

# Research-backed International Student Recruitment

Understanding the landscape ahead of the 2025  
recruitment cycle.



# What's inside?

This is what you're going to learn by reading this.

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to navigate

# What the data is telling us

An overview of the international student  
recruitment landscape.

The good.  
The bad.  
The promising.



# Top destinations

For students studying abroad.



**Canada:** 16.1%



**United States:** 14.8%



**The UK:** 14.4%

The UK remains the top choice for **postgraduate candidates**, with **18.2% choosing the UK as a study-abroad destination**.





# What's news

In the UK's priority markets?



Modeling by PwC indicates that anywhere from **51% to 80% of UK universities** could fall into deficit if international enrolments decline from 2024/25 onwards.

Enrolment data for January 2024 indicates that UK universities will lose traction this year in at least two of their most important source markets, India and Nigeria.

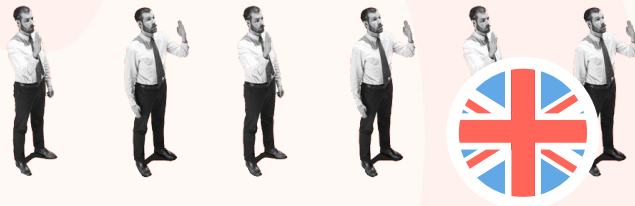
January 2024 intake of international students coming to the UK is down by **36%**.

## Here's why

1. A recent immigration policy change barring (some) foreign students from bringing dependents with them
2. The rising cost of living, which makes it more difficult for students to consider studying in the UK
3. UK's exit from the European Union and the trust deficit in EU markets

# How many international students are in the UK?

Let's take a look at the numbers.



2022 data shows that there were:

**679,970**  
international students  
studying in the UK.

**120,140**  
were  
European students.

**559,825**  
were  
non-European students.

**Where are the EU enrollments coming from?**

**Ireland:** 4,415

**France:** 4,355

**Germany:** 3,695

**Italy:** 3,105

As of 2023, there were **486,107 sponsored study visas** and 104,501 graduate route visas granted to applicants.

*Including data from HESA, UCAS, the Home Office and ONS.*

# What are the top sending countries?

Markets to consider.

**According to HESA, the 2022 top sending countries are:**

China (151,690)	Hong Kong (17,630)
India (126,535)	Bangladesh (12,700)
Nigeria (44,195)	Malaysia (12,135)
Pakistan (23,075)	France (11,870)
United States (22,990)	Italy (11,320)

**Postgraduate students:**

**372,500 (up 23.8% from 2021)**

**Undergraduate students:**

**11,965 (down 11% from 2021)**

Including data from HESA, UCAS, the Home Office and ONS.



# What are the priority markets that UK universities should be investigating?

The priority markets announced in the 2021 update to the International Education Strategy have seen varied results in demand for UK HE.

- **India and Nigeria** have seen strong growth in recent years, as has **Saudi Arabia**, which has seen an increase of **50% (+500)** since 2016.
- **Indonesia** has seen an increase of **191% (+525)** since 2011, although progress has since slowed somewhat.
- **Vietnam** has not had the same level of interest, with demand mostly declining in the last ten years, notwithstanding a 2020 uplift of **20% (+75)**.
- **Nigeria** features within the top ten markets for a five-year demand increase (**+1.7k, +102%**), as does **Pakistan (+1.1k, +59%)**.
- Some new markets emerge when examining increases over the last two years, with
  - **Hong Kong (+1.3k, +23%)** and **Ireland (+1.2k, +29%)** seeing notable increases since 2019.
- **The US** has had an unexpected surge in demand just in the last year with the second largest proportional one-year increase (**+2.7k, +53%**) after Nigeria.

# What are the priority markets?

Let's take a look at the undergraduate enrollment growth rates.

Top 5 Proportional Growth - 10 Years			Top 5 Proportional Growth - 5 Years			Top 5 Proportional Growth - 2 Years		
UAE	+247%	+2,050	INDIA	+131%	+5,625	NIGERIA	+101%	+1,685
TURKEY	+233%	+1,050	CHINA	+128%	+15,970	INDIA	+60%	+3,710
SOUTH AFRICA	+229%	+595	NIGERIA	+102%	+1,690	US	+56%	+2,740
INDIA	+222%	+6,835	TURKEY	+91%	+715	CHINA	+44%	+8,670
EGYPT	+206%	+535	UAE	+89%	+1,360	ZIMBABWE	+40%	+215

# Who is the UK granting study visas to?

As of 2023.

In 2023, visas issued for main applicants **grew by 2.3% compared to 2022**, an increase of 85.9% from 2019.

**What does this mean?** The significantly slower growth rate indicates a leveling off in international recruitment.

1. India: 133,237
2. China: 108,978
3. Nigeria: 51,071
4. Pakistan: 33,150
5. United States: 14,603
6. Bangladesh: 10,717
7. Nepal: 7,848
8. Saudi Arabia: 6,368
9. Hong Kong: 6,336
10. Sri Lanka: 6,277



At a **combined 242,215 visas**, Chinese and Indian nationals comprise almost half (49.8%) of all sponsored study visa grants.

# What do these students say?

A voice for the postgraduate.

68%

Sustainability

Cite sustainability as important to their academic experience

42%

Full-time

Prefer full-time studies

38%

AI studies

Are interested in AI studies

17%

Hybrid learning

Prefer a hybrid learning environment

## Demand for flexibility:

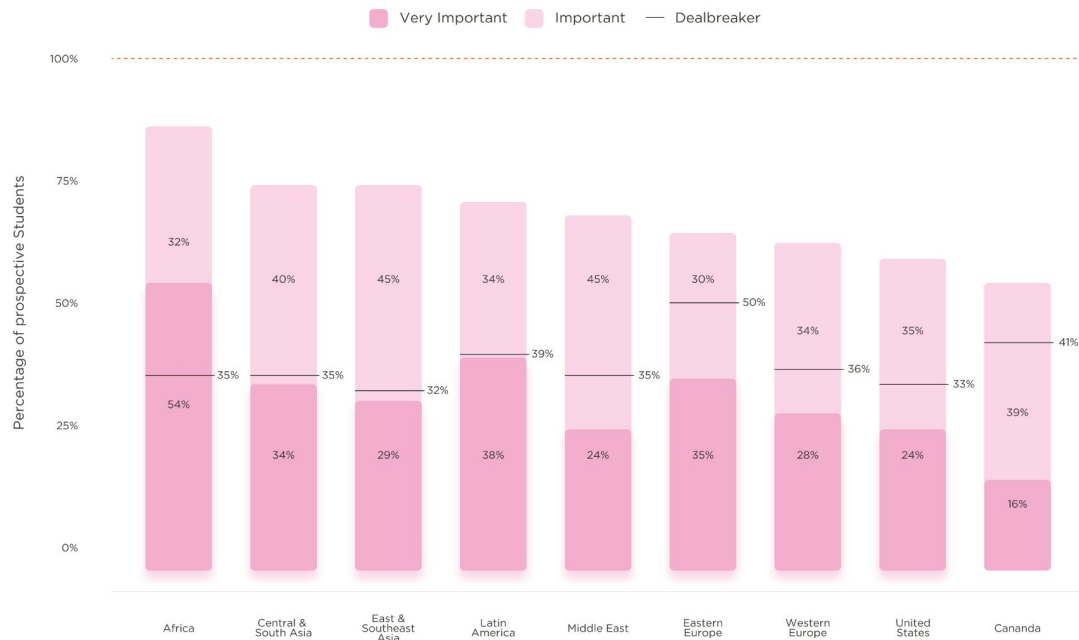
- There's an increasing preference for postgraduate hybrid learning structures
- Nearly half of the surveyed postgraduate candidates don't see the value of an online-only degree

## Business & STEM:

- 38% of postgraduate candidates say that AI is essential to the curricula
- Interest is highest among the Middle East & Latin America
- Interest is highest among millennials & men

# Sustainability

## Importance of Sustainability to Candidates by Region, 2023





# The lasting effect of COVID on international recruitment

Surprise - it comes down to... money.

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A 2021 survey conducted by Leverage Edu reports that:

- **71% of participants** cite “better healthcare infrastructure” as a reason to study abroad
- Nearly **half of participants** cite improving their financial situation as a reason to study abroad



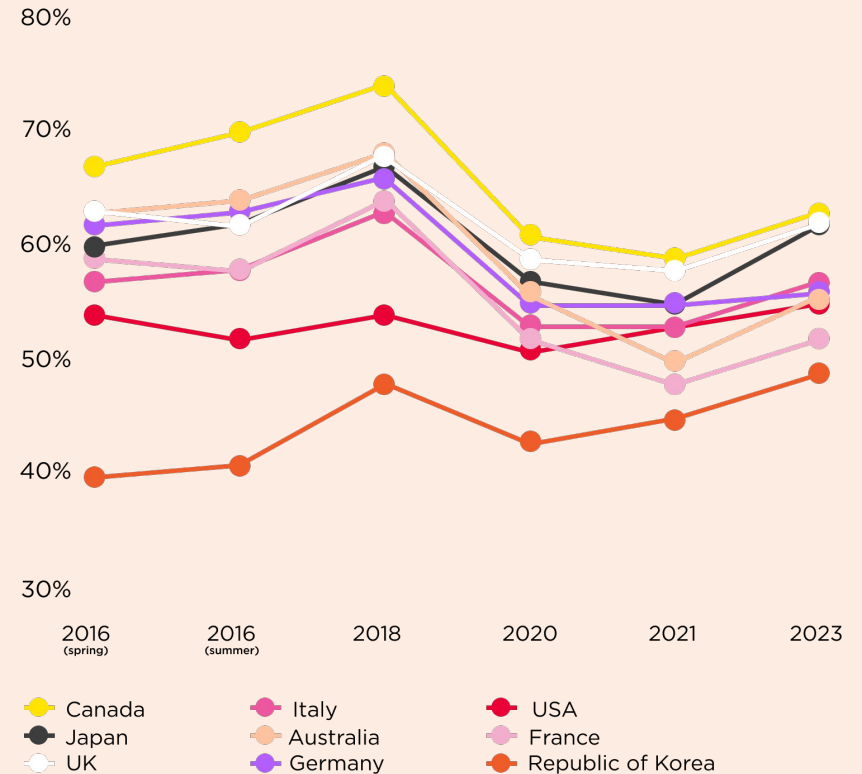
# Opportunities within UK Universities

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# Here's what's wrong, and what we can do about it.

The UK averages second for trust in the G20, but its position is strengthening and on current trends it is well-placed to overtake Canada to become the most trusted country in the G20.



# A global perspective of the UK

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Because, it matters what 18-34 year olds think of us.

In 2023, the most attractive country in the G20 was Italy, with a rating of 77%, with the UK just behind in second place at 76%.

