International students

Working in the UK

1. Finding a job in the UK

Working in the UK after your studies can provide many benefits to your future career, enabling you to gain overseas experience, skills and cultural knowledge that will help you stand out in the global employment market.

The UK graduate job market has many opportunities, but is also very competitive. As an international student you will need to participate in a range of activities in order to increase your attractiveness to employers. UK organisations value:

- work experience, which could include part-time work, voluntary work, summer placements, one-year industrial placements or internships;
- involvement in extracurricular activities such as student societies on campus, sporting clubs and student union committee work;
- active participation in academic activities, e.g. leading a group project or being a student representative for your course.

There are two primary routes for gaining graduate employment in the UK, which are graduate schemes or direct entry into a job after graduation.

Graduate schemes

A graduate scheme is offered by large organisations as the entry route for new graduates. These organisations can be private companies, public sector organisations or charities. Many employers will accept graduates from any degree discipline onto their schemes with the emphasis being more on grades, competencies and experience. However, some career areas may require a specific degree specialisation, e.g. engineering.

On entry to a graduate scheme, you will be an employee of the company and will receive the appropriate salary and benefits for the role. Schemes usually last two or three years, during which time graduates undertake a mixture of training and work in their field. This may include:

- placements in different departments within the company;
- studying for professional qualifications;
- career support through a mentor, buddy or manager.

There are many more graduates than graduate training scheme positions so competition is intense.

Direct entry

Upon graduation, you may be able to apply for a position that does not form part of a graduate scheme. This is known as direct entry and may occur because the:

- employer is a small company;
- role requires specialist skills;
- position arises outside of the main graduate recruitment cycle;
- company requires an experienced professional.

Direct entry roles can occur at any time of year; however, employers would expect you to start straight after the recruitment process, so these positions would be unsuitable to apply for if you are still in the process of completing your degree.
Job hunting resources

The graduates who are most successful at finding work in the UK are those who are most proactive. Your university careers centre will have a number of resources to help in the process, so you should familiarise yourself with their services as soon as you arrive in the UK. These resources include:

- **Careers fairs** - many employers come onto campus on one day to promote their graduate programmes. These fairs are for information only, not direct recruitment. (See How employers recruit.)
- **Employer presentations** - individual employers talk about their own company schemes.
- **Skills sessions** or programmes - employers run workshops to develop skills for employment.
- **Online vacancy lists** - many careers centres advertise graduate roles on their websites.
- **Networking opportunities** - attend employer talks and recruitment fairs to find out about jobs and make contacts with potential employers.

Other job hunting resources include:

- job portals, e.g. Monster;
- national and local press;
- graduate job directories, e.g. The GET Directory, Target Graduate Jobs, Inside Careers and The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers, available from your careers service or online;
- making speculative applications to employers of interest - send a CV and covering letter to target an employer that has not advertised a vacancy;
- joining a professional body relevant to your career area - they may provide an online vacancy listing, databases of member organisations and events for students to attend.

Using multiple approaches and sources of information to research the market and then target particular employers will give you the best chance of success.

2. Recruitment in the UK

Attitudes of employers

The UK government’s points-based system of immigration rules, which enables international students and graduates to work in the UK, was revised significantly in April 2011. This will impact on businesses and it is therefore difficult to gauge how this might affect the attitude of employers towards international applicants. However, employers will always require candidates with:

- a good academic record, particularly at undergraduate level;
- a wide range of skills;
- some work experience, particularly relevant to the position they are recruiting for.

They will primarily be recruiting for UK-based roles, although with the increasingly global employment market some will also be recruiting for programmes overseas.

The ability to demonstrate how you meet employers’ requirements and having a good understanding of the immigration situation at the time you apply will give you the best opportunity of securing a job.

How employers recruit

Many graduate schemes follow a recruitment cycle, in which employers advertise vacancies in the autumn term of the final year of study for graduates to commence employment the following autumn. For certain sectors, such as banking and finance, schemes may be advertised very early, e.g. in September with a closing date in November, so early research is advised.

