

Facebook University Group - Fact File

This is one of two documents to help you get acquainted with university application processes. The other is a checklist which gives you an idea of what to consider when. The latest version of both documents can be accessed here (if you have Word, right click the document and Open in Word for a higher quality):

[Facebook University Group files](#)

Neither document is the finished article. If you have anything to add, please do feel free to contact Pauline or Kim, administrators of the group, so that we can edit the document.

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Gap Years

- For some subjects (eg Maths) a gap year is not advised. For other subjects, students are encouraged to gain work experience in a relevant field before starting at university. This should be discussed with university admissions officers.
- It's better to make a 'deferred' entry, ie say from the outset that you want to have a gap year, than to get offers and then decide you want to do a gap year. The university does not have to keep their offer if you tell them that you are going to take a gap year after they have already offered you a place for the coming year. It's better if you got the grades offered, however you might have to withdraw from the UCAS system and reapply a year later.
- If you're not sure whether you want to have a gap year, apply to uni, maybe aim high, and see what happens. You can always apply the following year with more realistic aims.
- If you have deferred for a year, you do not have to go through the UCAS system, as you will already have your grades. You can contact universities directly yourself, but you will need support from your school, so it's best to check that your school will be OK with this. You can go through UCAS too.
- Recommended gap year info: look at NGOs if wanting to do something fun and related to a subject of study. Many gap year companies are like expensive holidays. www.gapyear.com is good for booking travel. For science students: <http://www.theiet.org/students/work-careers/gap-year/>
- Gap years give you the advantage of applying to university with actual rather than predicted grades. They also give more thinking and exploring time to students who aren't sure what they want to study.
- Any recommendations for gap year organisations are very welcome.
- Note that EU staff may lose their right to education allowance for their children who take a non-educational gap year.
- You will lose Belgian family allowance for a child taking a non-educational gap year so you will need to reapply for it when they start their studies.

How to choose a university and/or course

(i) University

- Consider whether you prefer the idea of campus universities, being in a big city, being in a small city.
- Consider travel to the uni after the first year if it's a campus uni.

- Consider living and travel costs - London is much more expensive to both live and travel in than other parts of the UK. Different countries vary widely in their costs of living.
- Accommodation: always look at accommodation when visiting unis. In the UK, most students go into halls in first year. Some unis give students an early choice of which halls to go into – apply to your first choice as soon as you can so as not to be disappointed. Other unis only offer places once A level results are through. Check whether you can choose catered or non-catered halls, and whether you have to get possessions out of the room during Xmas and Easter.
- In most other EU countries, accommodation by the university is not generally offered, and students have to find their own place, either alone or with other students.

(ii) Course

- One possibility is to apply for courses in Europe, eg in Belgium, say for medicine (if that's what interests you) and also apply for a deferred entry to the UK, just in case the course here doesn't work out.
- Some universities in the UK have already said that they will have less availability for entry in 2021 due to taking higher numbers in 2020.
- However, bear in mind that the number of school leavers in the UK is declining for the next few years. This means that universities are finding ways to get the courses filled that weren't available previously.
- There are now sponsored degrees in the UK - eg for accountancy and law. They pay for your degree and you work for them during the holidays.
- There are also courses that will give grants to high achievers. This can be as high as £3,000 a year.
- Some courses contain a significant number of lecture time per week (eg over 30 hours) while others can contain as little as 9 hours and expect more self-directed work.
- Some small "universities" are setting up and creating their own courses eg engineering <http://www.warsashacademy.co.uk/> and Hotel Management <http://www.edgehotelschool.ac.uk>. There are probably many more.
- Some businesses work with universities eg ASDA with a retail management degree at Manchester Met, with ASDA paying for the course.
- Applying to Oxbridge - the teaching style is not for everyone. Students can't "hide" as the groups are very small - sometimes just 3 people. Some students find it very hard to find themselves not the brightest in the room. Oxbridge do pay for psychological counselling for their students.
- If you're not sure what subject to do Liberal Arts and Sciences (ie the US way of doing degrees) are beginning to take off in Europe. There are a few courses in the UK (although they tend to be

more Arts based than Science based) and about 8 in the Netherlands in English, based at University Colleges. These tend to be more expensive than other university courses in the Netherlands.

