temperature extremes due to the warming influence of the Gulf Stream. In general, the climate is similar to the U.K. except that it has higher rainfall and more cloud cover.

## History and Population

Ireland has been populated for around 9,000 years. Irish ancestry includes a mix of many peoples such as the Celts, Normans, Vikings, and Scots. Once part of the U.K., the Republic of Ireland became increasingly sovereign over the course of the 20th century, with the Republic of Ireland officially declared in 1949.

Historically, emigration was caused by politics, religious oppression, and economic issues. Over 80 million Irish people and their descendants currently live in other countries. Since the 1990s, thanks to an agreement in 1998 ending civil strife as well as to economic expansion, this trend has been changing: more people are now moving to Ireland than leaving the country.

The total population of the Republic of Ireland is around 4.5 million. English is the main language, with a minority using Irish as their mother tongue.

## Society and Culture

The *Lonely Planet* travel guide named Ireland as the friendliest country in the world (2008 and 2010), and the 2009 *Global Peace Index* ranked it the 12th most safe and welcoming country to live in. Ireland is predominantly Christian, and mainly Roman Catholic. English and Irish (Gaelic) are the official languages, although Gaelic is a minority language.

Myths and legends are an integral part of Irish culture. Traditions such as music, Irish dancing, social outings at the Irish pub, and wearing something green on St Patrick’s Day are a very important part of the culture. The Irish are well recognised for their love of storytelling, their wit and humour, and for a distinctive musical rhythm or lilt in their voice in conversation. At the same time, they have embraced modern culture, and international students will see both traditional and modern culture side by side in Ireland.

## Living Conditions and Cost of Living

The ICOS website provides up-to-date information on the cost of living expenses. Accommodation can range from around €90–€140 a week. On-campus student accommodation is highly sought after, and can be more expensive than sharing a house or flat. The cheapest alternative is usually staying with a family. Students should allow around €70–€100 a week for food. Entertainment budgets can vary considerably.

Tuition fees for international students vary depending on the institution, the study programme, and the level of study, with the average around €12,000 per year (€9,000–€18,000 range except for medical-

level of study, with the average around €12,000 per year (€8,000 – €16,000 range except for medical related courses). These average costs refer only to third-level course fees. The fee for a general standard English-language programme tends to be lower, seldom reaching the 10,000-euro mark for a full-year course. Where the annual course fee is less than €6,000 pa, the full fee must be paid in advance.

It may be beneficial for students to apply for an International Student Identity Card (ISIC) as this can assist in reduced costs in several areas such as transport. Train and bus transport are generally readily available in the major towns. In major cities, there should be dedicated bike lanes for those who choose this form of local transport. While a waterproof jacket is a must (it rains twice as much in the west as in the east), a range of outdoor activities is available including hill walking, biking, pony-trekking, and even surfing.

## **Economy**

Since joining the European Union (EU) in 1973, the Republic of Ireland has transformed itself from a largely agricultural society into a modern, technologically advanced economy which is now ranked eighth in the world in terms of purchasing parity. Notably, the Republic of Ireland is ranked fifth in the world on the *Human Development Index*, which basically registers the overall wellbeing and progress of a population. The economy is increasingly a “knowledge” economy with a focus on services and high-tech. The Euro is the Republic of Ireland’s currency.

## **Government**

The Republic of Ireland is a parliamentary democracy with two houses of parliament: the upper house, Senate (Seanad) and the lower house, House of Representatives (Dail). The popularly elected president is the head of state and the prime minister is the leader of the national parliament. Local government takes place through elected county councils for each of the 26 counties.

## **Education System**

Ireland has one of the best education systems in the world according to the independent *IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook 2009* (Ireland ranks eighth). Many believe the education system is a major reason for the country’s rapid economic growth in the last few decades.

Responsibility for education lies within the Department of Education and Science, which administers all aspects of education policy.

There are three main sectors of formal education: primary (eight years), secondary (six years) and tertiary/higher education (universities, institutes of technology, colleges of education, NUI colleges, and independent colleges). In recent years a fourth sector, called further education, has been added to promote the concept of lifelong learning throughout a person’s career and life. Education is free at all levels, but only to those applying from EU countries

In terms of higher education, there are seven universities in the Republic of Ireland, 14 institutes of technology, as well as many independent (privately funded) colleges. All government-approved academic awards in these institutions are internationally recognised. There is a wide range of technical and vocational training programmes available in Ireland. English-language programmes attract around 200,000 students a year of all ages and nationalities.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

With a relatively young population (36% are under the age of 40), an internationally acclaimed emphasis on education, and a reputation for being a safe place to live, the Republic of Ireland can be a very exciting place to be a student.

Citizens of the European Economic Area (EEA) generally do not have any special requirements to study in the Republic of Ireland. For some countries outside the EEA, a visa is not required. It is important to check country requirements via the Department of Foreign Affairs website.

If a visa is required, the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service (INIS) website provides detailed information of how to apply and the essential documents that must accompany an application. Some of these requirements include a letter of acceptance for enrolment in a recognised course, immediate access to a specific amount of funds, proof of private medical insurance, proof of English-language level sufficient to meet entry (e.g., IELTS 5) and ability to complete the course, mainly for students who intend to enrol for third-level institutions.

International students studying in a full-time recognised course of at least one year's duration may be eligible to obtain casual employment of up to 20 hours a week.

## More Information

[www.i-studentadvisor.com](http://www.i-studentadvisor.com) – I-Student Advisor website – international interactive education guides  
[www.discoverireland.com](http://www.discoverireland.com) – Tourism Ireland: covers society and culture, places to see, accommodation  
[www.usit.ie/travel/travelcards\\_isic\\_student\\_card.html](http://www.usit.ie/travel/travelcards_isic_student_card.html) – International Student Identity Card application  
[www.educationireland.ie](http://www.educationireland.ie) – Provides information on all universities in the Republic and Northern Ireland  
[www.ioti.ie](http://www.ioti.ie) – Directory of all Institutes of Technologies (IUT) in the Republic and Northern Ireland

[www.icosirl.ie/eng](http://www.icosirl.ie/eng) – Irish Council for International Students: visas, work permits, health insurance

[www.gov.ie/en/](http://www.gov.ie/en/) – Irish Government: links to state organisations and government departments  
[www.dfa.ie](http://www.dfa.ie) – Department of Foreign Affairs official website  
[www.dfa.ie](http://www.dfa.ie) – DFA entry visa requirements for specific countries  
[www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie) – Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service – student visa guidelines  
[www.educationireland.ie](http://www.educationireland.ie) – Department of Education and Science official website  
[www.i-studentadvisor.com/studying-in-ireland.html](http://www.i-studentadvisor.com/studying-in-ireland.html) – Information for students  
[www.usi.ie](http://www.usi.ie) – Union of Students in Ireland  
[www.acels.ie](http://www.acels.ie) – Advisory Council for English Language Schools in Ireland  
[www.learning.ie](http://www.learning.ie) – Learning Ireland Network: online resource for all learning in the Republic  
[www.nfq.ie](http://www.nfq.ie) – National Framework for Qualifications, Republic of Ireland  
[www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) – Central Statistics Office Ireland  
[www.met.ie](http://www.met.ie) – Irish Meteorological Service Online

[Germany](#), [Switzerland](#), [The Netherlands](#), [France](#)

## Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Federal Republic of Germany)

### Five Quick Points About Germany

- Nearly one-tenth of world's international students go to study in Germany
- New bachelor-master system offers degrees which are internationally compatible
- Emphasis on interdisciplinary studies, international outlook, and theory balanced with practical applications
- Very green, environmentally aware society
- Blend of modern and traditional cultures

## Location and Geography

Germany (Deutschland), the sixth largest country in Europe by land area (349,520 square kilometres), is situated in central Europe, with coastal access to the North and Baltic Seas. It is bordered by nine other European countries to the north, east, south, and west. It comprises lowlands (north), uplands (centre), and the Bavarian Alps to the south. Berlin (in the northeast) is the capital.

## Climate

The climate of Germany is temperate (and marine in the north), with cool, cloudy, wet winters and warm summers, occasionally tempered by the Föhn, a warm mountain wind. There can be marked variations in climate from region to region.



## History and Population

The German nationals of today have evolved from several different tribal groups: Celts, Germans, Franks, Slavs, Romans. Germany has had a long and chequered history with periods of dominance, repression, and division.

Germanic invasions destroyed the declining Roman Empire in the 4th/5th centuries AD, and Charlemagne was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in 800AD. From the 15th to early 19th centuries, the Hapsburgs ruled until the decline of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. Within this period was the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which devastated Germany and left the empire divided into hundreds of small principalities.

After the Napoleonic Wars of the 19th century, Germany reorganised and a German Empire was established. The growing influence of Germany then collided with the interests of other nations leading into World War I, the Great Depression, World War II, and the separation of West Germany and East Germany.

In the 1960s and 70s, a large immigration wave began in Germany, with workers from Greece, Turkey, Italy, Morocco, Portugal, Tunisia, and the Balkans coming in to help with a labour shortage during a significant economic expansion (dubbed the “economic miracle”). East Germany attracted workers from Vietnam, North Korea, Angola, Mozambique, and Cuba. After reunification, another wave came from Eastern Europe (1990s). Many of these workers stayed and have permanently altered the composition of the German population, making it more multi-ethnic.

Following the German Reunification in October 1990, Germany became a united and sovereign state for the first time since 1945. It has a population of over 82 million and is the second-most populated country in Europe. Population density varies markedly from urban (very dense) to rural (less dense) areas.

The median age is 43.8 years. Over 95% of the population speaks German as their mother tongue; other languages include Sorbian, North Frisian, Danish, Romani, Kurdish and Turkish.

## Society and Culture

Germany is still basically a homogeneous ethnic society (German 91.5%, Turkish 2.4%, other 6.1%). A trend toward a more multicultural society is now occurring with a greater emphasis on integration of immigrants. Restoring the social unity between West and East has been an ongoing agenda of the German government since reunification in 1990, with living conditions, education, and health as

important priorities. The family remains at the core of German society though traditional gender roles are disappearing, bringing German society and culture more into line with the modern Western world.

Culture in Germany has many facets. From world-famous orchestras, architecture, museums, churches, and traditional cuisine to avant-garde art and music, the international student will find a mix of modern and traditional. The Germans enjoy the outdoors along their beautiful riverbanks and in the gardens which can be found in most cities and towns. Germany is a sporting nation with football the no.1 sport. Walking and cycling are common leisure activities. Train travel is excellent and fast, making it easy to get around the country to festivals and other cultural events.

## **Economy**

Germany is a member of the European Union (EU). Its economy is the largest in Europe and the fourth-largest in the world after the U.S., Japan, and China, and it is very export-oriented (second-largest exporter in the world). It is among the largest and most technologically advanced producers of iron, steel, coal, cement, chemicals, machinery, vehicles, machine tools, electronics, food and beverages, shipbuilding, and textiles. It is the leading producer of wind turbines and solar power technology in the world.

Some of the largest annual international trade fairs and congresses occur in German cities such as Hanover, Frankfurt, and Berlin. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

The political structure of the Federal German Republic is complex, consisting of a central federal government and 16 states. The government and economic systems today are based predominantly on those of West Germany prior to reunification. West German Basic Law (or constitution) became the cornerstone of the central, federal government in 1990. The Federal Constitutional Court has the power to repeal legislation if such legislation contravenes the Basic Law.

Most areas of government are centralised. The states, however, are responsible for schooling (and to a large extent tertiary education), internal security (including policing), as well as the organisation of local self-government. The federal government supplements the states' income to assist them in managing and administering these areas.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

International students living in Germany can generally live on €750–€950 a month: accommodation €230–€400, food €220, books/stationery €50 and other €250 (e.g., transport, entertainment, laundry, telephone) depending on location and type of housing. Tuition fees, where applicable, are an additional cost. Health insurance is usually around €50–€60 a month. Student accommodation is less expensive than renting a flat. International students should be aware that often flats are let unfurnished and that there may only be a sink in the kitchen area. Tenants then have to provide all other kitchen facilities.

## **Education System**

The fundamental structure of the German education system is similar to that of many Western countries. It consists of elementary (primary), secondary (lower and upper) and tertiary/higher education. It is in the detail – especially in relation to the range of institutions that deliver tertiary/higher education – where the differences lie. International students planning to study in Germany need to be able to identify these differences in tertiary/higher education; a brief outline follows:

- Traditional universities (Universitäten)
- Equivalent higher education institutions including technology (Technische Hochschulen or

- Equivalent higher education institutions including technology (Technische Hochschulen or Technische Universitäten) and education (Pädagogische Hochschulen)
- Colleges of art and music (Kunsthochschulen and Musikhochschulen)
- Universities of applied sciences (Fachhochschulen)
- Universities of applied administrative sciences (Verwaltungsfachhochschulen)
- Professional academies for vocational education and training (Berufsakademien)

Most of these institutions are public (government). There are some privately run institutions; however, public education is the first choice for most (more than 90%).

## Information Specific to International Students

Close to 250,000 international students are enrolled at German institutes of higher education. This makes Germany among the most sought-after destination countries in the world.

International students may have to pay some minor tuition fees. However, this is a recent situation and doesn't apply to all higher education institutions. Therefore, it is essential to source such information from the individual institution to determine if tuition fees apply.

There is a German language proficiency requirement for entry to higher education institutions, the DSH (DSH-Prüfung). In some situations, basic language may be accepted dependent upon the course, the level of study, and the language of instruction. German-language courses are available at most institutions.

To gain acceptance, non-European Union (EU) students may have to prove financial capability. Applications should include evidence of capacity to meet the costs of studying/living in Germany. EU regulations govern the assessment students from EU countries wishing to study in Germany. Non-EU students may need to obtain a student visa prior to entering Germany. Students should first check with the German embassy or consulate in their own country to obtain the most up-to-date information about student visa requirements. Visa application processing for long-stay visas can take several months, so students must allow sufficient processing time prior to their intended date of entry. Students who wish to seek work while studying need to check if they will need a work permit.

Within seven days of arriving in Germany, all international students must register with the relevant district administrative office. Proof of, or application for health insurance coverage, must be submitted to the district office of the AOK (Allgemeine Ortskrankenkasse). After three months, all international students – regardless of country of origin – need to apply for a residence permit (Aufenthaltserlaubnis).

International students can work while they study in Germany, and because student jobs are subsidised (entailing lower social security costs for employers), many German employers find student workers an attractive option.

## More Information

[www.deutschland.de](http://www.deutschland.de) – Deutschland Portal: Official portal to access information on Germany

[www.bmbf.de](http://www.bmbf.de) – Official site of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research

[www.studienwahl.de](http://www.studienwahl.de) – Study programmes in Germany

[www.eduserver.de](http://www.eduserver.de) – Deutsche Bildungs Server: Information on the education system and access to web-based education information in Germany

[www.eubusiness.com/Germany/econ](http://www.eubusiness.com/Germany/econ) – EU business site: Information on German economy

[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) – International Monetary Fund site for IMF reports on German economy

[www.hs-kompass2.de/kompass/xml/index\\_en.htm](http://www.hs-kompass2.de/kompass/xml/index_en.htm) – HRK: Information on higher education institutions

[www.study-in-germany.de](http://www.study-in-germany.de) – Deutsche Welle: Information on studying in Germany and student visas

[www.auswaertiges-amt.de](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de) – German Foreign Office

[www.internationale-studierende.de](http://www.internationale-studierende.de) – Deutsches Studentenwerk (German Student Union)

[www2.zvs.de](http://www2.zvs.de) – ZVS – Central Office for the Allocation of Study Places website (university placement)

[www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de](http://www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de) – Information on German government, society, and culture

[www.germanculture.com](http://www.germanculture.com) – Information on German society: population, culture, education, healthcare

[www.germany-tourism.de](http://www.germany-tourism.de) – German National Tourist Board

## Switzerland

### Five Quick Points About Switzerland

- A land that embraces diversity, with nearly a quarter of the population composed of immigrants and four official languages
- Highly qualified and skilled labour force
- Very decentralised and diverse education system – international students apply at institutional level
- Finding suitable accommodation can be challenging – international students should research and find housing as soon as possible after being accepted at a school
- Unique VET (higher vocational education and training) model

### Location and Geography

Switzerland (officially “the Swiss Confederation”) is a small landlocked nation state in central Europe; its total area is 41,290 square kilometres. Bordering Switzerland are France (west), Germany (north), Austria and Lichtenstein (east), and Italy (south). Switzerland is a diverse land of mountains, lakes, and rich fertile plains: the Jura Mountains in the northwest, the Alps in the south, and the glacier-carved plains of the Central Plateau. The capital city is Bern.



### Climate

The cool, temperate climate in Switzerland is affected by its landlocked position and by the variations in altitude. This translates to generally cold, cloudy, rainy/snowy winters and cool to warm, cloudy, humid summers with occasional showers. In summer on the plain, temperatures can reach 30°C. In winter, the temperature rarely drops below 5°C.

### History and Population

First part of the Frankish Empire and then part of the Holy Roman Empire, Switzerland emerged as a modern state in 1815 at the Congress of Vienna. In 1848, the Swiss State was formally established with a tiered system of federal government, local government cantons, and communes. Through World War I and II, Switzerland remained neutral. Since 1945, Switzerland has enjoyed political stability, economic progress, increased social security, and increased openness and tolerance.

Switzerland has a population of around 7.6 million (German 64%, French 20%, Italian 7%, Romansch less than 1%, other 8%) – and immigrants compose roughly 21% of the population. The average age is 41 years. Switzerland is densely populated, and almost three-quarters of people live in urban areas. As most of the cities, towns, and villages are concentrated in the Mittelland or Midlands, the central plateau area is the most densely populated region in the country. Switzerland has four official languages: German, French, Italian, and Romansch.

## **Society and Culture**

Swiss culture is known for its diversity: there can be marked differences in language, economy, cultural history, cuisine, political persuasions, climate, architecture, and the educational system from region to region and canton to canton. The cultural diversity of Switzerland is evident in the many cultural events. The country is well known for all kinds of winter sports. The International Olympic Committee and FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association) headquarters are in Lausanne and Zurich respectively.

The website [Swissworld](#) notes the following: “The Swiss themselves are sometimes puzzled about what they have in common apart from their passport, what it is that makes them Swiss. The Swiss say they are held together by the desire to stay united. The general attitude is summed up in the formula ‘unity, but not uniformity.’”

## **Economy**

Throughout the 19th century, Switzerland embraced industrialisation and developed a reputation for superior workmanship. Today, the economy is based on a highly qualified labour force performing very skilled work in small to medium enterprises which are the backbone of the economy. Banking and insurance, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, microtechnology, and high-quality precision instruments are important industries. Swiss watches and chocolates are world famous. In this mature economy, growth is slow and heavily reliant on international trade. The Swiss aim to attain environmentally friendly industries. The currency is Swiss Francs (CHF).

## **Government**

Switzerland’s government, parliament, and courts are organised on three levels. The Swiss Confederation’s constitution sets out the powers of the federal government, (e.g., foreign relations, army, customs examinations and tariffs, value added taxes, legislation on currency, measure and weight, railways, and communications). At the second level of government are the cantons (26) and third, at a more local level, are the communes (just under 3,000).

There are two houses of parliament at the federal level: the National Council (like a House of Representatives) and the Council of States (like a Senate), which represents the cantons. Only the cantons run universities (with the exception of two federal institutes of technology).

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Depending on the location of the university and personal demand, students will need CHF19,000 to 29,000 (Swiss francs) a year. Average monthly expenses excluding tuition and accommodation costs will be: CHF1,135 (food: 600, cultural activities and leisure: 250, public transport: 70, study materials 100, health care/other insurances 115). Tuition fees can range from CHF1,300 to CHF8,000 per year.

Most Swiss rent accommodation rather than buying. Vacancy rates in Switzerland are very low, accommodation can be expensive and finding accommodation may not be easy. Subsidised accommodation may be available from the universities; however, this is often limited. Flats and apartments can be rented as bare shells. Accommodation should be researched and sourced as soon as possible after acceptance at an educational institution.

## **Education System**

The Swiss constitution sets the framework for Swiss education – including that primary school is mandatory and free when offered in public schools – but the practical authority for the education system

resides with the cantons. Therefore education is very diverse in Switzerland: in the school sector (primary and secondary) there are essentially 26 different public education systems.

In terms of higher education, there are 10 cantonal autonomous universities and two federal institutes of technology. Higher vocational education and training (VET) is a Swiss specialty, and provides tertiary-level courses (up to diploma level) and focuses on skills for professional and management positions. Basic VET is provided at secondary school level. VET is the joint responsibility of the federal government, cantons, and professional associations. The Swiss Education Server website ([www.educa.ch](http://www.educa.ch)) notes that the Swiss VET system “serves the purpose of senior staff training and specialisation of individuals who have completed a three- to four-year basic vocational education and training, or who have achieved an equivalent qualification.”

In terms of universities, there are two categories: (1) traditional universities (cantonal universities and Federal Institutes of Technology and (2) universities of applied sciences, including universities of art and music as well as universities of teacher education. International students should check carefully into the various universities in terms of language preference, because different languages of instruction occur across the university spectrum. While English is widely spoken throughout Switzerland, the majority of undergraduate programmes are taught in German, French, or Italian. The student will have to show command of the language of instruction for admission.

To enter a university, students must meet the qualification entry requirements, usually Matura or its equivalent. Otherwise they may be required to sit an entrance examination prior to acceptance. As the universities are independent, applications are made directly to the university or institute of technology.

### **Information Specific to International Students**

International students from outside the EU/EFTA must contact the Swiss embassy or consulate in their own country to first check if they require a student visa, and apply for a visa prior to entering Switzerland. Depending on the canton of study, this visa process can take two to three months; therefore, it is important for international students to consult their chosen educational institution in Switzerland as well. Further, within 14 days of entering Switzerland, EU/EFTA students must register with the local authority (*Einwohnerkontrolle*, Residents' Registration Office) at their place of residence and apply for a residence permit. Often universities provide support for international students with visa and study permit registration.

Anyone who lives in Switzerland for three months, including international students, must have basic health insurance coverage. Students who have international mutual coverage may be exempt from taking out the compulsory Swiss health insurance. International students may work while studying; however, there is usually a maximum of 15–20 hours a week allowed. Course duration will not be extended on the basis of gainful employment commitments.

### **More Information**

[www.ch.ch](http://www.ch.ch) – The Swiss government portal

[www.swissworld.org](http://www.swissworld.org) – Your Gateway to Switzerland: published by the Department of Foreign Affairs

[www.admin.ch](http://www.admin.ch) – The Federal Authorities: links to all federal government departments

[www.bfs.admin.ch](http://www.bfs.admin.ch) – Swiss Federal Statistical Office

[www.educa.ch](http://www.educa.ch) – The Swiss Education Server: information on the education system at all levels

[www.bbt.admin.ch](http://www.bbt.admin.ch) – Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET)

[www.swissuniversity.ch](http://www.swissuniversity.ch) – Information on the higher education courses available in Switzerland

[www.crus.ch/information-programme/study-in-switzerland.html?L=2](http://www.crus.ch/information-programme/study-in-switzerland.html?L=2) – CRUS page with list of documents required for registration for a permit for EU/EFTA students

<http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep/nameri/vusa/wasemb/scitec/study/prinf.html> – Living in Switzerland page on Federal Department of Foreign Affairs site

[www.justlanded.com](http://www.justlanded.com) – Just Landed – Living Abroad website: Useful information on Switzerland  
[www.myswitzerland.com](http://www.myswitzerland.com) – Swiss National Tourist Office  
[www.switzerlandisyours.com](http://www.switzerlandisyours.com) – Information on living in Switzerland

## **The Netherlands (Nederland/Holland)**

### **Five Quick Points About the Netherlands**

- Liberal, open-minded society with many cultures represented in the population
- High-quality education system, with courses and programmes recognised around the world
- Student-centred, interactive focus – with teachers and professors known for being very accessible
- Large number of courses and programmes taught in English
- International classrooms

### **Location and Geography**

This small, low-lying country in the northwest of Europe is bordered by Germany, Belgium, and the North Sea. With a total area of 42,437 square kilometres, the Netherlands is comprised mostly of coastal lowland and reclaimed land, with some hills in the southeast. Much of the land is below sea level and is traversed by rivers and canals. The capital is Amsterdam, but the government sits in The Hague (Den Haag).



