



7 October 2020

**Dear Student,**

Whether you are starting a new course or returning to pick up where you left off, student life is going to look different from usual this year. Our mission at UKCISA is to support international students and all who work with them, so we are writing to give you some information that we hope will help you to thrive and enjoy your studies during this very unusual time.

**Support on campus**

If you experience any problems or difficulties during your time in the UK, in the first instance you should turn to your education provider. Most institutions will have a Student Services team whose sole purpose is to look after the wellbeing of students. Their services are confidential and you can seek support for a range of issues, from financial worries to housing problems to mental health issues, without judgement or any fear of repercussions to your academic standing.

Your Student Union is also there to support you and is likely to have an International Students Officer who will welcome you to the union and let you know what services and support they offer.

**Student clubs and societies**

Student societies, sports clubs and extracurricular activities are a great way to meet other students from all backgrounds. When we talk to international students near the end of their studies, they often tell us they wish they had got involved in some of the clubs and societies at their institution earlier on during their time in the UK. A lot of this activity might be online this year, but it will still be a great and innovative way to connect with other students who share similar interests.

**Support from UKCISA**

The UKCISA [website](#) has lots of information and advice for international students – from navigating the impact of Covid-19, to adapting to life in the UK and up-to-date immigration advice.

We also run a specialist advice line, which you can call between 1pm and 4pm Monday to Friday to speak to one of our specialist advisers.

- [Find out more here](#)

## Support from external organisations

There are many other UK organisations that support students:

- [Student Minds](#) has support and resources around mental health, as well as the [Student Space programme](#) to support students through coronavirus
- The [National Union of Students](#) champions student rights
- The [Office of the Independent Adjudicator](#) reviews complaints about higher education institutions in England and Wales, and is the place to turn to in the unlikely event of an unresolved complaint with your institution

## Covid-19

The number of cases at local and regional levels is being monitored closely and, as a result, guidance from the UK government is being regularly updated. You can keep up-to-date with guidance specific to your area on the [GOV.UK website](#), as well as from your institutions.

Testing and treatment for Covid-19 is free to everyone in the UK regardless of immigration status. Information about how to book a test is available on the [GOV.UK website](#).

- For further guidance specific to international students, [please take a look at our website](#)

## Brexit

The UK left the European Union in January 2020 but is in a transition period until 11pm on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020. EU, EEA and Swiss students who are in the UK or coming to the UK before the end of the transition period can apply under the EU Settlement Scheme to live and study in the UK. However, EU, EEA and Swiss students who are coming to the UK from January 2021 will need to apply via the new points-based immigration system before they come (unless coming for up to six months as a visitor, and the study is allowed) – [take a look at our website](#) for the latest information about the new student route and EU Settlement Scheme.

## UKCISA's work on behalf of international students

Our vision at UKCISA is that every international student who comes to the UK has a positive experience. This year we published a [position paper](#) calling on the UK government to work with the education sector to deliver a world-class international student experience. UKCISA is now working on an International Student Charter, which will be the next step in making the aims of the UK Government's International Education Strategy a reality.

- Sign up here to stay informed of all [the work we do on your behalf](#)

## #WeAreInternational

The #WeAreInternational campaign celebrates the value of international education and international students by sharing stories of international students studying in the UK.

In March 2020 we appointed the first cohort of [#WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors](#), ten inspirational international students who we work with as key partners in shaping a quality student experience.

The ambassadors are using their knowledge of studying in the UK to influence policy and lead the #WeAreInternational campaign, so that together we can develop an inclusive global student community.

Applications for the next cohort of student ambassadors will be opening soon – [follow #WeAreInternational on social media to find out more.](#)

## **UKCISA Fest 2020**

Introducing UKCISA Fest 2020 – a whole week of free online events in mid-November to celebrate International Student Day – to virtually bring together international students across the UK , to inform policy and practice through lived experience.

Each day, we will focus on different themes and topics. Discussions will be led by the #WeAreInternational Student Ambassadors, exploring deeper understanding of international students' experiences at every stage of your education journey; along with other students, UKCISA members, sector partners and policy makers.

Registration opens soon – follow [UKCISA website](#) and social media to find out more.

We hope you can join us!

## **Get involved**

We would love for you to share your experiences of student life and studying in the UK with us.

- [Find out how you can get involved with the #WeAreInternational campaign](#)

International students are at the heart of everything we do at UKCISA. We recognise that it's a huge step to leave home to study abroad and your experience of studying this year may be very different to what you imagined when you first thought of coming to the UK. We know the staff in all institutions have been working extraordinarily hard for months to make sure that while it will be different than normal, your time studying here this year will still be worthwhile, valuable, and full of opportunity.

With very best wishes,

**Anne Marie Graham**  
Chief Executive, UKCISA



**Nebu George**  
Chair of the Student Advisory Group  
UKCISA



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