- Also, the Scottish and Irish ways of studying degrees force students to study more than one subject in the first one or two years at university. Normally the courses last 4 years, although it can be possible to skip the first year if your grades are good enough and you know more precisely what subjects you want to study. In Scotland you can completely change your course choices eg you could start doing English and Philosophy and finish with a Maths degree (not an exaggeration but an actual example!) (This may be possible in Ireland too - confirmation from a group member would be good!)

University Fairs

- Normally the BSB, ISB and St John's hold university fairs and events throughout the year. They are open to all (sometimes preregistration is required). These will be posted in our group. The European Schools are starting to hold fairs, but they are sometimes exclusive to EU school students. Because of Covid, some schools are holding online university discussion groups with universities.
- Oxbridge usually have an opening evening at the BSB each September which is open to all.
- European Studies Fair in Brussels in Jan/Feb each year. Pitched at post graduates:
www.diievents.dii.eu
- The Studyrama International Education and Career Fair (Salon des Formations et Carrières Internationales) in Brussels can take place between October and March.
<http://www.studyrama.be/>
- This link can help you find university fairs in any country at any level of study:
<http://www.universityfairs.com/fairs>
- UCAS Higher Education Convention, brings together universities and colleges, and other organisations, eg army, gap year possibilities to inform and guide prospective students. There are many events at different locations throughout the year:
<https://www.ucas.com/events/convention-exhibition>
- UK University Fair. This brings together major UK universities from across the country. International students will be able to get essential course information and talk to admissions advisors about entry requirements and ask any questions they may have about the university:
www.ukunifair.co.uk/
- During pandemic times, many universities are doing online visits which require pre-registration. Whilst these are certainly better than nothing, and often you get chance to ask direct questions, please bear in mind that they often don't give a 'feel' of the university in the same way as visiting

in person eg the look of the uni (old, new, busy, quiet, fun, serious, spacious, cramped, green v city, what's the accommodation like – old, new, cramped, spacious, near the uni or far from it, what are the student facilities like – canteens, cafes, sports, bars, student clubs etc).

More info to add?... do let us know

Advice on writing personal statements

The personal statement is a piece of writing of 4,000 characters in which the student sells themselves to the university. Schools usually offer some support in the writing of this, but the amount of support varies according to the school.

- Tip to startexercise ... try describing why you are a good person to go to their uni (or do your chosen course) in 3 words .. and take it from there.
- Write about how you are an independent learner, giving examples.
- 1/3 what you want to study, 1/3 why you want to study it, 1/3 what's interesting (and relevant) about you (it's interesting that you come from another country!).
- Show how experiences have opened your eyes, and to what.
- Don't say anything twice, nor repeat what is elsewhere on the form.
- Use a synonym finder so as not to keep repeating the same words.
- Think of a stand-out moment in class.
- They are looking for people who have passion in the subject, but avoid using that word.
- Don't make it bland - it needs 'colour' and needs to 'sing.' Try and make your introductory sentence one to pique their interest.
- Make it sound like a 'person' - write what "I" like and what "I" am interested in.
- Make sure you've stuff to put in it!! Eg work experience of any kind shows responsibility ... attendance at courses outside school, even online ones eg www.futurelearn.com can used to show interest in particular subjects.
- For Oxbridge - focus on the subject. For other unis, add more about what makes you interesting.
- For Oxbridge generally, they are looking for people who are particularly passionate about the subject. However, for engineering, Cambridge particularly is looking for well-rounded students.
- Look for online courses that you can do and get certificates for to prove your interest.
- [UCAS Personal Statement Guide](#)

- Do's
80% should be about the subject that the student is wishing to study.
20% max should be spent on extracurricular elements within the personal statement (any more will ring alarm bells in UK Admissions).
- Don'ts
NEVER NEVER try to tell the admissions people what the subject is – eg Law is.....They are working in this field and they know more than you do.
- The Personal Statement should comprise three main things:
 - 1 – How the current courses that the student is following are helping prepare them for the subject that they wish to study,
 - 2 – What extra work has the student done to help them with this preparation – reading/ work experience/ extra courses,
 - 3 – Why you love that course – why does it appeal to you as a learner (avoid the “I have wanted to be an engineer since I was 2” – no you haven't).