## The trust metrics



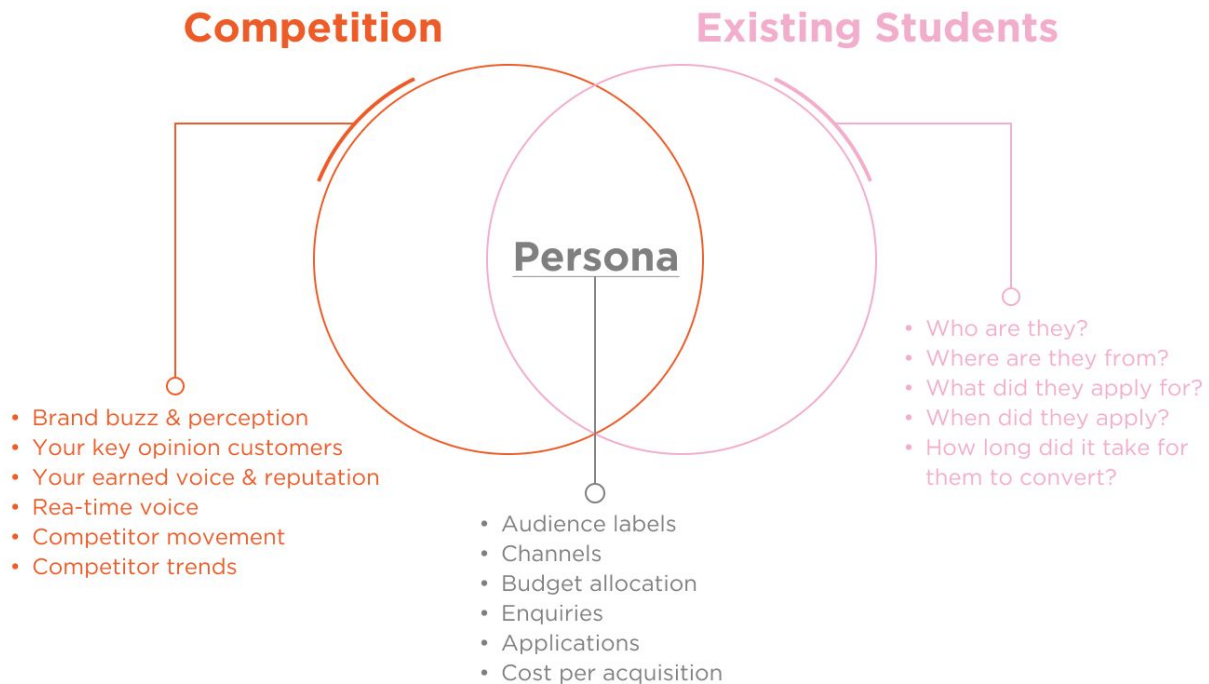
**61%** Trust in people

**54%** Trust in Government

**58%** Trust in institutions

# Winning the hearts and minds of students

With a data-driven approach.



# Consider incorporating these into your strategy

The numbers don't lie.

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**65%**

of students will enroll at a university where they can speak with a student ambassador



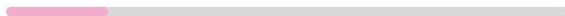
**51%**

of agents report that they are enrolling students from new source countries in 2023



**18.2%**

of international postgraduate students prefer the UK as a destination



**11.3%**

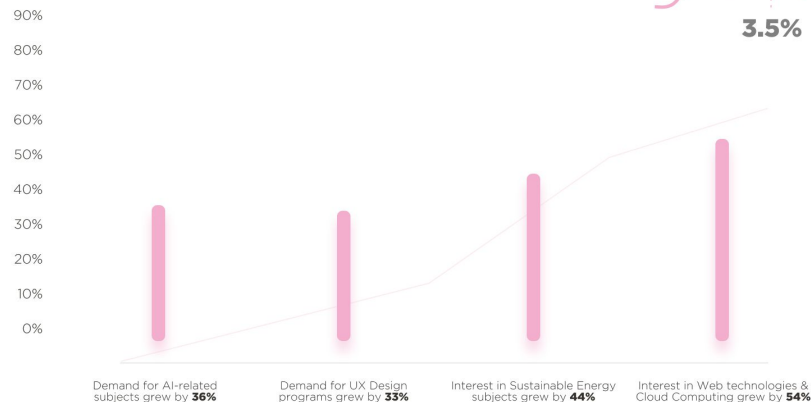
of international undergraduate students prefer the UK as a destination



# Giving international students the programs they really want

A dual perspective.

## 2023 Undergraduate insights



## 2023 Postgraduate insights



# The need for flexibility

The 2023 Undergraduate & Postgraduate perspective.



21% of  
candidates

are either extremely or very  
interested in studying online

50% of  
candidates

would find a hybrid learning  
experience, combining virtual  
and in-person studying, either  
very or somewhat appealing

73% of  
candidates

would be interested in taking  
part in a student exchange  
program



# Diversifying the offering

Topics that students are most interested in.

1. Business and administration: 18.8%
2. Healthcare and medicine: 17.4%
3. Computer science and IT: 14.5%
4. Engineering: 12%
5. Social sciences: 9.2%
6. Business studies: 8.8%
7. Administrative studies: 8%
8. Humanities & culture: 7.9%
9. Environmental studies: 7.6%
10. Natural sciences: 7.5%

## Top subjects for undergrad:

- Computer science and IT: 21.4%
- Healthcare and medicine: 21%

## Top subjects for postgrad:

- Business & administration: 19.5%
- Healthcare and medicine: 16%

# The missing link, sorry, USP

Things to add to your key differentiators.

**59% of students** see the benefit of sticking with what they enjoy and “**the rest will take care of itself**”



# Learn to leverage their optimism

This is why they're really pursuing their degrees.

1. **64%** of students look forward to earning their own money
2. **38%** look forward to being in control of their decisions
3. **37%** look forward to building a career
4. **36%** look forward to travel
5. **30%** look forward to living on their own
6. Only **16%** look forward to specialist fields



# But at the same time ...

Really understand what they're afraid of.



- **31%** of students worry about finding a job
- **28%** worry about not getting good enough grades
- **25%** worry about not knowing what they want from their future
- **23%** worry about their family's financial wellbeing
- **22%** worry about missed career goals
- **17 %** worry about mental health
- **17%** worry about disappointing their parents

# Yeah okay, fine

But what can you do about it?

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1. **Don't forget the fun.** Playfulness & happiness are pretty important drivers among adolescent audiences - particularly those facing big life decisions. Balance your campaigns with a little levity.
2. **Don't confuse them, alright?** Demystify the process - they've got enough to worry about. Their main concerns relate to the journey toward career choice & financial stability. Part of your job is to help them navigate these fears.
3. **Exposure breeds confidence.** Those with more experience and stronger ideas about what they want to do are the least worried, so make sure you have a strong provision of placements, work experience, mentorship, and expert talks.



# The need for speed

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So much to do, so little time.

Prospective students have a lot on their minds. Choosing a university, let alone a major, is arguably one of the most important decisions that they will have to make at their age. The thing is - we all know this. So, we're all vying for their attention. Drawing from the same pool of students. Competing for enrollments.

**Do you know where we all go wrong?**  
**They do.**

In a 2023 survey spanning 195+ countries, students were asked how a university could improve its communication - based on the experience the student had.

## **The top 3 recommendations?**

1. Speed of response
2. Quality of response
3. Availability of information



# Pretty alarming, right?

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A little embarrassing too.

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We're all guilty of it. We get our marketing teams to spend hundreds of hours creating the perfect campaign. We then get our finance department to approve even more in the budget.

But - once the leads come in?

We all want enrollments. And we know what the students want too. So, what's stopping the process?

**A lack of strategy, data-driven insights, and a deep misunderstanding of the international student conversion cycle.**

But - we'll get into that later.



# What are the factors that motivate their decision?

To study abroad - more specifically, in the UK.

1. **More than 1 in 10** international students are considering HE abroad before their eleventh birthday
2. **Around half (47%)** say that parents /guardians or close members of their family have previously studied abroad
3. Nigerian students are most interested in gaining skills to support them in their career (chosen by **80% of Nigerian respondents**); meanwhile, for Indian students, the most important factor is that HE options are of 'better quality' (**75% of respondents from India**)
4. **More than half** say that it was their own research that informed their choice of country of study; 1% reference teachers and 2% name education agents
5. **Around two-thirds (69%)** of international applicants applying to the UK say they intend to self-fund, relative to **4% of domestic students**



# Building an insights-driven strategy

How it's done and why it matters.

**85%** of education marketing professionals acknowledge the role of data-driven campaigns, noting a **50%** increase in ROI for institutions utilizing data analytics.



# You need market specific strategies

Yes - one for each market that you target.

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Sure, your program doesn't change based on its region. It's the same for all students regardless of their home country.

## But...

That same program will be perceived differently across different countries.

It might be hot in one region, and completely flop in another. In some countries, you could be seen as a *premium destination*.

In others - the affordable choice.

So - if you're serious about international student recruitment, you need to treat each market as its own campaign.



# Here's what you need to consider

When building a persona-lead campaign for each region.

1. Cultural nuances
2. Communication preferences
3. Language barriers
4. Economic factors



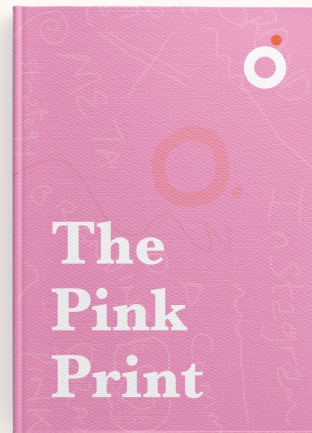
# Here's what you need to do

It's a simple click really

Reach out to Pink Orange for your very own **Pink Print©**. We're all about building genuine connections and helping institutions thrive by expanding into new markets.

1. It offers lifetime benefits to your entire organization
2. It provides a holistic overview, tailored strategy, and research-backed insights
3. It identifies potential stumbling blocks and areas for improvement
4. It ensures that your campaigns and marketing efforts are driven by data, meaning you'll never run an aimless campaign again
5. It's a step-by-step roadmap to help you navigate future campaigns
6. It's completely tailored to your institution, your prospects, and your goals

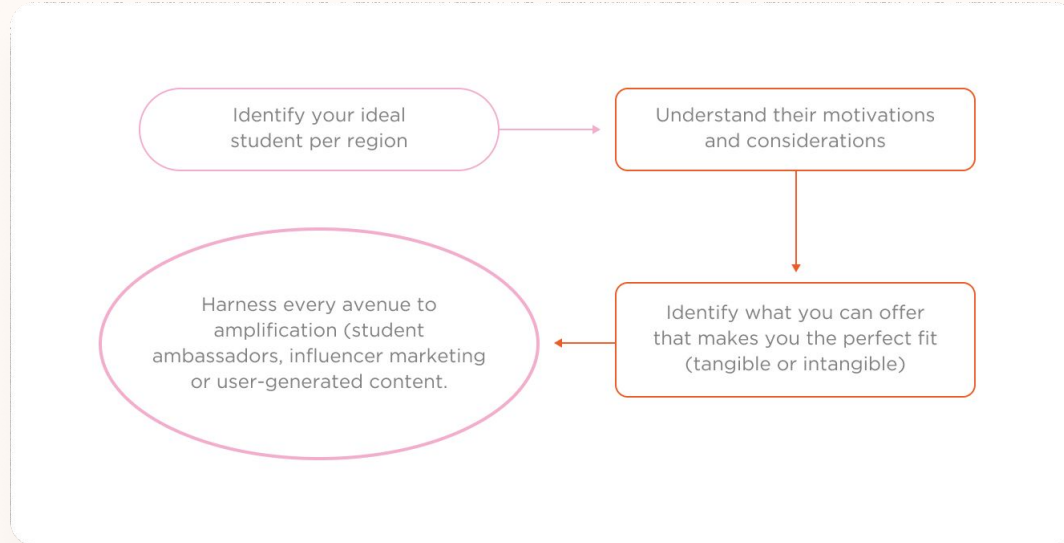
It also dives deep into your brand, uncovering the unique qualities that make you stand out to your target audience. We're passionate about The Pink Print© because we've seen the incredible difference it can make for institutions like yours, helping you create real connections and achieve lasting success.



[See what it entails](#)

# Make room for brand-building

Through persona-led storytelling.



## Not convinced?

- Persona-driven websites are **2-5x** times more effective and easier to navigate by their targeted audiences.
- Persona-based content further increased customer engagement by **6x** when targeting cold leads.
- **74%** of users feel frustrated when website content is not personalized.

# Top destinations for international students

The full list.

1. Canada: **16.1%**
2. US: **14.8%**
3. UK: **14.4%**
4. Germany: **6%**
5. Australia: **5.4%**
6. Italy: **4%**
7. France: **3.5%**
8. Netherlands: **2.8%**
9. Sweden: **2.7%**
10. Spain: **2.4%**



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# Let's take a look at Gen Z

And what they're like as students.