Individual positions, for example those advertised by small businesses, are advertised as the vacancy arises. Some graduate recruiters advertise positions all year round.
The recruitment process will depend on the type of role for which you are applying. Smaller organisations may have a two-stage process of a written application followed by an interview. Graduate schemes have a multiple-stage process, which may contain some or all of the following:

- a written/online application form or a CV and covering letter;
- psychometric or aptitude test - either early in the selection process or at the assessment centre;
- a preliminary interview, which may be conducted over the telephone;
- an assessment centre. This is often the last stage in the selection process and may involve a further interview and a series of individual and group exercises testing different competencies, following which a job offer may be made.

Details of a company’s application and selection procedures are usually available on their website.

Your careers centre will also provide advice on the recruitment process.

### 3. Getting work experience

Gaining work experience in the UK will strengthen your CV and increase your attractiveness to employers in the UK or in your home country. It will enable you to develop your skills, giving you experience of a professional environment and also the opportunity to apply your academic knowledge.

UK employers value different types of experience available during your studies. These include:

- part-time work, e.g. in a shop or a bar;
- vacation work either in the UK or in your home country;
- projects with organisations as part of your academic degree or outside it;
- voluntary work, usually unpaid for a company or charitable organisation;
- summer placements, usually degree-related and lasting two to three months;
- industrial placements, one year long and part of an undergraduate degree.

Placements will enable you to confirm whether your chosen career area is suitable for you. For some careers, e.g. teaching and law, work placements demonstrate commitment and are vital for entry on to training courses.

Recruitment for some work placements is nearly identical to the graduate scheme recruitment process, as employers use it to evaluate your capabilities, which may then lead to a graduate job offer.

If you can’t get relevant experience, or are unsure of your career direction, any workplace experience will be valuable as it can help develop skills that can be transferred to any job. It also demonstrates that you are motivated and hard working.

### Working while studying

Students come under Tier 4 of the points-based system of UK immigration. Your passport or identity card will have information on your eligibility to work in the UK and companies are required to check this if they wish to employ you. It is important that you understand your permission to work during your studies and that you do not breach these conditions as it will affect your ability to secure further permission.

Students on a Tier 4 (general) visa on a foundation degree or degree level course are entitled to:

- work part time for up to 20 hours per week during term time as defined by your university;
- work full time during vacation periods and after studies before leave expires if an application for further immigration permission has been submitted;
- work as a postgraduate doctor or dentist on a recognised Foundation Programme;
- work as a student union sabbatical officer for up to two years;
- do a work placement as part of the course.

For work placements, your university must be a Highly Trusted Sponsor, which you can check by looking at the UK Border Agency Register of Sponsors (Tier 4) (approved education providers), and the placement must not exceed 50% of the total length of the course, unless there is a legal requirement for it to do so.
You may not fill a full-time permanent vacancy and you must not be self-employed, employed as a doctor in training (except on a recognised Foundation Programme) or as a professional sportsperson, coach or entertainer.

If the course is not a foundation degree and is below degree level, different rules will apply and you should seek further information. **UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs** represents the interests of international students in the UK and has current information on work permission and also a telephone advice line. Your university will also have international student advisers giving individual advice on permission to work during studies.

See the [UK Border Agency](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-border-agency) for the latest information.

**Developing your skills**

When undertaking work experience you should look for ways to demonstrate general skills that are required by employers, such as:

- commercial awareness;
- teamwork;
- communication, which can be written or verbal and includes presentation skills;
- organisation, including planning and time management;
- initiative - having ideas and implementing new ways of doing things;
- problem-solving;
- IT.

By being proactive at work your experiences will:

- tell an employer something about your personality - in particular attributes like enthusiasm and motivation;
- demonstrate your practical work skills as well as academic ability;
- develop your English language skills and confidence;
- help you identify your career preferences.

**Finding part-time work**

Visit your university careers service for advice as soon as you arrive. Check the following resources for vacancies:

- your careers centre’s vacancy list;
- the students’ union;
- your university job shop or temporary work agency;
- local businesses, which may advertise directly or in local newspapers;
- recruitment agencies, for temporary work;
- business organisations’ membership directories, e.g. Chambers of Commerce.