Advice on applying to Oxbridge

- This is a paid service. <http://www.oxbridgeapplications.com/>

English proficiency tests

- Students who wish to study at university IN English but are not American or British (etc), even if they've studied IN English (eg a French person who's studied at the ISB) may have to prove their level of English for entrance to courses in English.
- Similary, British/US (etc) students who have studied in the Belgian school system, ie as they've studied in French or Dutch, may have to prove their level of English.
- The following are providers of such tests:
 - TOEFL (www.ets.org/toefl)
 - SAT (www.collegeboard.org)
 - ACT (www.actstudent.org)
 - IELTS <http://www.britishcouncil.be/exam>
 - CAE (<https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/>)

Applying to European Universities

- <http://www.eunicas.co.uk/> a centralised application support service

Info for applying for Art courses

- For the UK, consider doing an art foundation course as a first step to choosing an art degree course. These are less commonly done than in previous years but are a good way in for students who do not have Art A level or equivalent, eg students coming from the Belgian school system.
- There are no tuition fees for under 19's doing Foundation courses, but you will still pay fees for equipment etc.
- Application for art college is separate from UCAS. You can apply to as many as you wish, although we limited it to 5. Application to art courses at university, however, is via UCAS.
- Each course has its own deadline for application, and are often submitted later, and they have different rules on portfolio format etc. Some courses require you to do a specific project for them.
- Pupils can use a Flickr account to send work, hard copies not necessarily required. Can be offered places without interview because of living overseas. Good idea to put all the work in a hard copy portfolio file just in case.
- Good to get advice on how to create a portfolio. If schools don't offer it, ask them or Uni Lifers, who is currently around to help. Getting such advice is crucial to creating a good portfolio and presenting it effectively. Personal statements are also an important component when sending in work.

Info for applying for Science courses

- Good idea to go on a university stage in the summer holidays to get experience. See Checklist file in the [Facebook University Group files](#).
- For some courses, particularly Chemistry and Physics, it is hard to get a related job without a PhD.
- Cambridge highly unlikely to take students from European schools for Engineering as they believe that the EB does not cover enough science compared to A level students - particularly Maths for engineering. Unlike other faculties, the engineering faculty at Cambridge looks for 'rounded' people.
- For some courses, the degree may be accredited by a national body (IOP for Physics) or merely recognised - check whether this is relevant to you, it may affect chances of postgraduate courses etc.

- In the UK, it's possible to do science and engineering foundation courses to check if it's really the right subject for you. Up to the age of 19, foundation courses are free.

UCAS – applying to the UK generally

- Initially, applications can be made to 5 universities (max). The student waits to see what offers are made (it is possible that some universities will not make an offer) and which grades are required. The student can accept only 2 of the original 5 – one firm and one insurance. Most offers will be conditional on meeting certain levels (exam results or tariff points).
- You no longer rank unis on your UCAS form – so students can apply to rival universities, except Oxford and Cambridge (you can't apply to both of them at once) without them being offended!
- British children who have hardly lived in Britain now have to go under the "other" category in terms of their nationality on the form. This is new from 2015 onwards.
- If you apply by 15th October, universities will assume that you have applied to Oxbridge (as that is their deadline for applications). Some unis may then not offer you a place, knowing that they are your second choice.
- If you don't get an offer from any UK university - you are allowed to apply to one more through "UCAS extra" from the end of February. You can only apply to universities that say they have extra availability. If that one rejects you, you can apply to another ... and so on. Or you can wait for "clearing".
- If you get the grades required for your firm choice, your place there will automatically be confirmed. Even if you don't get the grades required, they may still choose to accept you. If you are doing the EB or IB, you have the advantage of the grades coming out well before the A level results, so you could contact the university (immediately by phone) and make your case - universities would prefer to have someone who chose their university but who might have got slightly lower grades than expected, over someone who didn't choose their university and might get a place through clearing. They may, however, make you wait until after the A level results are out before confirming you have a place.
- If your firm choice rejects you but you get the grades required for your insurance choice, your place there will automatically be confirmed.
- If you don't get the grades required for either of your choices, you can go through "clearing". This is explained in greater depth here: (i) **If grades are worse** than predicted.
- If you get better grades than expected, you can go through "adjustment" ie apply for a course with higher entrance requirements than your firm choice. This is explained in greater depth here: (ii) **If grades are better** than predicted.
- If you have two nationalities, you can put both of them down on the application form. Often unis only look at the first one listed.