1. **One-third** of Gen Z chooses traditional 4-year degree college programs
2. **62%** of Gen Z worry about affording higher education expenses
3. **29%** of Gen Z think robots will help them learn more efficiently
4. **69%** of Gen Z students believe the university admission process has become too competitive
5. **18%** of Gen Z students are more likely to drop out of school than Millennials
6. **72%** of Gen Z students consider college debt as the main reason for enrolling in professional certification programs



# What really affects their decision?

This is what the numbers say.

Agents have found that international students are increasingly basing the important decision of where to study on a range of factors, many of which are a reaction to contemporary issues.

## Here are the leading factors, as of 2023:

1. Cost of studies & living abroad - ranked 1st by **41%** of respondents
2. The range of employment opportunities
3. Immigration opportunities & visa application support





# The top 5 factors

Influencing a potential student's decision.

1. Institutional ranking: **38%**
2. Visa application support: **44%**
3. Visa processing times: **37%**
4. Cost of tuition: **67%**
5. Work/immigration opportunity: **52%**

## In terms of what they consider first?

Undergraduate students:

1. Program **43.1%**
2. Country: **33.3%**
3. School: **22.6%**

Postgraduate students:

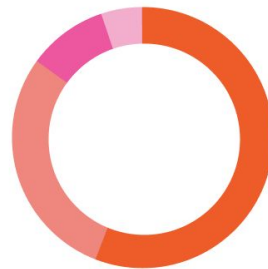
1. Program **58.4%**
2. Country: **26.9%**
3. School: **14.8%**



# What about their decision-making journey?

From start to finish.

The time spent researching, before applying:



**56%** less than 6 months

**29.1%** 6-12 months

**9.9%** 12-24 months

**5.06%** longer than 24 months

## The number of programs applied to:



**37%**    **35.7%**

1 program

UG

PG



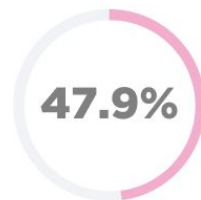
**52.4%**    **51.8%**

2-3 programs

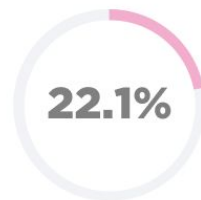
UG

PG

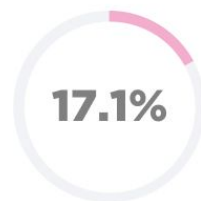
## The number of schools applied to:



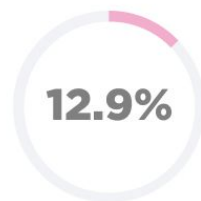
**2-3** different schools



**4-7** different schools



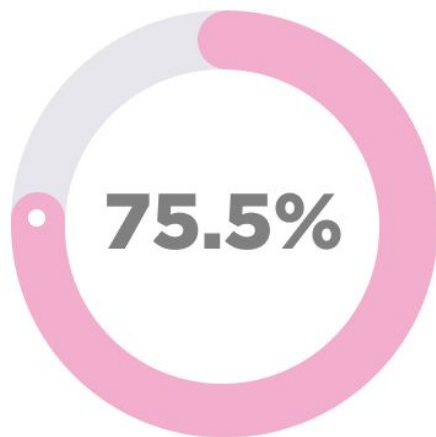
only **1** school



**7** or more schools

## Their biggest barrier to application:

75.5% - expensive tuition or program fees



## Their level of concern over safety:



**75%**

75% said yes, and 38.1% were most worried about racial discrimination

**85%**

85% of African students are concerned for their safety

**50%**

50% of EU students are concerned for their safety

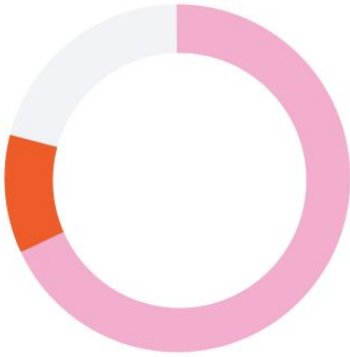
# Let's take a look at communication

What they want to receive, when, and how.

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## Remember what we said about the need for speed?



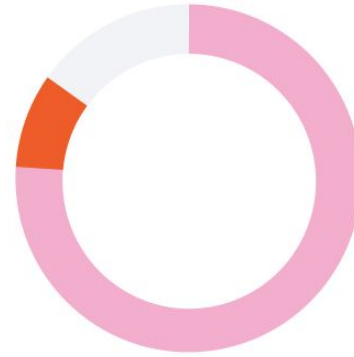
**61.8%**

expect a response from a  
uni within 24 hours or less

**11%**

expect an  
immediate response

## Where to contact them:



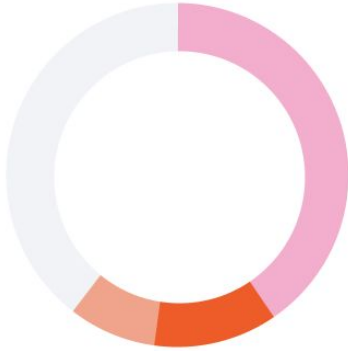
**76%**

prefer to be contacted  
via email

**8.8%**

prefer to be contacted via  
social, i.e., messenger

### What they really want information about:

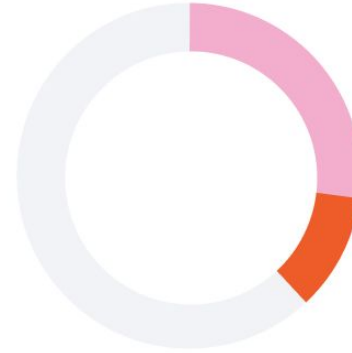


**40.4%** scholarship and funding information

**11.7%** Visa and immigration information

**8.3%** Cost of living info and tips

### What would stop them from studying abroad:



**27%** too expensive

**16.5%** don't want to leave family/friends

# What about the external influences?

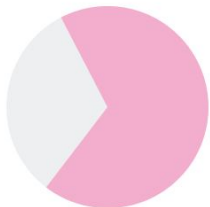
This is who they consider advice from.

1. **67%** of candidates will speak to their parents about their study options
2. **53%** claim their parents have 'a lot of' or 'a fair' amount of influence on their decision-making
3. **56%** of candidates will speak to their parents about their choice of country to study in
4. **37%** of candidates believe that student safety is the topic that their parents are most concerned about
5. **62%** of candidates believe international education agents are a trusted source of information on studying overseas
6. **27%** of candidates will be influenced by a student ambassador



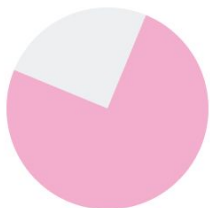
# What do they actually want?

Not sure, but we can tell you what they want in a university.



**2/3**

More than 2 thirds of potential students say that equity & inclusion are important to their academic experience



**3/4**

Three-quarters of potential students say that wellbeing efforts (i.e., eliminating poverty) are important to their academic experience too



**1/2**

More than half won't consider a school that lacks these efforts

The same group states that sustainability is important to their academic experience



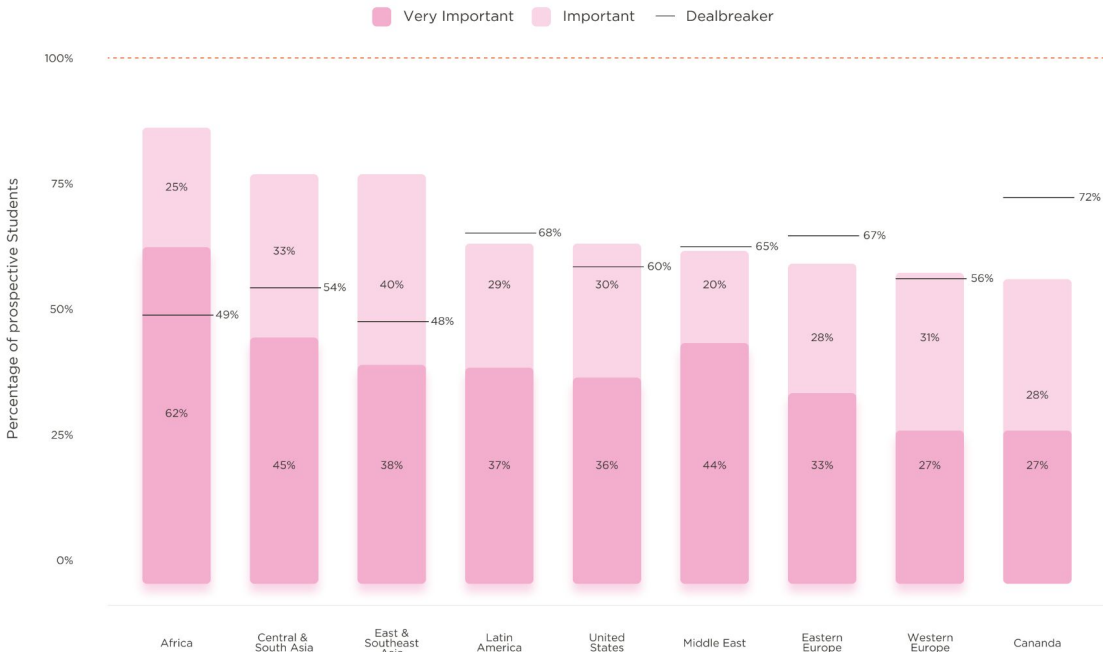
**1/3**

A third of them won't choose a school that doesn't prioritize sustainability

# Things like Equity, Inclusion & Sustainability

can be deal breakers for  
this generation.

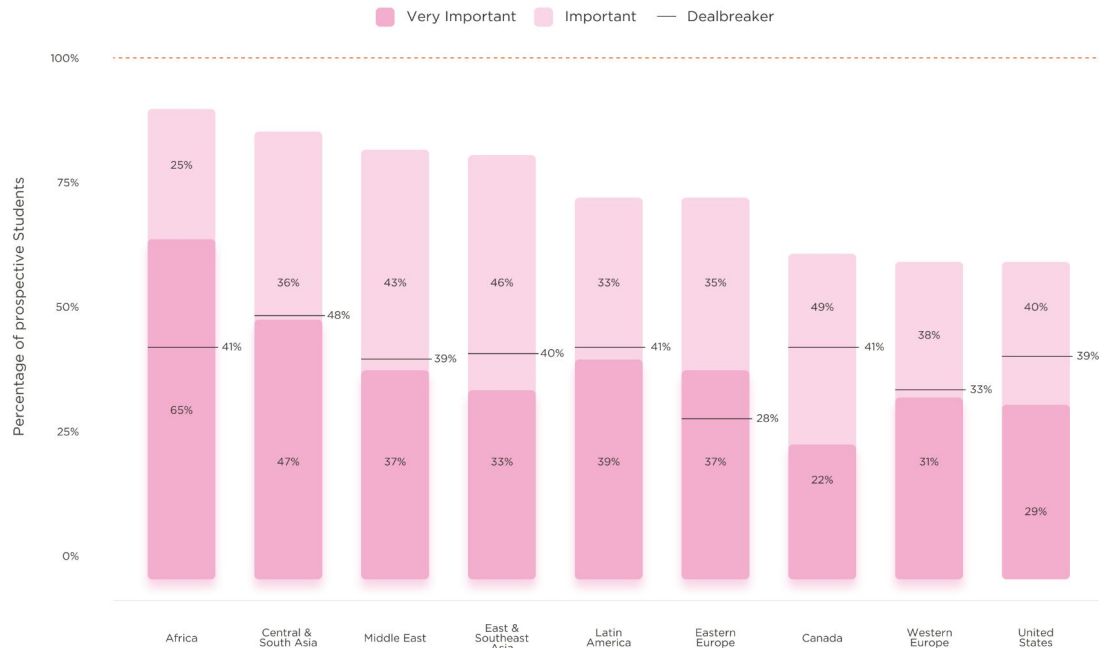
## Importance of Equity & Inclusion to Candidates by Region, 2023



They prioritize  
their health &  
wellbeing too

Even more so in key  
recruitment regions.