The [National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES)](http://www.nases.org.uk) has further information on part-time work and employment rights.

**Paying tax**

International students will pay tax on earnings above the tax free personal allowance granted by the UK Government. If you earn less than your personal allowance in a tax year, you will be able to reclaim any tax paid.

You must also pay National Insurance, which you cannot reclaim, and will need to obtain a National Insurance Number (NINo). You can obtain this from a local Jobcentre Plus office as soon as you start seeking work. You need to contact 0845 600 0643 to arrange an appointment. More information on tax and National Insurance can be obtained from [HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-and-customs) and [Directgov - Applying for a National Insurance number](https://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Healthandsocialcare/HealthcareTopics/NationalInsurance/HowtoapplyforanNINnumber/IDPG6019).

**Further information**

- [British Chambers of Commerce - find your local Chambers](https://www.britishchambersofcommerce.org.uk)
- [UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs - Working in the UK during your studies](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/workingintheuk)
4. Visas and work permits

The points-based system

The schemes that enable non-European Economic Area (EEA) nationals to come to study and work in the UK are consolidated under one points-based system. These schemes are subject to change and you will need to check the current rules when you apply for a job. See the UK Border Agency (UKBA) - Working in the UK and UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs - Working in the UK after your studies for up-to-date information.

There are five tiers each relating to a different category, e.g. Tier 4 relates to students who wish to study in the UK. For each scheme you will accrue points for different attributes. These include:

- salary;
- sponsorship;
- type of job, e.g. a shortage occupation;
- English language level;
- maintenance/available funds.

Am I eligible for a visa?

The answer to this will depend on which scheme you are applying for to remain in the UK and whether you meet the required number of points. Check this by using the UKBA points-based calculator.

You may also be able to obtain advice from international student advisers at your university. If you wish to seek professional legal advice they may be able to provide you with the name of a reputable specialist or solicitor. You could also check the directory of the Immigration Law Practitioners’ Association (ILPA).

Once you have established your eligibility, take the following steps to give your application the best chance of success:

- Check the documentary evidence for schemes.
- Prepare required documentation in advance.
- Start saving maintenance funds in a separate account.
- Obtain advice on completing the forms from your university’s international student advisers, immigration professionals or the UKCISA website.

As schemes change frequently, employers may not be aware of current rules so understanding your eligibility will enable you to discuss this productively with them. You can also direct them to sources of information, e.g. the UK Border Agency (UKBA) Employers and Education Providers and their sponsorship and employer helpline (0300 123 4699).

Tier 1 (Post-study work)

This scheme closed to new applicants on 6 April 2012.

Graduates already on this scheme (or its predecessors, the Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland Scheme, the International Graduates Scheme or the Science and Engineering Graduates Scheme) are eligible to switch into sponsored roles under Tier 2 and no longer need to have worked with their employer for six months in order to be exempt from the resident labour market test.

Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur)

From 6 April 2012, the Tier 1 (Graduate Entrepreneur) scheme permits graduates of a degree course in the UK to remain in the UK to develop ideas or entrepreneurial skills by setting up a business. The applicant must currently be in the UK and must be sponsored by the institution from which they graduated (which must be a Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) under Tier 4). Sponsors will be required to maintain processes for identifying and developing entrepreneurs, assessing their progress and reporting to the UK if they cease to participate.

Places are limited to 1,000 per year and 10 per institution. Leave is initially granted to remain in the UK for 12 months, with a possible extension to 24 months if the sponsor confirms progress. At this point, the entrepreneur must switch in to Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) to remain in the UK and be able to demonstrate £50,000 funding (rather than the £200,000 normally required for Tier 1 (Entrepreneur)).
This route is not available to those who previously had leave under Tier 1 (Post-Study Work) and entry clearance applications cannot be made under this route.

**Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent)**

Applications for the Tier 1 (Exceptional Talent) route must be endorsed by a ‘designated competent body’ (i.e. the Royal Society, the Arts Council England, the British Academy and the Royal Academy of Engineers). There are only 1,000 visas available each year.