- Not all universities/courses use the UCAS tariff calculator for their courses. Details will be on the uni website. NB: The UCAS tariff calculator and the A level system changed in 2017.
- Although this is not strictly about applying, it is good to know. Once you're at uni, if you don't like your chosen course, unis are generally flexible about letting you change to a different one within the first couple of weeks of term (you don't get long to decide!).

Applying to UK universities with European Bac or Belgian school leaving certificate

- It can be complicated converting the grades required for university entrance from non-UK educational systems e.g. the European or International Baccalaureate or Belgian school leaving certificate. Some universities are more aware of 'foreign' qualifications than others.
- Get to know the head of Belgian schools so they can have a better input in the personal statement. It is useful to work with the school to help them write a suitable reference.
- When speaking to universities about what they are looking for (either at uni fairs or when visiting or on the phone), check that you are speaking to admissions tutors and not to recruiters (ie that you're talking to someone whom you could influence, or could remember you when you apply, rather than someone who's trying to sell the university/course to you).

Applying to Irish Universities with A levels, EB or IB

Entrance to Irish universities is on a point-based system. Only when all results are in (late August) do the courses decide what their cut-off level is for entrance. Some subjects eg Medicine demand additional requirements. See www.cao.ie for further info. Applications open in early November and close late January.

(i) A Levels

- Need minimum of 3 GCSEs (incl Maths and English) and 2 A Levels.
- Points awarded only for A and AS levels. The higher the grade, the higher the level, the higher the points.
- If you take A Level Maths you get awarded an extra 25 points for grade E or above.

(ii) European Bac

- Need to pass 6 subjects including English and Maths (although a 5 in 5 hour Maths is considered a pass by Irish unis).
- If you get a 6 or higher in 5 hour Maths, you get awarded 25 extra points.

- Minimum 5 hour Maths is required for any course which has a strong Maths or Science component.
- Points are awarded for the overall % mark x 6. Trinity, however, just takes the top 6 subjects and multiplies by 6.

(iii) International Baccalaureate

- Only the overall grade is taken into account. No notice is taken of scores in individual subjects except Maths, where 25 extra points are given for a score of 4 or better in higher level.

What to do if you don't get the predicted grades

Grades are the main factor in most UK and Irish universities offers. If you don't get the grades needed, some universities (the top ones) have traditionally been very strict and don't let you in. However, reducing school-leaver numbers and reducing applicants has led to all universities being more flexible on grades. From 2016, universities are no longer penalised for taking more students than their quota, so student numbers may increase, again making it even easier to get into UK universities ... but then there may be issues of course quality.

(i) If grades are worse than predicted

- If NOT doing A levels (ie Belgian or EU systems), get your school to talk to the admissions tutor at the unis you were 'holding' and explain exactly what the child had to do to achieve the award. This can often help.
- "Clearing" starts after the A levels come out in mid August, but you will be given a Clearing number to use as soon as you know you can't go to any of the unis chosen. Places available are found on the UCAS website plus on individual uni websites, though it's best to go through UCAS first, especially as they have now introduced Clearing Plus – your original choices, your grades plus any entry requirements will be matched to your top 50 course matches.

(ii) If grades are better than predicted

- "Adjustment" can be used if you got better grades than predicted. If you chose not to "hold" an offer from a uni because they wanted higher grades than you thought you'd get ... and then you get the high grades, you can contact that uni and ask if they would be interested in taking you now. If so, you need to go through "adjustment" in the UCAS system. This is particularly useful for those who get their grades before the A levels come out, eg IB and European Bac. It is dependent on availability of places though of course.

