Studying abroad is an exciting prospect for any student. Taking a leap of faith and studying away from your home country allows you to experience life in another culture, meet people from around the world, and encounter faculty and research facilities at some of the leading, global universities.

If you are looking to earn your graduate degree abroad, then this eBook is for you! We have written this guide to logically break down everything you need to know to make your decision on whether getting a graduate degree in the UK is the right decision for you.

"I am so happy that I took this chance, moving half way around the world, for my studies. Across The Pond made the transition quite easy; I’ve made life-long friends, and couldn’t imagine my life anywhere else.

Stefania Fulginiti, The University of York"
Considering a move to the UK to study is a pretty big step in your life, but there is no need to worry, I know exactly how it feels! Hi, my name is Heather West, and I live in Seattle, Washington. I attended the University of Exeter to get my MA in English Literary Studies. Across The Pond made the entire process so simple that, before I knew it, I was living and studying in the UK. It turned into one of the most rewarding years of my life and I cannot recommend this opportunity enough to everyone I meet.

In this eBook, we will detail all the many ways Across The Pond supports graduates throughout the entire application process, from choosing the right university to landing on British soil. We will also answer students’ most frequently asked questions.

After reading, if you have any further questions, don’t hesitate to visit our website at studyacrossthepond.com and make an enquiry.

Heather

WHY STUDY IN BRITAIN?

Studying abroad may seem like a costly upheaval compared to remaining in the US. There are, however, a host of benefits to studying in a different country. But, of all the countries of the world, why choose Britain?

TOP UNIVERSITIES

Great Britain is home to many top universities, whose degree programs are recognized around the world. In fact, in a recent BBC survey the UK placed sixth in the world’s top 20 global education systems, and the UK was the first English-speaking country on the list. Impressive, to say the least!

Students often refer to university rankings to see how universities compare to each other and get confused by the conflicting results across the various league tables. There are quite a few tables to consider, all of which use a wide range of methodologies and assessments when evaluating institutes of higher education. It can become overwhelming and confusing! To simplify things, we suggest students simply recognize that British universities continually and consistently place among the best in the world, and students can rest confidently in that fact.

Britain is well-known for its prestigious universities and high academic standards, so, no matter where you study, you can be sure that you will receive some of the best education out there and won’t have any problems returning to the US, or anywhere else in the world, to continue your education or seek employment.

COST AND TIME-SAVINGS

Most students assume it is extremely expensive to study in the UK, but this is not the case! More often than not, the cost of study is cheaper than in the US. There are many reasons for this, but in general, tuition is cheaper and degree programs are shorter, and these factors together significantly reduce the cost of education. The UK offers a high-quality, graduate degree completed in just twelve months; this not only means that you save on time and money, but you get to start your career sooner!
Tuition fees in the UK are cheaper than that of private universities in the US and are on par with many public universities. You should expect to pay on average around $17,000 to 21,000 for tuition fees and between $12,000 to $20,000 in living costs for each year of study in the UK. (Note these figures will fluctuate with the currency exchange rate and location of universities.) The higher tuition costs encompass specific laboratory science programs and the MBA; the higher living costs represents the expense of living in London for 12 months.

It is worth mentioning that scholarship help is more widely available in the US than it is in the UK. The reason is simple: it is not as expensive to study in the UK, so the demand for scholarship money is not as great. Still, international students can benefit from scholarship help from British universities. These opportunities are generally merit-based and result in only a partial reduction in fees, but with tuition so inexpensive in the first place, even a partial scholarship makes a significant difference. We have up-to-date information on all our partners’ scholarships and our own exclusive scholarships, which may not be available unless you apply through us. If you would like to find out more information, please contact an Across The Pond advisor.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE
Not only will you experience education from a prestigious institution, you will also benefit from professional exposure. British universities place a high premium on making students ready for the workforce immediately after graduating. They do this by equipping students with practical experience and through networking. The UK is the gateway to Europe and therefore offers students great international networking opportunities. Many times, universities will add an extra year to their degree programs so students take advantage of a year-long internship or work placement opportunity. This is called a “sandwich degree” and is unique to British universities. Some Master’s programs also allow dissertations to be based on internship work, which is sometimes an option for students.

Not only that, international students are permitted to work part-time while in the UK, which is another chance to acquire international work experience. If earning a Master’s from a British university is not enough to make your resume pop, the addition of international work experience could be the ticket.

