

Study UK

A student and parent guide to choosing an education agent

study-uk.britishcouncil.org



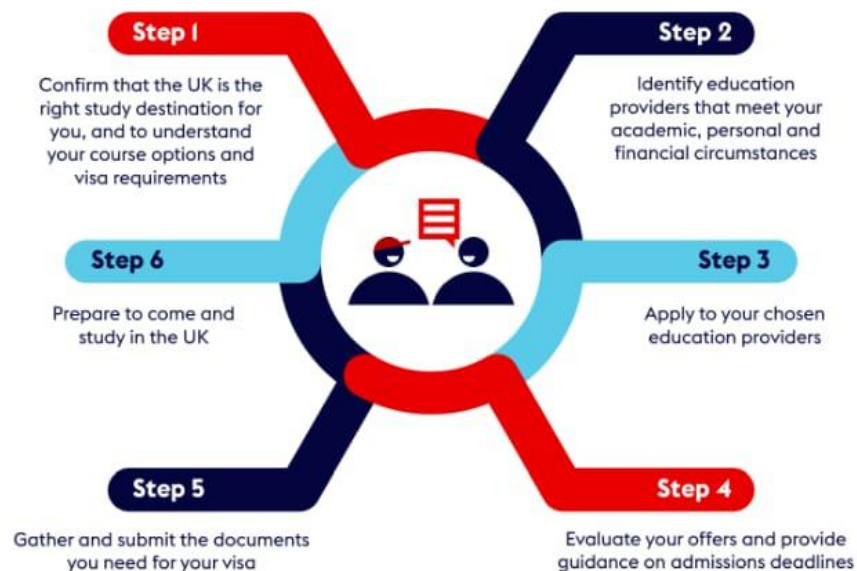
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Choosing an international study destination is one of the most important decisions you can make. Your family and friends may be able to help but making a final choice and applying to an education provider can be daunting. This is why many students get help from an education agent or counsellor.

This guide is for you and your family to understand the role of agents working with UK-bound students and the service they should provide.

A good education agent will help you to:



They will have:

Completed the British Council UK certified counsellor training

Certified agents and counsellors will have been awarded a 'I am a UK Certified Counsellor' digital badge to demonstrate their knowledge and awareness of the UK as a study destination. They can also choose to be listed on the UK database of certified counsellors. <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/agents-counsellors/database>

Committed to the national code of ethical practice for UK education agents

The national code sets out the behaviours and values that are expected of education agents that represent the UK.

Use this checklist to identify good quality education agents:

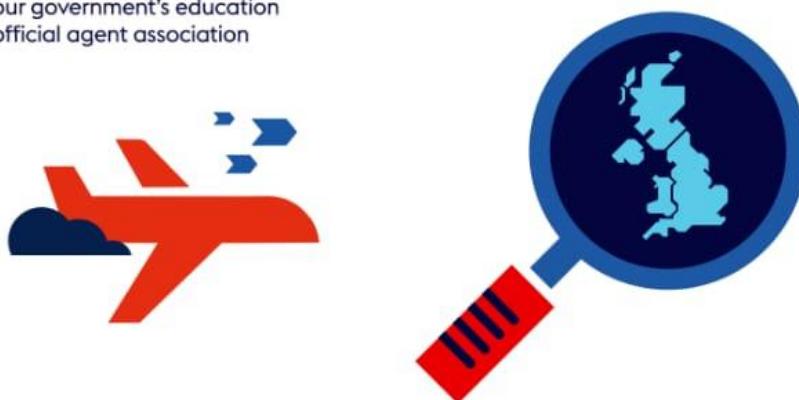
Is the education agent listed on the UK database of certified counsellors? https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/agents-counsellors/database	✓
If you know where you want to apply, is the education agency listed as an official representative or partner on the school/college/university website?	✓
What are other students saying about the education agency? Note: Even the best agent can't make everybody happy but this will help you decide if they are right for you.	✓

Important sources of information

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)	UKCISA provides guidance for international students on studying and living in the UK, and the latest visa and immigration information. If you have questions, call its free advice line to speak to a qualified international student adviser. https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/
Study UK	Study UK shares the latest updates and advice on studying in the UK. https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org
UK Agent Quality Framework	The UK's set of tools and guidance for ethical practice in international student recruitment. https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/agents-counsellors/uk-quality-agent-framework

What you should expect from your education agent

- A well trained agent will explain the UK education system, the different regions of the UK and the schools/colleges/universities they represent. They should give you a good understanding of the many options open to you in the UK.
- They should know what [the national code of ethical practice for UK education agents](#) is and show you a copy. Familiarise yourself with the national code to see how your education agent is doing.
- Many education agents will regularly attend training delivered by their partner education providers, the British Council, and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).
- The UK does not require a licence for agents to recruit students to UK universities, colleges or schools but agents operating in your country may require a local licence. Do your research beforehand to find out if this applies in your own country. This may include checking with your government's education department or official agent association websites.
- Agent fees are typically covered by the school/college/university in the form of a commission payment, which covers the agent's operating costs. Regardless of whether the agent is paid a commission or not, they should give you high-quality and unbiased advice.
- Some education agents may charge for additional services. They should be clear with you at the start of the process if they will charge you any fees and what they are for. If you are unsure you may check with the education providers that you plan to apply to.
- Agents cannot provide you with favourable entry requirements, alternative application options, or access to information that differs from a student applying directly. If an agent claims to be able to do this, contact the education providers you are applying to, report it, and seek clarification.



- Agents should have clear information about what you can do if you are not satisfied with the services they have provided you with. If you follow the agent's complaints process but your issue is still not resolved, talk to the education providers you are applying to, and seek their advice.
- If you are not satisfied with the education provider's response, you may be eligible to complain to an ombudsman. In England and Wales, this can be done through the [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#), in Scotland it is the [Scottish Public Service Ombudsman](#), and in Northern Ireland, it is the [Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman](#). You should check with the ombudsman website to see if your complaint is eligible or contact them for further information.
- Many education agents may not be licenced UK immigration advisers but can still provide you with effective guidance with your student visa application. If you receive immigration advice from an agent, make sure you also understand the requirements you need to meet. You can find advice on how to apply and how to protect your immigration status once you are in the UK at [gov.uk](#), [UKCISA](#) and [Study UK](#). You can also seek this support from the institution you will study at.
- You can ask to speak to students the education agent has previously placed in the UK. Speaking to them can be a useful way to find out about their experiences. Remember every student's situation is different so their application or visa processes may differ from yours.
- Some education agents offer additional help after you arrive in the UK, e.g. providing visa updates, accommodation support, etc.

Remember, where and what you study is your decision

Education agents are there to help you make an informed decision. Not to decide for you. Be open to any ideas they may suggest but remain firm about what you want. If you believe that you are not receiving the best service, contact the education providers you are applying to and get them to investigate your complaint. Similarly, if you have had a good experience support other students by recommending them and providing reviews.

View this guide and more information about studying in the UK



Whilst some agents do charge fees for their service, this should be explained clearly from the start. Agents should not hold money or make payments on your behalf. If you are unsure about an agent asking you for money, check with the institution you are applying to see if this is legitimate.