Uni applications advice for parents and students - UK

- Document available [here](#).

Brexit and Students in the EU

- For the latest information, please see:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/studying-in-the-uk-guidance-for-eu-students>
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-students-in-the-eu-continuing-your-studies>
<https://www.qub.ac.uk/Study/Undergraduate/Fees-and-scholarships/Tuition-fees/>
- This is an interesting [article](#) with plenty of links at the bottom.

Differences between fees (and other issues) in different countries

(i) England and Wales

- Tuition fees for 'home' students are usually around £9,250.
- From 2021, British students living in Europe will be charged this fee, for at least the next 7 years. All other EU students will be charged the international rate – which can vary from €15,000 to €55,000 a year. Loans are discussed in greater detail here: [Student loans - UK](#).
- Information for Wales can be found [here](#).

(ii) Scotland

- From 2021: those in Europe who can prove links to Scotland (eg birth or family there) may be able to pay fees of roughly £2,000 (which those in Scotland already pay – but for all these people, the Scottish government covers the fees). This is not yet confirmed.
- Other Brits in Europe will be charged €9,250 from 2021 and Europeans will pay international rates.
- The Scottish Government puts a cap on the number of "Scottish" students that any university can take, so it's much much harder to get in. The more prestigious universities either don't give offers or ask for incredibly high grades from students studying EU school leaving qualifications.
- If you don't get the grades you need for any university offer, do note that Scottish universities rarely allow 'Scottish' students to apply through "Clearing".
- Pupils from Ireland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland pay £9,250 a year but are given lower offers than "Scottish" students as they bring in the most money. See <http://www.saas.gov.uk/index.htm>

(iii) Northern Ireland

- Irish students pay roughly £4,500 a year. UK students pay £9,250. Student loans are available.
- Decisions about EU student fees from 2021 have not been made yet.

Student loans - UK

- Brexit has changed accessibility to loans. For courses starting between 1st August 2021 and 31st December 2027, British students who live in Europe remain eligible to apply for loans for tuition fees. However, non-British EU students will no longer be able to apply for these loans - see [here](#).
- The loan for helping with living costs (the maintenance loan) is only available if you've lived in the UK for more than 5 years before the first day of the first academic year of your course, and even then it's means tested.
- Not having a National Insurance number (NINO) might mean the payment of the loan is delayed. Most universities do not have a problem with this so long as they have confirmation that the loan has been granted. Here is a link to terms and conditions updated 06/04/2020: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/terms-and-conditions-of-student-loans>
- Repayment of the loans is a tax on earnings, rather than a debit to be paid off regardless of earnings, but beware that interest is added from the end of the 1st year of study. If you work in the UK, the amount you are expected to pay back (based on your earnings) will automatically be deducted. If you don't work in the UK, this obviously can't happen but you will be expected to declare your earnings to the Student Loan Company so that they can calculate what you should pay. <http://www.bis.gov.uk/studentfinance> Tel +44 141 243 3570. (Student Finance Services) for more information.
- Martin Lewis, the Money Saving Expert, has excellent advice about repaying (or rather not rushing to repay!) loans (updated 04/09/2020): <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes>
- The student loan repayment terms are something that can change at any time. Also beware of any rules that affect interest if you move out of the UK.

European universities

(i) Ireland

- Tuition fees are around €3,000.
- Most applications are now made online via the CAO (Central Applications Office). This guide written by the CAO is an excellent source of information: [CAO Application Guide](#)

- When applying, a personal statement is not required. Placement is based purely on grades.
- There are two course choices lists, an Honours Bachelor list and an Ordinary Bachelors/Higher Certificate list.
- You choose up to 10 courses (on both lists if you like) and then get allocated a place on a list for each of your eligible courses, your position on the list being determined by your points relative to the other eligible applicants for that course.
- Offers are then issued based on the position of the students on the list until all places have been offered - this is known as Round One.
- You will receive an offer of the course highest up your preference list that you are eligible for.
- If a place on a higher preference course becomes available in Round Two that you are eligible for, you may receive an offer which you can choose to accept or ignore. Accepting the new offer will automatically cancel the previous acceptance.
- If you don't receive an offer in Round One, you may still receive an offer in Round Two or later. There is also the possibility of making an Available Places application. See the CAO guide above for details.
- They don't seem keen on anything other than the Irish leaving cert. They are ok with the European Bac, less ok with IB and A Levels. For the European Bac, 5 hour Maths is a minimum entry requirement (and always gives extra points) for many courses (although this is changing). For IB they only take the final overall mark - they take no account of grades achieved in different subjects.
- Accommodation can be expensive. Student halls cost approximately €230/week in Dublin and €180/week in Cork. For details of student housing costs in 2019, click [here](#).