PERSONAL GROWTH
The UK offers a multi-cultural and dynamic place to study, which results in tremendous personal growth. By removing yourself from familiar surroundings and studying alongside students from all over the world, you will make many new and important realizations, not only about the world, but also yourself, your opinions, beliefs and even assumptions. While often challenging and maybe even humbling at first, students come to appreciate and value the personal growth they experience, which results
in many qualities and skills that can be used to their advantage for the rest of their lives: open-mindedness, critical thinking, adaptation, and compassion.

It is not all about the time spent in academia; there is a wealth to be learned outside of the classroom as well. Education is all about exposure, and the UK is in an incredibly convenient location from which to travel to mainland Europe and the rest of the world. Imagine how much you will be able to see, do and therefore learn with the chance to travel cheaply and easily with the UK as your home base, not to mention giving your family and friends an excuse to cross the Atlantic and adventure with you!

GLOBAL FRIENDS
Depending on which university you are considering, it is likely that anywhere from 40-50% of its student population is international, while the remaining percentage come from the UK. What an amazing network of students! Many American students return home from the UK with a friend on almost every continent.

Don’t fall into the trap of mingling primarily with the other Americans on campus (unless you want to, of course!). Seek out multi-cultural friendships to gain exposure to people and cultures from across the globe. We are able to identify which of our partners have a high or low number of American students, depending on what kind of experience you wish to have.

All of these experiences will help you to stand out from the crowd when it comes to establishing yourself in your chosen career, either in Britain or back home.
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US AND UK GRADUATE DEGREES

BRITISH UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS ARE MORE SPECIFIC
Whereas American degree programs focus on students acquiring a breadth of knowledge, British degrees focus on depth and hone in on a single subject from the very beginning of the program. This is the main reason why British degree programs are shorter and generally more professionally focused, depending on the area of study. A British degree is perfect if you know what you want to study and want to get straight to the point! Depending on the university or the degree program you choose, you may still be able to take classes outside of your Master’s, but generally not enough time to depart from major coursework significantly. Some programs are designed to let you combine multiple areas of focus, but the general rule is that British programs are far more engrossed in one subject than in the US.

BRITISH UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS ARE MORE RESEARCH-BASED… IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE
Studying in the UK requires a different learning style to what Americans are typically accustomed. The difference can actually be summed up in one, concise sentence:

In general, US education tells students what to think, while in the UK, they are taught how to think. Let us explain this in a little more detail…

Firstly, in the US, students rely strongly on memorization, whether it be the content they read in their textbooks or what they hear from professors in class. They are then used to repeating these answers, almost by rote, on tests. British programs focus more on learning through your own research and developing your own opinions with the help and guidance of professors. You are not required to buy expensive textbooks for each class (another area of savings!); instead, you are given a “suggested reading list” (as opposed to a syllabus) and will only be as informed and prepared as you choose to be based on what is read outside of class. There is far more emphasis placed on your
independent study outside of class with the focus being on learning how to present a well-argued and researched hypothesis or opinion.

Secondly, American students are used to, and perhaps depend upon, hand-holding or prodding from their professors, oftentimes having their overall grade docked if they skip class too many times. Their final grade is usually the accumulation of various quizzes, tests and assignments that are scattered throughout the semester or year. These multiple opportunities to affect one’s grade minimizes the consequences of doing poorly on a quiz here or skipping a class there. Whereas this type of hand-holding would naturally decrease in a graduate program anyway, in Britain, you may still be surprised to learn that you will only be assessed once or twice during the semester. You will typically have one piece of work during the semester and one assignment or exam at the end, which means your final grade depends on the performance of these items. You can, of course, seek feedback and guidance from your professors at any point, whether you need help with a research idea, a paper or the content of their class in general. There is tremendous support from professors for students who take an invested and proactive interest in their own studies.

Because British programs are already intense and accelerated by nature and everything that is learned throughout the semester is tested only once, you will automatically feel a strong sense of responsibility and the weighty importance of not only attending each class but also paying careful attention and putting forth the very best at every opportunity. As a result, professors do not generally need to keep tabs on your work anyway.

One more big difference: whereas you may expect to spend anywhere from 10-20 hours a week in class during your graduate program in the US, you will only spend 6-12 hours a week in class in the UK (note that this will vary by subject). The rest of the time is yours to do your own reading, develop your research, work on group projects, attend tutorials or smaller discussion groups and write papers. With all this supposed free time, it might be tempting to avoid your homework and go on some exciting, European adventures, but not too fast! We suggest students approach their British Master’s degree like a 40-hour work week. Plan to put in around 6-8 hours of work in a day so you are sure to keep up with your classmates and do well. However, with good forward-planning and time management, you will have plenty of time to travel and explore the rest of the world. Don’t worry!

