

## The UK continues to be a top destination for study, with applications set to rise by almost 50% within five years

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Students from across the globe still hold the UK's universities and colleges in the highest regard, with renewed interest in living and learning here as the world emerges from the pandemic.

For 10% of international students, the dream of studying abroad starts before their 11th birthday.

With borders opening up again, insights from a survey completed by 1,300 students planning to study internationally show how experiencing life in a different country, that is safe, with a strong academic reputation, are key motivations. Cultural factors such as the worldwide admiration of the NHS and the English language are also crucial for many considering the UK.

For the UK, UCAS forecasts the volume of international undergraduate applicants will increase by 46% to 208,500 by 2026.

UCAS and College Board's new report '*Where Next? What influences the choices international students make?*' also shows that international students apply for a focused group of subjects, are highly independent with their research, and around half follow in their parents' footsteps by studying abroad.

During the pandemic, [88% of students viewed the UK as a positive](#), or very positive, place to study, with 77% applying because of the UK's strong academic reputation.

The report also found:

- Motivation differs by nation, with Nigerian students most interested in gaining skills to support them in their career (chosen by 80% of Nigerian respondents), while for Indian students, the most important factor is that HE options are of 'better quality' (75% of respondents from India) than at home.
- Prospects after graduation are more important for those wanting to study in the US (57%), Singapore (54%) and the UK (54%); whereas experiencing life in that country is more important to those considering Italy (75%) and the Netherlands (72%).
- Students want to hear from students, as open days (40%) and interaction with current students (39%) are increasingly used by students in their research.
- Students are five times more likely to say securing a job in their destination country, rather than their home nation, is their top priority.
- In 2021, more than half of international students accepted through UCAS to study in the UK came from seven countries, with two in every nine coming from China.

College Board reported a record number of international students sitting for their Advanced Placement (AP) exams in 2021, even exceeding pre-pandemic participation by 4% to reach 84,000. With seven in ten respondents in this survey saying that their study abroad ambitions drove qualification choices, international students are paving the way for future study abroad opportunities in key destinations like the UK and the US.

In total, UNESCO reports that 5.6 million students, equivalent to the entire population of Singapore, study in a different country to their home nation. The UK continues to be a leading host destination for international students, second only to the US with both countries collectively hosting [30% of international students](#).

Over the past decade, UCAS has helped 1.3 million students from more than 200 countries and territories around the world secure their place in higher education, and recently launched [Myriad by UCAS](#), a dedicated platform for international postgraduate students coming to the UK. Each year, College Board helps more than 7 million students prepare for the transition to college through programs like the SAT and Advanced Placement which are offered in nearly 190 countries and territories, more than any other qualification program in the world.

**Clare Marchant, UCAS Chief Executive said:** “International students are showing extraordinary resilience – the universal appeal of living and studying in another country continues.

“Despite the challenges of the pandemic, international students have pursued the opportunities available to them and we forecast sustained growth in interest to study in the UK to continue into the next decade.

“Our findings from this joint research with College Board focus on international students’ mindsets and what they want from their higher education experience. To continue to inspire and support international students to cross borders, the global higher education community should personalise applicants’ experiences, using information that’s relevant and useful for specific countries to share the outstanding opportunities on offer.”

**Linda Liu, College Board’s Vice President of International**, said, “As we are on the precipice of the world reopening, these results reaffirm the desire of so many students to study in another country. We see this desire manifest in our programs at the College Board, from the many students who want to send their SAT scores to universities outside of their home country to the record-setting number of students taking AP exams outside the US.

“Studying abroad is a big decision, and we continue to see international students planning early, being thoughtful about their research, and fiercely seeking tangible outcomes from their experience. We are pleased to partner with UCAS on this research which not only includes learnings from this new survey, but also combines insights from previous research to uncover evolutions and differences in how globally mobile students are making their choices.”

## **Ends**

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## **Notes for editors**

UCAS, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, is an independent charity, and the UK's shared admissions service for higher education.

Our services support young people making post-18 choices, as well as mature learners, by providing information, advice, and guidance to inspire and facilitate educational progression to university, college or a degree apprenticeship.

We manage almost three million applications, from around 700,000 people each year, for full-time undergraduate courses at over 350 universities and colleges across the UK. We also talk to 1.4 million people considering their next step, whether that's a traditional undergraduate degree, apprenticeship, or other vocational route, each year.

We also provide a wide range of research, consultancy and advisory services to schools, colleges, careers services, professional bodies and employers, including apprenticeships.

We're a successful and fast-growing organisation, which helps hundreds of thousands of people every year. We're committed to delivering a first-class service to all of our customers — they're at the heart of everything we do.

## **About College Board**

College Board is a mission-driven not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success and opportunity. Founded in 1900, College Board was created to expand access to higher education. Today, the membership association is made up of over 6,000 of the world's leading educational institutions and is dedicated to promoting excellence and equity in education.

Each year, College Board helps more than seven million students prepare for a successful transition to college through programs and services in college readiness and college success—including the SAT®, the Advanced Placement® Program, and BigFuture®. The organization also serves the education community through research and advocacy on behalf of students, educators, and schools. For further information, visit [collegeboard.org](https://collegeboard.org).