**Tier 2 (Sponsored skilled worker)**

Employers must be a registered sponsor with the UKBA to be eligible to offer positions under the Tier 2 (Sponsored skilled worker) scheme. See the UKBA Register of Sponsors (Tier 2) for a full list.

Both Tier 4 students and graduates with Tier 1 (Post-study work) status are eligible to switch into this category. Employers are not restricted in terms of the numbers of students they can sponsor from these two categories. The process has two stages. Firstly, the employer issues the graduate with a Certificate of Sponsorship (CoS). To do this the employer must refer to Codes of practice for sponsored workers for the job role, prepared by the UKBA. This gives information concerning the following criteria which then need to be satisfied:

- The job must be of graduate level or above.
- The salary must be a minimum of £20,000 or in accordance with the relevant code of practice, whichever is higher.
- The recruitment process may need to include a resident labour market test to show there is no one in the EEA that can do the job. (Exceptions exist, e.g. if the applicant already has Tier 1 (Post-study work) status or if the applicant will be switching into Tier 2 in the UK from Tier 4).

The graduate then applies to the UKBA for immigration permission under Tier 2, where they must gain 50 points for the following attributes:

Certificate of sponsorship assigned (30 points), if:

- the job has an annual salary of £150,000 or more; or
- the job is on the shortage occupation list; or
- your sponsor has completed a resident labour market test; or
- you are switching from a post-study work category; or
- you are switching from Tier 4 student or another pre-Tier 4 student category; or
- you will be working for the same sponsor in the same job.

A further 20 points are awarded for:

- English language (10 points);
- maintenance (10 points).

The above process only applies for students and graduates who are in the UK. If you are not in the UK a different process will apply and you should check the criteria with the UKBA.

From 14 June 2012, further changes will be introduced to Tier 2:

- Advertising requirements will be relaxed for jobs paying over £70,000 and specified PhD-level jobs.
- The resident labour market test will be modified for PhD-level jobs.
- The minimum skills level will be raised, resulting in the removal of 27 occupations from Tier 2 eligibility, but exceptions will remain for some shortage occupations and some creative occupations.

**Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange)**

From 6 April 2012, the Tier 5 (Government Authorised Exchange) route is open to applicants switching from Tier 4 (Student) under a Government Authorised Exchange scheme to undertake a period of professional training or work experience. This work must be required to obtain a professional qualification or professional registration in the same professional sector as their qualification, after being awarded their degree and before leaving the UK. This category must not be used to fill job vacancies.
A CoS is required for application under this scheme, issued by a licensed Tier 5 sponsor. See the UKBA Register of Sponsors (Tier 5) for a full list.

Leave will initially be granted for 12 months and can be extended to 24 months. Availability of maintenance funds is a requirement of application.

Other relevant categories

There may be other categories open to some wealthy individuals such as entrepreneurs or investors. For full details consult the UK Border Agency (UKBA) website.

**Working outside the UK**

1. **Applying for non-UK jobs**

Having completed your studies in the UK, you may be considering returning home to find graduate work. There may be differences between the graduate recruitment system in your home country and the UK, so you will need to familiarise yourself with the:

- application process;
- timing of graduate recruitment;
- methods that employers use to meet potential candidates, e.g. ‘walk-ins’ in India, where candidates can be recruited through open days run by employers.

**Getting advice**

Your careers service can provide information and advice on your career options and finding work in your home country, and can help you prepare for the selection process.

**International employers**

Many large UK graduate recruiters are multinational companies that may have graduate schemes for your home country. If organisations are developing their business interests overseas, they may actively recruit graduates through a specific international programme, e.g. Tesco China Programme which recruits UK-educated Chinese graduates in the UK for their China operation.

To find companies with an interest in your country you can also:

- search the membership directories of business organisations, e.g. UK India Business Council (UKIB);
- search the international members/websites of professional bodies, e.g. ACCA Global for accountancy;
- research UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) news for details of businesses trading overseas;
- research stories about business investment in newspapers and websites in the UK and your target country.