### **Climate**

The climate is temperate marine with cool, humid summers and mild, windy winters.

### **History and Population**

Historical accounts of the Netherlands date from the 1st century BC when the Romans conquered Germanic and Celtic tribes. In 1848 the Netherlands became a parliamentary democracy, with a constitutional monarch. In the latter 19th century a period of economic expansion occurred. During World War II, however, the Netherlands suffered heavy destruction of infrastructure and its economy.

The Netherlands was among the founding members of NATO (the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation) as well as of the European Coal and Steel Community, which gradually evolved to become the European Union.

Currently, the population is just under 17 million. The median age is just over 40. The Netherlands is a very densely populated country. Approximately 22% of the land is used for agriculture and 82% of the people live in urban areas. The official and most-used language is Dutch.

### **Society and Culture**

The Dutch are a culturally liberal and tolerant people. Throughout history, Holland has produced many world-renowned artists and architects. In the Dutch Golden Age (roughly 17th century), Dutch trade,

art, and science were among the most acclaimed in the world. The Dutch are known for their professionalism, no-nonsense attitude, perfectionism, and the way they separate their business and private lives. They are modern and progressive yet preserve their standards and values. They love the arts and cultural activities. Traditional cuisine in Holland is simple and straightforward.

## **Economy**

The Netherlands was a founding member of the European Union (EU), the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The modern Dutch economy is noted for being open, generally prosperous, heavily dependent upon foreign trade, an important European transportation hub, and having a highly mechanised agricultural industry. The port of Rotterdam is the largest and most modern port in the world.

The Netherlands generally has stable industrial relations, moderate unemployment and inflation, and a sizeable current account surplus. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

The Netherlands has two constitutions: one for Europe and a federal constitution that applies to the whole of the Netherlands. There is no traditional separation of powers in the Dutch system of government. The Queen and cabinet of the parliament share legislative power. All legislation has to pass through the parliament; the Raad van State (States General) and the Social-Economic Council advise the government on most socio-economic legislation. Twelve provinces form the administrative layer between the national government and the local municipalities.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

While the cost of living in the Netherlands is among the lowest in Europe, actual living costs depend on lifestyle and on the city/town of residence. As in most countries, the big cities are more expensive than rural areas. The average total cost of living per month is estimated to be in the range of €750–€1,000, including accommodation €280–€600, food €240, books/stationery €70 and other €270. Bicycles are an extremely popular and cheap form of transport in the Netherlands. Students may be able to obtain discounts on some purchases if they have an international student card.

Costs will also vary according to the type of accommodation, transport, and each student's financial situation. Types of accommodation available include on-campus; staying with a family or renting/sharing a flat. Higher education tuition fees range from €6,500–€32,000 per year for non-EU international students depending on the course and level of study.

## **Education System**

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science is responsible for education. The Dutch primary and secondary compulsory education system combines a centralised education policy with decentralised administration and management of schools by the municipal authorities and school boards. For post-compulsory vocational education, there are no intermediate levels of management between government and adult/vocational education institutions. Institutions for higher professional education and the universities are fully autonomous.

Higher education is offered at three types of institutions: universities of applied sciences (hogescholen; Hoger Beroeps Onderwijs, HBO); research universities (universiteiten; Wetenschappelijk Onderwijs, WO); IE institutes (international education institutes). HBOs comprise general institutions and institutions specialising in a particular field and offer a more practically oriented professional education. The Netherlands has 40 government-funded universities of applied sciences. The largest enroll 20,000 to 39,000 students. Altogether some 365,000 students are enrolled on professional programmes. nWOs

comprise general universities and universities specialising in specific faculties, e.g., engineering, law, social studies, and agriculture. The Netherlands has 14 (WO) universities. Amsterdam and Utrecht are the largest and Leiden, established in 1575, is the oldest. *The Times Education Supplement* ranks many of them in the top 200 in the world, and the others aren't far off.

The third form of Dutch higher education (which has been offered for more than 50 years) are advanced courses taught in English in what is known as "international education" (IE). There are five large IE institutes and a number of smaller ones which all focus on development-oriented courses. These are based on working in small, intercultural groups and exchanging knowledge.

Teamwork, interactivity, and problem-based learning (emphasising self-study and self-discipline) are important elements of the Dutch education system. Admission and language requirements vary among institutions.

### **Information Specific to International Students**

Though it is a non-English-speaking country, the Netherlands nevertheless offers most of its higher education programmes and courses in English, with an emphasis on an international outlook. Dutch higher education institutions are known for being very high quality and for their student-centred approach.

Prospective international students should always check with the Netherlands embassy or consulate in their own country to ensure they have the most up-to-date information on visa/permit requirements and conditions. As issuing of visa applications can take three to six months, students must ensure they allow sufficient time for processing prior to their proposed date of commencement.

To enter the Netherlands for study purposes, most nationals except those from the EEA and several other specified countries, require a visa. There are different application procedures depending on nationality and length of stay. Students staying longer than three months may need to apply for a provisional residence permit. Students under the age of 18 will need parental/guardian permission. All international students must either produce evidence of multinational health coverage or take out health insurance while studying in the Netherlands. Cost of health insurance is €40–55 per month.

Regarding work in Holland, the Netherlands Organisation for International Cooperation in Higher Education notes the following:

"If you're a foreign student (non-EU/EEA/Swiss) and you have a valid residence permit with the aim to study, you can work alongside your studies (either full-time seasonal work in June, July and August, or part-time work of no more than ten hours a week). In this case your Dutch employer does need a work permit for you, but this is an easy process as the employer doesn't need to show that there are Dutch or EU nationals capable of doing the job. As an EU/EEA/Swiss student you are free to work as many hours as you like alongside your studies. Your employer doesn't need to have a work permit for you."

### **More Information**

[www.studyinholland.nl](http://www.studyinholland.nl): (NUFFIC's website) general information about studying in Holland

[www.government.nl](http://www.government.nl) – Official site of the Netherlands Government

[www.dutchgovernment.com](http://www.dutchgovernment.com) – Unofficial site for information on the Netherlands system of government

[www.postbus51.nl](http://www.postbus51.nl) – Information on different areas of government including education and health

[www.minocw.nl](http://www.minocw.nl) – Ministry of Education, Culture and Science site

[www.cpb.nl](http://www.cpb.nl) – Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis: information on the economy

[www.eubusiness.com/Netherlands](http://www.eubusiness.com/Netherlands) – Information on the Netherlands economy

[www.iisg.nl](http://www.iisg.nl) – International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam)

[www.internationalstudy.nl](http://www.internationalstudy.nl) – Information for international students

[www.studychoice123.nl](http://www.studychoice123.nl) – Compares all higher education courses taught in English in the Netherlands

[www.studyinthe125.nl](http://www.studyinthe125.nl) – Compares all higher education courses taught in English in the Netherlands  
[www.esn.org](http://www.esn.org) – Erasmus Student Network: student support organisation  
[www.studentsupport.nl/aegee](http://www.studentsupport.nl/aegee) – Association des Etats Généraux des Etudiants de l'Europe (AEGEE)  
[www.ind.nl](http://www.ind.nl) – IND organisation website for entry into the Netherlands  
[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) – European Union: information on studying abroad by EU nationals in EU countries  
[www.holland.com](http://www.holland.com) – Netherlands Board of Tourism  
[www.movetothenerlands.com](http://www.movetothenerlands.com) – Information on the Netherlands, including living and studying

## France

Note: This overview refers to Metropolitan France, and does not include Overseas France (La France d'outre-mer: Martinique, Guadelupe, Réunion, French Guiana, French Polynesia, etc).

### Five Quick Points About France

- Very popular study destination and welcoming to international students in admissions policies
- Incredible diversity of higher education institutions as well as programmes – something for everyone
- High-quality, well-recognised degrees
- Amazingly rich, old, and vibrant culture – a main reason France is the world's #1 tourist destination
- Many French schools have added international elements to their courses, allowing students to experience other European cultures

### Location and Geography

Metropolitan France is the largest nation in Western Europe, with a total area of 674,843 square kilometres. It is surrounded by Belgium and Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and by water bodies the Bay of Biscay, the English Channel, and the Mediterranean.

France is a land of flat plains or gently rolling hills in the north and west, forests and mountainous areas in the Pyrénées (south), Alps (east), and lower Vosges mountains (north east). The capital city is Paris.

### Climate

Mainland France has cool winters and mild summers, with the occasional Mistral wind. The Mediterranean coast has mild winters and hot summers.



### History and Population

In 2,500 BC, the Celts settled in Gaul (France) and dominated until absorbed by the Roman Empire after 125 BC. In the Middle Ages, the Hundred Years War from 1337 to 1453 was fought over the throne left by the Capetian line of kings. By the 17th century, France was the dominant power in Europe under Louis XIV. The 18th and 19th centuries saw the French Revolution and Napoleonic Empire, the Franco-Prussian War, and beginning of the Third Republic. In the 20th century, France was occupied in both World Wars, which is perhaps a contributing factor in its modern foreign policy, which has seen it as a strong supporter of efforts against genocides (e.g., in the Balkans) and international terrorism. The Fourth Republic was established in 1946, and the Fifth Republic in 1958.

The current population is around 65 million with a median age of 39.4 years. Roughly 4.5 million

immigrants live in France. The largest immigrant groups are the Portuguese, Algerians, Moroccans, Spanish, Italians, and Tunisians. France is one of the few countries in Europe where births exceed deaths. Overall population density is relatively low for Europe. More than three-quarters of the people live in urban areas. French is the official language.

## **Society and Culture**

France and particularly Paris have been key centres in European cultural development, including philosophy, arts, architecture, design, fashion, music, cuisine, wine, and filmmaking. A tradition of independent thinking has helped to fuel significant periods of internal social unrest. French beliefs and values hold that quality of life is of the essence and that work, a home, and education are essential rights.

Food and drink play a major role in French culture, with fresh produce, fine meats, cheese, and wine the mainstays of the family table and a source of pride internationally. Meals are generally slow, often with several courses, and accompanied by conversation.

The urban areas of France contain a diverse multicultural society. Football, tennis, skiing, and equestrianism are popular sports. Boules games are a traditional marketplace social activity in regional villages.

## **Economy**

France's economy is the fifth-largest in the world in nominal terms and is a member of the G8 and G20 groups of leading industrialised countries. It has transitioned from an interventionist to a free market economy, with gradual privatisation of public assets and labour reforms; still, the government continues to play a significant role in some areas of the economy, particularly with regard to infrastructural industries. It has a mixed industrial and agricultural export-oriented economy, and is also prioritising its knowledge economy. France has an international reputation for excellence in the fields of space, transportation, sciences, biotechnology, health, and electronics, which many people attribute to its excellent higher education system.

With 82 million foreign tourists per year, France is the world's most visited country and has the third-largest income from tourism in the world. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

The Fifth French Republic has a semi-presidential style of government with a dual executive: the president and the prime minister. The French parliament consists of the National Assembly (five-year term) and the Senate (nine-year term). The Executive (Council of Ministers) is appointed by the prime minister at the suggestion of the president.

France has three levels of local government: 22 Régions plus four Régions d'outre-mer; 96 Départements plus four Départements d'outre-mer and 36,679 municipalities (Communes).

The French government is highly invested in its higher education system. It subsidises a large share of the cost of higher education for students, allowing as many students as possible to achieve post-secondary education by making it more affordable. In 2007, the government allocated fully 1.3% of France's GDP to higher education.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Students can live reasonably well on around €800 a month (other than Paris, which is more like €1,000): accommodation €215–€450; food €210; books/stationery €50 and other €250, depending

on location and lifestyle. An accommodation grant may be available for international students from the 2nd month (the amount varies according to rent, e.g., for a university room at €215, the grant is around €95). Tuition fees vary considerably, €500–€15,000 per year. Language courses can be expensive, depending on the type of institution and whether it is public or private. The average cost of health insurance is around €40–€50 per month.

## **Education System**

France spends more per capita on education (20% of total budget) than many other Western countries and has traditionally had high academic standards. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) currently ranks the French education system 25th in the world.

The French education system consists of primary education (enseignement primaire), secondary education (enseignement secondaire – colleges and lycées), and higher education (enseignement supérieur). Primary and secondary education is predominantly public although well supported by private institutions. There are more than 400 institutions of higher education and research in four different types: universitaires (universities); grandes écoles; écoles spécialisées, and sections de techniciens supérieurs. Grandes écoles and écoles spécialisées or supérieurs are considered to offer higher quality learning environments than the universitaires.

France's 83 public universitaires offer degree programmes in all disciplines and are spread throughout the country. There are three levels of degree: licence (three years), master's (five years) and doctorate (eight years). Degrees can be academic, technical, or professional. To be considered for admission, international students need to demonstrate they have the credentials that would allow them to undertake higher education in their home countries.

Grandes écoles can be public or private, and they are a unique French invention. They are very selective in their admissions, much more so than the universitaires, and most specialise in business and engineering programmes. Others have reputations for public administration, teaching and research, veterinary medicine, and military sciences, to name a few. The grandes écoles have admission procedures and guidelines for international students as well as for French students.

Prospective international students must contact individual institutions directly for admission information and requirements for studying in France. Most programmes are taught in French, although more higher education institutions are now offering courses in English. Entry requires appropriate French-language proficiency. Some students may need to sit a French language test or undertake a French-language course. Enrolments should be made no later than September.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

France has more international students than any country except for the U.K. and the U.S. The French higher education system is very accessible to international students; admission requirements are in fact the same for international students as for French students.

Prospective international students should check current visa requirements at the French embassy or consulate in their home country. A long-term student visa is required for study exceeding six months, except for EU members and other specified countries. Passports must be valid for the length of stay. Proof of financial capacity is also required. Visas cannot be extended and tourist visas cannot be converted into student visas.

Student visas don't automatically include permission to work, though students from the EEA (plus Switzerland) are allowed to work freely. [Campus France](#) notes the following about international students and work:

“Since July 1, 2007, French law has allowed non-EU international students to work under the following

conditions:



A residency permit (VLS-TS, validated by OFII, or a residency permit in addition to a visa) marked “student” entitles the student to accept paid employment for up to 60% of the legally defined working year (or 964 hours per year) without prior administrative authorization. However, the time that students spend in internships connected with their academic program (and covered by a written internship agreement) are not counted toward the maximum allowable working hours, even if the student is compensated during the internship.”

Within two months of arrival, international students on a visa must apply for a temporary residence permit (carte de séjour) from the local préfecture (services des étrangers or government centre). The permit is valid until completion of the applicant’s study, but must be renewed annually. Students need this permit to obtain housing assistance. Upon arrival, students (under 28) must also register with French National Health Insurance. This may be organised after arrival by the education institution.

## More Information

[www.diplomatie.gouv.fr](http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr) – Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs

[www.education.gouv.fr](http://www.education.gouv.fr) – *Ministère de L’éducation Nationale* : Information on the French education system

[www.vosdroits.service-public.fr](http://www.vosdroits.service-public.fr) – DDTEFP – *La Direction Départementale du Travail, de L’emploi et de la Formation Professionnelle*: Assesses and issues work permits, info on social security

[www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) – the European Union (EU)

[www.eubusiness.com/France/econ](http://www.eubusiness.com/France/econ) – EU Business site: Information on French economy

[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) – International Monetary Fund (IMF) reports on French economy

[www.ceftunisie.org](http://www.ceftunisie.org) – A commercial portal for tertiary/higher education in France and careers

[www.intstudy.com/visafran.htm](http://www.intstudy.com/visafran.htm) – The International Education Site: Information on student visas

[www.francetourism.com](http://www.francetourism.com) – French Tourist Office for Travel and Tourism

[www.justlanded.com](http://www.justlanded.com) – Just Landed – Living Abroad website: Useful information, services and links

[www.discoverfrance.net](http://www.discoverfrance.net) – Commercial site for a range of tourist information on France

[www.france-voyage.com](http://www.france-voyage.com) – Commercial site with easy access to information on every region in France

[Spain](#), [Italy](#), [Malta](#)

## Spain

### Five Quick Points About Spain

- Among top ten study abroad destinations in world
- Fascinating southern European culture and society
- Spanish is a world language, and learning it gives access to Latin America
- Beautiful geographical contrasts – white beaches and snow-covered mountains
- Increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary studies

## Location and Geography

Spain, with a total area of 504,750 square kilometres, occupies 85% of the Iberian Peninsula in the southwest of Europe, bordering the Mediterranean Sea and North Atlantic Ocean. The Pyrenees Mountains (north) border France and Andorra; Portugal lies to the west and (British) Gibraltar is a small peninsula in the South. The capital city is Madrid.

## Climate

Mainland Spain is the second highest country in Europe and experiences three climatic types: continental (temperate clear, hot summers; cold winters), maritime (more moderate cloudy summers; cool partly cloudy winters along the coast) and Mediterranean (hot, dry summers; cool, wet winters). Droughts can be an issue for Spain.



## History and Population

Spain, originally inhabited by Celts, Iberians, and Basques, eventually became part of the Roman Empire. It incurred several invasions until the 16th century, when it amassed tremendous wealth and power and a vast colonial empire with its conquest of Mexico and Peru. But in 1588, Spain lost its naval supremacy due to a defeat by England, and it rapidly declined into a second-rate power. The War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714) led to Spain's loss of Belgium, Luxembourg, Milan, Sardinia, and Naples. Its colonial empire (Americas and Philippines) vanished in wars and revolutions in 18th and 19th centuries.

In both World Wars, Spain was neutral. In the 1920s through to the 1940s, Spain experienced much civil unrest. After the Spanish Civil War, the dictatorship of General Franco lasted from 1939 to 1975. Since Franco's death, democratic elections have been restored. The Catalonia and Basque separatists' conflict has continued for decades, even after home rule in 1979. Foreign terrorists attacked Madrid in 2004.

The population of Spain is around 41 million with a median age of 41 years. Population density is lower than that of most European countries with 77% of the population residing in urban areas. The official language is Castilian Spanish (74%) with three official regional languages: Catalan (17%), (Galician 7%), and Basque (2%).

## Society and Culture

The Spanish are a composite of Mediterranean and Nordic ancestry. Both Catholicism and socialism are strong influences. The family and extended family network play an important role in Spanish society.

Spain historically has strong cultural and religious traditions including festivals, flamenco music, and dance, and public architecture with Moorish features. In each region of Spain, towns, cities, communities and even professions have their own patron saints, whose feasts are important religious and social events. Spain has a leisurely outdoor lifestyle, sunshine, lively towns and cities, and friendly people. Informal social gatherings in bars, cafés, restaurants, and at work are a big part of Spanish life.

## Economy

Since joining the European Union (EU) in 1986, Spain has opened its economy to investment and trade, modernised its industrial base, improved infrastructure, and revised economic legislation to conform to EU guidelines. Main trading partners include France, Germany, Italy, and Great Britain. Spain's

principal exports are machinery, motor vehicles, wine, fruit and other food products, and pharmaceuticals; its tourism industry is among the largest in the world. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

Spain is a constitutional monarchy with a democratic parliamentary form of government. The king is the head of state. The government consists of Executive (president), Legislature (Congress of Deputies), and Senate. There are 47 peninsula provinces; two autonomous cities in North Africa (Ceuta and Melilla) and 17 autonomous communities including the Balearic and Canary Islands, and three small Spanish possessions off the coast of Morocco: Islas Chafarinas, Penon de Alhucemas, and Penon de Velez de la Gomera.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

The cost of living in Spain varies greatly by area, with the cost being much higher in the urban centres (e.g., Madrid, Valencia, and Barcelona) than in the rural Spanish villages and towns. Living costs for a student could range from €850–€1,300 per month for food, accommodation, and other general living expenses. Of course, living costs also vary depending on individual students' lifestyle choices, the type of accommodation, and area in which they live. These costs do not include tuition fees. To obtain costs of tuition, students must contact the actual institution they are planning to attend.

## **Education System**

Spain has an essentially two-tier education system for schooling: compulsory (primary and secondary to 16 years) and post-compulsory (secondary and middle grade vocational). Tertiary and higher education consists of upper-grade vocational training and university.

Both public and private institutions provide higher education. Universities are divided into departamentos, facultades universitarias, escuelas tecnicas superiores, escuelas universitarias, institutos universitarios, and other centres, notably the colegios universitarios. The state-operated universities, private universities, and technical schools are entitled to grant professional university degrees.

The Spanish education system was founded in the Middle Ages. The oldest university, Salamanca, was established in 1218. The Spanish university system offers degree and post-graduate programmes in all fields, including law, sciences, humanities, and medicine. The superior technical schools offer programmes in engineering and architecture.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

International students who are not from EU countries or from countries with bilateral agreements with Spain regarding university access (e.g., China) will need pass a series of aptitude tests – “Pruebas de Aptitud para el Acceso a la Universidad (PAU)” to be able to study at a Spanish university in Spain.

In terms of the application process, international students do not apply directly to a specific Spanish university; rather, they apply to a central applications office called the Spanish National University for Distance Education (Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia, or UNED). This office sends students to the university and studies that best suit the particular student and the system. The decision to send the student to one place or another depends on the average mark between the secondary studies and the PAU exam, and the availability of places at the different public universities.

EU nationals do not require a visa to study in Spain. All other nationalities should apply approximately 90 days prior to date of arrival. Some important visa requirements include evidence of financial capacity, acceptance at an approved institution, and affidavit of parental permission if under 18.

Visas are granted for the duration of study. Student visas are renewable. Once in Spain, students must apply for authorisation to stay for the specified time at the Foreign Office or central Police Station (comisaría) where they will be studying. Work may be allowed if it doesn't interfere with study. For full information on student visa requirements, prospective students should contact the embassy or consulates in their home country.

EU nationals are covered by state health insurance while studying in Spain. Other international students must have private health insurance.

## More Information

[www.sispain.org](http://www.sispain.org) – Si Spain ( *Si Espana* ): Information on extensive range of topics about Spain  
[www.spainexpat.com](http://www.spainexpat.com) – Site for expatriates in Spain: links to government departments (*Ministeros* )  
[www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)  
[http://europa.eu/abc/european\\_countries/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/index_en.htm) – the European Union (EU)  
[www.eubusiness.com](http://www.eubusiness.com) – EU Business site: information on Spanish economy  
[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) – International Monetary Fund: IMF reports on Spanish economy  
[www.economywatch.com](http://www.economywatch.com) – Economy Watch: Information on Spanish economy  
[www.meo.es](http://www.meo.es) – Ministry of Education ( *Ministero de Educación* )  
[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) – European Commission for Education and Training  
[www.rediris.es/rediris/centros/univ.es.phtml](http://www.rediris.es/rediris/centros/univ.es.phtml) – List of universities in Spain with links to institutions  
[www.gostudyspain.es](http://www.gostudyspain.es) – Go Study Spain: Information on student visas, accommodation  
[www.spain-visas.com](http://www.spain-visas.com) – Commercial site offering legal services, information on visa requirements  
[www.tourspain.es](http://www.tourspain.es) – Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Commerce ( *Ministero de Industria, Turismo y Comercio* )  
[www.spain.info](http://www.spain.info) – Official site and portal of the *Ministero de Turismo de España*

## Italy

### Five Quick Points About Italy

- Highly developed, industrialised economy
- One of the most appreciated cultures in the world (and beautiful language)
- Incredible food and wine traditions
- More UNESCO World Heritage sites than any other country
- Sophisticated tourism infrastructure makes studying in Italy very pleasant

### Location and Geography

Italy, with a total area of 301,230 square kilometres, is a long, boot-shaped peninsula extending into the Mediterranean Sea, plus the islands of Sicily and Sardinia. (San Marino and Vatican City are small autonomous states embedded in Italy). France, Switzerland, Austria, and Slovenia adjoin to the north, the Adriatic and Ionian Seas are to the east, and the Tyrrhenian Sea is to the west. Most of Italy is rugged, mountainous terrain with the Alps in the north and the Apennines running the entire length of the peninsula to Sicily. Rome is the capital city.

### Climate



The predominant climate is Mediterranean (cold, wet winters and warm, dry summers). Significant variations occur in the mountainous areas (Alps and Apennines) with long, cold winters and short, cool summers. The south has mild winters and long, hot, dry summers.