## Importance of Health & Well-Being to Candidates by Region, 2023



# This is what they really look for

When choosing an institution.

## In a program:

1. **36.9%** - Internship opportunities
2. **23.6%** - Practical curriculum
3. **17.2%** - Resume enhancing program

## In a school:

1. **59.7%** - Quality of education and teaching
2. **45.1%** - Flexibility (work and study at the same time)
3. **43.1%** - School reputation



# What does their research look like?

How they find you, and how they want you to find them.

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## Most popular social platforms for research

1. Instagram: **27.5%**
2. Facebook: **26.5%**
3. LinkedIn: **17.1%**
4. YouTube: **8.8%** (up **26.3%** from 2022)

## Most popular methods of organic search

- Online search using a search engine
- University listing platforms
- Social media
- Online webinars or events
- Online community groups, i.e., Quora or Reddit

## Where they want to be contacted

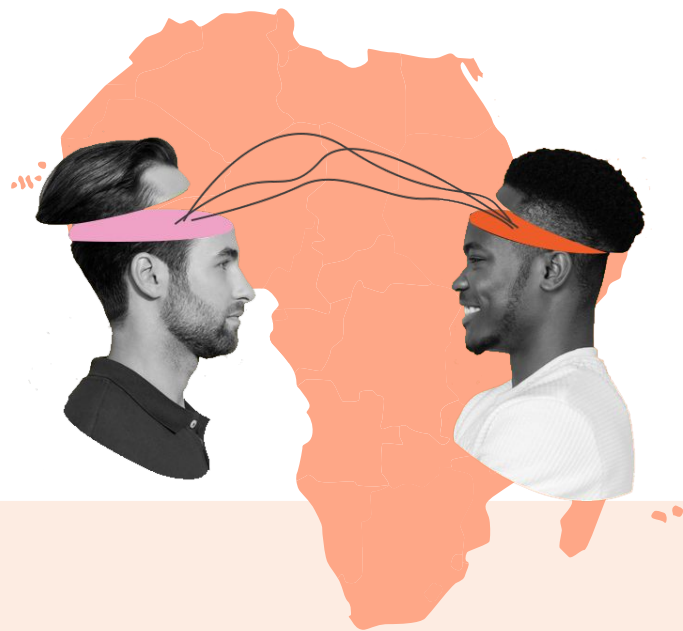
1. **76%** of students want to be contacted via email
2. **8.8%** of students want to be contacted via social



# Recruiting from Africa

Everything you need to know about enrolling African students.

Africa is the fastest-growing market for student recruitment globally, with a **29.8% increase in students sent in 2021**



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# The African market overview

What's new, and what you can expect from this growing market.

- Africa holds the greatest proportion in the world of students looking to study undergraduate degrees in Health Care & Medicine (**24.2%**), Computer Science & IT (**22.7%**), and Engineering (**15.5%**)
- The program factors of graduate career prospects (**+10.1%**), study mode and flexibility (**+21.1%**), and online delivery (**+113.4%**) became increasingly important in 2022
- Southern Africa has the highest student preference for online delivery (**14.7%**) in the world
- Facebook and LinkedIn as platforms to get more information about studying abroad are more popular in Africa than in any other global region for students interested in undergraduate, postgraduate, and PhD/Doctorate degrees
- The popularity of the UK as a destination is very pronounced in West Africa (**23%**) and Southern Africa (**22%**), and least in Central Africa (**8.8%**)
- At the postgraduate level, there are more African students who want to study Environmental Studies (**11.2%**) and Administration Studies (**10.1%**) than any other region

# Market spotlight

Let's take a look at Ghana.



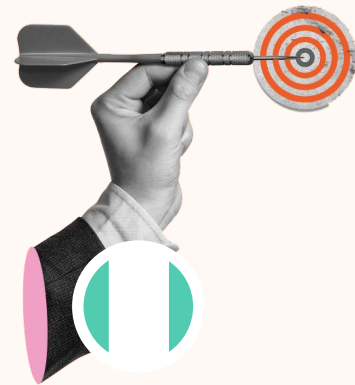
- Recent **growth in Ghanaian student** numbers observed in **Canada, Germany, the UK, and the US** indicates intensified recruitment efforts by educators in these countries.
- Recruitment tactics include utilizing agents, establishing in-country offices staffed by local experts, and participating in virtual student fairs organized by various student placement platforms.
- UK educators saw a significant increase, enrolling **21.9%** more Ghanaian students in 2020/21 compared to the previous academic year, totaling 2,670 students. Ghana is a priority for market development alongside Nigeria and Vietnam for Universities in the UK.
- The US also acknowledges Africa's potential, particularly spotlighting countries like **Angola, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Zimbabwe**.
- Ghana's attractiveness to international educators stems from its demographic advantage, with **57%** of the population under the age of 25, totaling roughly 32 million people.
- Ghanaian students are well-prepared for English-language studies abroad due to English being the primary language of instruction and the official language in Ghana.



# Market spotlight

Let's take a look at Nigeria.

- Affordability is a significant concern for Nigerian students, and institutions offering financial aid or flexible tuition payment arrangements stand a better chance of attracting Nigerian enrollments.
- The devaluation of the naira has adversely affected Nigerian students' capacity to study abroad, leading many to consider distance learning with foreign institutions as a more cost-effective alternative.
- Climbing annual inflation, which rose to **25.8%** in August 2023, has created challenges with application-to-enrolment conversion from this market as students become increasingly price-sensitive.
- Preferred host countries for surveyed Nigerian students include the UK, US, Canada, Germany, and Australia. However, an even larger percentage expressed a preference for distance learning (**46.6%**) over in-person learning abroad (**40.6%**), likely due to financial limitations.
- The availability of scholarships and a country's reputation for safety, security, and hospitality are the primary factors influencing Nigerian students' decisions.
- The opportunity to work part-time during studies, low living expenses, and the presence of family or friends in the host country also play a role in their decision-making process.



**And this is how they want  
to be contacted:**

WhatsApp **95%**  
Facebook **89%**  
FB Messenger **70%**

# Market spotlight

Let's take a look at Egypt.

- Egypt is also a market with growing recruitment potential based on the increasing student population.
- Almost **20%** of Egyptians are aged 15-24 and their population of 18-year-olds is set to grow by an average annual growth rate of **3%** year-on-year from 2023 to 2030.
- However, similar to Nigeria, they face challenges with inflation, and Egypt's annual urban consumer price inflation rose to a historic high of **38%** in September 2023.

What are their  
communication  
preferences?

Facebook **85%**  
WhatsApp **72%**  
FB Messenger **71%**



Source: HESA, ICEF Insights Magazine 2023

# What are their challenges?

Factors that impact African student's decision to study abroad.

1. **80.84%** of African students express concern over the cost of living while studying abroad
2. **53.61%** of African students are worried about immigration & Visa processes
3. **41.41%** of African students express concern over finding housing/accommodation
4. **54.81%** of African students are concerned about racial discrimination

## What might help them overcome these challenges?

1. **38.30 %** of African students say that more specific information about the process of studying abroad would be helpful
2. **37.59%** of African students say that more information about the school or program would be helpful
3. **26.24%** of African students say that making contact with the university would be helpful

# What are their motivations?

This is what drives them to study abroad.

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1. Achieving career-related goals: **56.1%**
2. Personal development: **44.1%**
3. Access to higher quality education: **42.4%**

**Africa has the highest percentage of students globally who are motivated by accessing higher-quality education, with the most candidates coming from:**

1. Central Africa: **48.5%**
2. West Africa: **44.5%**
3. East Africa: **43.1%**

Attending a top-ranked program or university is **11.1%** more influential as a study abroad motivation, and **11.3%** more students say ranking lists are a decision-making resource.

# What are their preferences?

From communication style to timing.



## How they conduct research:

- **19.34%** of African students use Instagram
- **33.01%** of African students use Facebook
- **19.33%** of African students use LinkedIn
- **8.53%** of African students don't use social media to research a university

## What they expect from you:

- **31.49%** of African students expect a response from the University within 24 hours
- **27.78%** of African students expect a response from the University within a few days
- **23.35%** of African students expect an immediate response

## How they think you could improve:

- **26.43%** of African students said that communication could be quicker
- **22.81%** of African students said that the response could have a better quality
- **21.72%** of African students said that the quality of information could be improved
- **16.49%** of African students said that communication channels could be diversified/increased

# Their decision-making journey

And what they want from you to support it.

## How long they research for:

- **62.77%** of African students wanting to study abroad start their research 6 months before applying
- **25.31%** of African students wanting to study abroad start their research 6-12 months before applying
- **7.62%** of African students wanting to study abroad start their research 12-48 months before applying

## How many schools they apply to:

- **49.52%** of the above apply to 2 or 3 universities
- **21.22%** of the above apply to 4-7 universities
- **16.77%** apply to only one university

## What information they want along the way:

- **46.73%** of African students want information about scholarships and funding
- **13.31%** of African students are interested in receiving information about immigration
- **8.20%** of African students want information about application deadlines

# Overcoming these barriers

To support your recruitment growth from Africa.

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In all these markets, one eerily familiar theme stands out: **price sensitivity**.

Higher education institutions must strategize on how to navigate price barriers concerning course fees, accommodation, and living costs to tap into the expanding student populations from these source markets.

## Here are some valuable tips:

- Demonstrate to students how their investment in education will yield returns through job opportunities, cultural immersion, academic excellence, and more.
- Promote informative content regarding funding options, language learning support, and visa processes.
- Maintain a strong social media presence to provide glimpses into university life and offer day-to-day insights.
- Expand student recruitment efforts into emerging markets to gauge potential for future student enrollments.
- Cultivate a sense of comfort among students by sharing testimonials from other African students and highlighting the vibrant African societies and clubs within the university.
- Proactively address inquiries through chatbots to ensure swift and efficient communication.

# Recruiting from the Americas

Everything you need to know about recruiting North & South American students.

**14,603** UK student visas were granted to North American students as of September 2023. *A (modest) increase of **0.3%** from the previous year.*

The majority of students from North America who study abroad are women, financially well-to-do, caucasian, and mostly interested in short study abroad programs to earn college credit.



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# An overview of the potential

of the North & South American market.

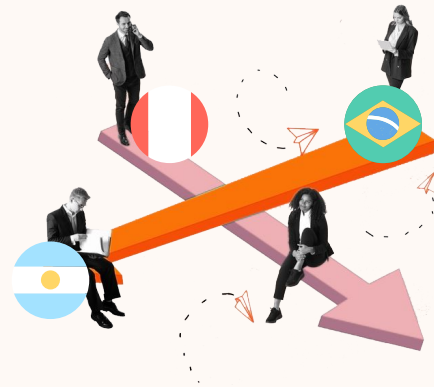
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- **188,753 American students** of varying ethnicities chose to study abroad in 2021
- Breaking this down further, **a total of 300,000 students** from Central America, LATAM, and the Caribbean chose to study abroad
- The United States remains in the top five nationalities with **14,603 study visas granted**, a very modest increase of 50 (0.3%) in the preceding year, and 202 (1.4%) in the year ending September 2019
- **73% of students** studying abroad choose Europe. The UK is the second top choice with **15% of students** choosing to study here. **13% choose Spain** and **Italy leads with 16%** of this share
- **68.7% of applicants** from the US are women, the rest are men, barring 0.2% of students who identify as non-binary
- **68% of students** applying from the United States are Caucasian
- **11.9% of the applicants** are Hispanic or Latino
- **8% of the applicants** are Asian
- **5% of the applicants** are African American

# What are their challenges?

Factors that impact South American student's decision to study abroad.