Also, keep in touch with your network of contacts in your home country while you are in the UK, e.g. former classmates and lecturers, to help you keep up to date with the employment market.

**Finding job vacancies**

- Search International graduate jobs.
• If you return to your home country during vacations, use the time to make applications or to network with employers.
• Make use of the internet. All global organisations, government agencies and an increasing number of small and medium-sized enterprises have websites, usually with a ‘careers’ or ‘current vacancies’ section. Search engines can be used to locate employers and vacancies in specific countries.
• Visit high commissions and embassies in London, which usually provide information about jobs in their countries. See the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) - Find a foreign embassy in the UK for contact details.
• Check UK and foreign newspapers and professional journals. Search for foreign newspapers using online directories such as Kidon Media-Link.
• Use online recruitment agencies such as OverseasJobs.com. You should not pay money to an agency in the UK or overseas for help in finding jobs.
• Send speculative enquiries, using a targeted CV and covering letter, directly to organisations.
• Contact alumni associations in your home country. The British Council website has information on alumni networks. They sometimes provide job clubs for graduates with UK qualifications where you can post your CV online, get access to vacancies or be matched to a suitable company that has signed up with the British Council.

Your university careers centre will also provide a number of resources, including:

• **graduate recruitment publications** which detail overseas opportunities.
• **country specific directories**, for example Graduan and GradChina.
• **graduate recruitment fairs** which attract global organisations and provide a good opportunity for networking. Some overseas employers also hold campus presentations and interviews at UK universities. Ask your careers centre for event listings.
• **international job-seeking resources**, for example Going Global a website containing country profiles, an employer directory and vacancy listings.
• **specific events held by overseas talent organisations**, e.g. Global Careers Company recruitment summits.

**Selection procedures**

These will differ between countries, companies and industry sectors as cultural differences will produce variations in what is valued in an employee. If the organisation you are applying for is multinational, you may encounter similar processes to those used in the UK.

If the company operates a country recruitment programme from the UK, then recruitment will generally be in the UK style. This is also true if the organisation sends representatives to the UK to recruit, although procedures depend on how easy it is for employers to visit UK campuses for recruitment. Interviews and assessment centres, which usually involve a range of tests, may be used.

For companies who do not send representatives, interviews may take place by telephone, internet conferencing, e.g. Skype, or via video conferencing. However, you will usually also be required to attend a face-to-face interview in the country.

Going Global is a useful resource for finding out about the recruitment and selection procedures in different countries. You may be able to access this in your careers service.

**Job offers**

Successful candidates may receive a job offer whilst still in the UK. Most offers have conditions such as:

• good final exam results;
• passing a medical examination;
• work permit/immigration approval if the candidate is from a different country.

When you get an offer of employment, check it carefully to ensure the job title, job description, terms and conditions are accurate. If there is anything that you are uncertain about, seek clarification from the organisation before accepting.

If you are offered a job in a country different from your own, check that the offer covers important issues such as healthcare costs, relocation allowances, minimum employment periods, bond conditions, if appropriate, and accommodation assistance.

Working in other countries

Most countries have an immigration procedure that requires foreign workers to apply for a work permit or employment visa. You may be able to obtain immigration permission if:

• the job role is a ‘shortage occupation’, i.e. the country has need of these particular skills;
• you can do the job on a working holiday visa (not suitable for graduate roles);
• an employer is willing to sponsor overseas workers for the position.

Consult the relevant embassy or high commission of the country you are interested in for more information.

2. Returning to your home country

Getting started

For many students, the goal of a UK education is to increase their chances of finding employment in their home country upon graduation. To do this successfully, you will need to demonstrate to employers how this unique experience has prepared you for your chosen career. You will need to:

• prepare examples to demonstrate the skills that employers in your country require;
• research the employment market using a variety of sources (see Applying for non-UK jobs);
• create application documents such as a CV and covering letter.