## History and Population

Beginning in 753 BC, Rome gradually expanded through conquest and alliances to dominate Italy and then the entire Mediterranean world until 476 AD. Following a period of invasions by German and other tribes, Italy stabilised under Charlemagne during the Middle Ages.

During the Italian Renaissance (15th to 16th centuries) the Italian City States re-emerged as centres of commerce, art, and learning; Italian thought and style influenced all of Europe. However, Italy was fragmented, with destructive conflict and frequent incursions by foreign powers, particularly France, Spain, and Austria. But after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Italy's national identity developed; Italy became a nation state in 1861.

Italy experienced changing alliances in the period covering both World Wars. In 1948, Italy became a republic. Since then Italy has had numerous changes of government and unstable political coalitions.

Italy's population is just over 58 million with a median age of just over 43. Italy has the 5th largest population density in Europe, and around two-thirds of Italians live in urban areas. The official language is Italian. Also spoken are regional dialects and some German, French, and Slovene.

## Society and Culture

The Italian people are great promoters of the art of living and enjoying life or "Ars Vivendi." Family and the extended family/community networks are at the core of Italian society. Deep Roman Catholic roots permeate traditions, many of which revolve around seasonal festivals with prescribed foods and rituals. Food is a highlight in Italy – especially when it comes to carefully prepared food and fresh, local ingredients. Like the French, Italians celebrate the art of eating unhurriedly, with gusto, and with company.

The countryside is varied and beautiful, and the cities are bustling and dynamic. Italy has more UNESCO World Heritage sites than any other country in the world.

Italians (again, like the French) value fashion and appearances, as well as the way people carry themselves. They are world-renowned for their sense of style. At the same time, they are a warm, welcoming people who love to relax and who value the art of conversation.

## Economy

Italy has a diversified industrial economy comprising a developed industrial north and a less-developed agricultural south with high unemployment. High-quality consumer goods are produced by small- and medium-sized enterprises. Export highlights include fashion, automobiles, appliances, and industrial goods. Tourism now contributes more to the economy than agriculture. Italy also has a sizable underground economy (as much as 15% of GDP).

Italy faces some significant challenges to its economy, including the national debt level, high taxation, rigid labour laws, an expensive pension system, and an ageing population. At the same time, the country boasts a high quality of life (8th highest in the world according to *The Economist*).

Italy ranks as the seventh largest economy in the world according to the International Monetary Fund. It is a member of the G8 industrialized nations, the EU, and the OECD. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

Italy is a parliamentary republic. The head of state is the president, but executive power rests with the prime minister and the cabinet. The Italian parliament has two branches: the House of Deputies and the Senate. Local government is divided among 20 regions subdivided into 100 provinces. Five of the regions have greater autonomy to reflect special cultural identity: Aosta, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino-South Tyrol, Sardinia, and Sicily. Italy was a founding member of the European Union (EU).

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Living costs can be high in Italy, especially in big cities like Rome. Italy ranks among the highest taxed countries in the world and among the most expensive EU countries for living costs. Actual costs are difficult to determine as inflation has been increasing steadily for several years. A very rough estimate figure is around €1,000–€1,500 per month for accommodation, food, and other living expenses in a city like Milan, and a bit less in smaller cities. This doesn't include tuition fees. To obtain costs of tuition, students must contact the actual institution they are planning to attend.

## **Education System**

Following a review of the system, control and management of education is being decentralised. Previously, all education was controlled by the Ministry of Education. Greater administrative and educational responsibility and autonomy are being transferred to the institutions themselves. In 2008, further reforms were proposed, mainly for primary school education. International students wishing to study in Italy should keep informed about any further changes to education that may occur.

In 2000, Italy changed to a two-tiered school system: primary for five years, secondary 1st Grade (medie) for three years, and secondary 2nd Grade (scuola superiore) divided into two years (biennio) and three years (triennio) of specialised learning (e.g., classical, scientific, technical and artistic studies). Education is free until the end of primary education. School is compulsory till the age of 16.

More information about each specialisation can be found at:

<http://nuovilicei.indire.it/>

<http://nuovitecnici.indire.it/>

<http://nuoviprofessionali.indire.it/>

After matriculation (Diploma di Maturità), students can enter higher education (universities or polytechnic institutes). There are approximately 89 universities and a range of non-university institutions (e.g., higher schools of design/polytechnics, higher integrated technical education, and training institutions).

## **Immigration and Visas**

International students from EU countries do not require a visa to study in Italy. All other nationalities must apply for a student visa at least three months prior to expected date of arrival. For up-to-date information on student visa requirements, prospective international students should contact the embassy or consulates in their home country. Important visa requirements are evidence of financial capacity, affidavit of parental permission and a responsible person in Italy if under 18, and evidence of acceptance at an approved institution.

Students with visas must apply for a residence permit (permesso di soggiorno) at the local Central Police Station (Questura) within eight working days of arrival. Proof of health insurance coverage is required. Students apply for Italian National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale - SSN) coverage

Students apply for Italian National Health Service (Servizio Sanitario Nazionale, SSN) coverage through the local ASL office (Azienda Sanitaria Locale). Cost of health coverage is around €160 a year.

## More Information

[www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org) – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)  
[http://europa.eu/abc/european\\_countries/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/index_en.htm) – The portal site of the European Union (EU)  
[www.eubusiness.com/Italy/econ](http://www.eubusiness.com/Italy/econ) – EU Business site: Information on Italian economy  
[www.imf.org](http://www.imf.org) – International Monetary Fund: IMF reports on Italian economy  
[www.economywatch.com](http://www.economywatch.com) – Economy Watch website: Information on Italian economy  
[www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it) – *Ministero dell' Istruzione dell' Università e della Ricerca* (Ministry of Public Instruction)  
[www.study-in-italy.it](http://www.study-in-italy.it) – Study in Italy: information for international students  
[www.esteri.it/visti/index\\_eng.asp](http://www.esteri.it/visti/index_eng.asp) – Ministry of Foreign Affairs ( *Ministero degli Affari Esteri* )  
[www.consnewyork.esteri.it](http://www.consnewyork.esteri.it) – Consulate General of Italy in New York: student visa requirements  
[www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/](http://www.esteri.it/MAE/EN/) – Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Information on Italy  
[www.justlanded.com](http://www.justlanded.com) – Just Landed – Living Abroad website: Useful information, services, and links  
[www.italianculture.net](http://www.italianculture.net) – *Il Portale dell'Italia Culturale* : Cultural activities and regional culture  
[www.lifeinitaly.com](http://www.lifeinitaly.com) – Commercial site with range of information on living in/visiting Italy

## Malta

### Five Quick Points About Malta

- Ideal choice for students who want to combine study with tourism and leisure
- Typical Mediterranean climate – sunny and warm
- Beautiful and diverse architecture stemming from historical influences, including medieval, baroque, and renaissance
- Very popular destination for English-language courses
- Relatively inexpensive cost of living

### Location and Geography

Malta is an archipelago with three main islands (Malta, Gozo, and Comino), located in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily. Only the three main islands are inhabited. Its total area is 316 square kilometres. The islands consist of mainly low, rocky, flat dissected plains with many coastal cliffs, numerous bays, and good harbours. Valetta is the capital.

### Climate

Surrounded by water, Malta has a Mediterranean climate with mild, rainy winters and warm, dry summers. Annual rainfall is low, and generally there's lots of sunshine.

### History and Population

Malta sits in a narrow channel between Southern Europe and North Africa, and also provides a demarcation point between Western Europe and the Middle East. Its location has meant that Malta has



played a role in history since 5200BC. Due to its strategic location, Malta has been seized and controlled by many powers over the centuries, most recently the British (1814–1964). After World War II, Britain granted Malta self-rule, and in 1964 Malta gained its independence.

Malta's population is around 405,200 with a median age of 39.5 years. Most people (roughly 94%) live in urban areas. The two official languages are Maltese and English; many Maltese also speak Italian.

## **Society and Culture**

A rich pattern of traditions, beliefs, and practices run through Maltese society and culture. The culture has evolved over time from adapting and assimilating diverse influences including Semitic, Latin European, French, and the British colonial legacy. The Latin European heritage predominates due to its ongoing influence over eight centuries and the fact that Malta shares the religious beliefs, traditions, and ceremonies of its Sicilian and Italian neighbours.

The arts have always played a significant role in Maltese culture. Cultural events occur frequently. Theatre and music are extremely popular. Maltese food is traditionally Mediterranean, using fresh, seasonal, and locally available produce and seafood. Today, an eclectic mix of dishes drawn from other cuisines, especially those of Sicily and Southern Italy, infuses traditional Maltese cuisine.

## **Economy**

Since the mid-1980s, the island has transformed itself into a freight transshipment point, a financial centre, and a tourist destination. With only sparse areas of fertile land, economic benefits from agriculture are limited. Tourism (service sector) provides the major financial boost to the economy. The internationally oriented banking sector has expanded rapidly in recent years. Malta is a full member of the EU. The currency is the Euro.

## **Government**

The Maltese have adapted the British system of administration, education, and legislation. Malta became a constitutional republic in 1974 and a member state of the European Union (EU) in 2004. The prime minister, who is the majority leader in the unicameral House of Representatives (Kamra tar-Rappre-entanti), heads the Maltese parliament. The central government controls most areas of government. There are, however, local councils (65) responsible for general upkeep of localities and administrative duties for the central government.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

The cost of living in Malta is considerably lower than in many other European countries. The average cost of living per month is around €940 including accommodation €320, food €280, books/stationery €70, and other €270 (transport, entertainment, laundry, telephone). Naturally, the cost per individual will vary according to the type of accommodation and the student's own personal budget. A range of accommodation ranging from staying with a family to renting/sharing a flat exists for international students.

## **Education System**

There are three levels of education: primary, secondary, and tertiary (including higher and vocational training). The education system is based on the British system. In primary and secondary, students can go to state, private/religious schools, or international schools. More than half of Maltese students progress to higher education.

There is one public university, Malta University (MU), which was established some 400 years ago. It is recognised internationally, and has 11 faculties of learning. MU was also the initial key provider of vocational training. Currently there are over 800 international students at the university. As nearly all courses are taught in English, evidence of English-language proficiency may be required. MU is located in Valletta.

The private sector is made up of providers offering distance and lecture-based business programmes, IT programmes, and tourism-oriented programmes. These providers forge close relationships with Malta's top companies and organisations which in turn recruit graduates who have received highly specialised training.

### **Information Specific to International Students**

Studying in Malta can be a wonderful combination of education and tourism, given Malta's long history, convergence of different cultures and traditions, love of the arts, mild climatic conditions, central Mediterranean location, and generally less expensive living costs.

University course tuition fees range from €7,500–€24,000 per year depending on the level and type of course. Students should contact the university for accurate up-to-date information on fees. Further education (vocational training) fees are generally lower than higher education fees. MCAST fees for vocational training depend on the course level. Generally fees range from €4,000–€6,000 per year.

Prospective international students should check with the nearest Maltese embassy or consulate to determine if they need to obtain a visa to enter Malta. After entry and with proof of acceptance into a recognised institution/course of study plus other documents, students must apply for a uniform residence permit. EU regulations apply to students from EU countries wishing to study in Malta.

International students from non-EU countries must take out health coverage. Under Maltese law, these students must also undergo medical health tests within 15 days of arrival in Malta. Only when the relevant authority issues a medical health clearance certificate will acceptance of enrolment be confirmed. Students should also check carefully as to whether they need to meet any conditions required for working in Malta while they study.

### **More Information**

[www.nso.gov.mt](http://www.nso.gov.mt) – National Statistics Office of Malta

[www.gov.mt](http://www.gov.mt) – Government of Malta

[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu) – Portal site of the European Union (EU)

[www.education.gov.mt](http://www.education.gov.mt) – Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport: Information on Maltese education system structure, Malta Qualifications Council, student services, English as a Foreign Language

[www.nche.gov.mt](http://www.nche.gov.mt) – National Commission for Higher Education: Further/higher education institutions

[www.um.edu.mt](http://www.um.edu.mt) – University of Malta

[www.mcast.edu.mt](http://www.mcast.edu.mt) – Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST)

[www.aboutmalta.com](http://www.aboutmalta.com) – Online guide to Malta: Information on arts, education, folklore, business and finance

[www.visitmalta.com](http://www.visitmalta.com) – Official Malta Tourism website

[www.malta.com](http://www.malta.com) – Essential Guide to Malta: Information including accommodation and events calendar

[www.maltaculture.com](http://www.maltaculture.com) – Malta Council for Culture and the Arts

## Australia

### Five Quick Points About Australia

- Incredibly beautiful country with a wide range of scenic and leisure opportunities
- Internationally acclaimed education options for international students, including many English-language options
- Excellent pathway and articulation between programmes such as diploma to degree
- Competitive in terms of cost of living and study
- Multicultural, friendly society, with over 400,000 international students coming to study each year

### Location and Geography

Australia is an island continent of approximately 7.7 million square kilometres, making it the sixth-largest country in the world. Located between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean, it is the oldest, lowest (apart from Antarctica), and driest continent. Because of its unique and varied geography, it is an archaeologist's delight, with landforms dating back millions of years. Australia is mostly flat, but has some notable mountains and long beaches. Canberra is the capital.



### Climate

The climate ranges from tropical in the north to temperate in the south. The largest part of Australia is desert or semi-arid. Overall, Australian cities enjoy a mild climate, with maximum temperatures falling in a fairly narrow range (e.g., in the summer in Sydney, the temperature might range from 16° to 26° Celsius). But the continent is large, and international students should be informed about the individual climates of the regions they are interested in. They should also be aware that the Australian sun can be very strong.

### History and Population

Aboriginal peoples settled Australia about 60,000 years ago – there were many distinct languages and dialects, and customs varied greatly from region to region. British settlement began in 1788, and for a time Australia was actually used as a penal colony (the first fleet of convicts arrived January 26, 1788, and the country still marks this occasion on that date with a holiday called Australia Day). The penal era ended in 1868. The settlement developed into six self-governing colonies which federated in 1901 to form Australia, a nation founded on ideals of egalitarianism, human rights, harmony, and democracy. Since the 1950s, large numbers of displaced people have immigrated to Australia, and this has had a profound effect on its society and culture.

The population is more than 21 million, and is highly urbanised. Just over 60% of Australians live in the main cities and almost 80% within 100 kilometres of a major city. Nearly one in four Australians were born overseas. Australia is predominantly a Christian country, with English the official language. It is a member of the British Commonwealth.

### Society and Culture

Australian society is safe, friendly, sophisticated, and harmonious. Many ethnic groups are represented in Australia, making it one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. The country's proximity to the Asia-Pacific region also influences its culture, economy, and lifestyle. The government of Australia describes the values underpinning the Australian way of life as:

- Respect for equal worth, dignity and freedom of the individual
- Freedom of speech and association, religion, and a secular government
- Support for parliamentary democracy and the rule of law
- Equality under the law
- Equality of men and women
- Equality of opportunity
- Peacefulness
- A spirit of egalitarianism that embraces tolerance, mutual respect, and compassion for those in need.

There are many ways to take part in Australian culture, from enjoying the vibrant dining out scene to barbequing on a beach, and from taking in a world-class theatre event to throwing on a backpack and doing a scenic hike. Surfing and other water activities are also highlights of Australia. It's been said that Australia is an easy place to be a tourist even on a limited budget.

## **Economy**

Australia has a stable, advanced economy, and is a member of the G20 group of nations. In 2009, it was the 13th largest economy in the world by nominal GDP. As with other advanced economies, the service sector dominates, which represents 68% of GDP. Natural resources are also important: the agricultural and

mining sectors account for more than half of the nation's exports. The currency is the Australian Dollar.

## **Government**

Australia is divided politically into six states and two territories, and is a stable, liberal parliamentary democracy (similar to the U.S. and U.K.), with three levels of government: federal, state, and local. Federal and state governments administer the laws that apply to education.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Living conditions in Australia are generally quite good. Australia consistently ranks in the top five or ten in the world when it comes to quality of life indexes (e.g., *The Economist's*) or human development indexes (e.g., The United Nations'). Housing and accommodation is of good quality, public transport is available, food and water are high quality, and many public amenities are accessible. Students can experience a wide range of leisure and sporting activities, and can expect low crime rates and a safe environment.

Tuition fees range from \$A5,500 to \$30,000 per year. The average fee is approximately \$9,000 per year. Health coverage is \$380 per year. Accommodation costs \$70–400 per week. Other costs are variable but similar to the U.S., Canada, and the U.K.

## **Education System**

Education in Australia is the duty of the state governments. Education is divided into three tiers: primary, secondary, and post-secondary/tertiary. Up to the age of around 15 or 16, education is compulsory; this age is determined by each state. The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), a unified system of national qualifications of schools, vocational training and education, regulates post-compulsory

education and the higher education sector.

Primary school and secondary school take up to 12 years, with years 1–6/7 for primary schooling and years 7/8–12 for secondary. While school education is compulsory up to age 15 or 16 (year 9 or 10), most students continue and finish in year 12 so they can study for the government-endorsed Senior Secondary Certificate of Education. This certificate is recognised for entry into all Australian universities, vocational education and training institutions, and many international universities.

Post-secondary education comprises two sectors: vocational/technical education and higher education. Australia's vocational education and training (VET) sector must meet the nationally agreed standards of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). In 2007, nearly 108,000 international students were enrolled in VET courses in Australia.

Higher education programmes lead to the following qualifications:

- Certificates, diplomas, advanced diplomas and associate degrees, which take one to two years to complete.
- Bachelor's degrees generally take three or four years to complete; they are generally the first university degree students undertake.
- Master's degrees are undertaken after the completion of at least one bachelor's degree, and often deal with a subject at a more advanced level.
- Doctoral degrees are undertaken after an honours bachelor's or a master's degree, and require a significant original research project resulting in a thesis or dissertation.

There are 39 Australian universities, and many other recognised higher education institutions, located in capital cities and many regional centres. Australian courses are of very high quality and recognised worldwide by employers and other institutions.

## **Immigration and Visas**

Australia is a world leader in the provision of education to international students. More than 400,000 students from around 200 countries receive an Australian education each year. The government notes top source countries for international students as being China, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand, and Indonesia.

The Education Services for Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 is the legislation regulating international education. Its National Code of Practice sets standards for educational institutions delivering services to overseas students. The Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) issues a unique CRICOS number. The ESOS Act, the National Code 2007 and CRICOS are national rules and regulations. Each state also has rules and regulations that closely relate to the ESOS Act.

English-language education (ELICOS) centres are accredited by the National ELT Accreditation Scheme (NEAS), and national professional associations include English Australia (EA), ACPET, WAPETIA, and TAFE.

The academic year in Australia comprises two semesters; the first begins in February and the second begins in July. (Some universities and programmes offer other start dates outside of these, but these are the norm.) The deadlines for sending in applications are November 1 for the February intake and April 1 for the July intake. International students should begin the application process at least three months in advance.

For courses lasting less than three months, international students can use a visitor visa or working holiday visa. For longer courses, they must apply for a student visa.

Student visas are only issued for CRICOS-registered institutions or courses. The Migration Act 1958 and associated migration regulations govern the issuing of visas. Visas are divided into seven subclasses based on the study option a student has chosen. They are:

- 570 – Independent ELICOS (English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students)
- 571 – Schools
- 572 – Vocational Education and Training
- 573 – Higher Education
- 574 – Post-graduate Research
- 575 – Non-award
- 576 – AusAID and Defence

Students must be enrolled on a full-time basis to be eligible for a student visa. In addition, they must satisfy the Australian government's general visa conditions. Extra conditions may apply depending on the student's country of origin.

A student visa allows full-time international students in Australia to work part time (maximum of 20 hours a week) during school semester and full time during vacation periods.

PRISMS (the Provider Registration and International Student Management System) produces and tracks all Confirmation of Enrolments (COE) for international students. A CoE is necessary for the issuing of a student visa.

#### **Australian Education Agent Training Course**

Student counsellors wishing to specialise in Australia are advised to take the [Australian Education Agent Training Course](#) (EATC), designed for education agents who counsel and refer students to study in Australia. It is an online course contained within the wider group of PIER courses for international education professionals, and is offered in partnership with Australia Education International (AEI) and the Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC).

The purpose of the course is to:

- Provide education agents with information about the Australian education system and Australia as a study destination, education quality assurance issues, and the Australian visa regulation system
- Keep agents abreast of changes and developments in international education services
- Encourage and support excellence in business service delivery, study, and career pathways and professional development.

It covers four areas:

- Australia, the AQF, and Career Trends (AQF)
- Legislation and Regulations (REG)
- Working Effectively in International Education (WEF)
- Professional Standards and Ethics (ETH)

#### **More Information**

[www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au) – Official Australian Government site for studying in Australia

[www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) – Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)

[www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au) – Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR)

[www.aei.gov.au](http://www.aei.gov.au) – Australian Education International

[www.idp.com](http://www.idp.com) – IDP Education Australia (IDP)

[www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au](http://www.cultureandrecreation.gov.au) – Australian government culture portal

[www.thesource.gov.au](http://www.thesource.gov.au) – Youth forum: Find information on schools

[www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au) – Australian Bureau of Statistics  
[www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) – Australian Bureau of Meteorology  
[www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au) – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade  
[www.alga.asn.au](http://www.alga.asn.au) – Australian Local Government Association  
[www.peo.gov.au](http://www.peo.gov.au) – Parliamentary Education Office  
[www.gov.au](http://www.gov.au) – Australian, State and Territory and Local Governments  
[www.oshcworldcare.com.au](http://www.oshcworldcare.com.au) – Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC)

[www.neasaustralia.org.au](http://www.neasaustralia.org.au) – National ELT Accreditation Scheme Limited (NEAS)  
[www.englishaustralia.com.au](http://www.englishaustralia.com.au) – English Australia  
[www.englishcafe.com.au](http://www.englishcafe.com.au) – Links to more than 150 English-language colleges in Australia

[www.dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au) – National Training Framework (NTF)  
[www.training.com.au](http://www.training.com.au) – Vocational education and training information  
[www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au) – The National Training Information Service (NTIS)

[www.australian-universities.com](http://www.australian-universities.com) – Australian Education Network University and College Guide  
[www.goingtouni.gov.au](http://www.goingtouni.gov.au) – Higher education website  
[www.auqa.edu.au](http://www.auqa.edu.au) – The Australian Universities Quality Agency

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## New Zealand

### Five Quick Points About New Zealand

- British-based education system with world-class, highly respected qualifications
- Innovative teaching methods and technology
- Universities in the Top 500 worldwide rankings (*Times Higher Education Supplement*)
- Personalised learning in a range of class settings and sizes
- Scenic beauty and modern, dynamic culture make New Zealand a great place to study

### Location and Geography

New Zealand is an island country situated about 2,000 km (1250 miles) southeast of Australia, in the southwestern Pacific Ocean. It has two main islands (North Island and South Island) and a number of smaller islands. The South Island is the largest land mass and is divided along its length by the Southern Alps. The North Island is less mountainous but marked by volcanism.

New Zealand, with a total area of 268,680 square kilometres, is comparable in size to Great Britain, Japan, or Colorado. Its closest neighbours to the north are New Caledonia, Fiji, and Tonga. Its capital city is Wellington, the southernmost national capital in the world.

### Climate

New Zealand has four distinct seasons but a mild climate characterises most of the country, along with fairly high regional rainfall but also lots of sunshine. New Zealand is one of the few places in the world where tropical rainforests, sunny coastline, alpine mountains and a



variety of flora and fauna are found within a relatively close distance of each other.

## **History and Population**

New Zealand has a rich heritage stemming from both Maori (aboriginal peoples) and European influences. The Europeans did not discover New Zealand until 1642 and it took another 150 years for settlers to begin to arrive. As European expansion increased, so did Maori resistance, and there were many conflicts in the 19th century (similar to the European/aboriginal friction in North America at around the same time). There have been several aboriginal/government settlements since that time to redress land lost by the Maori during European expansion, and Maori are now celebrated as an integral part of New Zealand culture.