(ii) The Netherlands

- Several Dutch universities now offer courses in English. Application deadlines depend on the university and some have a deadline of 15 January (echoing the UCAS deadline) so it's always best to check well in advance. They are generally non-selective and tough in the first year. If you fail the first year you are not allowed to apply again for several years.
- For general information on Dutch universities and those offering English-language Bachelors see: <https://www.studiekeuze123.nl/> or <https://www.studyinholland.nl/> or <https://studylink.com/>
- Tuition fees are in the order of €2,100 per year (2020).
- University Colleges offer Liberal Arts and Science courses. Application deadlines are between October and February. The courses vary a lot and they have a selective intake, usually involving a lengthy application form and an interview. The fees are 2 to 4 times those of other courses, and accommodation (costing extra) in halls of residence is sometimes compulsory.

- Accommodation can be difficult to find in the Netherlands. Two websites that may help with your search are <https://kamernet.nl/en/a> and <https://www.studentenwoningweb.nl/en/>

(iii) Belgium

- Some universities offer a limited number of Bachelor courses in English. You can search [here](#) on studyportals' Bachelors page.
- Two other websites to for finding courses are: <http://www.highereducation.be/home> and <http://www.studyinlanders.be/>
- Tuition fees start at €835 per year with some extra costs for exams and books.
- Open days held between February and April and also in November. Most universities have open lectures during the "carnival" holiday for prospective students to attend and also orientation workshops. Students can attend actual lessons.
- Flemish Belgian Unis have entrance exams for all medicine, vet and dentistry degrees. Some arts courses may set entrance tests. Some French Belgian unis have entrance exams for engineering courses.
- Most other courses will accept anyone who has passed their final year academic level (not valid from all Flemish technical schools) exam, but up to two thirds fail or withdraw by the end of the first year. Exam periods are in January and June with resits in August. Need to get enough points to get through each year. In some cases, you can carry over a small number of exams you have failed to the next year.
- Exams passed in school can give more points.
- Courses in Dutch often use English texts.
- Many Masters courses in Belgium are in English.
- Many students at Belgian universities either live at home and commute to their university, or rent a small bedsit during the week and return home during the weekend.
- Cost of living in Belgium is about €6,000 per year for a student.

(iv) France

- Search for English speaking courses here: <https://www.campusfrance.org/en/recherche/theme/formations-358>

North American Universities

(i) USA

- The 2 years before the graduating year (sophomore and junior years of high school) are extremely important as these are the grades the universities will focus on.
- Costs anything between US\$ 20,000-80,000 per year “all-in”.
- Some universities/colleges, especially lesser known ones, may offer scholarships to overseas students. Fulbright scholarships exist for students who are citizens of Belgium or Luxembourg. See www.fulbright.be.
- Application deadlines are normally between October and January.
- American universities tend to consider the student in a more global light, rather than focusing primarily on their academic abilities, which tends to be the case in the UK. Also, many courses tend to be broad-based during the first year or two before focusing on a particular subject, ie, the student’s “major” for the next 2 years. This can be an advantage to students who are not sure exactly what they want to do at the start of the course. Students should keep in mind that the major they choose when applying is not set in stone. Students normally have the option until the start of their junior (3rd) year to change to a final major and, as mentioned above, the 1st and 2nd years are mostly spent on fulfilling general requirements.
- For top American universities, getting an impressive score on the SAT is extremely important so it is worth spending time studying for this. (Tutoring for the SAT is big business in the US.) Many universities publish requirements for minimum scores. This is a link to average SAT scores for the best American universities: <http://onforb.es/1nmFbHe>
- If the student was not accepted to the university of choice, consider going to a 2nd or 3rd choice and then transferring to the better university later. The final university diploma will be from the one the student attended in the last 2 years. For example, if a student attended a community college the 1st and 2nd year, then managed to transfer to Yale for the final 2 years, the diploma will only say Yale. Even the best universities have “feeder” schools. I have been told by admission officers that it is rare to accept transfer students from overseas, due to the very different higher education systems between the US and other countries.