Living in the UK for a period of time will have given you a different perspective on life and possibly work if you have managed to gain some experience. This experience may be different from the cultural customs in the workplace of your home country and you will need to be aware of this as it may impact on your ability to impress a prospective employer. Refreshing your knowledge on the types of position, salary levels and etiquette when dealing with recruitment managers in your home country will ensure that your overseas experience is viewed positively.

Before leaving the UK

The experience you have had in the UK will benefit your career and you need to ensure that you continue to make the most of this once you leave. Creating networks is one of the most effective ways of keeping up to date with people and opportunities. You can do this by joining:

• the alumni association at your university;
• The British Council alumni association for your country, if available;
• relevant professional associations for your career area.

Keep in touch with your careers centre for further support and to inform them of your progress. Many centres work actively with alumni to support current students.
See UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs - Preparing to return home for advice on practical arrangements before leaving the UK to return home.

Relocating outside the UK

You are responsible for making relocation arrangements for yourself such as immigration, flights, shipping your belongings, insurance and finance arrangements. You should consult the employer and the embassy of the country you are relocating to when making arrangements.

Studying in the UK

1. Further study

Postgraduate study

If you wish to continue to higher studies in the UK, the main routes available are postgraduate taught courses or postgraduate research degrees. The main qualifications for both these levels are:

- **taught courses:** Postgraduate Certificate/Diploma (PG Cert/Dip), taking up to one year of full-time study, or Masters degree (MA, MSc, MBA), usually one year of full-time study or occasionally two years.
- **research programmes:** Masters degree MA, MSc, MPhil or MRes usually one to two years of full-time study, although it may take longer, or Doctorate (PhD, DPhil, EngD), usually taking three to four years’ full-time study.

You need to consider how this next step fits in with your ultimate career goals. Some careers require further study, e.g. if you are considering an academic career, but for most cases you will need to research how prospective employers will view further study. Seek advice from your careers centre.

The application processes vary for postgraduate courses and some popular courses may fill up quickly. You may also need to identify and apply for different funding sources. It is therefore sensible to start your research at the start of your final year.

Studying for a second degree

Currently it is possible to study a second undergraduate degree. There is very little funding available - any funding that is available will be for exceptional circumstances. You will have to pay fees in exactly the same way as you paid for your first degree. From July 2011, moving to a second degree will also need to show progression to a higher level on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)/Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), e.g. from a bachelor degree to a Masters degree, or will need to be deemed as complementary, e.g. taught Masters to research Masters. If you have any queries seek advice from your university’s international student advisers.

It is unlikely that you will be able to undertake a generic second undergraduate degree from April 2012 as the UK Border Agency (UKBA) will introduce a maximum total period of leave of five years for study at NQF/QCF levels 6 and 7 and SCQF level 9-11. Bachelor degrees are at level 6 of the NQF/QCF and level 9 of the SCQF. Therefore, a second three-year degree will exceed this limit.

There will be exceptions made for specific vocational qualifications, for example engineering, law, medicine (including pharmacy and dentistry), veterinary medicine and science and architecture, and you should refer to the UKBA website for further information as it becomes available.
Extending your student visa

International students currently studying in the UK are on Tier 4 of the points-based system, which has undergone a recent review. This has resulted in changes that will come into effect at different points during 2011 and 2012, so you should always check for the latest information. The system is very specific on the:

- academic level of courses that can be studied;
- institutions at which you can study;
- timing of applications;
- funds required to show you can support yourself;
- English language requirements;
- documentary evidence required in your submission.

Seeking advice early is the key to making a successful application. Your university's international student advisers will be able to give you advice pertinent to your circumstances. See also the UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs and UKBA websites.

It is vital that you make your application to extend your visa before your current immigration permission expires. Failure to do so will have severe implications, including losing rights of appeal and having an effect on future applications. It is possible to make an application from your home country.

Further information

- Explaining the National Qualifications Framework
- Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
- UKCISA: UK Council for International Student Affairs - Making an immigration application as a Tier 4 (General) student in the UK

2. Postgrad fees and scholarships

Fees for postgraduate study

Course fees vary depending on the type of course you wish to study and the university you attend. UK institutions will publish information about course fees and you should contact them for details. International fees will be higher than those of home students and it is the university that makes the final decision on whether you qualify as a home or overseas student.