For most of the 20th century, New Zealand was a member of the British Empire. It became an independent Commonwealth realm in 1947 and by this time Britain no longer played a notable role in governing the country. Britain, however, remained highly important to the New Zealand economy, and Britain's joining the EU in 1973 dealt a big blow to New Zealand's export-oriented economy. The economy suffered for some time because of this and other factors, but successive governments restructured it from highly protectionist and regulated to one of the freest in the world, and the country now has many more trading partners.

The population of New Zealand is approximately 4.2 million, with over 80% living in urban areas including Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Hamilton, and Dunedin. There is a great mix of ethnicities in the population, with Asians and Polynesians making up notable minorities in the majority Caucasian population. Christianity is the dominant religion, and English the most common language.

## **Society and Culture**

New Zealand is a harmonious and friendly society, unique in its identity. It is a multicultural fusion of Maori, Polynesian, Asian, and European cultures, and is recognised for a progressive humanitarian and pacifist stance, liberal politics, and world-leading social welfare. Cultural highlights include food and wine (and festivals celebrating these), outdoor activities and scenery, live music, a huge rugby tradition, and traditional Maori arts and crafts.

## **Economy**

New Zealand has a stable, healthy economy characterised by low inflation and steady growth, and a high standard of living. Over 50% of exports are agricultural products. The country is heavily dependent on free trade, and maintains a strong export industry with partners such as the United States, the U.K., Japan, and Australia. The dominant sector is agriculture and services, but manufacturing, construction and raw materials are also important. Tourism is also a major contributor to the economy; New Zealand is recognised around the world as being uniquely beautiful. The currency is the New Zealand Dollar.

## **Government**

New Zealand is divided into 12 regions and 74 districts (15 of these are designated as cities) with a parliamentary system based on the British system, with special land legislation and courts for the Maori. It is a constitutional monarchy: Queen Elizabeth II is officially Queen of New Zealand, and she is represented by a Governor General, who ratifies all laws by the elected New Zealand parliament. New Zealand is a fully independent member of the Commonwealth.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Living conditions in New Zealand are very good due to its thriving economy, low crime rate, and

relative lack of congestion and poverty. International indexes consistently place New Zealand high on their lists of good quality of life; for example, the 2009 *Legatum Institute Prosperity Index* ranked New Zealand #1 in the world for social capital and #10 for overall prosperity.

Housing in New Zealand is often more reasonable than that found in many parts of Asia, Europe, and North America. The government is active in supporting immigration, which includes helping people find good homes and suitable living conditions for their budgets.

The website [New Zealand Educated](#) advises that tertiary students should budget for up to NZ\$20,000 a year in living expenses, and provides the following indicative costs:

- \$100 to \$200 a week for accommodation
- 50 cents to post a letter within New Zealand
- \$4.45 for a Big Mac at McDonald's
- Free local phone calls from a home phone
- \$10 to \$15 to go to the movies
- \$1.60 for a 1-stage bus fare

Consumer goods in New Zealand have lower levels of tax attached to them than is the case in many other OECD countries.

## **Education System**

New Zealand follows the three-tier model of primary, secondary, and tertiary or post-secondary. This generally includes universities, private institutions, colleges, and polytechnics. New Zealand's educational institutions offer quality secondary school education, a well-established network of English-language schools, and internationally respected and recognised tertiary education providers. Post-secondary education is regulated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA).

As well as state-owned education providers, there are approximately 860 private training establishments (PTEs) in New Zealand. They are privately owned and funded, although some of their courses attract government funding and they include quality English-language providers. They offer a wide variety of courses that lead to qualifications in a large range of vocations from scuba diving to hospitality to business. NZQA requires that Private Training Establishments (PTEs) have adequate protection of student fees and tuition.

Polytechnics offer education and training at tertiary levels ranging from introductory studies through to full degree programmes. They deliver technical, vocational, and professional education. There are 23 polytechnics or institutes of technology in New Zealand.

The National Qualifications Framework is a system of national qualifications available through study in schools, polytechnics, colleges of education, etc. The Framework provides nationally recognised, consistent standards and qualifications. The Framework is endorsed and supported by New Zealand's education and training providers, employers and national industry and professional groups. It is compatible with similar systems in the U.K., Europe, South Africa, Australia, and North America.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

Education institutions must meet stringent criteria in accordance with the Immigration Act 1987. All students must have a confirmation of enrolment before applying for a visa. New Zealand's immigration laws prevent an international student from studying at a private provider that has not been registered with the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) or a course that is not NZQA approved.

If the student wishes to undertake a course which is less than three months, they can apply for a visitor's visa. All courses of three months or longer require a student visa. The conditions of student visas vary

but may allow a student to undertake some form of work as stated in their visa conditions.

## **NEW ZEALAND SPECIALIST EDUCATION AGENT PROGRAMME**

Student counsellors wishing to specialise in New Zealand are advised to take the [New Zealand Specialist Education Agent Programme](#), designed for education agents who counsel and refer students to study in New Zealand.

The programme has been developed by Education New Zealand (ENZ), with support from New Zealand agencies and the International Education Industry. It is designed to help education agents effectively promote New Zealand education, and also offers agents the opportunity to become a Specialist Agent.

The Specialist training process provides a credible demonstration of an agent's knowledge about New Zealand education and their commitment to an ethical agent code of conduct. Agents who meet a range of criteria – which includes attending a full day of training, passing a test, and industry reference checks – will become Specialist Agents and will be recognised with a Specialist logo, certificate, and listing within the market-specific sections of the [newzealandeducated](#) website.

The programme is divided into 10 main sections:

1. Living in New Zealand
2. New Zealand Education System – A Summary
3. New Zealand Education System – Schools
4. New Zealand Education System – Tertiary
5. New Zealand Education System – English-language Schools
6. Scholarships
7. Visas and Immigration
8. Making Choices
9. How to Sell a New Zealand Education
10. Agent Code of Conduct/Ethics

## **More Information**

[www.tourismnewzealand.com](http://www.tourismnewzealand.com) – General information

[www.newzealand.com](http://www.newzealand.com) – General information

<http://www.minedu.govt.nz/> – Ministry of Education

<http://educationcounts.govt.nz> – Education Counts

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/providers/index.do> – Education Organisation Details

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/for-providers/index.html> – Quality Assurance Framework

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/index.html> – New Zealand Qualifications Authority

<http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/framework/about.html> – National Qualifications Framework

<http://www.fulbright.org.nz/studynz/uni.html> – The New Zealand University System

<http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/study/> – Immigration New Zealand

<http://www.stats.govt.nz/> – Statistics New Zealand

<http://www.mfat.govt.nz/> – Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

<http://www.lgnz.co.nz/> – Local Governments New Zealand

<http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/AboutParl/Education/> – New Zealand Parliament – Education

<http://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf> – Department of Internal Affairs (Immigration)

<http://history-nz.org/> – History of New Zealand

[www.uni-care.org.nz](http://www.uni-care.org.nz) – Travel and medical insurance

[www.englishnewzealand.co.nz](http://www.englishnewzealand.co.nz) – English-language schools  
<http://www.educationnz.org.nz/> – Education New Zealand  
<http://www.nzapep.co.nz/> – New Zealand Association of Private Education Providers  
<http://www.qualitycommission.co.nz> – Listing of private education providers in New Zealand  
<http://www.newzealandeducated.com/> – Information on living, working, and studying in New Zealand  
<http://www.fourcorners.co.nz/new-zealand/home/> – New Zealand travel and vacation guide  
<http://www.educationpages.co.nz/> – New Zealand's leading online education directory  
<http://www.localeye.info/pages/?catId=2152> – Industry training organisations  
<http://www.metservice.co.nz/> – New Zealand weather today

[China](#), [Japan](#), [Malaysia](#), [Singapore](#)

## China

### Five Quick Points About China

- Fascinating and unique culture
- The Chinese economy is the fastest growing in the world – set to become the largest
- Learning Chinese and understanding China could be very important for some professions
- Chinese government is investing heavily in higher education
- Academic degree programmes available as well as those teaching the Chinese language

### Location and Geography

Located in Eastern Asia, China borders North Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Laos, and Vietnam. China comprises about one-fifteenth of the world's landmass (9,572,900 square kilometres). Its coastline runs along the East China Sea, the Yellow Sea, and the South China Sea between North Korea and Vietnam. The greater part of the country is mountainous. In the southwest is Tibet; the Gobi Desert lies to the north. The capital city is Beijing.



### Climate

China's climate is characterised by dry seasons and wet monsoons, which lead to clear temperature differences in winter and summer. Due to the country's complex topography, the climate changes from region to region.

### History and Population

China has a recorded history of 3,500 years and is noted for being the oldest continuous major world civilisation. Before the 20th century, China was ruled by a succession of dynasties. One of these, the Han dynasty, saw the ascent of the Confucian ideology, and during the Han dynasty intellectual, literary, and artistic endeavors flourished. Two major Chinese inventions, paper and porcelain, came from this period.

The Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty, established in 1644 when the nomadic Manchus invaded China, would be

China's last dynasty – it ended in 1911 and China became a republic. Much of the early 20th century saw civil war in China, with communists battling non-communist forces; invasions and occupations by other powers also occurred. Various communist models ensued, with various degrees of freedom and restraint, and wealth and poverty, for the population as a whole. Toward the end of the century, China began opening itself up to the rest of the world (it was isolationist for much of the century) and enacted reforms which led to massive economic development. China is now considered a major world power with a technology-intensive, industrialised economy.

With a population of over 1.3 billion people, China is the most populated country on earth – one in every five people in the world is a resident of China. Since 1979, there has been a one-child policy in China to try to slow down population growth. The median age is 34. The main language spoken is Mandarin Chinese. Cantonese and a host of other distinct dialects are spoken in different regions throughout the country.

## **Society and Culture**

Officially atheist, China is a country with diverse religious beliefs and freedom to practise them. The main religion is a combination of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism (93%), while “other” (7%) includes Christians, Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Muslims, and Jews. Han Chinese compose 92% of the ethnic make-up of the country, with Huang, Uygur, Hui, Yi, Tibetan, Miao, Manchu, Mongol, Buyi, Korean, and various other nationalities composing the rest.

In terms of culture, it's almost impossible to provide a brief description. Various parts of Chinese culture have been adopted across the world, especially in Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, including literature (including fables and poetry), cuisine (e.g., Sichuan), music (e.g., opera), crafts (e.g., wood carving and furniture-making) and visual arts (e.g., silk painting). Confucianism as well as an emphasis on collective over individual good have resulted in a society that values duty, sincerity, loyalty, honour, and respect for age and seniority.

## **Economy**

China's economy during the past 30 years has changed from a centrally planned system that was largely closed to international trade to a more market-oriented economy that has a rapidly growing private sector and is a major player in the global economy. Its major exports are electrical and other machinery including data processing equipment, apparel, textiles, iron and steel, and optical and medical equipment.

The rate of development has been extreme, with average GDP growth of 8% per year over the last 30 years. Most global economists expect the Chinese economy to become the largest in the world by the end of this century. While urban Chinese have seen significant increases to their standard of living, rural Chinese are still living in poverty. The Chinese currency is the renminbi or the Chinese yuan (sign: ¥).

## **Government**

China has a communist government. The Beijing-based 73 million-member Chinese Communist Party, which is by nature authoritarian, dominates government. However, central leaders increasingly have to attract consensus for new policies from local and regional leaders, non-party members, and the overall population. Party control is tightest in urban areas and less entrenched in rural China. The principal organs of government power are the National People's Congress (NPC), the president (head of state), and the State Council.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Food costs are generally reasonable in China; housing is the major expense. Contacts are important for finding the best place to live, so students should begin talking to people as soon as they get to China for comfortable but reasonably priced living arrangements. In general, western China tends to be cheaper than the eastern port cities of Beijing, Qingdao, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. In Beijing, both furnished and unfurnished properties are available. Furnished houses are very easy to find in the rental market of Beijing.

Most Chinese universities and colleges provide various levels of on-campus accommodation to international students at different costs to suit different budgets. International students can choose their accommodation when they arrive at the school. On-campus accommodation is usually the cheapest alternative. For travel between cities, buses and boats are almost always cheaper than trains and planes.

## **Education System**

The Chinese government has placed priority on developing education. It is revitalising the country through science and education, intensifying the reform of educational system, and implementing nine-year compulsory education. Governments at all levels are increasing their investment in education. China's education system includes pre-school, primary school, secondary school, high school, university and college, as well as graduate school education.

Secondary schooling is for children aged 12–17 and is managed by local governments and various business authorities. State-run secondary schools include junior middle schools and senior middle schools, both with three grades or years. The first three years of secondary school are compulsory and tuition is free. Senior middle school is not compulsory and students must pay minimal tuition fees. Private secondary schools often offer specialised education and have a more vocational bent, but their qualifications are considered to be on the same level as those of state-run middle schools. However, graduates from secondary professional schools are seen to have achieved a higher level in some ways akin to a university education. Students graduating from junior middle schools usually go on to senior middle schools, although some move to vocational high schools or secondary professional schools for 3–5 years of study.

In terms of higher education, universities, colleges, institutes, and vocational colleges offer degree (e.g., bachelor's, master's, and doctoral) programmes as well as non-degree programmes – all are open to foreign students. There are over 2,000 universities and colleges, and students are required to pay tuition. The number of post-secondary students in China has been growing at approximately 30% per year since 1999, and the number of graduates has increased dramatically in the 21st century.

Chinese universities are divided into several categories: some directly under the Ministry of Education, others run by provincial, autonomous regional, and municipal governments, still others run by local centre cities, as well as by communities. Chinese universities and independent colleges are equal institutions of higher learning.

To enter a university or college, students have to take the national entrance examination, which takes place every June. Selection is based on each student's marks in this exam, and due to the number of people sitting the exam, getting into university is highly competitive.

China's full-time institutions of higher learning have two semesters in a school year (three semesters in some colleges). The first semester begins in early-September, while the second in mid-February. One semester usually lasts about 20 weeks.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

In the last several years, the number of international students coming to China has more than doubled, due to China's growing economy and improving higher education system. In March of 2010, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China announced a total of 238,184 international

students were studying in China in 2009. The top five countries with the largest numbers of international students in China are South Korea, Japan, the United States, Vietnam and Indonesia.

The education institution must be accredited to offer courses or internships to international students; it will send the international student a JW201 or JW202 form and an admission letter. The international student will submit these with photocopies of their visa application. Different academic departments have different Chinese language requirements (e.g., engineering and computer sciences generally require lower Chinese-language requirements than do degrees like law).

The student visa is divided into an X visa and an F visa. An X visa is issued to foreigners who come to China for study, advanced studies, or fieldwork for more than six months. An F visa is issued to foreigners who come with the same purpose but for a period of less than six months. An X visa is valid only for 30 days from the date of arrival during which time the international student and their university must seek a temporary residence permit for the duration of their study or internship, to a maximum of 12 months.

International students are not permitted to work on this visa without permission, and should contact their university or employer after they have settled in to see what can be arranged. All foreign students pursuing higher education in China for a period of over six months need to get travel insurance, student health insurance, and emergency insurance. Students can purchase their insurance from their home country or from the university admission office during registration.

## More Information

[www.gov.cn/english/chinatoday.htm](http://www.gov.cn/english/chinatoday.htm) – Chinese government website

[www.edu.cn/20041203/3123354.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/20041203/3123354.shtml) – Education system in China

[www.edu.cn/Internationaledu\\_1499/20090515/t20090515\\_378829.shtml](http://www.edu.cn/Internationaledu_1499/20090515/t20090515_378829.shtml) – How to study in China

[www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/laws\\_e.htm](http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/laws_e.htm) – Chinese Ministry of Education

[www.aacircle.com.au/visas-china.htm](http://www.aacircle.com.au/visas-china.htm) – Immigration and visa information

[www.e-admission.edu.cn/](http://www.e-admission.edu.cn/) – Information regarding accommodation, health insurance, finding schools and programs, how to apply, work, and money matters.

[www.cma.gov.cn/english/](http://www.cma.gov.cn/english/) – Chinese Bureau of Meteorology

[www.china-travel-tour-guide.com/about-china/climate.shtml](http://www.china-travel-tour-guide.com/about-china/climate.shtml) – Climate information

[www.china.org.cn/e-china/history/Ancient.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/e-china/history/Ancient.htm) – History of China

[www.stats.gov.cn/english/](http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/) – National Bureau of Statistics China

[www.chinaconsulatesf.org/eng/qianzhen/zgqz/t48482.htm](http://www.chinaconsulatesf.org/eng/qianzhen/zgqz/t48482.htm) – Information for international students

[www.travelchinaguide.com/embassy/visa/student.htm](http://www.travelchinaguide.com/embassy/visa/student.htm) – Information on visas

[www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/international\\_3.htm](http://www.moe.edu.cn/edoas/website18/en/international_3.htm) – Information on studying in China

## Japan

### Five Quick Points About Japan

- Fascinating blend of very old and very modern cultures and art forms
  - One of world's best-educated and most literate populations
  - Cutting-edge research and technology facilities in many schools
  - Welcoming environment currently for foreign students given government emphasis on increasing international student numbers
  - Stunning environmental as well as cultural attractions
-

## Location and Geography

Japan is situated in northeastern Asia between the North Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Japan. In terms of size (377,835 square kilometres), Japan is nearly equivalent to Germany and Switzerland combined, or slightly smaller than the U.S. state of California. Japan consists of four major islands, surrounded by more than 4,000 smaller islands. The country's topographical features include coastlines with varied scenery, towering, often volcanic mountains, forests, and valleys. The capital city is Tokyo.

## Climate

The combination of Japan's mountainous territory and the length of the archipelago results in a complex climate. Most of the country is located in the northern temperate zone, which yields four distinct seasons. In addition, there are significant climatic differences between Hokkaido in the north, which has short summers and lengthy winters with heavy snowfalls, and the southern islands, such as Okinawa in the south, which enjoy a subtropical climate. Japan's topographical features include coastlines with varied scenery, towering often volcanic mountains, and twisted valleys that invite visitors into the mysterious world of nature.

## History and Population

Japan has been populated for at least 30,000 years. During the last ice age, Japan was connected to mainland Asia by a land bridge, which Stone Age hunters were able to walk across. When the ice age ended about 10,000 BC, Japan became a group of islands.

In 1603, after decades of civil warfare, the Tokugawa shogunate (a military-led, dynastic government) ushered in a long period of relative political stability and isolation from foreign influence. For more than two centuries, this policy enabled Japan to enjoy a flowering of its indigenous culture.

Japan opened its ports with the U.S. in 1854 and began to intensively modernise and industrialise. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Japan became a regional power that was able to defeat the forces of both China and Russia. It later occupied Korea and Formosa (Taiwan). In 1931–32 Japan occupied Manchuria, and in 1937 it launched a full-scale invasion of China. Japan attacked U.S. forces in 1941, triggering America's entry into World War II, and soon occupied much of East and Southeast Asia. After its defeat in World War II, Japan recovered to become an economic power and an ally of the U.S.

Japan's population is over 127 million. Japan is one of the most densely populated regions in the world, and most Japanese reside in urban areas. Japanese is the official language.

## Society and Culture

Shinto and Buddhism are Japan's two major religions. They have been co-existing for several centuries and have even complemented each other to a certain degree. Most Japanese consider themselves Buddhist, Shintoist, or both. Harmony, order, and self-development are three of the most important values that underlie Japanese social interaction. Japan has made major contributions to the art world (including performance arts, literature, and film).

As much as Japanese are proud of their traditional culture, they are also embrace modernity. Japanese fashion, pop music, video games, cartoons and comic books (e.g., manga) are very avant-garde and often lead the world in new trends.



Japanese cuisine is renowned around the world for its freshness (e.g., sushi) and health benefits. The most popular sports are sumo, baseball, and football (soccer).

## **Economy**

In the years following World War II, government-industry cooperation, a strong work ethic, mastery of high technology, and a comparatively small defense allocation (1% of GDP) helped Japan develop a technologically advanced economy.

Today, measured on a purchasing power parity basis, Japan is the third-largest economy in the world after the U.S. and China. Only the U.S. has a higher GNP. It is the Asian leader in banking, retailing, telecommunications, stock exchange, and transportation. Main exports are cars, electronic devices, and computers, and main trading partners include China and the U.S., followed by South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, and Germany. Japan ranked 12th of 178 countries in the *World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index 2008*. The currency is the Yen.

## **Government**

Japan has a parliamentary government with a constitutional monarchy. While the emperor retains his throne as a symbol of national unity, elected politicians hold actual decision-making power.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Japan is a relatively expensive place to study for international students. Living costs (especially in Tokyo) are notorious for being among the world's highest. However, students living outside of central Tokyo who adjust to a Japanese lifestyle and do not depend too heavily on food and products from their home countries (and who don't eat out too much) will find Japan much more affordable. The general cost of living and accommodation varies depending on where students choose to stay.

## **Education System**

Education is taken seriously in Japan, and the education system is in fact credited as a major factor in Japan's recovery after World War II.

All Japanese must attend elementary and lower-secondary (middle school) levels; most choose public schools at these levels. While they aren't compelled to, almost all students progress to the upper-secondary (high school) level, which is voluntary; at this level, private schools become a more popular option (as they do at the post-secondary level as well).

Students can enrol in one of five types of institutions of higher learning: universities (undergraduate courses), graduate schools, junior colleges, special training colleges (post-secondary courses), and colleges of technology.

There are about 765 universities in Japan, including national, public, and private ones. The best/popular national institutions are famously tough to get into. Applying for them entails two exams: a standard exam given by the National Center for University Entrance examinations and the university-specific exam administered by each school. Many students who do not get into the university of their choice wait till the following year to try again with the exams.

Recent years have also seen the ascendance of private educational institutes, many of which now rival national universities in prestige and popularity.

## Information Specific to International Students

In 2008, the Government of Japan announced the “300,000 Foreign Students Plan,” which aims to more than double the number of foreign students in Japan (currently 120,000) by 2020, and to achieve a significant part of that increase in the next five years. Suffice it to say that the current climate in Japan is welcoming to students coming from other countries.

The entry procedures for non-Japanese citizens and the type of activities they can engage in are stipulated in detail by the Immigration-Control and Refugee-Recognition Act. The academic year in Japanese universities begins in April.

Generally, a prospective student first enrolls in a Japanese language institution after arrival in Japan. In many cases, he/she studies Japanese and other related subjects at the language institution for between one and two years and then takes the entrance examination for a university.

There are two types of Japanese language institutions for foreign students who wish to go on to a Japanese university for either undergraduate or post-graduate studies: (1) preparatory Japanese language courses for foreign students offered by private universities and (2) Japanese language institutions certified by the Association for the Promotion of Japanese Language Education.

Foreign students need a student visa in order to study in Japan; they should check with the nearest Japanese embassy or consulate to find out what special arrangements their country has with Japan regarding visas that will affect length of stay and visa eligibility prerequisites. Visa applicants require an education institution as their sponsor in order to obtain a student visa. Student visa holders are not allowed to engage in any paid activities, unless they get the permission of the school and the immigration office. Even then, students may work only a set maximum number of hours per week. Working on a tourist visa is prohibited.

## More Information

[www.intstudy.com/visajapan.htm](http://www.intstudy.com/visajapan.htm) – Information for student visas

[www.mofa.go.jp/j\\_info/visit/visa/index.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/visa/index.html) – Ministry of Foreign Affairs Japan, guide to visas

[www.japan-guide.com/e/e2202.html](http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2202.html) – Guide to living costs in Japan

[www.education-in-japan.info/](http://www.education-in-japan.info/) – Education in Japan for school-age children

[www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/index.html](http://www.immi-moj.go.jp/english/index.html) – Department of Immigration Japan

[www.jnto.go.jp/eng/](http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/) – Japan National Tourism Organization

[www.jasso.go.jp/study\\_j/info\\_e.html](http://www.jasso.go.jp/study_j/info_e.html) – Study in Japan Information Centres

[www.mext.go.jp/english](http://www.mext.go.jp/english) – Japanese education data

[www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html](http://www.jma.go.jp/jma/indexe.html) – Japanese Bureau of Meteorology

## Malaysia

### Five Quick Points About Malaysia

- Known as one of the safest, most tolerant, easiest to manage countries in Asia
- Beautiful, diverse scenery, from forested mountains to white sand beaches
- Surprisingly low cost of living, affordable education, and good quality of life
- Excellent, internationally recognised education system and qualifications
- Multicultural, vibrant environment for international students from more than 150 countries

## Location and Geography

The Federation of Malaysia, in total about the same size (329,750 square kilometres) as the U.S. state of New Mexico, is in Southeast Asia and comprises two regions: Peninsular Malaysia (11 states) and the Island of Borneo (which includes two states, Sabah and Sarawak). The South China Sea separates the two regions. To the north of Peninsular Malaysia is Thailand, and to the south, Singapore. Indonesia surrounds Sabah and Sarawak, and the latter shares borders with Brunei as well. The landscape ranges from coastal plains to hills and mountains, as well as lovely sand beaches. Trees cover nearly three-quarters of the total area. The capital city is Kuala Lumpur.