- **74.52%** of South American students are concerned about the cost of tuition fees, studying abroad
- **47.72%** of South American students worry about finding accommodation or housing
- **36.38%** of South American students worry about the visa application process
- **29.91%** of South American students are concerned about facing racial discrimination when studying abroad
- **19.06 %** of South American students are (specifically) worried about sexual harassment when studying abroad
- **64.22%** of South American students express concern over their general safety when studying abroad
- **22.73%** of South American students say that their concerns would be lessened by speaking to a student ambassador



# What are their preferences?

From course to communication, and everything in between.

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Preferred fields of study in this order: STEM, Business, Communications, Education, Arts & finally, Foreign language studies.

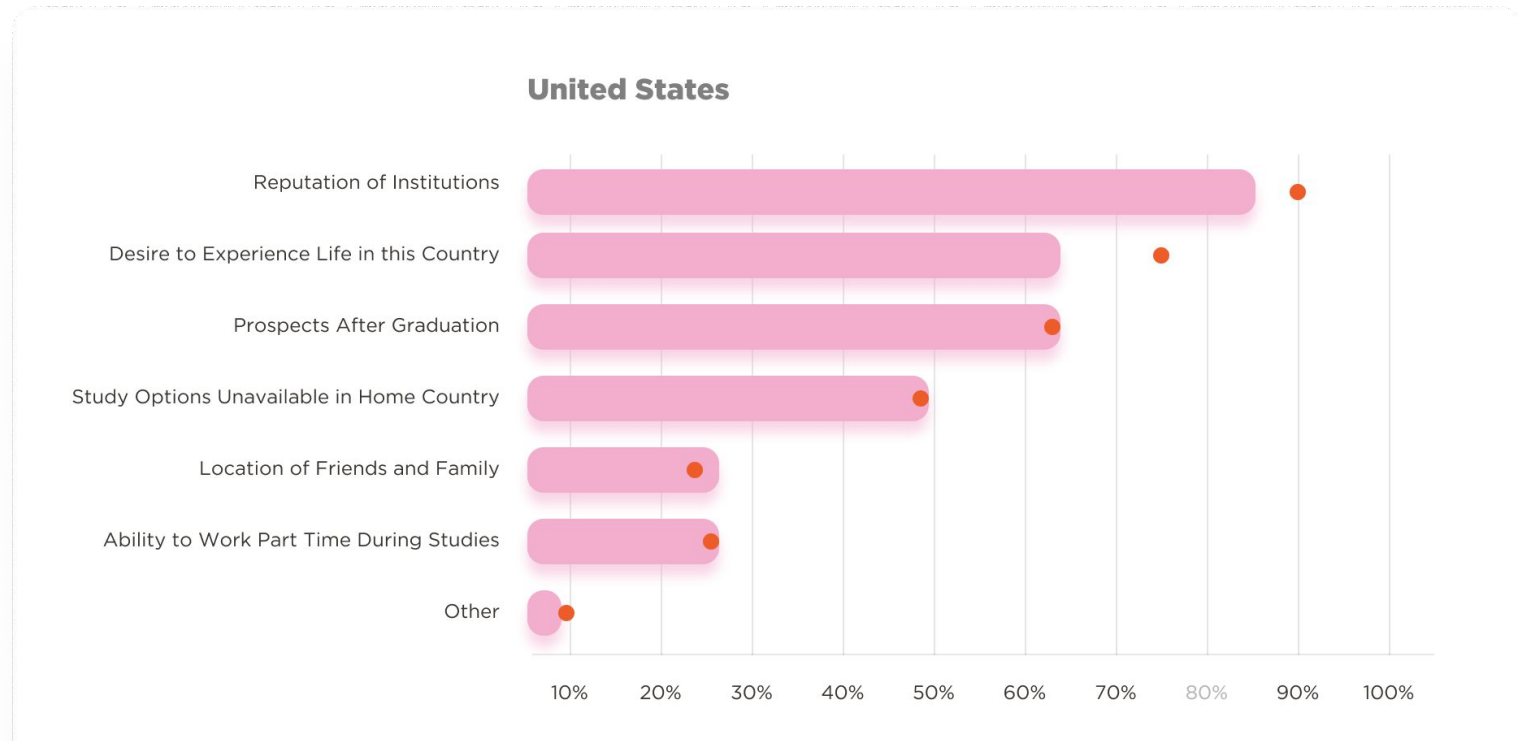
## What information do they really want from you?

1. **52.75%** of South American students want to receive informative guides
  2. **47.42%** of South American students appreciate interactive workshops or online events
  3. **39.84%** of South American students want information on scholarships and financial aid with only
  4. **12.03%** wanting advice on living abroad
- 
1. **48.76%** of North American students want to receive informative guides
  2. **45.03%** of North American students appreciate interactive workshops or online events
  3. **33.67%** of North American students want information on scholarships and financial aid, with
  4. **13.53%** wanting advice on living abroad

# What are the factors that influence a North American students decision

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to study abroad?



# What does their research process look like?

How long they take, and what they use.

## SA (South America)

- **36.96% of South American students** start their research 6 months before applying to an international university, with 18.18% taking 6-12 months.
- **51.59%** of South American students will apply to more than 3 universities.
- **55.92% of South Americans** use Instagram to research a University
- **13.16%** of South American students use LinkedIn to research a Uni
- **12.83%** of South American students don't use social media as part of their research at all
- **27.14%** of South American students expect to receive a response from Uni within 24 hours, with the majority, 38.98% expecting communication within a few days

## NA (North America)

- **45.06% of American students** start their research 6 months before applying, with 32.72% of these taking 6-12 months to research.
- **48.05%** of American students will apply to more than 3 universities.
- **40.95% of American students** use Instagram as part of their Uni research
- **16.06%** of American students use Facebook
- **23.92%** of American students don't use social media as part of their research at all
- **29.53%** of American students expect a response from a Uni within 24 hours, with the majority, 40.52% expecting a response within a few days.

# What you do to support this journey

Guess what... it comes down to communication.

- **30.28%** of American students say that a better quality of response would help their decision-making process
- **16.92%** of American students said that a speedy response would be helpful

**And then, show them that you have exactly what they want.**

In a 2018-2019 survey, it was found that out of the 350,000 American students who studied abroad:

- **39%** took a summer term
- **33%** chose short-term programs (4-9 months)
- **25%** opted for programs lasting under 8 weeks
- **3%** chose programs spanning 1 year

# Promoting recruitment from this region

Tips to apply to your US recruitment strategy.

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- Understand (and then leverage through your messaging) your audience's gender split: Most US students who study abroad are women
- Target key states that send students abroad, such as states with the top universities and schools
- Try promoting short-term programs as above **50%** of Americans prefer short-term studies abroad
- Understand why students prefer Italy and France to the UK, and pivot your strategy accordingly
- Offer funding options, and promote scholarships or financial aid programs that you already have
- Offer inclusivity-led initiatives that make minorities feel welcome
- Use testimonials of other American students, and incorporate ambassadors into your strategy



# Recruiting from EMEA

Tips to apply to your EMEA recruitment strategy.

Everything you need to know to leverage your voice in this nuanced market:

In the Middle East, the UK is the favored study destination occupying **45% of the overall scholarships** offered in 2021/22, followed closely by the USA at 41%.

*\*Based on the size of this region, the data represented is split between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East for further nuance.*





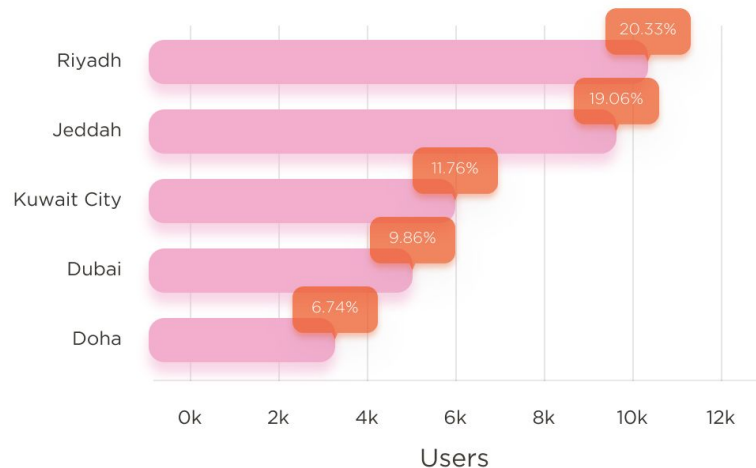
# The market spotlight

Who are the key drivers in this region?



- Students tend to make their decisions faster in this region, notably, within a month of the relevant intake period.
- Students from Dubai hold significant demand for UK universities, at just under **10%** of interest.
- Doha (Qatar) also features in the top 5 regional demands, with **6.74%** of searches originating from there.

Middle East Student Demand for the UK by City, 1 January to 1 August 2021



# EMEA students' destination of choice

A combined look at where they would prefer to study.

## Where they prefer to study:

1. **16.1%** - UK
2. **12%** - Germany
3. **8%** - Italy
4. **7%** - France
5. **5.6%** - The Netherlands

## How they prefer to study:

1. **68.4%** - on campus
2. **26.6%** - hybrid
3. **5%** - online



# EMEA students' top choices

In study programs & motivations.

## Undergraduate students

1. **19.6%** - Computer science or IT
2. **19%** - Business & Administration

## Postgraduate students

1. **19%** - Business & Administration
2. **15%** Healthcare & Medicine

## Why they choose to study abroad:

1. Achieve career goals: **53%**
2. Personal development: **45%**
3. Cultural exchange: **37%**
4. Access to better quality teaching: **36%**
5. Study for free, or for less: **20%**



# Their decision-making process

A look at their research process.



- **49.52%** of students from EMEA research for less than 6 months
- **33.26%** of students from EMEA research for 6-12 months
- **11.73%** of students from EMEA research for 12-24 months
- **5.50%** of students from EMEA research for longer than 12 months
  
- **45.16%** of students from EMEA apply to 2-3 universities
- **14.09%** of students from EMEA apply to more than 7 universities

# The challenges that they face

A look at what might stop them from applying to your school.

1. **75.64%** of students from EMEA cite “expensive tuition fees” as a barrier to application
2. **50.22%** cited a lack of scholarship opportunities as a barrier to application
3. **23.98%** of students from EMEA believe that there is a lack of support for international students

## Their biggest concerns?

1. Tuition fees & living expenses: **79%**
2. Finding housing or accommodation: **45%**
3. Visa process & applications: **42%**
4. Employability: **24%**
5. A language barrier: **22%**



# Their marketing channels & preferences

Where to reach them, and what to say.

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## The channels they prefer:

1. Instagram **30%**
2. Facebook **25%**
3. LinkedIn **18%**
4. YouTube **8%**

## The content that they want to receive:

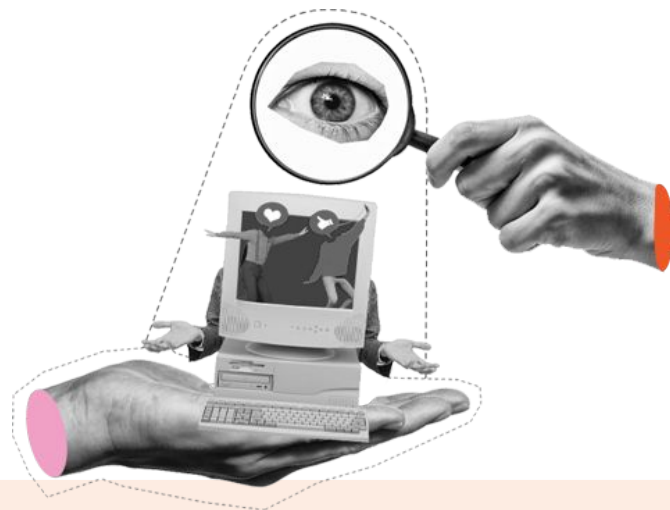
1. Informative content or guides: **42.02%**
2. Group workshops or classes: **39.84%**
3. Information on scholarships or funding: **33.54%**
4. Cost of living or practical information: **10.54%**
5. Visa or immigration information: **10.19%**

## What they expect from you:

- **32.99%** of students from EMEA expect a response from a university within a few days
- **29.54%** expect a response within 24 hours
- **20.48%** expect a response within a few hours
- **10.82%** expect a response immediately (live chat)
- **6.17%** expect a response after a week

# Recruiting from Asia

Everything you need to know about enrolling students from this region.