Fees are only one element of the expenses you will incur as an international student, so good financial planning is essential. Using tools such as the UNIAID International Student Calculator will help you to budget for your education in the UK.

Scholarships for postgraduate study

There are a number of scholarships available to international students, covering partial or full payment of fees and, in some cases, other expenses such as living costs. These can be government funded, university funded or from private or charitable organisations. Competition is likely to be strong and strict criteria applied, e.g. academic performance, so researching in advance and ensuring you meet all the criteria will help with making successful applications.

Sources of funding information include:

- Education UK - Scholarships for international postgraduate students;
- British Council - Funding your studies;
- university websites - sections on fees and funding for international students;
- postgraduate study/funding websites, e.g. Postgraduate Studentships and Postgrad.com.
Some international organisations and agencies, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the European Commission, operate their own award schemes, usually for developing countries.

You may also be able to get a grant or award from a charitable body or other organisation. The Grants Register: The Complete Guide to Postgraduate Funding Worldwide is a useful resource for finding postgraduate awards. Ask your careers centre for further information.

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**Case studies**

**Professional consultant: Jessica An**

Jessica has a degree in advertising and marketing communications from the University of Bedfordshire and an MSc International Management from Loughborough University. She works as a consultant for an online advertising and marketing company.

I love living in Western nations, especially the UK. It is the lifestyle, friendly neighbourhood and challenging working environment that attracts me most. I have always believed that I can get to where I want to be if I deliver competently and confidently in this country.

I currently work as a professional consultant for a British search engine optimisation (SEO), pay-per-click (PPC) advertising and online marketing company. The company promotes the English Premier League to football fans in China. My role involves adjusting the website in a Chinese-friendly way, maintaining and increasing a high volume of visitors and encouraging them to participate in our competitions.

I knew that work experience is vital to get a job anywhere, so I started to prepare a long time ago. When I first entered university in China, I also helped my family's international trading businesses, importing and exporting mainly to South America and Europe.

After graduating with a degree in advertising and marketing communications from the University of Bedfordshire, I got an internship at Saatchi & Saatchi Beijing as a managing assistant, helping on the Lexus Hybrid Model launching project. I then returned to Loughborough University for my Masters degree. Studying in the UK definitely helped me obtain a British style of thinking. Learning technical terms and theories during my course also helped develop my understanding and communication skills.

I found my first UK job by attending an event run by the East Midlands universities, including Loughborough University. I met a small internet marketing agency called Metafocus Global, which was looking for someone familiar with international trading and the car industry, and that just happened to be me! I became their full-time employee after a part-time trial period.

I built a good rapport with English colleagues, learning from them every day: working approaches, British culture/rituals, history and even new slang words. Working in a different country, you need to adapt to their style and make yourself part of the team. After three months, I could think in a British mindset and began to understand what colleagues were doing and how to respond correctly.

Working in a small company is very beneficial for a fresh graduate, because you can learn much more than you could ever imagine. As there aren’t many employees in the company, you need to be alert to any changes and manage problems quickly. At Metafocus Global, I had ten of my own British and Chinese clients. The pace was unbelievably fast and pressured; however working here was the best self-development for me.

I suggest using your time wisely while you are still at university. It is a short time, especially for one-year postgraduates. Getting experience in the UK or at home will help with future applications. Being part of the culture is crucial as well, socialising with British friends after studying and participating in the HOST family programme to find a local family to stay with during the Christmas holiday. All these will help future job hunting. Don’t let any opportunity slip through your hands.

**Business analyst: Naresh Bhojwani**

Naresh has an MEng Communication Engineering from Queen Mary, University of London and works as a business analyst for Deutsche Bank.

I found the UK one of the top choices to further my education. UK qualifications are recognised and respected throughout the world. It has been a solid foundation for building my future, boosting my career and prospects. I believe studying in UK universities provided a vibrant, creative and challenging environment in which I have developed my potential.
I joined Deutsche Bank in 2009 on a graduate programme and successfully completed multiple rotations in various banking roles. My current role is a business analyst within GTO (Group Technology and Operations). The job involves providing innovation, speed and accuracy in technology and operation, which is the backbone of Deutsche Bank’s competitive edge.

