



International students studying in the UK - Guidance for UK higher education institutions

**Draft for consultation
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Foreword

This draft new publication was produced through the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) working with an advisory group drawn from, and acting on behalf of, higher education institutions in the UK, as well as representatives from higher education organisations with an interest in international students' experiences (membership in Appendix 1).

The decision to develop the draft new guidance, which is intended to assist higher education institutions in the UK in managing international students' experiences, was taken following a scoping group discussion chaired by QAA that included representative bodies and others held in April 2010 (membership in Appendix 2). Representatives at that meeting acknowledged the considerable good practice in this area and the importance of demonstrating UK higher education's continuing commitment to international students' experiences.

This draft new guidance is presented to institutions providing higher education for international students in the UK, students and their representatives, and other higher education organisations and representative bodies, for comment as part of a sector-wide consultation. Feedback received as part of the consultation will be taken into account in preparing the final version of the guidance for publication around the start of the academic year 2011-12. Responses should be directed to international.students@gaa.ac.uk by Friday 14 October 2011.

This draft publication is produced by QAA, an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies in the UK. QAA visits universities and colleges to review how well they are fulfilling their responsibilities for academic quality and standards. QAA's mission is 'to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education'.

1 Introduction

The UK is one of the most popular countries of destination for international students and it has one of the most internationalised student populations in the world. The UK is also one of the world leaders in transnational education, with considerable numbers of international students studying on UK higher education (HE) programmes outside the UK.

The popularity of UK HE relies to a large extent on the quality of its provision. Large-scale student satisfaction surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer (ISB) reveal high rates of satisfaction among international students - in the most recent surveys, eight out of ten international students are satisfied with their overall experience of studying in the UK¹.

Institutions and policymakers are not complacent however about the quality and reputation of UK HE. The intense and growing global competition for recruitment, and the increasing sophistication of international students in their choice of country and institution, makes it crucial for UK higher education institutions (HEIs) to continuously maintain and enhance the quality of international students' experiences.

While international students appreciate the quality of UK HE and their overall learning experience, it is possible to identify, from student surveys, lower grades of satisfaction in a number of areas, including integration on campus, work opportunities and career advice, and cost and financial support². Furthermore, the growing intake of international students, while bringing financial benefits and enriching the academic and social experience of all students and staff, poses new and heightened challenges to HEIs. In particular, the great diversity of the international student population requires HEIs to manage an increasingly varied range of expectations and needs.

What is the purpose of this guidance and who is it intended for?

There is much good practice already in place in support of international students' experiences and the quality of the services provided by institutions³. This new guidance seeks to reflect and consolidate existing practice. It was developed through QAA working with an advisory group made up of representatives drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the sector (membership in Appendix 1). The guidance seeks to establish a UK-wide set of shared principles that reflect minimum expectations of support for international students, with a view to assisting HEIs in developing an inclusive environment that meets the challenges associated with an increasingly international student body.

The guidance is not regulatory in nature and it does not form part of QAA's existing *Code of practice* or its successor, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Rather, the principles set out in each section are intended to act as a point of reference for institutions in reviewing and enhancing their own practice; this in part allows students and external audiences to feel confident that institutions are discharging their responsibilities in this area effectively.

¹ 'The international student experience: NSS student survey results' Sami Benyahia, Research Director, Ipsos Mori and 'Benchmarking the global international student experience; how does the UK compare?' William Archer, Director, i-graduate. Presentations at 3rd Annual Improving International Student Experience Conference, 28 January 2011.

² 'Benchmarking the global international student experience; how does the UK compare?' William Archer, Director, i-graduate. Presentation at 3rd Annual Improving International Student Experience Conference, 28 January 2011.

³ *Outcomes from Institutional audit - Arrangements for international students*, 2006 and 2008, published by QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/Published-Outcomes-papers.aspx.

As responsibility for providing an inclusive environment and meeting the needs of a diverse student body rests with all staff within an institution, the guidance may be of practical help to student advisers, international offices, lecturers, quality assurance practitioners, student service managers and pro vice-chancellors. It may also be of direct interest to students and their representatives.

What is meant by an international student for the purpose of this guidance?

This guidance is based around an awareness that international students cannot be regarded as a homogenous and tightly defined group. They represent a varied group of individuals with different needs and expectations, and a different degree of familiarity with UK culture and higher education. For the purpose of this guidance, international students are therefore broadly defined as non-UK students. In particular, no distinction is drawn between EU and non-EU students. No distinction is made between students studying in the UK for whole programmes or as part of exchange programmes or articulation agreements with overseas partners.

The guidance is focused on international students who come to the UK to study on HE programmes, or parts of programmes, at UK HEIs that are physically based here. However, QAA recognises the significance of transnational education and that many students study outside the UK while registered for UK awards. The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA, includes guidance on transnational education partnerships⁴. The *Code of practice, Section 2* should be regarded as the primary point of reference for HEIs seeking guidance on collaborative provision arrangements, although some of the content set out in this new guidance may also be useful.

How is this guidance structured?

The guidance is structured around the typical international student journey, from the point of first contact with UK HE and its providers, through to support for learning and progression into further study or employment. It is set out in the form of principles, with signposts to sources of further information, advice or guidance included at the end of each section. As such, the guidance is supportive, recognising the diversity and autonomy of individual HEIs, and allowing for flexibility and responsiveness.