(ii) Canada

For Belgian or French nationals:

- There are 3 anglophone (and many more francophone) universities in Quebec where Francophone Belgian and French nationals pay tuition fees at out of province Canada rates rather than international rates, around 5k tuition per year. Bishop's in Sherbrooke, Concordia and McGill in Montreal (scroll down on this [page](#) for more information about these three). More information about the student mobility agreement between Québec and the French community of Belgium can be found [here](#).

- CAE or IELTS (or similar?) is a must for French and Dutch educated students.
- Belgian (not dependent on language spoken) and French students in Quebec get free medical insurance covered by Belgian mutuelle.

For all nationalities:

- General information for applying:
<https://www.universitystudy.ca/plan-for-university/how-to-apply-to-canadian-universities>
- Students of any nationality pay Canada rates at the University of Ottawa if 40% of classes yearly are taken in French, remaining 60% can be in English.
- Living costs are about 6k. Total annual costs around 11k and scholarships available for international students to reduce costs.
- Students on 3 or 4 year degree courses qualify for 3 year open access post-grad work permits and then Canadian nationality.
- Canada has lots of work placement degrees called coop. Students can work 20 hours a week term time and 40 hours a week in the holidays.
- In normal times, paperwork should take 3 months but because of CV19, it is taking much, much longer.

Proof of proficiency at English

- Often needed for entry into English speaking universities by students living in non-anglophone countries. Even if you are English mother tongue, but live abroad, a university might ask for proof of your English (sometimes because the systems are automated and no-one has read the details of the application). If so, it can be helpful for the student to phone the university themselves and speak to the admissions tutor to prove to them that their spoken English at least is to the required level. See **English proficiency tests** for details of test providers.
- To find where to take the test, see the Checklist file in the [Facebook University Group files](#).

Practicalities and paperwork (some of this advice is repeated in the Checklist file)

(i) UK Banking

- Some bank branches are incredibly fussy about which documents they want, and others demand very little. You might need to go to several bank branches before finding an 'easy' one. You need a UK address. Can get a 'young savers' account any time when in the UK if you can prove you have a UK address. It's relatively easy to switch this over to a 'student account' once they get accepted at a university.

- The TSB now has an under 19 EU residents bank account that you can apply for from abroad. <https://www.tsb.co.uk/current-accounts/faqs/opening-under-19-account-non-uk-eu-residents/>
- Opening student bank accounts with Natwest is possible for children over 17.5 years (most demand that you are over 18 years)). It can be easier in Scotland because many 17 year olds go to university at that age there. Nationwide is not ok and most banks require 3 years previous residency for a student account. With Santander you can open a non-student account, pay GBP5 a month and change to a student account after 6 months. **If anyone has other info, please do share.**
- HSBC took 6 months to process a UK account from Belgium.
- Need a UK bank account to get a student maintenance loan.
- It is advisable to set up a bank account early, before the student even moves to the UK. There is then time to deal with any complications or difficulties in securing the correct paperwork.
- It's also possible to get a "Revolut" card - a bit like a travel card. It's prepaid and works with multiple currencies. Has great forex rates <https://www.revolut.com/be/>
- **Please feel free to send us any further info**