During my time at university, I learnt business, financial and technical subjects. In my penultimate year, I spent my summer holidays researching and taking advice from the university careers service as I was interested in a graduate programme. I also researched relevant information, updated my CV and practised numerical reasoning tests and interviews. This helped me to perform well at the interview and assessment centre. I am now able to learn more through on-the-job training as well as the core curriculum of the graduate programme. This has helped me develop a stronger and wider foundation in both my financial and technical knowledge.

My advice to current international students who are looking to work in the UK is:

- Read materials to find out what job opportunities are available to you and then focus on the jobs that interest you as a career. It is also very important to read about the company and get company-related information for the job that you are applying for.
- Evaluate your skills, strengths and weaknesses and improve them by doing activities during university. I did voluntary work, some work experience and an internship. This provided me with good experiences to talk about at interview. For example, the insight I got into banking through my work experience enabled me to answer interview questions about working in banking as I had actually worked in this area.
- Go to presentations or on career-related courses. For example, as I was interested in a financial career I went on The City Course run by The Careers Group. The training and exposure I gained during the course was highly valuable to me and helped me secure my new job.
- Apply to internship programmes early to help secure a graduate role in the longer term.
- Apply early if you are applying to a graduate scheme. Some open as early as August. The sooner you submit your application, the more vacancies are still available and the more time recruiters have to spend looking at your application form.

Software developer: Kripa Vijay Anand Loganathan

*Kripa has an MSc Advanced Computer Science from the University of Leicester and works as a software developer for Vigence.*

I always had a passion to study and work in technologies. The MSc course at the University of Leicester and the opportunity to work for two years after graduation were key to my preference for the UK. I also wanted to work with British people as they are known for their kindness, and I knew I could develop in such a friendly environment. I felt international work experience could bring lots of prospects and training for the competitive world of work.

I am now a software developer at Vigence, a business and technology consultancy focusing on interactions between customers, partners and suppliers. I started as an intern through the HEFCE graduate placements, University of Leicester. Later, I was made a permanent employee as I excelled in the training and assessments. I work in the software development team creating plug-ins and custom CRM solutions for clients across the UK and Europe. I am also first-line technical support to existing CRM clients.

Being an international student, I was totally unaware of what was available when I joined university. I started developing my network of contacts, joining student communities in the Students’ Union. I approached the careers service for help finding the right career, building a professional CV and strengthening my employability. I drafted a plan to manage both academic and extracurricular activities and became an active volunteer, which helped me gain valuable work experience and develop myself.

I did an internship through the Shell Step programme (see Step) as a web developer, receiving an extra-mile award, which added a lot of value to my CV. I attended careers service workshops, which gave insights into business and opportunities to interact with employers. I subsequently achieved the Leicester Award for Employability for community engagement. Through effective planning, my department awarded me the best technical project award for my Masters project and I graduated with distinction, thereby positioning myself in a commanding place to face the challenging and competitive job market.

I feel studying in the UK is one of my greatest achievements to date as it completely changed me and gave me a new perspective on life. It gave me opportunities to join hands with people from different cultures, get to know them and encounter thought-provoking ideas. Participating in community groups and the Students’ Union allowed me to work with different people, giving me confidence to build my career.
The priceless experience from internships shaped me into a professional and added value to my CV. Living abroad gave me independence and experience to take on new challenges, take critical decisions, live life the way I want to and learn from my mistakes. It also helped me to compete in a challenging environment for a professional career and certainly got me an internationally-renowned Masters degree.

Studying abroad is a life-changing experience and I would definitely recommend it as a must to the students aspiring to achieve success in life. It is vital to do background research, shortlist universities, courses and location. My advice to international students is to be proactive and think ahead as you are being offered an opportunity to shape your career. Proper planning, discipline and prioritising are essential to succeed.

Written by Yasmina Mallam-Hassam, June 2011

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