## Climate

Located near the equator, Malaysia experiences a tropical climate. While it can get very humid (with monsoon seasons) it never gets extremely hot – average temperatures are from 20° to 30°C.

## Population and History

Malaysia's first inhabitants are said to have been immigrant ancestors of the Orang Asli, who arrived 5,000 years ago from China and Tibet. The Malays, who brought with them skills in farming and the use of metals, followed them. The Hindu-Buddhist period began around the first century B.C. and is evident in the temples of the Bujang Valley and the Merbok Estuary in Kedah in the northwest of the peninsula, near the Thai border. This era came to an end when Islam was introduced by Arab and Indian traders in the 13th century. At this time, the Malay-Hindu rulers of the Melaka Sultanate, the Malay kingdom which ruled both sides of the Straits of Malaka for over a hundred years, converted to Islam. This change had a profound effect on Malay society. Malaysia was also influenced by the British colonial presence in the 19th and 20th centuries. Following World War II, Malaysia became an independent member of the British Commonwealth.

At present the Malaysian population is over 28 million people. Its ethnic composition is roughly Malay 53%, Chinese 26%, indigenous 11%, Indian 7%, and others 8%. By constitutional definition, all Malays are Muslim. Despite the overall majority of Malays, non-Malay indigenous groups make up more than half of Sarawak's population and about 66% of Sabah's.

Other than Islam (at 60%, the dominant religion), the other practised religions are Buddhism (19%), Christianity (9%), and Hinduism (6%). The official language is Bahasa Melayu, but various dialects of Chinese, English, Tamil, as well as indigenous languages are also spoken.

## Society and Culture

Malaysia is a cultural mosaic. While many cultures contribute to Malaysia's identity, some have had especially lasting influence on the country: the ancient Malay culture and the cultures of Malaysia's significant trading partners throughout history – the Chinese and the Indians. These three groups are joined by a multitude of indigenous tribes, many of which live in the forests and coastal areas of Borneo. Although each of these cultures has vigorously maintained its traditions and community structures, they have also worked together to create contemporary Malaysia's uniquely diverse heritage. Despite the various ethnicities, there is a common reverence for the family structure, and for polite, harmonious, respectful conduct. And though the Malaysian constitution declares Islam to be a founding guide for Malaysian culture, there is also a great deal of tolerance for other ethnicities and religions.

## **Economy**

The Malaysian economy is known for its relative stability and general growth track. After an economic boom in the 1970s, Malaysia diversified successfully and transitioned from being a mainly raw materials producer to a top exporter of manufactured goods, earning it the designation “newly industrialised country.” It is a significant producer and exporter of palm oil and rubber; crude petroleum and liquefied natural gas; cocoa and pepper; apparel; and timber and wood products. Major markets for Malaysian exports are Singapore, the U.S., Japan, and China. The currency is the Ringgit.

## **Government**

Malaysia practises parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch heading the country. The Federal Constitution underlines the separation of governing powers between the executive, judicial, and legislative authorities. The separation of power occurs both at the federal and state level.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

The cost of living in Malaysia is exceptionally low for a newly industrialised country. Housing/renting, food, and eating out are very reasonable, and taxes are relatively low. The average Malaysian spends around 150 Euros every month on food.

The website [Study Malaysia](#) notes that Kuala Lumpur city was rated the least expensive city in the world in terms of food, electronic goods, clothes, public transport, hotel rates and entertainment for Western visitors, in a recent survey of 71 cities worldwide by the Swiss banking giant UBS.

The living standard in Kuala Lumpur (KL) is in general quite high. Malaysia has a good health care system, good hospitals, good international schools, excellent highways, and modern communication systems.

## **Education System**

Education is a priority for the Malaysian government. The website [Study Malaysia](#) notes that:

“The 9th Malaysian Plan (9MP) from 2006 to 2010 has placed great importance on education, training and lifelong learning. In line with greater focus on human development under 9MP, a total of RM40.3 billion (about 21% of the total budget allocation) has been allocated for the expenditure of education and training development.”

The Education Act 1996 covers pre-tertiary levels of education under the national education system, which comprises pre-school, primary, and secondary education as well as post-secondary education. Primary and secondary education are free to students in Malaysian government schools.

Another six acts regulate the provision of higher education in Malaysia. The Minister of Higher Education controls all tertiary education. There are two types of tertiary education in Malaysia: government-funded and private higher educational institutes.

Most private higher educational institutions teach courses in English. However, while most post-graduate courses at public universities are taught in English, most bachelor's degrees at public universities are taught in Bahasa Malaysia.

The legal regulatory frameworks that support the provision of education in Malaysia are The Private Higher Education Institutions Act 1996, The National Council on Higher Education Institution Act 1996, The Malaysian Qualifications Agency Act 2007, The Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Act 1996, The National Higher Education Fund Corporation Act 1997, The MARA

Institute of Technology (Amendment) Act 2000, and The National Higher Education Fund Corporation (Amendment) Act 2000.

## Information Specific to International Students

To study in Malaysia, international students should apply directly to the institution they would like to attend; student counsellors can help students assess whether this school is licensed and approved by the relevant regulatory bodies of the Malaysian government.

International students coming to Malaysia must obtain a student pass. This is done by applying and being accepted to the institution of choice. It normally takes three to five weeks to obtain the student visa approval. Before purchasing flights, students should check with the Malaysian High Commission/consulate in their home countries about whether they need a visa to enter Malaysia along with the Student Pass approval letter. If they do need one, they should proceed to the nearest local Malaysian diplomatic mission (i.e., Malaysian High Commission Consulate) and show them the approval letter to obtain their single-entry visa. The student approval letter is usually valid for three months from the date of issuance.

International students can work part-time in Malaysia under strict guidelines whereby they can work only during semester breaks for a maximum of 20 hours a week. Only certain workplaces are permitted (for more information, contact Malaysian immigration). All applications to work must be approved through Malaysian Immigration.

## More Information

<http://www.tourism.gov.my/> – Tourism Malaysia

<http://www.malaysia.gov.my/EN/Pages/default.aspx> – Official Malaysian government website

<http://www.studymalaysia.com/education/> – A gateway to study in Malaysia

<http://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/home> – Immigration Department Malaysia

<http://www.utp.edu.my> – International Student Unit Universiti Teknologi PETRONAS

<http://www.internationaleducationmedia.com/Malaysia/aimst.htm> – Asian institute of Medical, Science and Technology Malaysia

<http://www.met.gov.my/> – Malaysian Meteorology Department

## Singapore

### Five Quick Points About Singapore

- Fascinating blend of Eastern and Western cultures
- Great ethnic diversity
- World-class education system
- Amazing dining, shopping, and nightclub scene
- Highly impressive economic and urban planning infrastructure

## Location and Geography

Located at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula, Singapore (officially the Republic of Singapore) consists of the island of Singapore and



the Republic of Singapore) consists of the island of Singapore and some 63 islets within its territorial waters. The main island is about 42 kilometres from west to east and 23 kilometres from north to south. It's a mostly undulating country with low hills.

## Climate

Like most of Southeast Asia, Singapore is generally hot and humid. The temperature almost never drops below 20°C, even at night, and usually climbs to 30°C during the day. Humidity is usually over 75%.



## History and Population

Located at the natural meeting point of sea routes at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, Singapore became an important port in the 14th century as part of the Sri Vijayan empire. It was known as Temasek (“Sea Town”), and trading and military sea craft from China, India, Portugal, and the Middle East visited it regularly.

During the 18th century, the British saw the potential for Singapore to serve as a “halfway house” to nurture the merchant fleet of their growing empire, and as a location to rebut any advances by the Dutch in the region. For these strategic reasons, as well as their growing interest in the spice trade, the British established Singapore as a trading station. Singapore attracted merchants from around the world. By 1824, just five years after the founding of modern Singapore, the population had grown from a mere 150 to 10,000. Before the end of the 19th century, Singapore was unconditionally wealthy and trade exploded between 1873 and 1913.

Singapore fell to the Japanese in World War II, and remained occupied for close to four years. The British returned after the close of war, but self-government was attained in 1959. Singapore was for a brief time part of a larger Malaysia, but in 1965 became a sovereign, democratic, and independent nation.

Singapore now has a population of nearly five million. Totally urban, it is densely populated. The main ethnic groups are the Chinese (77%), Malays (14%), and Indians (8%). English, Malay, Mandarin, and Tamil are the four official languages of Singapore.

## Society and Culture

Singapore is a cosmopolitan society where people live harmoniously and interaction among different races is amicable. The pattern of Singapore stems from the inherent cultural diversity of the island. The immigrants of the past have given the place a mixture of Malay, Chinese, Indian, and European influences, all of which have intermingled. Behind the facade of a modern city, these ethnic groups are still evident. The bulk of Singaporeans think of themselves as Singaporeans, regardless of race or culture.

Known for how well run and regimented it is, Singapore provides an easy, safe, navigable, enjoyable experience for visitors and international students. Nightclubs, restaurants, and boutiques are among the most stylish in Asia, and the food is fantastic – sampling from all over Asia. Despite how urban it is, Singapore surprisingly offers many outdoor activities as well, including mountain biking, rock climbing, and water skiing.

## Economy

Singapore boasts the world’s second busiest port after Rotterdam, minimal unemployment, and a super-

efficient infrastructure. Indications of how advanced and prosperous Singapore is come from the World Bank's Doing Business 2010 Report: Singapore is ranked the easiest economy to do business in as well as the most open and liberal economy in the world. It is ranked the most competitive country in Asia, with the lowest levels of corruption in the economy. Singapore is incredibly international, which it has had to be given limited natural resources; the government welcomes foreign investment and the economic policy is export-oriented. The official currency is the Singapore Dollar.

## **Government**

Singapore is a sovereign republic, with a legal system based on English common law. Its constitution lays down the fundamental principles and basic framework for the three organs of state: the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. The prime minister is appointed by the president. The president, acting on the advice of the prime minister, also appoints other ministers from among the members of parliament.

## **Living Conditions and Cost of Living**

Singapore's safety, low crime rate, and high standards of living are world renowned, offering international students an ideal environment for study. Leisure activities include sports, entertainment, and a range of fascinating sights and sounds to experience. The cost of living is relatively low, and basic items like food and clothing are very reasonably priced. An international student in Singapore spends on average about S\$750 to S\$2,000 a month on living expenses. This [KT5]amount, of course, varies depending on individual lifestyle and course of study.

## **Education System**

Originally based on the British model, the Singaporean education system has evolved to meet the needs of the globalised economy. It has moved from a fairly rigid orientation to incorporate emphases like personalisation of learning, advanced technology, innovation, and creativity.

Its structure is quite complex, with students being "streamed" into different programmes/levels of study as soon as secondary school (four to five years), and then again streamed into different pre-universities[KT6] (two to three years) depending on their exam results and other qualifications. Students who don't want to pursue university studies but do want professional qualifications go to polytechnics (three-year diploma programmes) or the Institute of Technical Education.

The universities in Singapore often feature in lists of the top universities in the world. There are currently three local universities in Singapore. A new fourth local university will open its first intake in 2012. There are also foreign universities in Singapore which have either set up a physical campus (institutes of higher learning) or have joint collaborations/programmes with local universities (local tie-ups).

The Ministry of Education's Higher Education Division (HED) oversees tertiary and technical education in Singapore as well as registration of private schools.

## **Information Specific to International Students**

International students applying for admission to schools in Singapore have to provide documentary proof of having completed the age-based education level. In addition, institutions will normally conduct entrance examinations for international students in the subjects of English, math, science, and their first language.

However, admission procedures depend very much on the particular school an international student wants to study at. Students (and student counsellors) will want to check with the education institution of choice for full details. As a start, the following web link is helpful:

choice for full details. As a start, the following web link is helpful.

<http://www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/htm/mis/faq01.htm>

International students must apply for a student pass which can vary depending upon what is studied and where. The Immigration and Checkpoints Authority website (listed below) contains the correct information about student pass types and requirements, and how to apply.

## More Information

[www.singstat.gov.sg/](http://www.singstat.gov.sg/) – Statistics Singapore

[www.asia-planet.net/singapore/information.htm](http://www.asia-planet.net/singapore/information.htm) – Brief history of Singapore

<http://app.sgdi.gov.sg/index.asp> – Singapore Government online directory of Departments

[www.gov.sg/](http://www.gov.sg/) – Official Singapore Government website

[www.ica.gov.sg/index.aspx](http://www.ica.gov.sg/index.aspx) – Immigration and Checkpoints Authority

[www.moe.gov.sg/education/](http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/) – Singapore Ministry of Education

[www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/international-students/non-dp-ieo/](http://www.moe.gov.sg/education/admissions/international-students/non-dp-ieo/) – Singapore Ministry of Education International Student Admissions

[www.mfa.gov.sg/](http://www.mfa.gov.sg/) – Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs

[www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/htm/stu/stu0107.htm](http://www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/htm/stu/stu0107.htm) – Education system overview

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## Other

Destination countries in Africa (e.g., South Africa) and South America (e.g., Brazil, Argentina) are not featured in this course.

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## 2 Education Systems

### Overview

This lesson examines how education systems work in destination countries, and what the Student Counsellor should look for in order to understand them.

### Focus Questions

- How is the education system structured in destination countries?
- What types of educational institutions are there and how do they fit in the education system?
- What types of qualifications can a student gain from these educational institutions?
- What is the regulatory framework for qualifications, and how does it work?
- Where do international students enter and leave the education system?

The student counsellor needs a general understanding of the education system of each destination country, including:

[The Structure of Education Systems](#)

[Institution Types](#)

[Student Facilities](#)

### The Structure of Education Systems

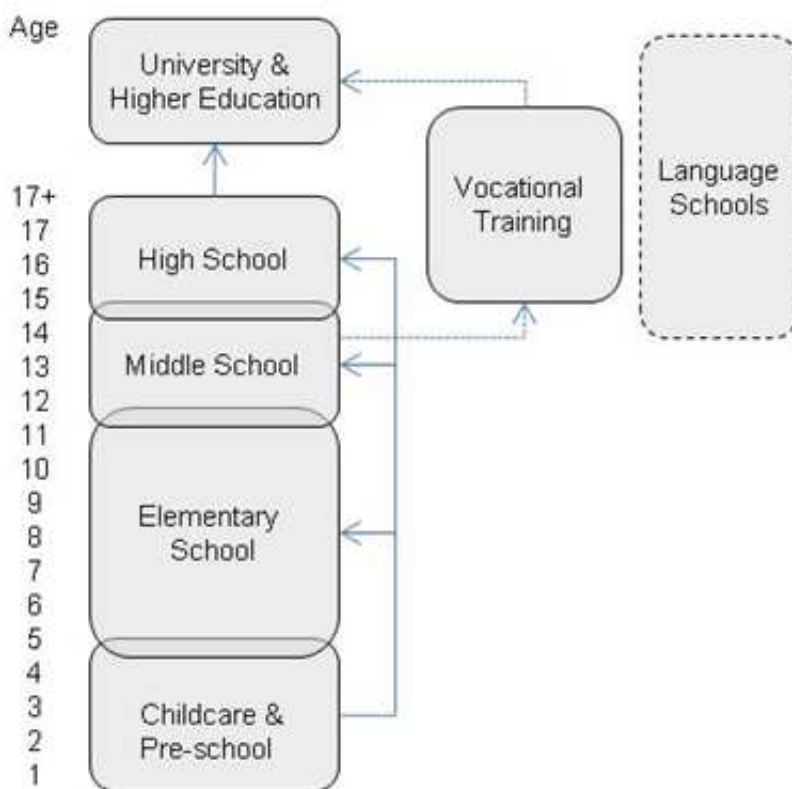
# THE STRUCTURE OF Education Systems

## Education Systems

Each country has its own way of structuring its education system. The student counsellor needs to know these structures, and be able to explain to prospective students how they differ from the home country's system and from each other. This is particularly important when planning learning pathways for students.

Most destination countries will have childcare, primary and secondary school, vocational training, and tertiary education sectors of some form for the local population. How each country structures each of these sectors may differ in terms of the age range of its students, the way the sector is governed and funded, the makeup of its institutions, and the type and quality of qualifications it issues. In addition, there will usually be a second-language sector catering to international students.

The student counsellor should know the equivalence of qualifications between the destination and home countries. This will allow him/her to advise prospective students about whether their existing qualifications are recognised in the destination country, and whether the destination country's qualifications are recognised in the home country. He/she should know what the various sectors are called in the destination country, the age range, articulation points, entry requirements, etc.



### Before School

Before formal schooling most countries have some form of childcare. The availability and cost of childcare may be important to adult international students who want to take their children with them while they are studying. This sector usually has two subsectors:

- Childcare: Age 1–5. Crèche, nursery school, kindergarten, childcare centre.
- Pre-school: Age 3–6. Pre-school, prep school, kindergarten, nursery school.

### Primary and Secondary School

In most destination countries, primary and secondary education is divided into some variation of elementary, middle, and high school. For example, a 6–3–3 system has six years elementary school, three years middle school, and three years of high school. A 7–3–2 system has seven years elementary school, three years middle school, and two years of high school.

- Elementary School: Age 5–12. Elementary school, primary school, grade school.
- Middle School: Age 11–15. Middle school, junior high school.
- High School: Age 14–18. High school, senior high school, secondary school.

## **Vocational and Technical Training**

Age 15+. Vocational college, technical college, polytech, junior college, community college, apprenticeships. After formal schooling most countries provide some form of post-secondary vocational training for school leavers, people entering or re-entering the workforce, and those wishing to upgrade their skills qualifications.

- Vocational and technical education colleges
- Apprenticeships
- Industry training

## **Tertiary Education**

Age 17+. University, polytechnic institute, institute of technology, college of advanced education. Tertiary education includes universities and similar institutions offering advanced education (i.e., degree-level and above).

- Undergraduate: Age 17+.
- Post-graduate: Age 20+.

## **Language Schools**

In the second-language sector, language schools specialise in teaching the national language of the country to international students.

## **Other**

Specialty colleges (e.g., religious colleges, sports institutes) may offer specialised programmes for international students. Distance and online learning programmes may be available.

## **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What is the structure of the education system?

What education is available to international students?

What is the relative status, cost, recognition, etc. of education?

## **Public and Private Education**

The student counsellor should be able to advise prospective students about the differences between public and private education in the destination country. Public education is run by government primarily for the local population, but may offer fee-paying places to international students. Private education may mirror public education (e.g., religious or parochial schools), or may provide education in niche markets (e.g., language and specialty schools). Private education providers may be large or small organisations, non-profit or fully commercial.

The relative quality, cost, and accessibility of public and private education will vary among destination countries. In some countries (and sectors), private education has higher status than public education; in other countries/sectors the reverse is true. The student counsellor should identify the relative standing of public and private education in the destination country, and know how each is regulated and monitored by government or regulatory agencies.

## **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What public education is available to international students?

What private education is available to them?

What private education is available to them.

What is the relative status, cost, recognition, etc. of public and private education?

## Regulation and Accreditation

The student counsellor should be aware of how the education system in the destination country is governed, and how this relates to its structure. Each sector in the education system may be regulated by different authorities, and the student counsellor will need to know these authorities and their requirements with regard to enrolling international students. In addition, he/she will need to be familiar with how the institutions in each sector are accredited and monitored for quality.

Regulation systems and requirements are discussed in [A3 Regulatory Systems](#) and [A4 Legal Requirements](#).

**Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

How is the education system governed?

What accreditation systems are there?

How effective are they?

## Activity:

### Exercise A2.1a

Question	Answer
Knowledge of the education system is important when	<input type="radio"/> Planning learning pathways
	<input type="radio"/> Arranging accommodation
The student counsellor should know the equivalence of	<input type="radio"/> Qualifications
	<input type="radio"/> Government funding
Primary and secondary education occurs in the	<input type="radio"/> Pre-school sector
	<input type="radio"/> School sector
Vocational and technical training usually occurs	<input type="radio"/> After formal schooling
	<input type="radio"/> After university
Undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are offered by	<input type="radio"/> After formal schooling
	<input type="radio"/> After university
Language Schools specialise in teaching the national language of the	<input type="radio"/> Home country
	<input type="radio"/> Destination country

Choose answer

## Institution Types

The types of institutions within each sector of a destination country's education system are likely to be shaped by the structure of the system and have characteristics unique to the country. While their names may vary, institution types can be categorised functionally according to their role in the education system. The student counsellor should be able to tell prospective students what the various institutions are called in the destination country, the age range, articulation points, entry requirements, class sizes, school hours, etc.

## Before School

## **Childcare**

(Age 1–5. Crèche, nursery school, kindergarten, childcare centre.) Childcare increasingly involves a structured play and learning environment in which children's mental and physical growth is facilitated through a planned range of developmental activities. Childcare organisations are regulated differently in different countries. The availability and cost of childcare may be important to adult international students who want to take their children with them while they are studying.

## **Pre-school**

(Age 3–6. Pre-school, prep school, kindergarten, nursery school.) Pre-school typically prepares children for elementary school. Pre-school organisations are regulated differently in different countries. The availability and cost of pre-school may be important to adult international students whose children accompany them to a study destination.

## **School**

### **Elementary School**

(Age 5–12. Elementary school, primary school, grade school.) The first six or seven years of formal education in most countries. Countries which accept international students in elementary schools usually have strict conditions regarding their guardianship. Adult international students may wish to enrol accompanying children in an elementary school.

### **Middle School**

(Age 11–15. Middle school, junior high school.) Usually the next three years of formal education and the first two or three years of secondary schooling. After finishing middle school, students may continue on to senior high school, quit school and begin working, or undertake an apprenticeship or vocational education. Countries usually have strict conditions regarding guardianship of international students enrolled in middle schools. Adult international students may wish to enrol their children in middle school.

### **High School**

(Age 14–18. High school, senior high school, secondary school.) Usually the final two or three years of secondary education. After finishing high school, students may continue on to college or university, begin working, or undertake an apprenticeship or vocational education. There are usually strict conditions regarding the guardianship of international students in high schools. Parents may wish to enrol their children in a foreign high school because of superior education in the destination country or shortcomings in the home country, or as a pathway to higher education in the destination country. Adult international students may wish to enrol their children in high school.

## **Post-secondary**

### **Vocational and Technical Training**

(Age 15+. Vocational college, technical college, polytech, junior college, community college, apprenticeships). This sector encompasses a broad range of training programmes from basic job skills through to semi-professional certification. Courses available to international students vary widely in terms of content, length, delivery, and cost. Qualifications may include different forms of proficiency statements, certificates, and diplomas. Training organisations are regulated differently in different

countries. Generally, countries with a strong regulatory framework with a clear set of quality standards (e.g., ISO, AQTF) will have better quality programmes. However, they may be more expensive and have more complex entry requirements.

International students enrol in vocational and technical training for a variety of reasons. For some students, experiencing the society of the destination country will be a more important motivation than the certification gained from a course. For others, the skills and qualifications may be crucial for their career development, or for articulation into university study.

## **University**

(Age 17+.) University, polytechnic institute, institute of technology, college of advanced education.) There is considerable variation in universities and the range and content of programmes they offer. Universities may be large or small, metropolitan or regional, teaching- or research-oriented, and public or private. They are usually organised into faculties and schools based on teaching and research disciplines. The academic year may be divided into two or three semesters, and starts at different times in different countries.

University programmes are divided into undergraduate and post-graduate study. Courses can vary considerably in form, entry requirements, duration, and method of assessment.