(ii) Applying for a National Insurance Number in the UK

- A National Insurance number is necessary for any "home" students (student loans can be blocked until up to a month after you provide it) and for anyone who intends to undertake paid employment when in the UK (e.g. a Saturday job, paid work for the university, a holiday job). Anyone who is permanently resident in the UK is automatically given an NI number after their 16th birthday.
- "Home" students who lived in the UK can apply while the student is still living in Europe as they will have a juvenile account set up while claiming child benefit in the UK. But it is not easy and you have to be lucky enough to talk to the right advisor. Recommend the new Webchat service which you will be offered on the [hmrc site](#), rather than ringing up. Allow 3 weeks to receive the letter. Otherwise you have to apply when resident in the UK.
- To apply for a NI number in the UK, the student has to phone the NI office and make an appointment for an interview at a Job Centre Plus office. The student can go to the nearest JCP office, or make an appointment at an office in another area if it is more convenient. The appointment will be within the next week.
- The student will be asked for their date of entry to the UK (usually around the start date of their course). The student is expected to remain in the UK for the period between making and attending the interview.

- They need to take with them a form of ID (passport, driving license) and a letter from the college saying you are studying in the UK (if you have other docs eg birth certificate, bank account, it may be wise to take those too).
- Answer the question “why do you want a NINO” with either “to get part time work” or ‘apply for a student loan”.
- The NINO should arrive within 2-3 weeks but it can take up to 6 weeks. Once you know it’s on its way you can ask for it to be sent to a different address (if needs be).
- National Insurance number application line: Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm
Telephone: 0345 600 0643
Textphone: 0345 600 0644
See <https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number> for more information.
- Once the student has this number, it is theirs for life!
- EU students don’t have to provide one for a student loan (though should if they have one). Here is a link to terms and conditions updated 06/04/2020:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/terms-and-conditions-of-student-loans>

(iii) Phones

- “3” and GifGaf have been recommended.
- Much easier to get prepaid cards compared to a contract as these require bank accounts and may also require proof of residency.

How much are student living costs?

Student living costs vary according to where they study and what they have to pay for out of the money they are given. When asking people how much they might give, take into account what they are including eg travel back home, utility bills, phone costs, clothing. Also take into account the costs of books and equipment - some courses require lots of equipment and resources, others very little with much being available online. And then take into account the lifestyle of your child - will they party all the money away if you give them a lot or will they save it? At meetings people say they give between €40 to €100 a week with 100 being seen as generous and 40 including just food and transport costs. Edited 09/2020: I would say that this information is now out of date and that €40/week would not be enough to cover food and transport costs given that it says below that food will be £30/week. It certainly would be nowhere near enough if bills had to be paid from it. The following are some things to consider:

- Area – some areas are more expensive to live in than others.
- Transport – does the student have to use public transport to travel to and from the place of study? How much will this cost each week/month?

- Trips home – who pays for this?
- Food – included or not? £30 a week (?) but not if the student is buying steak or salmon every day!
- Mobile phone – at least £10 a month, depending on phone and package. Can be a lot more.
- Study material – some courses require more study material than others, so more expense for the student.
- Utility bills – not applicable if in a hall of residence but a factor if renting private accommodation, estimate around £40-£50 a month.
- What sort of lifestyle do you want your student to have? Most UK students live on a fairly tight budget.
- For 50+ tips for students to stretch their budgets, by the Money Saving Expert, click [here](#).
- A last word of wisdom, if you start with a lower allowance, you can always increase it if the student is struggling. Difficult to do it the other way around ... but not impossible!

Work experience

- If a student is applying for work experience, it is **much better if they contact the company themselves** rather than letting their parents do it. This doesn't mean that you can't still advise your children or tell them what to write if necessary, but it is important that the initiative comes from them, or at least appears to come from them. Students who contact the company themselves and send their own application letters were considered more serious and motivated than those who had not.
- This concerns the legalities of unpaid internships. Worth reading through if you have a student looking for work experience in Belgium. <http://www.emploi.belgique.be/defaultTab.aspx?id=400>
- Prof. B. Gulbis : +32(2) 555. 34.28 chimie@erasme.ulb.ac.be (Biochimie Clinique) - offers stage d'observation in French, for biochemistry students
- Offers work experience in the summer with manual, admin or lab work www.cargill.com
- Offers short assignments in market research or office admin www.powersys.com
- [Links to add ... please let us know](#)

Voluntary work

- [Links and information to add ... please let us know](#)

Erasmus exchange programme

- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus-about-erasmus.htm>