When looking at preferred study destinations chosen by prospective students in Asia, the UK stands out at the top once again after increasing in popularity by **27.2%** since 2021.

**pinkorange**

# An Asian market overview

The state of recruitment within this market.

1. There are various emerging markets in Asia with **India and China being top senders** worldwide
2. This is a price-sensitive market, however, with such explosive economic growth from countries such as **Bangladesh, Nepal, Thailand**, and more, we can expect much traction from these developing economies
3. **Parents are involved** in the decision-making process and have a huge say in which universities students finally apply to
4. Students start researching options **2 years to 6 months in advance** of application dates.
5. Asian students are more likely to choose an institution with a **high ranking**
6. Highly active on social media, Asian students use platforms such as **Instagram, YouTube, and LinkedIn** for university 'search' and research.
7. **Tourism, business, computer science & IT** are highly sought-after programs.



# Market spotlight: Asian markets

Who are the priority markets that you should be targeting in 2024?

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## Bangladesh

Data shared by UNESCO (2020) shows that there were **49,150 Bangladeshi students** studying abroad. In 2022, numbers grew to **more than 70,000 Bangladeshi students** abroad (including other sectors).

The UK, Canada, and UAE are the top three destinations at the moment for Bangladeshi students.

1. UK: 12,700 in 2021/2022 (**+90% YoY growth**)
2. Canada: 12,295 in 2022 (**+24.5%**)
3. UAE: 11,150 in 2020 according to UNESCO

## Nepal

According to data shared by UNESCO, 2022 saw Nepal sending out at least **125,500 students** (including enrolments in other sectors). A student survey conducted by the Indian think tank IC3 revealed a strong demand for study abroad among Nepalese high school students, and this finding seems to have been very much on point.

## Pakistan

The most recent UNESCO data (2020) counts **64,065 Pakistani students** abroad in higher education. Outbound mobility from Pakistan was over **103,190 in 2022** when we consult more recent statistics published by government sources in various destinations.

The top three destinations for Pakistani students currently are UAE, UK, and Australia.

1. UAE: 24,865 in 2020 according to UNESCO
2. UK: 23,075 in 2021/22 (**+62% YoY growth**)
3. Australia: 15,875 in 2022 (**+15%**)

## Thailand

The most recent UNESCO data (2020) counts **32,066 Thai students** abroad in higher education. The number of Thai students abroad in all sectors has grown moderately to about **40,720 in 2022**.

The top three destinations for Thai students currently are Australia, UK, and US.

1. Australia: 19,360 in 2022 (**+78%**)
2. UK: 5,405 in 2022 (**+21%**)
3. US: 5,010 in 2021/22 according to IIE's Open Doors report

# Market spotlight: India

A deeper look into India as a recruitment market.



1. In the Indian market spotlight, the availability of scholarships emerges as a critical factor for prospective candidates, underscoring the market's inherent price sensitivity. Universities that effectively communicate the caliber and innovative approaches of their faculty members and teaching methodologies are poised to resonate well with Indian candidates, showcasing their commitment to delivering high-quality education.
2. Graduate outcomes and employability hold significant importance, with a robust careers service and a high rate of graduate employment ranking among the top five priorities.
3. Demonstrating tangible support for graduates in launching their careers serves as a compelling testament to a university's prowess in this domain, enhancing its appeal to Indian candidates seeking assurance of post-graduate success.

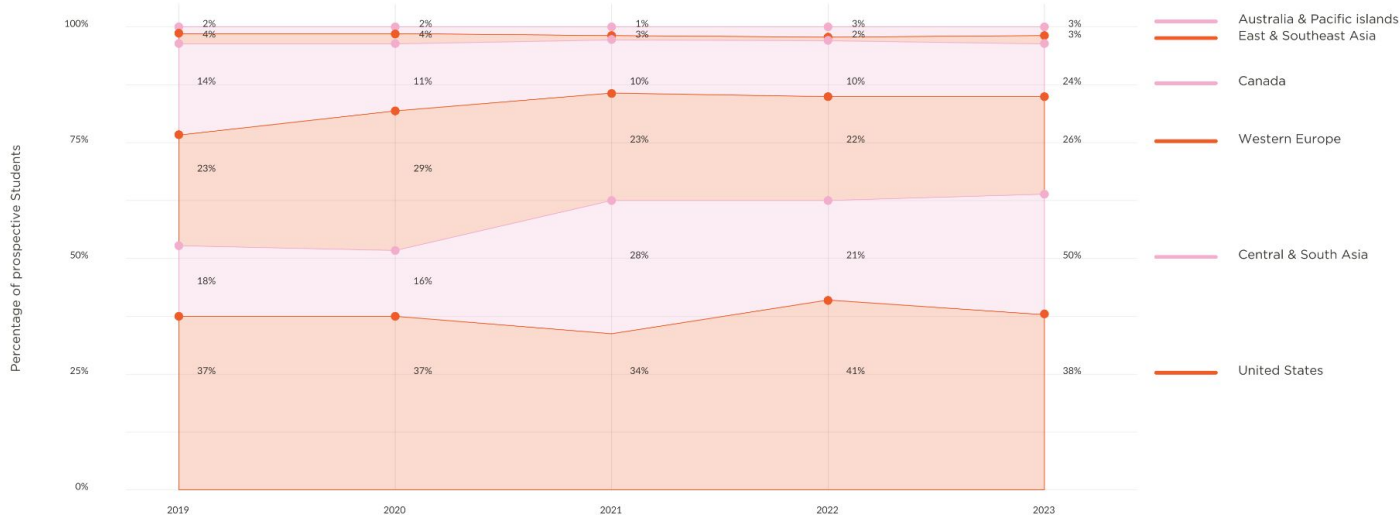
**When it comes to their communication preferences, these are their top choices:**

- WhatsApp **77%**
- Instagram **75%**
- Facebook **71%**

# India as a recruitment market

Indian student preferred study abroad destinations.

Preferred Study Destinations for Citizens of India, 2019-2023



*\*In Late 2021, the GMAC Prospective Students Survey sample collection methodology was adapted, which increased the number of Central and South Asian respondents who may be more interested in studying within the region.*

## This is why Indian students would choose to study in the UK

1. Reputation of educational system: **63%**
2. Better preparation for career: **38%**
3. Affordability: **31%**

Scholarships are crucial due to price sensitivity. Universities showcasing strong teaching quality and innovation resonate with candidates. Additionally, prioritizing graduate outcomes and employability, including a robust career service and high employment rates, is vital. Demonstrating support for graduates in starting their careers strengthens a university's appeal to Indian candidates.



# Asian student motivations

And destinations of choice.

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## Why Asian students choose to study abroad:

1. Achieve their career goals: **56.2%** (highest reported number in this category globally)
2. Having more options when it comes to programs or majors: **63.2%**
3. The opportunity to attend a top-ranked university: **20%**
4. Getting a visa for immigration purposes: **23.1%**

When looking at preferred study destinations chosen by prospective students in Asia over the last few years, the United Kingdom stands out at the top once again after increasing in popularity by **27.2%** since 2021.

Over a quarter of East Asians indicated their interest in studying abroad in the UK in 2023 (**25.4%**).

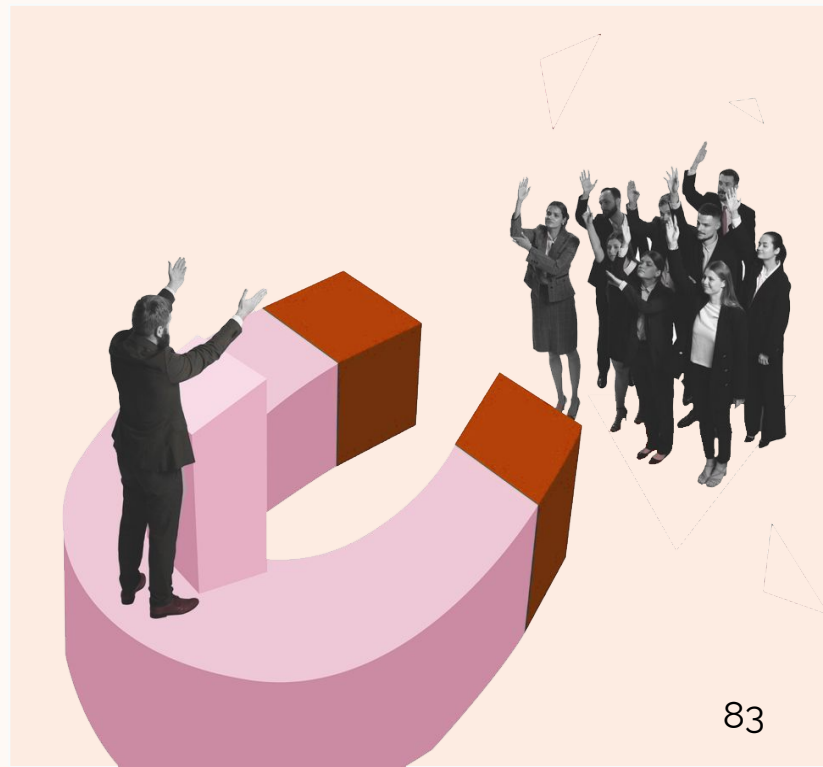


# A look at the Asian decision-making process

The length of the journey - and what they need from you to support it.

More than a third of South Asians consider the country first (**37.3%**) and **26.1%** of East Asians consider a school first, both of which are the highest proportions in the world for their respective considerations.

Nearly half (**45.1%**) of Asian students also indicated that they will begin to research their study options less than six months before they apply. When combining this proportion with those looking at researching 6 months to one year in advance, the total grows to **82.6%** - which in itself says a lot about the type of conversion cycle that you can expect from this market!



# This is what they prefer

When it comes to program type and delivery.

1. **70.08%** of Asian students prefer to learn on campus/in-person
2. **22.75%** of Asian students prefer a hybrid approach to learning
3. **6.45%** of Asian students prefer online learning

**The top 5 subject areas that Asian students are most interested in:**

1. **18.89%** for Business & Administration
2. **16.76%** for Computer Science & IT
3. **14.61%** for Healthcare & Medicine
4. **14.49%** for Engineering
5. **10.78%** for Business Studies





# The challenges that they face

When it comes to choosing an international university.

