

The Complete UK Student Move Checklist

Every phase of moving to the UK for study — from deciding it's worth it, to graduation and beyond. Built from an actual move, not a marketing checklist.

PHASE 1 — Is the UK worth it?

Before you commit — the decision-stage questions

- English-speaking country — no new language required
- Job opportunities and prevalent industries in your field
- Graduate Route (post-study work visa) — up to 2 years after most courses, 3 for PhD
- Part-time work rights during study — 20 hrs/week term-time for most Student visa holders
- Dependants rules (2024 change) — generally only postgraduate research students can bring dependants
- Expected salary vs. cost of living, by city
- Monthly expenses as a student, by city
- How the UK compares to other study destinations (US, Canada, Australia) on cost, visa ease, PR pathway

PHASE 2 — Application & Discovery

Choosing where to apply

- World ranking and course-specific recognition
- Tuition fees by course and university
- City-based vs. campus-based university trade-offs
- Location vs. expected monthly expenses
- Entry requirements and eligibility
- English language test requirements (IELTS/TOEFL/PTE) and score thresholds
- Course structure — 1yr vs 2yr taught, taught vs research (affects cost and dependants eligibility)
- Application deadlines / rolling admissions by university
- SOP and reference letter requirements
- Scholarship possibilities
- Employability outcomes / alumni data by course
- Loan-eligible university lists (check your home-country lender's approved list before applying)

PHASE 3 — After Admission

Once you have your offer

- Visa requirements and associated costs
- Financial evidence rule — funds must sit untouched for a period before applying (traditionally 28 days; reportedly cut to 14 days from Aug 2026, guidance inconsistent — verify current rule on gov.uk)
- TB test requirement (country-dependent — check if yours applies)
- Accommodation booking
- Tuition fee payment logistics, loan disbursement
- UK SIM card and UK bank account setup
- TfL / local travel card research
- Furniture bundles for move-in, if unfurnished accommodation
- Pre-departure briefing (university or agent-run, if offered)
- Packing for climate, adapters/voltage, medication supply rules
- Notify your home bank of travel dates
- Networking — join pre-arrival WhatsApp/Facebook cohorts
- Preparatory courses (online or offline) before term starts

PHASE 4 — First Week

Landing and getting set up

- Confirm eVisa or physical BRP status — depends on when you applied
- Document collection and in-person enrollment / ID card
- University registration and IT/LMS access
- Course book acquisition
- Register for Council Tax exemption certificate — don't assume it's automatic
- GP registration
- Set up travel card, get renters/contents insurance
- Locate nearest pharmacy and supermarket

PHASE 5 — First Month

Settling into the routine

- Timetable and reminders set up
- Homework / assignment schedule established
- Confirm council tax exemption actually processed
- Part-time job search, understand the 20-hour cap in practice
- Freshers' Fair / society sign-ups
- Know where university counselling/wellbeing services are, if needed
- Budget reality-check — compare planned vs. actual spend

PHASE 6 — Mid-Course

Staying on track through the term

- Visa renewal, if your course extends beyond initial grant
- Re-entry rules if travelling home during breaks
- Placement year / internship logistics, if applicable
- Second-year accommodation search — often starts earlier than expected

PHASE 7 — Last Semester

Preparing for what's next

- Job applications
- Final submissions
- Graduate Route application timeline and deadline
- CV / cover letter adapted to UK style, careers service usage
- Visa switch process if a job offer arrives early (Student to Skilled Worker)
- Post-student accommodation search
- Note: council tax liability resumes once your course ends
- Degree attestation / apostille, if needed back home

PHASE 8 — Graduate Route & Beyond

For those not staying long-term

- Job search under Graduate Route vs. switching to Skilled Worker before it expires
- Tax residency / exit considerations
- Shipping belongings home, closing UK bank account
- Alumni network access post-graduation

This checklist is informational and organisational only. It is not immigration advice and is not a substitute for official UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) guidance or a registered immigration adviser (OISC-regulated). Visa rules change — always confirm current requirements directly with official sources before acting.