**WORK EXPERIENCE OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN YOUR DEGREE**

As stated earlier, there is sometimes the chance to spend some time in your industry or in an internship, and these opportunities, if available, will be built into your degree program already. Naturally, these programs tend to be more competitive and have more rigorous entry requirements, but these opportunities are worth considering. Not all placements are paid opportunities, but if you’re lucky enough to get placed somewhere, the value of experience cannot be quantified.
APPLYING TO THE UK AS A GRADUATE

British universities offer a very wide range of subjects to study, and the options are inspiring. Your Across The Pond Advisor will first assess your academic background, grades and personal interests, which helps them recommend the universities and programs that will best serve your academic and professional goals. This guidance and support is totally free!

Entry requirements are one area where students need and appreciate Across The Pond’s expert help. Even though everyone is speaking English, entry requirements can often feel like another language! Additionally, requirements vary from one university to another, and even from one academic department to another. Having an expert by your side, navigating these requirements and matching you to those schools where you have a shot at success, is a great benefit.

Across The Pond are also expert at navigating each university; our advisors have a very good idea of what it will take to receive an offer, and what to expect once you are at university. A university that only had 10 places on a program this year may have 20 places available next year. Conversely, a program might reduce in size for various reasons, which will affect your chances of an offer. All of this and other changing circumstances in universities and departments may affect entry requirements from one year to year. With this in mind, Across The Pond advisors can help you find the most realistic and best suited university program for you.
OPPORTUNITIES BEYOND YOUR BRITISH MASTER’S

WORK AT HOME OR ABROAD
After you have graduated from your Master’s in the UK, you can either start your career or continue your studies at home or in the UK. Yes, that’s right, your degree from the UK will most definitely impress US employers!

STARTING YOUR CAREER IN THE US AFTER YOUR BRITISH MASTER’S
Because Across The Pond only works with accredited universities, your UK degree will always be recognized back in the US. Britain is well-known for its prestigious universities and high academic standards, so when employers see your British academic qualifications, they are likely to be highly impressed.

There are, however, a small number of professional degrees that do not directly transfer back to the US. Qualifying teaching degrees, Health or Clinical Psychology, the LLB (the British equivalent of a JD), Physical Therapy, and a handful of others may require you take an additional qualifying exam or study for a professional qualification upon returning to the States. Your Across The Pond advisor can help you identify these degree programs, and, in some cases, navigate these situations, but the large majority of UK degrees transfer back to the States without any issue at all.

In today’s world, more and more companies are adopting an international focus by expanding overseas, entering new markets, as well as developing international partnerships. Your study abroad experience will show that you have the skills to bridge the gap between cultural differences, to communicate effectively, to problem-solve, and perhaps even lead a group or team – all abilities which are very much desired in the workplace.

I think you get out of the university experience what you put into it! You need to be open to learning in new ways from your peers and they will learn just as much from you - whether it’s in the pub, over a pizza, or at one of the many university social events

Amelia Hagen, The University of Brighton
HOW CAN WE HELP?

Since 2004, Across The Pond has been providing free, personalized student advice and guidance to thousands of North American students looking to study at a UK university. Our team of UK Study Experts all have first-hand experience with studying in the UK and many used Across The Pond to help them do it.

We use this wealth of knowledge to ensure you are best matched in terms of your academic and personal goals. We represent over 40 universities across the UK, and you will benefit from a high acceptance rate to these institutions. We are able to offer a customized, free service because Across The Pond is funded entirely by our partner universities in Britain to represent them in North America. Keep in mind that when you work with Across The Pond, we are on hand to help every step of the way, even once you are enrolled at your university. Should you enrol at one of our partners and feel it is not for you, we will be there to help you resolve any issues or look to make a transfer to the US after the first year, with the plan to study your second year at an American school.

We are confident that with our high level of personal guidance, you can maximize your chances of being accepted to some of the best universities in the UK – and the world! Our UK Study Experts’ expertise and commitment are the cornerstone of Across The Pond, and it is because of these qualities that we continue to help you achieve your study goals overseas.

“Without the help of Across The Pond, the selection, application, and preparation processes for UK study would not have gone nearly as smoothly as it did by using Across The Pond. They answered all of my questions fully, provided relevant materials and checklists, and even proofread some of my stuff with suggestions!”

Sam Grate, The University of Newcastle