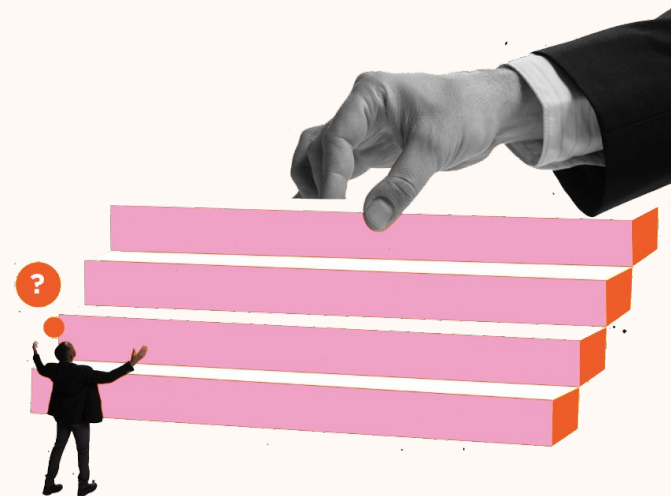
1. **79.81%** of Asian students worry about the cost of tuition & living expenses
2. **46.15%** of Asian students worry about the visa application process
3. **40.95%** of Asian students worry about finding accommodation or housing
4. **26.70%** of Asian students worry about their employability status
5. **19.57%** of Asian students worry about the language barrier

## What are their safety concerns?

1. **31.18%** of Asian students aren't worried about their safety
2. **21.87%** of Asian students are worried about racial discrimination
3. **15.05%** of Asian students are worried specifically about "Asian hate"
4. **13.44%** of Asian students are worried about physical violence
5. **9.78%** of Asian students are worried about facing sexual harassment

## What they have said will help them make a decision:

1. **43.66%** reported wanting more information about studying abroad
2. **38.84%** reported wanting more information about the school or program specifically
3. **20.75%** reported wanting to speak with a student ambassador



# Communicating with prospective Asian students

What they prefer, and when they want to hear from you.

1. **40.46%** of Asian students want to receive informative content or guides
2. **39.31%** of Asian students want to receive student counseling services via email
3. **38.81%** of Asian students want the opportunity to attend online workshops during the recruitment process

**This is the information that they want you to share:**

1. **38.37%**: Scholarship or funding information
2. **13.26%**: Visa or immigration information
3. **9.03%**: Cost of living / practical tips

**These are the social media platforms that they want to be contacted via:**

- Instagram: **29.47%**
- Facebook: **25.79%**
- LinkedIn: **16.99%**
- TikTok: **0.86%**



# It's all about the funnel

Adopting an integrated approach to your international recruitment strategy.

The average open rate for texts (**98%**) is more than **5\*** the average for emails (**17%**).

The average response time for an email is 90 minutes — but 90 seconds for a text message.



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# A quick overview of the enrollment funnel

Remember - adapt it to each market!



## Top-of-funnel:

- Cold audiences
- Goal: Building brand awareness
- How: Education (zero-click) content

## Content that works:

- Blogs & student interviews
- Introductory videos
- User-generated content

TOFU

## Mid-of-funnel

- Warm-ish audiences
- Goal: Engage to be considered
- How: Add value

## Content that works:

- Programme brochures
- Webinars, masterclass, virtual open days
- Quizzes: i.e. is this programme right for you?

MIFU

## Bottom-of-funnel:

- Warm-ish audiences
- Goal: Convert the right people
- How: Clear CTAs and urgency

## Content that works:

- Alumni success stories
- Application process guides
- Strong CTAs & scarcity messaging

BOFU

# Top tips for optimizing your enrollment funnel

Do it regularly, do it well.

1. **Tailor the funnel**, its messaging, and its content based on the region you're recruiting from. Consider cultural nuances, languages, and economic factors.
2. **Be considerate**: Learn about your prospect. Consider their messaging and communication preferences, decision-making journey & language.
3. **Optimize your application process**: Make it clear and simple. Ensure that your portal is optimized and built for a mobile-first experience.
4. **Make it personal**: Personalize all communication to students
5. Offer virtual tours, meetings or counseling sessions
6. Leverage and engage student ambassadors
7. Be clear about financial aid offerings and scholarships
8. Be clear & assist when it comes to the visa application process
9. **Always be ready to optimize**: Analyze your data frequently, and learn to make adjustments as needed.

# Okay, but how do you tailor it to each market?

Simple tweaks do the trick.



Research from Scoir, (a company that simplifies the application process for US colleges), reveals that the biggest challenges for students exploring college options are not being able to find what they need on college websites and a lack of personalization in communications.

**80% of students expect tailored experiences**

## Here's how you can leverage data and analytics for your higher education marketing:

1. Divide your audience for targeted campaigns, tailoring messages to specific student demographics, and maximize relevance and engagement.
2. Forecast trends and behaviors with data, enabling strategic decision-making for effective outreach and resource allocation in marketing efforts.
3. Customize communication to resonate with individuals, leveraging data insights to create tailored content that appeals to diverse student interests and needs.
4. Track and analyze marketing campaign performance, utilizing key metrics to assess effectiveness and refine strategies for optimal impact.

# Content adaptation is pretty important too

And it makes for an easier creation process.

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1. The average social media user is now on 6–7 platforms, highlighting the importance of a multi-channel approach to digital marketing (Source: Forbes Advisor).
2. By creating a content repository for the different stages of the student journey (application - acceptance - induction - graduation), we can help students get an authentic first-hand perspective from alumni/student ambassadors. and staff.
3. This content can then be used at various funnel stages. Testing these out will help us perfect the messaging, platform, format, language, and types of content that students consume and therefore, are convinced by.

**Repurposing content is a way to use the same content piece by tweaking it according to the content platform.**

For example, a blog post can be tailored into different content pieces by simply adding images, hashtags, CTAs as per the posting platform.

- Email nurture content
- Paid social ad
- Instagram post
- LinkedIn post
- Facebook post
- TikTok post

# And now - tailored messaging

Yep, that needs to be personalized too.

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Understanding the profile of the student and parent means that you can tailor messaging and increase conversions.

This includes understanding demographics, psychographics, and behaviors.

1. Local language is a crucial part of tailored messaging as some markets respond better to regional language content.
2. Audience setting (location) should also focus on source cities that have higher densities of aspiring study abroad students.
3. Research on students' economic situation, pain points, desires, and motivations to study abroad should reveal insights that can be used to A/B test messaging at different touchpoints.



# Bridging the gap between applications & conversions

It's a challenge for all of us.



- A panel at EAIE 2023 underscores the crucial conversion opportunity between admission and enrolment, highlighting the **complexity of student decision-making**.
- Factors affecting this phase include **student voice, multiple points of contact, authenticity, transparency, and building a sense of belonging**.
- During this critical stage, **students take the lead** in decision-making, making it imperative for institutions to focus on conversion efforts.
- Conversion factors post-admission include **financial, academic, social, support, geographic, and graduate outcome** considerations.
- Social factors and support are pivotal during this period, with **word of mouth, community, and responsiveness** playing key roles.
- There isn't a singular point of contact for conversion; **multiple messages** contribute to students feeling supported and valued.

# Bridging the gap between applications & conversions



Ask and you shall receive.

- It's all about giving the student (or potentially lost student) **a voice**.
- Consider implementing an initiative where you **survey admitted students who didn't enroll**. Much like one that the University of Helsinki regularly applies.
- In the University of Helsinki survey, consistent findings show financial factors like **cost of living** and **scholarship availability** as top reasons for non-enrollment.
- Another key emphasized by the University of Helsinki is the significance of program-related factors such as **rankings and program availability** in hindering conversion.
- Their data consistently stressed the importance of **student-to-student connections** for authenticity in university messaging. (Hello, student ambassadors)
- Students often prefer asking questions of their peers, highlighting the value of **transparency and authenticity**.
- While this approach may mean losing some control over the conversation, the **trade-off is worthwhile**.

# Bridging the gap between applications & conversions



This is what the numbers say.

- Students who make inquiries before they apply represent **17% of all enrolments**.
- Students experiencing "a great inquiry experience" accept admissions offers **more than twice as often as others**. (Source: Uniquest)
- More than half of students now research their degrees abroad within six months of applying, **up 23% since 2022**. They don't like waiting for answers and information
- (Source: Keystone Education Group's 2023 State of Recruitment Report)

# What other institutions are saying

Let's take a leaf from their book: Trinity College Dublin.

1. Declan Coogan from Trinity College Dublin highlighted that students typically apply to **multiple institutions in different countries** before finalizing their choice.
2. Factors influencing student decisions include **rankings, geography, costs**, and intangible elements like **"gut instinct" or a feeling of belonging**.
3. Trinity College Dublin is reassessing assumptions about international student recruitment, recognizing the **complexity and unpredictability of student decision-making**.
4. Coogan discussed the evolving role of **agents**, who now serve as **one-stop shops** for students, assisting with admissions, housing, and financing.
5. Trinity College Dublin organized a pre-departure event in China expecting 200 attendees but had 8,000 participants, highlighting the **unpredictability of student engagement**.
6. Lessons include the importance of the **student voice, multiple points of contact**, authenticity, transparency, and building a sense of belonging, especially post-admission.



Trinity  
College  
Dublin

The University of Dublin

**The key takeaway? The importance of authenticity in post-admissions conversions, acknowledging that students value realness and will discern authenticity quickly.**



# Aligning sales, marketing & recruitment teams

Because a singular voice matters.



# Avoiding the biggest pitfall...

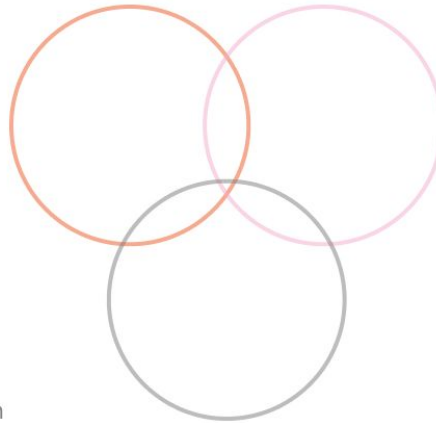
Yes - mixed messaging.

## **Faculty messages**

What they're saying about you

## **The recruitment message**

Often a reactive activation based on inquiries, the conversion narrative is neglected



## **Institutional messages**

What you're actively promoting (often focussed on rankings, credentials and the student lifestyle)

# Making room for Student Ambassadors

A simple way to be really authentic.

An impressive **65%** of students applied to the universities where they were able to chat with a student ambassador.



# The Gen Z perspective

On the value of student ambassadors.

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Research conducted by Unibuddy in collaboration with institutional staff revealed that **85%** of admissions professionals acknowledged the positive impact of student-to-student communication on engaging prospective students.

Gen Z students expressed the following preferences regarding when they would find it most beneficial to engage with other students:

- When they are narrowing down a list of schools to apply to
- When they are making a final decision
- At the research stage
- During the period between enrolment and orientation
- Writing applications

**Basically, Gen Z wants the opportunity to talk to other students pretty much all the way through their decision-making about higher education.**





# How influential are they:

Like really though ...

Research by Unibuddy and Instead found that **57%** of college applicants found the input of student ambassadors to be the most helpful part of the application and admissions process. (2020)

Peer-to-peer interactions are powerful influencers in the application and enrollment process for students looking to narrow down their prospects for colleges and universities outside of their home country. The ability of current student ambassadors to instill confidence and provide encouragement goes a long way in convincing prospective students to engage and ultimately commit to an institution.

Students specifically referenced ambassadors' unique and honest perspectives on academics, student life, and local culture as influential to their university selection process.

- Africa: **69%** of students enrolled after speaking to an ambassador
- Asia: **51%** of students enrolled after speaking to an ambassador
- Europe: **62%** of students enrolled after speaking to an ambassador

In terms of preferences in student ambassador communications, here is the split between undergraduate and postgraduate students: **UG: 43%** **PG: 56%**

# What prospective students value most

When it comes to speaking to an ambassador.

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## Ranked from most to least important

- Academic information
- General information
- Student life & campus culture
- Application & procedures
- Unique student perspective
- General helpful resource
- Personal encouragement
- Sense of belonging
- Clarity to specific questions
- Good, general advice

**28%** of EU students valued the information about academics

**19%** of African students valued personal encouragement above all else



# Where their impact was the strongest

In terms of the enrollment funnel.

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When it came time to apply to schools, an impressive **65%** of students applied to the universities where they were able to chat with a student ambassador.