### **Undergraduate**

(Age 17+.) University undergraduate programs are the first stage of tertiary education and the basis for entry to a profession. The basic university qualification is the bachelor's degree, which may be of three or four years' duration. In some education systems, an extra "honours" year can be added to the basic bachelor's degree. Some universities also offer semi-professional qualifications (e.g., certificate, diploma) similar to the vocational training sector.

### **Post-graduate**

(Age 20+.) Post-graduate programmes may include: graduate certificate (six months), graduate diploma (12 months), master's degree (coursework or research, one to two years), doctoral degree (i.e., Doctor of Philosophy or PhD, usually three years). Generally (but not always), graduate certificates, diplomas, and many coursework-oriented master's degrees are considered professional qualifications. Research master's and doctoral degrees are the normal progression for an academic career (although it is possible in some universities to articulate directly from a bachelor's degree with honours to a PhD).

## **Language Schools**

Language schools are dedicated colleges or centres which focus on teaching the national language of a country to international students. For example, English is taught in the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Malta, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand; meanwhile, European and Asian languages are taught in their respective countries. Generally, courses may be from one to 52 weeks. Depending on the length and type of a course, a language student may need a visitor visa, a student visa, or a working holiday visa.

Students can enrol for stand-alone courses, or as the first step in a pathway leading to courses in the other sectors. For example, a student may need to improve their language proficiency before being accepted into a vocational or university course.

Language schools come in all shapes and sizes: metropolitan or regional, large or small, private- or government-operated, and independent or attached to another learning institute. Cost and quality can

vary considerably.

In addition to general language proficiency courses, language schools may offer specialised courses for academic purposes, secondary school preparation, exam preparation, or more specific purposes such as business or other sector. They may also offer short courses (e.g., summer intensive courses, study tours, or intensive specialised courses).

The student counsellor needs to understand the regulatory and accreditation framework for language schools in the destination country, and be able to explain to prospective students its effect on cost and quality of courses. In addition, he/she should be able to take into account differing student motivations (e.g., life experience or career development) when recommending institutions.

## Other

### Specialty Colleges

Specialty colleges are institutions which provide specialised programmes (e.g., religious colleges or sports institutes). They are not usually part of the local formal secular education system; for example, bible colleges and golf academies are forms of specialty college. They may come in many forms and sizes, and may offer a range of programmes. Cost and quality can vary considerably.

### Foundation Programmes

Foundation programmes (also foundation years or university preparation courses) are designed to bring students up to requirements for entry into a post-secondary institution. They are offered by a diverse range of institutions. When planning learning pathways, the student counsellor should check that foundation programmes are recognised by the institutions which prospective students wish to enter.

### Distance and Online Learning

Distance or online courses may have identical content as offered face-to-face in a destination country. However, international students cannot normally get a student visa to study in such courses.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What are the various sectors and their institutions called in the destination country?

What age range do they cater for?

What are their articulation points and entry requirements?

What is the relative status, cost, recognition, etc of the institutions?

## Activity:

### Exercise A2.1b

#### Question

#### Answer

A system of elementary, middle and high schools is common

☐ True  
☐ False

Vocational and technical training includes programmes from basic job skills through to semi-professional certification

☐ True  
☐ False

University faculties are based around teaching and research disciplines

☐ True  
☐ False

Language schools offer general language proficiency courses

☐ True  
☐ False

Foundation programmes bring students up to requirements for entry into a post-secondary institution

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

Choose Answer

## Student Facilities

### Buildings and Equipment

The quality of buildings and equipment varies greatly among destination countries, and between institutions within a destination country. As a general rule, the higher the quality of an institution's buildings and equipment, the more likely its cost will be higher and its outcomes better (although not necessarily). The quality of buildings will often be related to government's investment in universities, and whether the institution is public or private. Prospective students' motivations and means will determine the optimal balance between cost and quality for them.

When evaluating institutions, the student counsellor should check the size and capacity of buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and other learning spaces, as well as how up to date they are and how appropriate for prospective students' needs. In addition, he/she should check the availability, currency, and appropriateness of learning resources, library resources, IT resources, and any specialised equipment needed.

#### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

How does the quality of buildings and equipment compare with other destination countries?

What is the relative quality between institutions within the destination country?

What is the size and capacity of buildings, classrooms, laboratories, and other learning spaces at institutions in the destination country?

What learning, library, IT, and other resources are available?

### Support Systems

Support systems for international students may include services provided by individual institutions, consumer protection and civil laws, and social, health and welfare assistance available in the destination country. In addition, most countries mandate guardianship and welfare requirements for students who are minors.

The student counsellor should check that institutions have appropriate academic counselling for international students, and provide personal support (accommodation, lifestyle, social, health and welfare, legal) either directly or by referral.

#### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What support services are available for international students?

How are they accessed by international students? What do they cost?

What support services are mandatory for minors (e.g., students under 18)?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A2.1c

#### Question

#### Answer

- Student facilities include buildings, equipment and resources ☐ True  
☐ False
- Support services include academic counselling ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answer

The student counsellor needs to be able to advise prospective students about the courses available to international students in the destination country, the qualifications which result from them, and their equivalence to qualifications in the home country. To do this, the student counsellor has to understand the qualifications framework of the destination country, i.e., the structure and hierarchy of the qualifications awarded in the education system relative to the courses offered.

[Courses and Qualifications](#)

[Equivalence and Recognition](#)

## Types of Qualifications

### School

Two types of qualification are usually available from secondary schools:

A *leaving certificate* or certificate of completion at the end of compulsory schooling (usually around 15 years of age or at the end of middle school). This is usually an informal certificate, but may be required for entry into vocational training programmes or as proof of education when seeking work.

A *high school certificate* or diploma at the end of high school. This is required for matriculation to university. Some schools offer foundation programmes to international students instead of a high school certificate. This normally provides entry to specific universities.

### Vocational (Post-secondary)

With such a broad range of training programmes, this sector usually offers a variety of certification ranging from certificates in basic job skills through to semi-professional diplomas. Qualifications awarded may include different forms of proficiency statements, certificates, and diplomas.

The student counsellor should be careful to understand the equivalence of qualifications in different countries. In particular, the terms “certificate” and “diploma” can have very different usage in different qualifications frameworks.

#### Proficiency Statement

Proficiency statements indicate that a student has successfully completed part of a course and is competent in the units undertaken. This is not normally regarded as a qualification, but may be used for course credit later.

#### Training Certificate

Training certificates are awarded on successful completion of a recognised training course. There may be a number of levels of certificate (eg Certificate I, II, III, etc) corresponding to progressively higher

levels of workplace skills.

### **Trade Certificate**

Trade certificates are basically training certificates which confer a recognised trade licence. For example, completion of an apprenticeship makes the apprentice eligible for the trade certificate needed to work in the specified trade.

### **Semi-professional Diploma**

Semi-professional diplomas are usually the highest level of vocational education. They generally qualify the holder for junior or lower middle management positions or equivalent. Semi-professional diplomas often articulate into professional degree courses at university.

## **University**

### **Semi-professional Diploma**

Many universities offer semi-professional certificates and diplomas. In general these are the same as the semi-professional diplomas awarded in the vocational education sector.

### **Bachelor's Degree**

The basic qualification awarded by universities is the bachelor's degree (e.g., Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science) or equivalent. This is usually considered to be the basic professional qualification. An additional honours year may be a bridge to post-graduate study, and can be regarded as equivalent to the first year of a master's degree.

### **Post-graduate Diploma**

Post-graduate diplomas are a professional qualification, usually involving a degree of specialisation, following on from a bachelor's degree. For example, a student might follow a Bachelor of Arts degree with a Diploma of Education in order to qualify as a teacher.

### **Master's Degree**

Master's degrees may be based on research, course work, or a combination of the two. A research methodology tends to be used more in master's degrees which are oriented academically (e.g., Master of Science), whereas course work is more common in those with a professional orientation (e.g., Master of Business Administration).

### **Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)**

A doctoral degree is normally completed by research and dissertation. It is awarded as recognition that the candidate is capable of developing and undertaking independent research in the relevant discipline. A PhD is regarded as essential for an academic career. Note: While most doctoral degrees are awarded as PhDs, there are variants such as Doctor of Divinity (DD). Doctor of Medicine (MD) is a professional degree and has its own methodology and processes.

## **Language Schools**

### **Proficiency Certificate**

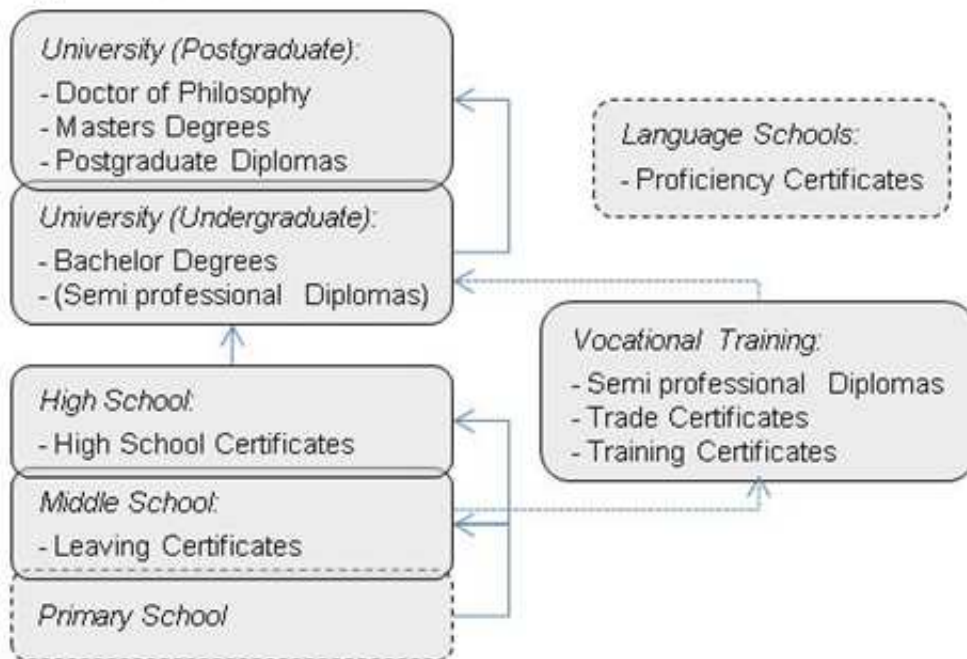
## Proficiency Certificate

Proficiency certificates are informal qualifications indicating the level of language proficiency students have attained. Students must sit one of the recognised language tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL) for a formal qualification in language proficiency.

## Other

In most cases, international students cannot obtain a student visa for specialty colleges unless they are accredited for some form of the above qualifications.

### Types of Qualifications



### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What is the name and form of each of the above types of qualification?  
What courses lead to these qualifications? What are their entry requirements?  
How are they accessed by international students? What do they cost?

## Activity:

### Exercise A2.2a Question

High school matriculation is required for entry to university

Vocational and technical education offers a range of certificates and diplomas

A bachelor's degree is a basic professional qualification

Post-graduate degrees may be by course work or research

Recognised language tests provide a formal qualification in language proficiency

### Answer

☐ True

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

Choose Answer

# Equivalence and Recognition

The student counsellor needs to know the equivalence of qualifications in destination countries relative to those in the home country. Not only do equivalent qualifications often have different names, but it is not uncommon for certification with a similar name to another qualification to in fact be quite different types of qualification. Even within a single country, different jurisdictions may use different terminology for equivalent qualifications.

In order to analyse the equivalence of qualifications, the student counsellor can check the characteristics of the qualification and courses for which it is awarded. These characteristics might include the age of students, course entry requirements, length and content of courses, course outcomes, articulation to further study, and professional or industry recognition.

Equivalence does not necessarily mean formal recognition (e.g., by education authorities, institutions, professions, industry, and employers). The student counsellor also needs to check whether the destination country's qualifications are formally recognised in the home country, in order to be able to advise students about the best courses to suit their future plans. Conversely, he/she needs to check that the home country's qualifications are recognised in the destination country to ensure that prospective students can meet enrolment prerequisites.

The student counsellor should check the relevant education institutions in the destination country for information on their courses and qualifications. Detailed information on types of qualifications should be available from the education authorities, and immigration authorities may have specific criteria regarding which qualifications are acceptable for student visas.

## Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

For each type of qualification, what is the equivalent qualification in the home country?  
Do the home and destination countries recognise each other's qualifications?

## Activity:

### Exercise A2.2b

#### Question

#### Answer

Equivalent qualifications always have the same names

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Equivalent qualifications have similar characteristics

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Equivalent qualifications may not be formally recognised

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answer

The student counsellor needs to be able to advise prospective students on international study options and pathways, and work with them to develop an effective study plan.

[Planning International Study](#)

[Pathways for International Students](#)

# Planning International Study

Students can have three main types of reasons students choose to study internationally, which will affect their preferences and objectives.

- *Further study:* The international study will lead to further study either internationally or at home.
- *Career and employment:* The international study will enhance the student's career or employment prospects.
- *Personal enrichment:* The international study is the means by which the student can improve his/her quality of life, either through the course itself and/or through living in the destination country.

When planning international study with prospective students, the student counsellor should take into account their preferences and objectives, as well as the availability of courses, their entry requirements, costs, duration, content, and outcomes. He/she should make sure courses are suitable for the prospective student in terms of both entry requirements and exit outcomes. In addition, he/she must take into account the logistics of travel, study, and living arrangements.

## Entry Requirements

As a first step, the student counsellor should obtain information from the prospective student about their existing qualifications, experience, and background. Then he/she should check course entry requirements and prerequisites. This information should be available in the course information provided by prospective educational institutions. The student counsellor must determine the equivalence of the student's qualifications to the course prerequisites, to ensure that the student's academic and language proficiency matches the level he/she wishes to enter.

If the student's qualifications and experience meet the course entry requirements, the student counsellor should then advise the student of the documentation needed to verify them for enrolment and visa applications.

If they do not meet entry requirements, the student must decide either to lower their study aims or to undertake some kind of bridging course to close the gap. This may be by means of a dedicated bridging or foundation course, or a lower-level course which articulates into the desired course. The student counsellor should work with prospective students to develop a learning pathway consisting of such bridging courses and the desired course. Learning pathways are discussed below.

International students must usually meet minimum language requirements, which are generally expressed in terms of internationally recognised language tests (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL). The student counsellor may therefore need to arrange testing of the student's language proficiency, and if necessary, find a suitable language course. This may be a stand-alone language course, or a foundation course which includes a language component for this purpose.

## Outcomes

In most cases, the outcomes are the reason the student wishes to take the course. The outcomes are the results of the course, i.e., the skills and qualifications that the student gains by doing the course, and/or any other intangible outcomes important to the student.

For most students, the qualifications will be important either for employment or career purposes. For many students, the intangible outcomes will be as important as, if not more important than, the actual qualifications gained. Intangible outcomes include such things as experience in the culture of the destination country, contacts with local people and other international students, cultural or sporting pursuits, travel and sightseeing, and so on.

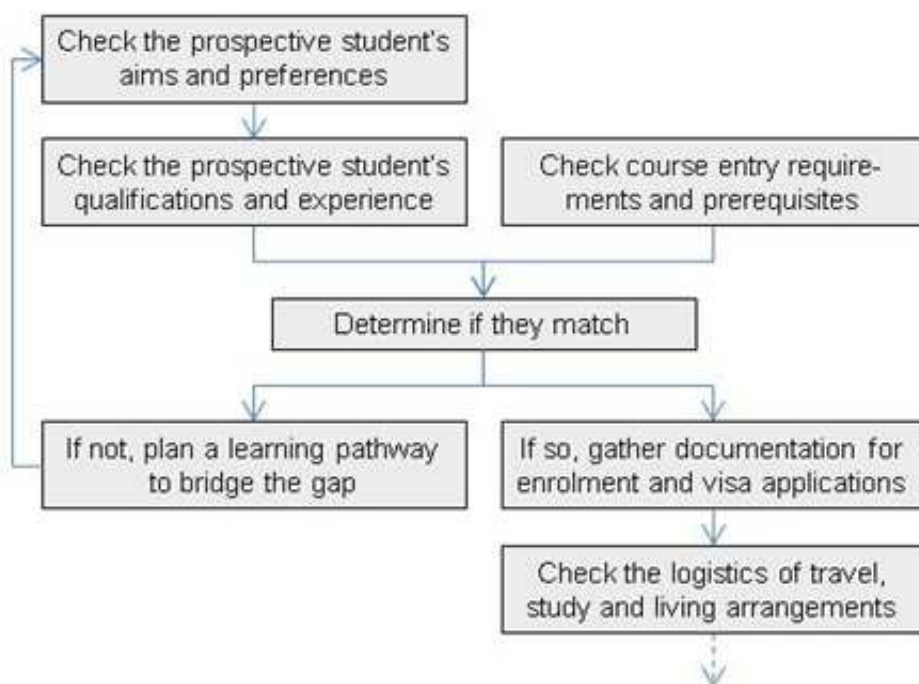
pursuits, travel and sightseeing, and so on.

The student counsellor must first establish the prospective student's reasons for taking a course, what type of course(s) they are interested in, their cost base, and time frames. He/she can then recommend a course based on how well its outcomes fit the student's aims and means.

## Logistics

The student counsellor must ensure that prospective students have the time and the means to undertake the proposed study. He/she should check the study plan has a realistic timeframe, including enrolment and visa processing time, travel times, and course duration. The cost of travel, study, and living must be affordable and accommodation must be suitable for the prospective student. Travel and living options are examined in [B2.1 Recruitment and Enrolment](#).

### Planning International Study



### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What formal language tests are recognised for international students?

What foundation programmes are available to international students?

What is the range of courses available in each sector? How do they compare in terms of relative quality and cost?

What are their entry requirements?

What are their outcomes in terms of both qualifications and intangible benefits?

## Activity:

### Exercise A2.3a

#### Question

Study planning should take into account students' reasons, and course entry requirements and exit outcomes

Answer ☐ True

☐ False

Study planning should take into account the logistics of travel, study and living arrangements

☐ True

☐ False

A realistic study plan includes enrolment and visa processing time, travel times and course duration.

☐ True

☐ False

# Pathways for International Students

When a student's qualifications and experience do not meet the entry requirements for the course they wish to study, the student counsellor may have to construct for them a learning pathway leading to the desired level. This may involve a formally structured set of courses organised by institutions in the destination country, or an informal set of courses put together by the student counsellor.

## Learning Pathways

The potential structures of learning pathways are as varied as the aims of prospective students and the gaps they need to bridge. In a learning pathway, exit outcomes of an earlier course should meet entry requirements of a later course. There are a number of common combinations:

### High School + Post-secondary Course

Students complete high school in the destination country, then enter a vocational, technical, or university course.

### Language Course + Desired Course

Students undertake a language course to improve their proficiency in the language of instruction in order to enrol in their desired course. Where students need to improve their language proficiency sufficiently to obtain a required standard language test score, the student counsellor should include the language test as part of the learning pathway. Some students who already meet the minimum language requirements for their desired course may still wish to undertake a language course before starting study. This enables them to improve their language proficiency as well as familiarise themselves with studying and living in the destination country.

### Foundation Programme + Desired Course

Students undertake a foundation programme to prepare for the desired course. Usually such programmes include both language and academic components, and are designed specifically to prepare international students for study in the destination country. Some foundation programmes are linked to specific courses, while some provide generic preparation for the proposed level of study.

### Certificate + Certificate/Diploma Course

Students undertake a vocational or technical certificate course which is a prerequisite for a higher-level certificate or diploma course. In many cases, institutions bundle a progression of courses together to form a seamless programme (e.g., prerequisite certificate course + diploma course = diploma programme).

### Semi-professional Diploma + Undergraduate Degree

Students undertake a semi-professional diploma course which articulates into an undergraduate degree programme at university. The student counsellor should check that the university offering the undergraduate degree accepts the diploma.

## Undergraduate Degree + Post-graduate Degree

Students complete an undergraduate degree which articulates into a post-graduate degree.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What language courses are available to international students?

What foundation programmes are available to international students?

What is the range of courses available in each sector? How do they articulate?

What courses can be combined into learning pathways?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A2.3b

##### Question

##### Answer

A learning pathway may be a structured set of courses

☐ True

☐ False

In a learning pathway, exit outcomes of an earlier course should meet entry requirements of a later course

☐ True

☐ False

Choose Answer

## 3 Regulatory Systems

### Overview

International education in a destination country is most likely controlled by legislation and associated regulations at national and state/regional levels. This lesson examines common laws and regulations relating to international education and outlines how they operate.

### Focus Questions

- How are the regulatory systems structured in destination countries?
- How do the regulatory systems affect the different types of educational institution?
- How do the regulatory systems affect the student counsellor?

The student counsellor needs a working knowledge of the laws, regulations, and practices which apply to international education in the destination country. This includes understanding of:

[The Role of Governments](#)

[Types of Laws](#)

[Laws Governing International Education](#)

[Regulation of Education Institutions](#)

[Agent Responsibilities](#)

## The Role of Governments

Most countries have national, regional, and/or local levels of government. Each level of government has its own powers and jurisdictions. Responsibility for laws and regulations relating to international

education can be divided quite differently between the levels of government in different countries. For example, in some countries, international education may be largely a national responsibility; in others it may be mostly controlled by state or regional governments. In some countries, the national government is responsible for overarching legislation, but the states or regions largely administer the accompanying regulations. Within a country, the state/regional governments may have quite different regulations and interpretations of laws relating to international education.

### **National Laws and Regulations**

National laws and regulations are those which are enacted by the national government and pertain to the country as a whole. In particular, the national government usually controls immigration and student visas, and may also have specific legislation regarding the governance and operation of education institutions enrolling international students.

### **State or Regional Laws and Regulations**

State/regional governments may have their own laws and regulations governing international education. These state/regional laws may extend the national laws, or impose further regulation in addition to any national laws. State/regional governments are often also responsible for administering regulations associated with the national laws.

### **Local Laws and Regulations**

Local government laws usually concern the local community, and do not usually relate directly to international education. However, local laws such as building codes, fire and safety regulations, environmental regulations, etc., directly affect the quality and cost of education premises and student accommodation.

The student counsellor should know which levels of government in each destination country are responsible for laws and regulations concerning the various aspects of international education.

## **Types of Laws**

Each country has its own unique laws and legal system. Some countries have a system based on common law plus legislation; other countries use a codified legal system. Some countries have a written constitution and bill of rights; others do not. Within each country however, some common types of laws are usually found. Those which may be relevant to international education include:

- Immigration laws
- Consumer protection laws
- Education laws
- Business laws
- Financial laws
- Privacy laws
- Anti-discrimination laws
- Health and safety laws.

### **Laws Relating to International Students**

As well as laws governing the general population, there may be specific laws (or additions to existing laws) which apply specifically to international students. For example, immigration laws normally specify

the types and conditions of student visas. In addition to general consumer protection laws, there may be specific laws to protect international students from deception or fraud.

### **Laws Relating to Education Institutions**

Similarly, education institutions providing courses to international students may be subject to specific laws governing their behaviour. In particular, additional laws and regulations on top of those pertaining to the local education system may impose extra conditions with regard to:

- Accreditation and registration
- Marketing
- Enrolment
- Duty of care
- Education provision
- Business operations

## **Laws Governing International Education**

In addition to laws and regulations which apply generally in the destination country, there are likely to be laws specifically governing international education. This may be stand-alone legislation or embedded in other laws.

The student counsellor should find out what is the primary legislation regulating international education in each destination country, and which government department or regulatory body is responsible for regulating it. The primary legislation usually has some variation of the following functions:

### **Financial Security**

To ensure students receive the tuition they pay for, and to prevent fraudulent use of international students' fees and other funds.

### **Quality Assurance**

To ensure institutions meet minimum quality standards for their premises, courses, and student welfare services, and to ensure institutions have integrity and act ethically.

### **Visa Compliance**

To prevent institutions from allowing or encouraging students to breach their student visa conditions, and to ensure timely collection and reporting of information regarding student compliance with visa conditions.

## **Regulation of Education Institutions**

The laws governing international education usually specify the regulations by which they are to be administered. Such regulations are generally applied by means of a mandatory code of practice and/or set of standards. These set out the conditions which an education institution must meet in order to be registered for international students.