1. **67%** engaged pre-application (Top of the funnel)
2. **10%** engaged post-application, but before the offer (Bottom of the funnel)
3. **16%** engaged once they had received an offer from the university (Bottom of the funnel)



# The role of educational agents

And why you have to make room for them.



# Recruitment expectation

What the agents are saying.

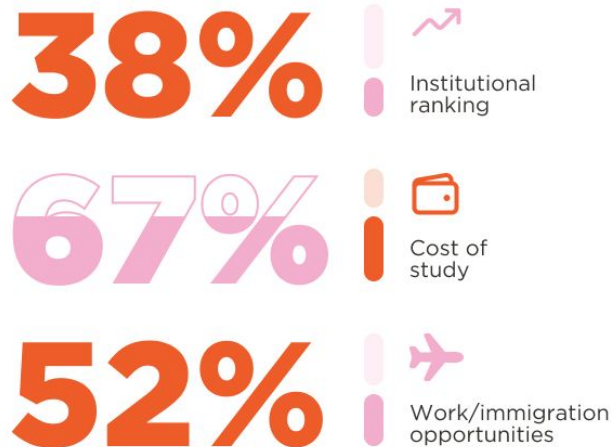


Globally, agents are predicting growth in the following areas:

- **59%** of agents believe a growth in vocational diplomas can be expected
- **63%** of agents believe that there will be growth in global Graduate and MBA programs
- **66%** of agents believe that there will be growth in foundational pathway programs, specifically for undergraduate students
- As student mobility continues to expand, agents have highlighted the need for diversity strategies - with **63%** of agents now placing students in new destination countries
- **51%** of agents are recruiting from new source countries
- **43%** of agents are saying that they are working with a broader range of students, reflecting the changing needs of students and institutions

# The agent's view on the student decision-making process

Word from the ground.



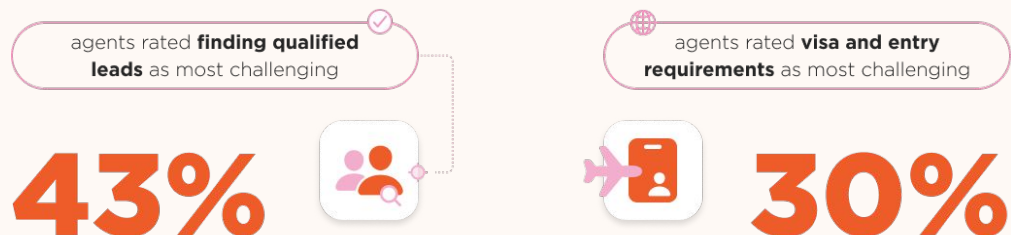
📞 Visa application support

44%

🕒 Visa processing times

37%

With the international student recruitment landscape continuing to evolve as a result of digital innovations, the changing interests of students, and a range of geopolitical factors, agents face several challenges in increasing enrolment.



### Top valued partner support areas:



### The main concern?

Sourcing qualified leads, with **43%** of agents ranking it as their top issue. Partner support is highly valued, with speed (in terms of response to inquiries and application support), highlighted as a top priority.

Agents have also reported high demand for training from partner institutions, whether online or in-person, with **85%** believing training to be essential for a successful partnership.

# The value of using agents

What benefits do they bring to the table?

- Improve support for international students' decision-making process
- Enhance international student feedback mechanisms
- Enhance early-stage student journey for improved satisfaction
- Enhance standards in education agent management
- Provide guidance and evaluation tools for education providers
- Streamline operations for increased efficiency
- Maximize ROI in student recruitment channels
- Empower education agents to represent providers effectively
- Ensure compliance with contracting and audit trails
- Elevate the UK education sector's profile for sustained recruitment





# Maximizing your international recruitment strategy in 2024

Key takeaways & what we've learned from this data.



# Action points

That you should incorporate into your strategy today.

- Prioritize post-graduation opportunities and career services
- Emphasize resources like resume workshops, interview prep, and networking events
- Highlight collaborations with industry partners, internships, and alum success stories
- Demonstrate commitment to inclusion and mental health support
- Emphasize diversity and inclusion through authentic student testimonies
- Use students' native languages for clear communication and trust-building
- Be responsive and timely in answering student inquiries
- Understand Gen Z's preference for quick access to information
- Tailor recruitment strategies based on data-led student personas
- Focus on delivering the best possible student experience



# Student “mystery shopper” insights

Yes, we have mystery shopper students now.

## Edified's mystery shopping

study reveals universities are losing leads due to neglecting live chat and Instagram, not using marketing automation, and omitting key selling points in communications.

Australian, New Zealand and Scottish universities ranked highest among 128 institutions surveyed.



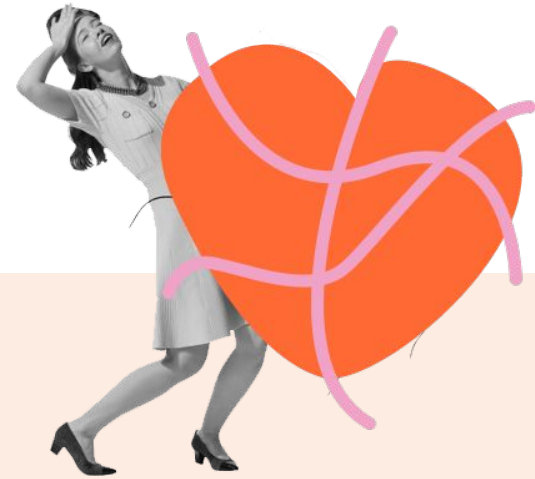
**What did we learn?** The study underscores the value of integrating *peer-to-peer channels into marketing and communications strategies*.

- **93%** of student mystery shoppers would not engage further with an institution after a negative inquiry experience.
- The most needed improvements were in response timeliness and follow-ups.
- While most mystery shoppers trusted responses (**90%**), only **40%** found them warm and friendly.
- **Only 50%** felt all their questions were answered, and 70% did not feel persuaded by responses lacking selling points.
- **1 in 4** mystery shoppers did not receive a response.
- **Only 20%** received follow-ups, with live chat being the worst channel for this.
- Response timelines have improved, with half of the responses falling into an "excellent" timeframe.
- **85%** felt peer communications were highly tailored and personal, indicating their significant influence on study abroad decisions.

# Winning the hearts and minds of Arabic students using a local language test campaign

Insights from the Pink Orange Database: A case study

**pinkorange**



# The challenge

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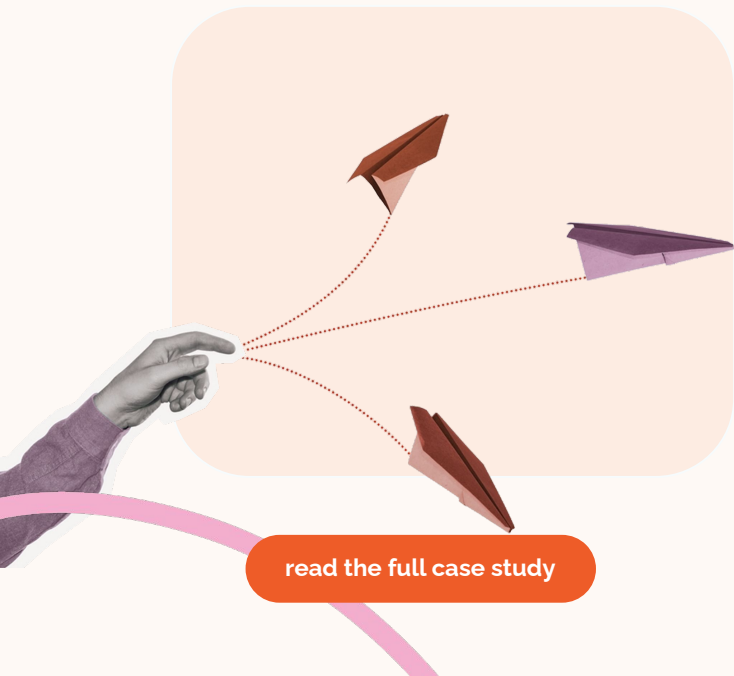


Page clicks for our client were high - but conversion rates were low. The challenge was quickly whittled down to the why?

## **So - we began testing.**

- They were losing high-quality leads that should be converting
- We hypothesized that users may be experiencing a language barrier that negatively affected the conversion rate
- With that in mind, we launched multiple campaigns, in various languages.

# Solutions-based results



[read the full case study](#)

Work smarter, not more expensive.

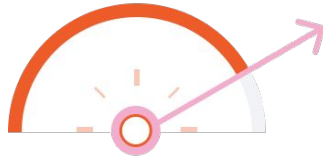
## Arabic localization of assets resulted in significant improvements:

- CPL in Saudi Arabia decreased from **6.78 GBP to 3.85 GBP**, a **reduction of 43.2%**.
- The conversion rate of Arabic pages increased from 1.37% to 4.84%, a **2.5x increase**.
- Email nurture sequence in Arabic saw a **9.4% increase** in open rate and a **10% increase** in click-through rate.
- Middle-of-funnel landing pages had low conversion rates initially. Moving the signup form to the top of the page increased the conversion rate **by 14x**.

## Impact Stats

# 20,847,177

impressions, for a CPM of **0.79 GBP**  
(compared to the direct industry  
average of 1.8GBP)



# 4556

engaged leads from Paid Channels,  
at **3.63 GBP** per lead

## 34.53%



Nurture sequence open rate

## 10.59%



Click through rate



# Tips for campaign budget allocation

Getting the most bang for your buck.



## **Walk the tightrope**

Maintain a balance between brand building and activation efforts to ensure that you're meeting both long and short-term goals



## **Benchmark - always**

Benchmark your budget allocation against previous campaign performance (in each region) as well as against the industry standard. This means you can gauge effectiveness, and keep up with the competition.



## **Flexibility is pretty important**

Stay flexible in your approach to deployment, reallocating budgets from underperforming channels to those that are showing positive results, to maximize your ROI.



## **Make room for exploration**

Allocate budget (no matter the size) to explore new platforms and opportunities. This experimentation can often lead to promising results.





# Campaign measurement toolbox

Everything you need to measure with confidence.

Seamless communication.  
Risk mitigation.  
Harnessing the best ROI.

Paid media campaigns	Organic social media	Social media interactions	Site performance	Organic social media
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Impressions</li><li>- Clicks</li><li>- CTR</li><li>- Visits</li><li>- Bounce rates</li><li>- Applications</li><li>- Conversion metrics</li><li>- CPM</li><li>- CPC</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Impressions</li><li>- Reach</li><li>- Likes</li><li>- Comments</li><li>- Saves</li><li>- Video views</li><li>- Follower growth</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Monitor the number (and nature) of comments and inquiries</li><li>- Ensure that urgent or critical comments are answered quickly</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Traffic sources</li><li>- User engagement</li><li>- Conversion data</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Impressions</li><li>- Reach</li><li>- Likes</li><li>- Comments</li><li>- Saves</li><li>- Video views</li><li>- Follower growth</li></ul>



Weekly catch-ups

Bi-Weekly performance analysis and optimization meetings

Strategic phase reviews

Advanced tools and innovations

# Where to from here?



Let's take the next steps together.

- In the dynamic world of International Student Recruitment, there's no one-size-fits-all solution. A myriad of factors, from immigration policies to cultural nuances, shape the landscape. Success lies in crafting a winning marketing strategy that taps into these insights.
- Universities must adapt to changing trends and circumstances. With the upheavals of the past decade—from COVID-19 to policy shifts—it's clear that diversification is key. Relying on a single approach is risky.
- To stay ahead, institutions must stay attuned to student preferences and industry shifts. Platforms evolve, and pain points emerge, demanding agility and innovation. Your campaigns should echo student voices, align with market trends, and ultimately, drive conversion.
- At Pink Orange, we've spearheaded over 300 successful digital campaigns across 100+ markets for universities from across the globe.



pinkorange



THE END