## Registration

In order to apply for registration, education institutions typically have to comply with conditions regarding:

- Course accreditation
- Course duration
- Student numbers
- Mode and place of study
- Staff, resources, and premises
- Management and administration
- Marketing and enrolment
- Arrangements with agents
- Arrangements with other institutions.

## Compliance

Registration conditions normally stipulate requirements and restrictions regarding the operations of the education institution and its relations with students, agents, and other institutions. To comply with these, the education institution must have in place policies and procedures in areas such as:

- Marketing information and practices
- Recruitment and enrolment
- Use of education agents
- Student support services (including arrangements for minors)
- Course credit
- Course attendance, progress, and scheduled completion
- Student transfers
- Deferment, suspension, or cancellation of study
- Premises and resources
- Staff qualifications and experience
- Changes to ownership or management
- Complaints and appeals.

## Processing and Reporting

Registration conditions may also specify the systems and documentation to be used when processing student enrolments and visa applications, and for reporting student attendance and progress.

## Agent Responsibilities

In many countries, education institutions are held legally responsible for the actions of their agents. That is, they must ensure that their agents comply with their registration conditions. Such compliance is commonly written into contracts between education institutions and agents. Such contracts usually specify sanctions, corrective processes, or termination conditions in the event a student counsellor is dishonest or unethical, or otherwise breaches the contractual conditions.

It is therefore imperative that the student counsellor knows what the contractual conditions are, and how they relate to the laws and regulations governing international education in the destination country. In addition, he/she must know and follow the correct procedures when recruiting and enrolling students, and when applying for student visas.

In particular, the student counsellor is responsible for honest and ethical behaviour with regard to marketing, enrolment, and visa applications. This entails ensuring that marketing materials and activities provide prospective students with accurate and up-to-date information about education institutions and their courses, and that advice given to students is fair and appropriate for their circumstances.

The student counsellor needs to explain enrolment conditions, fees, costs, etc. clearly to the prospective student prior to enrolment. When enrolling students, he/she must ensure they meet the enrolment conditions and entry requirements, and that they supply valid documentation.

Similarly, the student counsellor must clearly explain student visa types, conditions, and costs to prospective students, make sure they meet the visa conditions, and check that their documentation is appropriate and valid.

### **Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:**

What laws and regulations apply to international students?

What laws and regulations apply to education providers marketing to international students?

How are these laws and regulations implemented?

How effective are they?

How do they affect the student counsellor?

### **Activity:**

#### **Exercise A3.1a**

##### **Question**

##### **Answer**

National, regional and local governments have

☐ Different powers

☐ Equal powers

Types of laws affecting international students include

☐ Immigration laws

☐ Electoral laws

Legislation specifically governing international education may be

☐ Contrary to existing laws

☐ Added to existing laws

The laws governing international education institutions usually specify

☐ Registration conditions

☐ Tuition fees

Regulations usually require education institutions to comply with a mandatory

☐ Code of practice

☐ Fee schedule

Education institutions are held legally responsible for the actions of their

☐ Agents

☐ Students

Choose Answers

Industry self-regulation occurs when the member institutions of an industry agree on a guiding set of principles and a common code of practice to govern their operations. In most cases, these institutions will form an industry association.

The student counsellor will benefit from a working knowledge of the relevant industry associations of international education institutions in the destination country. This includes understanding of:

[The Role of Industry Associations](#)  
[Regulation of Education Institutions](#)

## **The Role of Industry Associations**

The student counsellor should be aware of the various affiliations which education institutions in the destination countries have with their industry associations, and understand what these affiliations mean in terms of self-regulation and quality assurance.

### **Industry Associations**

Some industry associations in the education industry are open to both public and private institutions; others only to private institutions. Membership in an industry association is an indication of quality assurance as it certifies that the institution adheres to its principles and codes of practice.

Various forms of industry association can exist at local, regional, national, and international levels, and for different sectors in the education system. For example a university may belong to a national university association as well as one or more international university associations. A private language school may be a member of a local industry body, a national language industry association, a national private education association, and an international language industry association.

In practice, industry associations can have both positive and negative effects, depending on their integrity and quality. At their best, industry associations can promote a high level of consistent quality in their member institutions, and be agents for ongoing improvement in the industry. It is possible, however, that an industry association may simply exist as a barrier to new entrants in the industry, thereby reducing competition and increasing prices.

### **Interaction with Government**

Education industry associations interact with governments in destination countries in a variety of ways. In many countries, industry associations have a close relationship with government policy-makers and regulators; in others they may have less influence. Industry associations may perform the functions of advocate, mediator, or regulator when interacting with governments.

In most countries, industry associations act as the industry's advocate with government. Industry associations lobby for policies favourable to their members and against unfavourable policies. They generally also negotiate regarding the interpretation of regulations and regulatory processes which affect their members.

Industry associations may also function as mediators in disputes involving industry members. Such disputes may be with other members, with customers, or with regulatory authorities.

In some cases, industry associations may undertake the role of official industry regulator on behalf of the government. This may be for all or part of the accreditation and registration processes. For example, accreditation by the industry association may be necessary for registration with the government regulatory authority.

# Regulation of Education Institutions

The two main mechanisms of self-regulation in the education industry are (1) the industry code of practice and (2) quality standards.

## Industry Code of Practice

An industry code of practice will set out the guiding principles and specific policies to which member institutes must adhere. Industry codes of practice can range from relatively simple declarations of general principles to detailed and comprehensive statements of values, aims, mission, policies, and standards. In many cases, they are aligned closely to government registration conditions.

As a general rule, the more comprehensive the industry code of practice, the more rigorous and consistent the industry standard of quality. A comprehensive code of practice should contain essential information for member institutes, clients, staff, and stakeholders regarding the industry's ethical and management standards for delivery of education products and services.

## Quality Standards

Industry quality standards provide a framework for consistency of member institutions. An industry association may issue its own quality standards or it may use recognised external standards (e.g., government standards or International Standards Organisation (ISO) standards).

Quality standards may require member institutes to have:

- Documented systems to ensure consistent quality of education and assessment
- Appropriate management systems and financial control
- A system for regular internal audits

- Appropriate agreements with partner organisations
- Appropriate procedures for recruitment and development of staff
- Teachers and assessors with appropriate qualifications and experience
- Systems for recognition of student qualifications and experience.

In order to comply with the quality standards, member institutes usually must have documented policies and procedures for management of:

- Accreditation and registration compliance
- Marketing operations and materials
- Recruitment and enrolment
- Provision of education and assessment
- Student support services and duty of care issues
- Business and financial operations.

In practice the quality standards used by industry associations often align with government-mandated standards and conditions of registration. In some cases the industry standards may be higher than the minimum government standards.

## Agent Responsibilities

It is likely that industry codes of practice and quality standards will affect the student counsellor through mandatory conditions in agents' contracts with education institutions. In most cases these contractual obligations duplicate those outlined above in [A3.1 Government Laws and Regulations](#).

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

- What industry codes of practice apply to international students?
- What industry codes of practice apply to international education providers?
- How are these industry codes of practice implemented?
- How effective are they?
- How do they affect the student counsellor?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A3.2a

##### Question

##### Answer

Industry associations promote consistent quality in their member institutions	<input type="radio"/> True <input type="radio"/> False
Industry associations may function as advocate, mediator, or regulator in relation to governments	<input type="radio"/> True <input type="radio"/> False
Education industry self-regulation usually relies on an industry code of practice and quality standards	<input type="radio"/> True <input type="radio"/> False
Quality Standards usually require education institutions to have documented policies and procedures	<input type="radio"/> True <input type="radio"/> False



The student counsellor should be aware of the main types of laws which may affect international education in the destination country. This includes understanding of relevant:

[Education Laws](#)

[Immigration Laws](#)

[Consumer Protection Laws](#)

[Business Laws](#)

[Other Laws](#)

## Education Laws

Most countries have laws and regulations governing their domestic education systems. These education laws can vary considerably in structure and terminology in different countries. However, they often tend to have similar functions, in particular to mandate:

- The structure and aims of the education system
- A framework or system of qualifications
- The governance and funding of the education system
- Provision of a public education system
- Regulation of private education
- Accreditation and registration criteria.

International education may be covered by stand-alone laws or provisions added to domestic laws. In either case, functionally such laws usually regulate:

- A code of practice and quality standards for institutions providing international education
- The handling of student funds and financial probity
- Management systems for handling international students
- Student support services for the particular needs of international students
- Criteria for registration for student visas
- Conditions for the use of agents and international marketing
- Recording and reporting requirements.

## Immigration Laws

Although the details vary from country to country, in general immigration laws function to control the movement of people across national borders, the issuance of visas for entry into the country, and the requirements for visa holders while in the country.

Of main concern to student counsellors are the laws and regulations relating to student visas. These usually stipulate:

- The types of student visas which can be issued and the conditions for issuing them
- The rights and responsibilities of student visa holders

- The rights and responsibilities of student visa holders
- The requirements for education institutions which enrol student visa holders.

Student visas are examined in [A5 Student Visas](#).

## Consumer Protection Laws

Consumer protection laws function primarily to regulate commercial practices to prevent unfair trade practices or dishonest conduct towards consumers of products or services. International students generally have the same protection under these laws as domestic consumers. In addition, international students may be specifically protected by registration conditions, codes of practice, or quality standards required of education institutions which accept international enrolments.

The strength of consumer protection laws varies in different countries. To be effective, they should specify legal mechanisms for handling consumer complaints and rectification of any breaches, as well as entail strong penalties for violation of their rules of conduct. In general, destination countries with strong registration conditions and quality standards will also tend to have strong consumer protection.

It is important for the student counsellor to understand the level of consumer protection for international students in each destination country. His/her advice regarding the relative risk of being swindled may be crucial in the choice of study destination.

## Business Laws

In addition to laws regulating education, education institutions must comply with their country's business and financial laws. The range and strength of the laws governing business can vary not only between countries, but also with changes in government within a country. Some countries regulate business intensely, others may have a more laissez-faire approach.

Compliance with business laws is ordinarily a prerequisite for registration of education institutions. Various business laws may function to regulate all aspects of the operations of a business, including:

- Structure and management systems and practice
- Financial control and probity
- Buildings, premises, and equipment
- Contracts and licences
- Personnel and industrial relations
- Production, marketing, and sales
- Warranties and after-sales service.

Financial laws are designed to ensure that money and financial assets are accounted for honestly and with integrity. Their functions are to prevent fraud and theft, circumvent dishonesty and unfairness, and regulate financial practices. Their range and effectiveness vary in different countries.

The student counsellor should be aware of each destination country's approach to business and financial regulation and its affect on the quality of education institutions and security of student funds. Note that destination countries with effective business and financial laws will also tend to have strong consumer protection. This may be an important point for many students who value financial security.

## Other Laws

Within destination countries, there may be a range of other laws which may affect international students and education institutions either directly or indirectly. These laws may be quite strong in some countries, and quite lax in others.

Privacy laws are found in many countries. Privacy laws relate to the control and use of personal and business information. They are generally designed to prevent unauthorised access to or use of information about a person or group, and any other invasion of their privacy.

Various kinds of anti-discrimination laws are found in different countries. Their function is to prevent discrimination based on untrue or unfair stereotypes of people, and in some jurisdictions to promote positive discrimination towards minority groups.

Health and safety laws may apply to all sectors of society and business. These laws function to prevent risks to health and safety. Note that the perception of risk and hence the range and strength of health and safety laws varies greatly in destination countries.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What are the main laws which may apply to international students?

What are their features?

How do they affect students?

How do they affect the student counsellor?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A3.3a

##### Question

Education laws regulate the structure and aims of the

Education laws regulate the framework or system of

Student visas are usually issued according to

Consumer protection laws function primarily to regulate

Business laws regulate business structure and management, and

Other important laws may concern privacy, anti-discrimination and

##### Answer

- ☐ Education system
- ☐ National government
- ☐ Immigration control
- ☐ Qualifications
- ☐ Immigration laws
- ☐ Consumer protection laws
- ☐ Commercial practices
- ☐ Tuition fees
- ☐ Commercial practices
- ☐ Tuition fees
- ☐ Health and safety
- ☐ Diet and exercise

Choose Answers

## 4 Legal Requirements

### Overview

This lesson examines the legal requirements under which education institutions operate, and how they affect agents and student counsellors.

## Focus Questions

- Why does each destination country regulate its international education industry?
- How is this regulation achieved?
- What roles do the national and state governments have?
- How familiar are you with your student counselling responsibilities?

The student counsellor needs to be aware of legal requirements under which education institutions operate in destination countries. Legal requirements can be related to:

[Accreditation and Registration](#)

[Marketing and Enrolment](#)

[Education Provision](#)

[Duty of Care](#)

[Business Operations](#)

## Accreditation and Registration

Before they can begin to operate, education institutions must usually obtain some form of accreditation and/or registration. This may take various forms in different countries. Within a country, each sector of the education system may be regulated by its own accreditation and registration authorities. In general, the strength of the accreditation and registration systems in a destination country correlates strongly with the quality of its education institutions.

### Accreditation

Accreditation refers to official endorsement of an education institution's courses and authorisation to teach them. Accreditation certifies that the course content, methodology, and resources are appropriate for the qualification offered on graduation. In some cases, courses are accredited by an external authority (e.g., language courses are often externally accredited). In other cases, the educational institution itself is accredited (e.g., most universities are authorised to self-accredit their courses).

### Registration

Registration involves the recognition by a regulatory authority that an education institution is fit to offer its courses to students. To qualify for registration, education institutions must typically demonstrate that they have:

- Properly accredited and delivered courses
- Suitable management and financial systems
- Appropriate staffing and resources
- Ethical marketing strategies and materials.

### Ongoing Compliance

In principle, regulatory authorities regularly check education institutions for ongoing compliance with accreditation and registration conditions. This may be by means of:

- *Audits*: This may involve document reviews, desk audits and/or inspections of institutions.
- *Reporting requirements*: Institutions may have to supply compliance data regularly.

- *Re-accreditation and re-registration:* Accreditation and registration may have a limited duration, thus requiring institutions to repeat them at regular intervals.

In practice, education institutions commonly maintain compliance with accreditation and registration conditions through their quality management systems. The more comprehensive their policies and procedures, the more likely they are to align (directly or indirectly) with accreditation and registration conditions. The more rigorous, the more likely they are to effectively maintain compliance.

Knowledge of destination countries' accreditation and registration systems can provide insight into the relative quality and stability of their education institutions and courses. Where accreditation and registration standards are high and compliance is rigorously enforced, education institutions are usually well organised and well run, with first-rate courses. The student counsellor's knowledge of these factors is valuable to prospective students.

## Marketing and Enrolment

When marketing to and enrolling international students, education institutions must comply with both domestic consumer protection and business legislation, plus relevant accreditation and registration conditions. Education institutions usually specify compliance with these legal requirements in contracts with their agents. The student counsellor must be aware of these contractual obligations.

### Marketing

Education institutions can have strict legal requirements regarding their marketing strategies, materials, and operations. Their marketing must accurately represent the institution and its courses, and be presented in a way that does not mislead prospective students. In particular, education institutions may be constrained regarding the claims made in marketing activities and material, whether produced by themselves or by agents under contract.

The student counsellor must be aware of any contractual obligations when marketing an education institution. These could apply to both marketing materials and the advice given by the student counsellor and might include:

- They must not imply more than is actually delivered in terms of course content, delivery, or outcomes.
- They must not misrepresent the institution or its location.
- They must only claim approval by the regulatory authorities and industry associations which in fact endorse them.
- They must only use logos and trademarks which they are entitled to display.
- They must accurately describe visa availability and conditions.

Note: The student counsellor should be very wary of education institutions whose marketing is false or misleading, as recommending such institutions can greatly damage their reputation and relations with legitimate educational institutions.

### Enrolment

Student enrolment can also be governed by strict legal requirements passed on to the student counsellor by means of contractual obligations. As a rule the student counsellor is required to:

- Give accurate advice about enrolment requirements and processes, as well as related student visas
- Ensure that enrolment applications are properly processed, use the correct forms and protocols,

- and are lodged correctly and on time
- Ensure that documentation supplied by prospective students is legitimate and relevant.

## **Education Provision**

Education institutions are obliged to provide their education products and services in accordance with education and business laws and accreditation and registration conditions in their country.

Courses must be accredited by the proper authorities and must meet the regulatory requirements for courses. These requirements usually include:

- Level, depth, and currency of content
- Teaching and assessment methodology
- Staff and resources.

Education institutions may be legally required to develop and implement effective teaching strategies for the delivery of their courses. Correspondingly, actual teaching must be appropriate for both the level of content and the learning abilities of students. It should be sufficiently flexible to fairly accommodate the varying learning styles of students. Appropriate teaching resources should be used.

Similarly, requirements for assessment may relate to assessment strategies, materials, and methods. In general, assessment must be demonstrably valid, reliable, fair, and flexible.

Legal requirements for staffing often specify the qualifications and experience teachers need relative to the courses they teach. Teachers often need to be specifically licensed to teach their discipline. They may be required to undertake regular professional development to maintain the currency of their qualifications and experience. They may be subject to police or other checks to ensure they are of sound character. There may be regulations governing teacher-to-student ratios, support staff, administrative processes, etc. Similar requirements may be separately mandated for assessors.

Education premises must meet building codes and registration requirements. Equipment and resources must be appropriate for the courses, reasonably up to date, and meet health and safety requirements. Teaching materials must be fit for use. Students should have access to adequate library and reference material.

## **Duty of Care**

The legal principle of duty of care, as applied to education institutions, refers to legal responsibility for the welfare, health, and safety of students and staff. It also refers to the obligation to prevent negligence which might harm students or staff.

## **Support Services**

To meet duty of care requirements, education institutions are generally required to provide suitable academic and personal support systems for their students. In addition, international students may need to be provided with language support, supplementary social, emotional, and cultural support, and other specialised advice and information.

Academic support services for international students may include counselling about educational options, learning strategies, and other factors – up to remediation when necessary.

Personal support services could include social advice and activities, emotional counselling, and assistance with cultural differences. Education institutions may provide international students with extra help with legal matters or dealing with government departments. If unable to assist students internally, education institutions may refer students to external organisations for assistance.

## Minors

Most countries have strict regulations regarding the guardianship of minors. International students who are minors require special care. Education institutions must usually ensure that young students have suitable accommodation with appropriate adult supervision, are not placed in any moral or physical danger, and have access to support appropriate for their age and culture.

## Health and Safety

Most education institutions take great care to meet health and safety regulations, as failure to do so could result in large fines and expensive litigation. However, the student counsellor should be aware that the notions of personal and public responsibility can be interpreted quite differently in different countries.

The student counsellor should check how education institutions approach duty of care issues, and match this to the support needs of prospective students. He/she should check what support services are available and whether or not they are included in the tuition fees. This will improve the advice he/she provides to prospective students.

Duty of care issues are discussed in [B3 Student Care Issues](#).

## Business Operations

Education institutions' business operations must comply with their country's business, financial, and consumer protection laws. Compliance may affect the following facets of institutions' operations:

- The structure of the business and the distribution of operational functions
- The business practices employed by the institution in its operations
- The financial control of the business, including accounting practice, audits, and safeguarding of student funds.

Consumer protection and business laws are discussed in [A3.3 Types of Laws](#).

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What are the legal requirements under which education institutions operate?  
What are their features?  
How do they affect students?  
How do they affect the student counsellor?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A4.1a

##### Question

Accreditation certifies that course content, methodology and resources

##### Answer

☐ Qualification awarded

are appropriate for the

Registration involves the recognition of an education institution by an approved

Education institutions comply with accreditation and registration conditions through their

Education institutions' contracts with agents often specify obligations regarding

- ☐ Tuition fees charged
- ☐ Education agent
- ☐ Regulatory authority
- ☐ Quality control systems
- ☐ Qualifications
- ☐ Marketing and enrolment
- ☐ Gender and ethnicity

Choose Answers

### Exercise A4.1b

#### Question

#### Answer

Education institutions must develop and implement effective teaching strategies and delivery

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

Assessment must be valid, reliable, fair and flexible

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

Duty of care is the legal responsibility for the welfare, health and safety of students and staff

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

Education institutions' business operations of must comply with business, financial and consumer protection laws

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

Choose Answers

The legal requirements of education institutions were discussed in [A4.1 Legal Requirements of Education Providers](#). These legal requirements are often be built into agents' contracts. The student counsellor needs to be aware of any such contractual obligations to education institutions. Contractual requirements can be related to:

[Information Handling and Recruitment](#)  
[Enrolment Preparation and Processing](#)  
[Visa Preparation and Processing](#)

## Information Handling and Recruitment

Education institutions' legal constraints regarding marketing will usually be built into contractual restrictions on the student counsellor's handling of information and recruitment advice.

In most cases, the fundamental requirement is for accuracy and integrity of information supplied to prospective students. The student counsellor must supply truthful information about education institutions and their courses, enrolment and visa conditions, living conditions and options, and costs.

In many cases, contracts may specify that the student counsellor must use promotional material supplied by the education institution. Where agents develop promotional publications on behalf of the education institution, the material must be accurate and not misleading.

Translation of promotional information is an area of particular concern. Translations, by their very nature, have the potential to be misleading. For example, translations could interpret vocabulary precisely, but still be misleading due to differences in grammatical usage and semantic connotations. Translations produced by education institutions may be unwittingly deceptive or ambiguous as a result of false assumptions about the background knowledge of prospective students in their home country. Translations produced by agents may lack information which the education institution is legally obliged

Translations produced by agents may lack information which the education institution is legally obliged to supply to students.

The student counsellor's advice to prospective students is usually in their first language. Where this differs from the language of the destination country, the student counsellor must take particular care to accurately translate education institutions' marketing and recruitment information.

When recruiting, the student counsellor must be sure that prospective students are fully informed before making a decision. In particular, he/she should be careful to avoid misleading by omission when advising prospective students. Advice and information supplied about education institutions should be comprehensive and factual.

Note that in all of the above, it is essential for the student counsellor to be thoroughly familiar with the information supplied by the educational institutions.

## **Enrolment Preparation and Processing**

The student counsellor usually has an obligation to assist prospective students to prepare their enrolment applications. In most cases, he/she needs to be aware of correct document and money-handling processes.

### **Document Handling**

Document handling can involve both enrolment application forms and student documents. The student counsellor should ensure that enrolment application forms are correctly completed. Most education institutions use their own enrolment application forms, so the student counsellor may need to be familiar with a variety of forms. The student counsellor should be able to:

- Advise students about the information needed for application forms
- Assist students to provide relevant information in the correct format
- Advise students about the supporting documents needed
- Check the relevance and authenticity of documents supplied by students
- Check the overall application is complete and accurate.

Document handling is discussed in [B4.1 Dealing with Student Documents](#).

### **Money Handling**

The student counsellor must make sure that any money paid by students is handled properly. Generally, any fees or other money he/she collects from students must be held securely and paid into the proper accounts.

Many education institutions are legally required to keep student money in special accounts, separate from the institution's general accounts, and with restrictions and conditions on withdrawals. Their contracts with agents may specify similar restrictions on handling student money.

The student counsellor may need to be familiar with a variety of money-handling requirements for different education institutions. Importantly, he/she must ensure that money is handled according to the particular processes of the institution enrolling a student.

## Visa Preparation and Processing

Each destination country's immigration laws usually have strict processes for student visa applications. The student counsellor needs to know these processes thoroughly in order to advise students and assist them to apply for student visas.

When preparing visa applications, the student counsellor must follow similar document and money-handling criteria as for enrolments. That is, he/she assists students to provide:

- Relevant and complete information in correct format for visa application forms
- Relevant and authentic supporting documents.

The student counsellor must properly handle and account for any visa application fees paid by students.

Usually student visa applications take some time to be processed by the destination country's immigration authorities. The student counsellor needs to be aware of the time frames for visa processing, and assist students to lodge their visa applications on time. That is, he/she should ensure enough processing time between visa application and enrolment date.

Visa applications are discussed in [A5.3 Enrolment and Visa Applications](#).

## Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What contractual requirements are there between education institutions and agents?

What are their features?

How do they affect students?

How do they affect the student counsellor?

## Activity:

### Exercise A4.2a

#### Question

#### Answer

Agents cannot give marketing information and recruitment advice to prospective students

- ☐ True  
☐ False

In most cases the essential requirement is for accuracy and integrity of information supplied to prospective students

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Enrolment applications require correct document and money handling processes

- ☐ True  
☐ False

The student counsellor must not advise or assist students to apply for student visas

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answers

The student counsellor needs to be aware of consumer protection requirements in destination countries which have an effect on contractual obligations. Consumer protection requirements can be related to:

[Advertising and Promotion](#)

[Contracts](#)

[Protection of Money](#)

## Advertising and Promotion

In most cases, both consumer protection laws and registration conditions constrain education institutions' advertising and promotion. As with marketing regulations, the fundamental requirement is for accuracy and integrity of information supplied to students.

Consumer protection requirements can relate to:

- Truth in advertising
- Advertising and promotion strategies
- Forms of advertising and promotion.

Marketing information is discussed in [A4.2 Agent Contracts and Accountability/Information Handling and Recruitment](#).

## Contracts

Consumer protection laws usually stress that contracts and agreements must be fair and reasonable, and that parties must not be deceived, intimidated, or unduly pressured into signing them.

Prospective students should not be rushed or coerced into any form of contract with the education agent, and must be supplied with complete and relevant information to make an informed decision. Similarly, the student counsellor must make sure that students are fully informed before applying for enrolment and visas.

## Protection of Money

Both domestic consumer laws and registration conditions usually hold education institutions strictly accountable for the handling of student money. Institutions, in turn, make agents contractually responsible for treatment of student funds. This includes money paid by students for:

- Deposits
- Tuition fees and related charges
- Management fees
- Visa fees, etc.

It may also include money handled on behalf of students for other purposes, e.g., travel, accommodation, health care, etc. In addition, there are usually conditions concerning the processing and payment of agent commissions.

Education institutions generally have clear agreements with agents about the way in which student money is processed. This may include the use of trust funds and special accounts, and specific time frames and mechanisms for money transfers. In all cases, security of student funds is paramount.

Money handling is discussed in [A4.2 Agent Contracts and Accountability](#).

# Delivery Guarantees

Consumer protection laws usually specify that goods and services must be fit for their purpose and of a standard commensurate with the price paid by the consumer. This applies to both the quality and delivery of education products and services

Education institutions must ensure that:

- Their courses are delivered and assessed appropriately
- Their courses lead to the promoted outcomes
- Students receive the tuition and support services for which they have paid.

Consumer laws and registration conditions may mandate that education institutions make provision for non-delivery of courses. This is to ensure that students are not disadvantaged in the event of a course or college closure. Education institutions may be required to:

- Withdraw student fees from holding accounts only when each portion of the tuition is delivered. The remaining money is then available to pay for the remaining tuition at another institution if necessary.
- Take out insurance to cover the cost of students completing their courses at another institution.
- Have reciprocal agreements with other institutions to take over the enrolments of affected students. Such agreements may be organised by relevant industry associations.

The student counsellor should be aware of the delivery guarantees of education institutions, and be able to let prospective students know that their enrolment is secure. This knowledge may be influential in students' choice of study destination.

Education delivery is discussed in [A4.1 Legal Requirements of Education Providers/Education Provision](#).

## Complaints

Education institutions are usually obliged to have effective complaint handling and resolution procedures and appeal processes. These must be accessible by students and fair to all parties.

In most cases, complaints are initially processed internally by education institutions. If the complaint is not resolved by internal processes, it may be referred to an independent external arbiter. In the event the dispute is still not settled, students may take legal action under the terms of consumer protection regulations, torts law, or other civil legislation.

Complaints about assessment outcomes may be handled by internal remarking or re-assessing, or by external re-assessment by an independent examiner. Appeals about assessment outcomes must only be upheld if the students meet the appropriate assessment criteria.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What consumer protection is there for international students?

How is consumer protection implemented and monitored?

How does it affect students?

How does it affect the student counsellor?

## Activity:

### Exercise A4.3a

#### Question

#### Answer

Both consumer protection laws and registration conditions constrain education institutions' advertising and promotion

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Consumer protection laws don't apply to contracts and agreements with agents

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Education institutions are accountable for the handling of student money, education delivery, and complaints

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answers

## 5 Student Visas

### Overview

This lesson examines the visa requirements for students. Visa requirements may be general (i.e., relevant for all students) or specific (i.e., applicable to certain circumstances).

When students go to a destination country, they need to understand what their particular student visa allows them to do and requires them not to do. Therefore, the student counsellor needs to be aware of:

- The conditions that a student visa may contain;
- The responsibilities that students have in order to comply with these conditions when they begin their studies;
- Other related issues such as working, travelling, and staying in the destination country.

### Focus Questions

1. Why do students need to obtain a student visa?
2. What is the relationship between visa types, course types, and the duration of visas?
3. How are visas processed?
4. What are the financial requirements of a student visa?
5. What are the character and health requirements of a student visa?
6. What are the language requirements for an international student?
7. What are the requirements for students who are minors?

The student counsellor should be aware of migration regulations affecting international students. Migration regulations and practice can be related to:

[Migration Regulations](#)

[Migration Practices and Processing](#)

## Migration Regulations

Migration regulations are usually the responsibility of the national government in destination countries. In general, migration regulations control all movements across a country's borders, both outward-bound

emigration of citizens and residents and inward-bound immigration of foreigners.

Some countries have strict border controls to restrict entry and rarely admit new citizens or permanent residents. Other countries may actively encourage immigration (e.g., to overcome population or skills shortages). Foreigners may be admitted to a country as either temporary or permanent residents.

In most cases, temporary residents enter a country in either tourist, student, temporary worker, or family reunion categories. Each of these categories usually has its own visa types and subtypes, with their own specific conditions and responsibilities.

The student counsellor needs to know the relevant migration regulations of a destination country. This will improve his/her advice concerning students' entry into destination countries. He/she should be thoroughly familiar with the types of visas which prospective students need, and the government authorities which administer them.

## **Migration Practices and Processing**

In most cases apart from tourist travel, an entry visa must be obtained prior to travel to a destination country. Initial visa applications are normally lodged at the destination country's embassy in the visitor's home country, but increasingly, they can be lodged online. The time frame for processing visa applications can vary greatly, depending on the volume of applications, the staff available to process them, the amount of information to be dealt with, and how meticulously it is processed.

Visas may be for single entry or multiple entry. Visas are usually valid only for a limited time period, after which the visitor must either extend the visa or leave the country. In some cases, visa renewals and extensions may be lodged and processed in the destination country. In other cases, the visitor may have to leave the destination country and apply for a visa renewal or extension externally.

Immigration authorities assess the risk of visitors breaching visa conditions. Information supplied by visa applicants is used to assess this risk at a personal level. Additionally, destination countries may attach higher risk profiles to particular source countries from which visitors have a history of visa breaches. In such cases, visa applicants may have to provide additional information or assurances when applying for a visa.

Once they have entered a destination country, visa holders may be monitored to ensure visa compliance. For international students, this usually entails education institutions reporting to immigration authorities on class attendance and study progress. However, some countries may require visa holders (particularly those from so-called "high risk" countries) to meet extra conditions, such as registering and reporting regularly to monitoring authorities. Visa holders are usually obliged to produce proof of their visa status if requested.

Penalties for breaching visa conditions vary in different countries. Breaches include Illegal entrants, those overstaying their visas, those breaching work or other restrictions, and those who have obtained a visa with false information. Penalties may include fines, detention and deportation, and prohibition against future entry.

The student counsellor should be aware of any restrictions that destination countries may have against supplying immigration advice. Some countries may have regulations requiring migration advisors to be specially licensed. In most cases, the student counsellor can advise prospective students about student visas without breaching these regulations, provided the advice does not go beyond the requirements and conditions of student visas.

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What migration regulations affect international students?  
How are migration regulations implemented and monitored?  
How do they affect students?  
How do they affect the student counsellor?

### Activity:

#### Exercise A5.1a Question

	Answer
Migration regulations are usually the responsibility of the regional governments	<input type="radio"/> True
	<input type="radio"/> False
Most countries require an entry visa for non-tourist travel	<input type="radio"/> True
	<input type="radio"/> False
Visas are usually valid for an unlimited time period	<input type="radio"/> True
	<input type="radio"/> False
Immigration authorities assess the risk of visitors breaching visa conditions	<input type="radio"/> True
	<input type="radio"/> False
Penalties are imposed for breaching visa conditions	<input type="radio"/> True
	<input type="radio"/> False

Choose Answers

The student counsellor needs to be aware of visa types, requirements, and conditions affecting international students in the destination country.

[Student Visa Types](#)

[Student Visa Requirements](#)

[Student Visa Conditions](#)

## Student Visa Types

Student visas can be divided into different types, depending on the category of the course, and the level and duration of study. The student counsellor needs to know the different types (or subclasses) of student visa in each destination country. These can vary considerably in their details in different countries, but in most cases are linked to the different sectors in the country's education system. Thus there may be separate types of student visa for:

- Language schools
- Primary and secondary schools
- Boarding schools
- Vocational and technical education
- University and higher education
- Post-graduate research
- Specialty colleges
- Study under the auspices of aid programmes or otherwise government-sponsored.

Each of the student visa types may be of different duration and have distinct conditions attached to it.

The student counsellor needs to know whether the particular student visa type allows short- or long-term stay, single or multiple entry, or other specifications. In addition, different visa types may have restrictions on what the student can do while in the destination country. In particular, some student visas permit students to work part time in addition to their studies, while others prohibit work while studying.

If a student wishes to study a series of courses, usually their student visa will be based on the highest-level course. The courses should normally be related and form a clear learning pathway from lowest- to highest-level course. For example, a student may need to undertake language and foundation courses prior to a university degree course in order to meet its entry criteria. In such a case, the student needs to have valid offers of enrolment in each of the courses (intention is not enough). Note that later offers of enrolment may be contingent on successful completion of the earlier courses.

## Activity:

### Exercise A5.2a

#### Question

#### Answer

Student visa types are often linked to the different sectors in the education system

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Student visa types differ in duration and conditions

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answers

## Student Visa Requirements

To qualify for a student visa, international students must meet the requirements of that visa. The requirements vary for different visa types and in different destination countries. However, some fundamental requirements apply to most student visas. These include:

- Valid enrolment
- Academic, age, and experience requirements
- Language requirements
- Financial means
- Health and character
- Valid documentation
- Guardianship of minors.

### Valid Enrolment

As a rule, applicants for student visas need proof of enrolment in a course at an education institution registered for international students. The enrolment must be verified by an official confirmation of enrolment from the education institution. For the enrolment to be legitimate, prospective students must meet the entry criteria for the course. Students may need to supply supplementary documentation to authenticate this.

### Course Prerequisites

Prospective students must meet the course entry prerequisites. Courses differ in their academic, age, and career requirements. For example, most courses have minimum academic prerequisites, without which the student is unlikely to be able to cope with the level of content or teaching methods of the course. Similarly, there may be a minimum (or maximum) age for course entry, based on the cognitive

development expected of students in that age range. Some courses may specify prerequisite career experience (e.g., business or technical courses).

### **Language Requirements**

In addition, international students usually need to prove their proficiency in the language of instruction. They may be required to supply proof of acceptable scores in standard language tests, or enrolment in an appropriate language course prior to the main course.

### **Financial Means**

Normally, prospective students must demonstrate that they have access to sufficient funds to pay tuition and living expenses. This is so even when they qualify for a visa which permits part-time work while studying. Immigration authorities may specify acceptable sources of funds, including student savings, family funds, or loans from approved sources.

### **Health and Character**

Usually visa applicants must be of good character and in good health. Good health may be determined by relevant questions in visa application forms. In some cases, immigration authorities may demand health checks or medical examinations. Students are usually required to obtain approved health insurance for their stay in the destination country. Good character may be demonstrated by means of suitable referees, testimonials, etc. Immigration authorities may do a police clearance check to ensure the applicant has no criminal history.

### **Valid Documentation**

International students may have to supply supplementary documentation to prove that they meet the above requirements. This documentation must be relevant and authentic. Which documentation is relevant is decided by the destination country's immigration authority. For example, a qualification from the student's home country will only be accepted for a prerequisite if the destination country recognises that qualification or its equivalence. The authenticity of documents is usually established by supplying certified copies and/or translations, or (less commonly) original documents.

### **Guardianship of Minors**

When prospective students are not yet legally adults, there are usually special conditions regarding their care and welfare. In particular, the student's parent or guardian must sign enrolment and visa application forms, and any other contracts involving the student. While studying in the destination country, the underage student must live with a parent or approved guardian. Approved guardians might include relatives, home stay, boarding schools, or other acceptable care arrangements. Guardians may be subject to suitability conditions and police clearance checks. It may be possible for the student's parent or guardian to obtain some form of guardian visa, and travel to the destination country to look after the student.

## **Activity:**

### **Exercise A5.2b** **Question**

Applicants for student visas need proof of enrolment in an approved course

### **Answer**

- ☐ True  
☐ False

Applicants for student visas must meet language, financial and health requirements ☐ True  
☐ False

Choose Answers

## Student Visa Conditions

While studying in the destination country, international students must comply with the conditions for their specific type of student visa. The student counsellor needs to make sure their students are aware of these conditions. Clearly, the exact criteria for the conditions varies across types of student visa. However, in most cases a number of key issues relate to student visa compliance while studying in the destination country. These include:

- Attendance
- Academic performance
- Address and contact details
- Changes to enrolment
- Work
- Travel
- Duration and expiry of visa
- Renewal specifications
- Completion of course

### Attendance

Most student visas specify a minimum course attendance rate. That is, students must attend a minimum number of scheduled lessons or breach their student visa conditions. Education institutions are often required to monitor student attendance and report non-attendance to the immigration authorities. Unless the student has compassionate or compelling reasons for missing classes, the immigration authorities may rule that the student is not a genuine student and cancel his/her student visa.

### Academic Performance

Similarly, students must achieve satisfactory academic results to be regarded as genuine students. Education institutions are often required to monitor international students' course progress and report unsatisfactory progress to the immigration authorities. If they do not improve their results, students may have their student visa cancelled.

### Address and Contact Details

International students are usually required to notify their education institutions and immigration authorities of any change of address or contact details.

### Changes to Enrolment

Student visas are issued for the specific courses for which students provide proof of enrolment in their visa applications. After they have begun their studies in the destination country, international students may wish to change this enrolment to a course that suits them better. They may wish to change to a different course with the same education institution, to the same course with a different institution, or to a different course with a new institution.

To do so, students generally need the permission of the immigration authorities and may need to obtain

to do so, students generally need the permission of the immigration authorities, and may need to obtain a release from the initial education institution. It is doubtful that permission will be granted unless there is a good reason for the change. If the change of enrolment is permitted, the students will need to revise their visa details, and may need to reapply for a new student visa.

## **Work**

The purpose of a student visa is for study, so many types of student visa specify that students are not permitted to work in the destination country. The penalty for doing so is cancellation of the student visa, and offending students may be fined and deported.

Some student visas allow students to work part time while they are studying. Long-term students (e.g., university students) may also be allowed to work full time during vacation periods. Such work allows students to supplement their incomes while studying. However, the student counsellor should warn prospective students that:

- They cannot expect to meet all tuition fees and living expenses from such work
- There is no guarantee that suitable work will be available
- Working may help financially, but it is unlikely to provide substantial funds
- They need to balance any work activity with the time burdens of their course (i.e., work must not interfere with study time).

## **Travel**

Single entry visas, as the name implies, allow a single entry into the destination country. If the student leaves the country, the visa automatically expires. Most student visas allow multiple entry for the duration of the visa, allowing students to go home or travel to other countries during vacations.

## **Duration and Expiry of Visa**

Student visas normally have a limited duration, with an expiry date which is soon after the end date of the student's course. The student counsellor should make sure that students are aware of their visa expiry date. If the student does not leave the destination country by the visa expiry date, they risk detention and deportation as illegal aliens.

## **Renewal Specifications**

In cases where a visa needs to be renewed, the student counsellor should make it clear to the student when, where, and how to accomplish this.

## **Completion of Course**

Once students complete the course on their initial student visa, their options are normally to apply for a new student visa for another (higher-level) course, apply for a tourist visa, or leave the country.

## **Activity:**

### **Exercise A5.2c**

#### **Question**

International students must comply with their specific visa's

Most student visas specify a minimum course

#### **Answer**

- ☐ Conditions
- ☐ Risk assessment
- ☐ Attendance rate
- ☐ Tuition fee

Most student visas specify that students must achieve satisfactory

Student visas usually do not allow students to work

- ☐ Social interaction
- ☐ Academic results
- ☐ Part time
- ☐ Full time

Choose Answers

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What visa types are there for international students?

What are their requirements?

What conditions apply to them?

The student counsellor needs to be aware of enrolment and visa application procedures and time frames in destination countries, and their effect on international students' study planning.

[Enrolment Applications](#)

[Visa Applications](#)

[Time Frames](#)

## Enrolment Applications

Before applying for a student visa, international students must enrol in an approved education institution in the destination country. The student counsellor may need to spend some time with prospective students in planning study and selecting a suitable course and education institution. Study planning is discussed in [A2.3 Study Planning](#).

### Preparation

Once students have selected a course, the student counsellor may then need to assist them to:

- Check that they meet the course entry requirements
- Assemble the information for their enrolment application
- Gather supporting documentation.

### Lodgement

Next, the student counsellor should assist students to prepare and lodge their enrolment application. Enrolment applications may be paper-based or web-based. In either case, the student counsellor must ensure that students:

- Use the proper enrolment application forms
- Fill in all fields fully and correctly
- Attach supporting documentation appropriately
- Submit the application correctly

- Pay any deposits, fees, or charges into the correct accounts.

### Processing

The student counsellor should be aware of how long the selected education institution takes to process enrolment applications. In some cases, he/she may be able to liaise with the education institution to track the progress of the application. (However, be aware that enquiring about progress may slow down the processing.) If the application is not processed in a reasonable amount of time, the student counsellor should:

- Follow up any delays in processing the application
- Assist the student to supply any extra information which is requested.

### Acceptance

When an enrolment application is accepted by an education institution, it is usually provisional until a student visa is issued. The student counsellor should make sure that the education institution:

- Supplies the correct enrolment acceptance documentation for the student visa application
- Notifies the destination country's immigration authorities if required to do so.

### Activity:

#### Exercise A5.3a

##### Question

Once students have selected a course, they must prepare and lodge an application for

When an enrolment application is accepted by an education institution, it is usually provisional until

##### Answer

- ☐ Enrolment
- ☐ Deferral
- ☐ a student visa is issued
- ☐ all tuition is paid

Choose Answers

## Visa Applications

Once their enrolment has been accepted by an education institution, international students must apply for a student visa. The student counsellor should assist students to prepare, lodge, and monitor their student visa applications, similar to the help he/she provided with their enrolment applications. Much of the information and supporting documentation gathered for the enrolment application is also used in the visa application.

### Preparation

Once students have enrolled in a course, the student counsellor may need to assist them to:

- Check that they meet the student visa requirements
- Assemble the information for their visa application
- Gather supporting documentation.

### Lodgement

Whether the student visa application is paper-based or web-based, the student counsellor can assist students to its lodgement. In particular, he/she should ensure that students:

- Use the proper student visa application forms
- Fill in all fields fully and correctly, in particular:
- Personal information
- Information about character and health
- Information about financial means
- Information about academic and language ability
- Attach supporting documentation appropriately
- Proof of enrolment in an approved course
- Proof of adequate health coverage
- Submit the application correctly
- Pay the application fee into the correct account
- Provide a valid passport

**Processing**

Processing of student visa applications may take some time, depending on the procedures of the destination country’s immigration authorities. If the application is not processed in a reasonable amount of time, the student counsellor should:

- Follow up any delays in processing the application
- Assist the student to supply any extra information which is requested.

**Acceptance**

When the student visa is issued, the student counsellor should check that the immigration authority has:

- Issued the correct student visa, with correct passport stamp and entry documentation
- Notified the education institution if required to do so

**Activity:**

**Exercise A5.3b**

Question	Answer
When their enrolment is accepted, students must prepare and lodge an application for a	<input type="radio"/> Student visa
	<input type="radio"/> Scholarship
A student visa application must use the correct	<input type="radio"/> Student visa
	<input type="radio"/> Deferral
Supporting documents must be	<input type="radio"/> Relevant
	<input type="radio"/> Extensive

Choose Answers

**Time Frames**

The time frame from a student’s selecting a course to the student visa being issued can be considerable in some destination countries and for some student visa types. In other cases, this time frame can be quite quick, for example where the applications are simple and the processing is routine.

The student counsellor needs to know the likely processing time frames for the different types of course and student visa which may be encountered in destination countries. He/she should advise prospective students of these time frames, and they should be taken into account when students are planning study and selecting courses. The student counsellor needs to also factor in sufficient time before the course start date for:

- Recruitment advice and course selection
- Enrolment preparation and processing
- Student visa preparation and processing
- Travel
- Orientation and settling in

## Activity:

### Exercise A5.3c

#### Question

Students must allow enough time for enrolment and visa applications prior to the course

Different types of course and student visa have different application processing

#### Answer

- ☐ Start date
- ☐ End date
- ☐ Time frames
- ☐ Personnel

Choose Answers

### Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

- How are enrolment applications processed?
- How are visa applications processed?
- What conditions apply to them?
- How does this affect students?
- How does it affect the student counsellor?

The student counsellor needs to be aware of enrolment and visa prerequisites affecting international students in the destination country.

[Academic or Professional Prerequisites](#)  
[Language Proficiency](#)

## Academic or Professional Prerequisites

Most courses have prerequisites to entry. Higher-level courses tend to have more prerequisites than basic courses. Prerequisites might include academic or technical qualifications, age, language proficiency, or other factors specific to the course.

For example, high school matriculation is usually a prerequisite for a university degree. Language proficiency is almost always a prerequisite for international students. In most education systems, there are some common types of academic prerequisites for different types of courses.

#### Type of Course

Primary school

#### Possible Prerequisites

Minimum and maximum age

Secondary school	Minimum age, completed primary school
Vocational or technical certificates	Minimum age, completed middle school
Semi-professional diplomas	Completed secondary school, related vocational/technical certificates or lower level diplomas
University undergraduate degree	Completed secondary school, related semi-professional diplomas
University post-graduate diploma	Completed undergraduate degree
University master's degree	Completed undergraduate degree
University doctoral degree	Completed undergraduate honours degree and/or master's degree
Second-language courses	Proficiency prerequisites
Specialty courses	Various, often specialised prerequisites

In addition to appropriate academic qualifications, technical, semi-professional and professional courses may have prerequisites related to professional experience.

To determine if students meet academic prerequisites, the student counsellor must know the equivalence of their home country qualifications with those of the destination country. Students' home country qualifications must be recognised as meeting prerequisite requirements by both the education institution and the immigration authorities.

Entry prerequisites are discussed in [A2.3 Study Planning/Planning International Study](#)

Recognition of qualifications is discussed in [A2.2 Qualifications Frameworks/Equivalence and Recognition](#)

## Language Proficiency

International students must demonstrate sufficient proficiency in the language of instruction to be able to enrol in their course and obtain a student visa. The student counsellor needs to find out how language proficiency is recognised by the education institutions and immigration authorities in the destination country.

Minimum language requirements are generally expressed in terms of internationally recognised language tests. The student counsellor should understand these terms, and how they apply to the different types and levels of course. These terms express a level of proficiency, and this level may be demonstrated in a number of ways:

- Internationally recognised standard language tests
- Nationally recognised standard language tests
- Previous study in the language of instruction for a minimum specified duration
- Successful completion of study in the destination country to a minimum level.

The student counsellor may need to arrange testing of the student's language proficiency, and if necessary, find a suitable language course. This may be a stand-alone language course, or a foundation course which includes a language component for this purpose.

### Activity:

#### Exercise A5.4a

## Question

Course prerequisites for international students usually include academic qualifications and language proficiency

Recognised language tests provide language proficiency benchmarks

## Answer

☐ True

☐ False

☐ True

☐ False

Choose Answers

## Extension Questions: For each relevant destination country:

What kind of prerequisites are there for a student visa?

What conditions apply to them?

How does this affect students?

How does it affect the student counsellor?



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