A note on UK immigration regulations

At the time of writing (August 2011), the UK is responding to a period of change with respect to immigration legislation. Readers are advised to consult the UK's immigration authority (UK Border Agency) for the latest information⁵. The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) offers information, advice and guidance for immigration advisers on its website⁶.

⁴ *Code of practice, Section 2*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-2.aspx.

⁵ UK Border Agency: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/.

⁶ UKCISA: www.ukcisa.org.uk/.

The Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI)

The Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI) was originally launched by the UK Government in 1999 as a five-year strategy aiming to increase the number of international students in the UK. In 2006, a second phase of the PMI (known as PMI2) began which had as a key theme the quality of international students' experiences. The projects undertaken as part of this Government initiative have given rise to resources that staff and students of many HEIs chose to draw upon. These resources are referenced at various stages of the guidance for the benefit of readers who wish to consult them.

2 Overarching principles

The following principles apply throughout the whole of the typical student lifecycle.

An inclusive environment

Institutions should seek to provide an inclusive environment where the needs of international students are considered and met alongside those of other students in an integrated and embedded way.

Student engagement

Institutions should ensure that international students are represented in student engagement activities and that their feedback is taken into account in making enhancements to existing policies and practice.

Clear and accessible information

Institutions should ensure that the information they provide at all stages of the student lifecycle, from marketing and recruitment through to support for learning and graduation, is accessible to international students. This includes information on the institution's regulations. Where technical terminology is unavoidable, clear explanation should be provided.

Shared responsibility

Responsibility for meeting the needs of a diverse student body should rest with all staff within an institution, not just those with a specific remit for managing international students' experiences.

Staff development

All staff working with international students should have access to appropriate training and development opportunities, which support them in recognising and addressing the particular needs of international students.

3 Marketing and recruitment

Marketing and recruitment represents the typical point of first contact between a potential applicant and an institution. How an institution markets its provision and recruits students has implications not only for the quality of students' experiences but also for the reputation of UK HE overseas.

The *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* contains precepts and guidance relating to recruitment and admission that institutions work with. The guidance given in this section should be seen as complementary to the *Code of practice, Section 10*. Similarly, there may be precepts and guidance in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* that are relevant to this section of the guidance.

Information for potential applicants

Potential applicants will benefit from having access to various types of information at different times during the admissions process. The information that an institution makes available to potential applicants should be clear, accurate, reliable and accessible (see also 'Overarching principles'). It should give a fair and unambiguous picture of the institution, its programmes, and the services and support that it makes available to students.

At the point of marketing and recruitment, the information that an HEI makes available should include, as a minimum, the following, some of which may also be included at the admissions stage:

- an overview of the nature of UK higher education and HE qualifications
- the profile of the institution
- details of registered representatives or agents and expected standards of service
- admissions processes and any variations for international students
- visa requirements and procedures
- entry requirements, including English language proficiency
- acceptance conditions, deposits required and refund policies
- estimated cost of living, including accommodation costs, in the UK
- study costs (including tuition fees and other costs) and details of whether and how such costs may alter during the course of the programme
- details of any scholarships and other financial assistance schemes
- programme details*
- an indication of student support services that are made available
- employability including opportunities for work experience, volunteering and work placements.

*The form in which programme information is made available may include all or any of: websites, prospectuses, course handbooks, programme specifications, and so on⁷.

The guidance is not prescriptive about the form in which institutions make this information available; whether electronically, in print, via face-to-face contact, or over the telephone. Institutions may wish to consider making information available in multiple formats.

⁷ At the time of writing, all higher and further education institutions that are subject to QAA review, including all those funded by HEFCE and DELNI and private higher education providers that subscribe to QAA will, from 2012-13 be expected to provide programme information in the form of a Key Information Set.

Programme information will be designed to assist potential applicants in making informed decisions about their options. Typically it will include, but will not be limited to: the nature and type of qualification; credit value and level; study routes and options available within the programme; principal methods of teaching, learning and assessment; progression opportunities; and whether or not the programme is externally recognised or accredited, for example by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).

Institutions may wish to advise potential applicants intending to work outside of the UK upon successful completion of their programme to check the conditions for entry to the profession of interest in that country.

Institutions may also wish to make clear to potential applicants that acceptance onto a course does not guarantee successful completion or entitlement to residency and employment upon graduation.

The information that institutions provide should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that it remains up to date. Part of the review process should involve seeking and acting on users' feedback (see also 'Overarching principles').

Opportunities for potential applicants to obtain further information to assist in making informed choices should be made clear and institutions should have processes in place to ensure that they are able to respond in a timely manner to such requests for information.

Where an education agent⁸ acts on behalf of the institution, the same principles outlined here apply (see also 'Use of education agents and appointed representatives').

The onus is considered to rest on institutions to satisfy themselves that agents and representatives working on their behalf are acting ethically and responsibly.

Recruitment policies and procedures

Institutions should have in place policies and procedures for the recruitment of international students that are fair, clear, explicit and implemented consistently.

The institution should seek to ensure that its recruitment policies and procedures are clearly signposted, accessible, and made available to potential applicants, their advisers and third party agents. Institutions may wish to consider including in their policies and procedures information about the responsibilities and obligations of applicants. This may include details of how an institution will respond to applications that include fraudulent or false information.

Staff with responsibility for recruitment and an institution's appointed representatives should work to high standards of professional conduct. Professional conduct here implies competence, fairness, truthfulness and a primary concern for the best interests of the student.

The position of those who advise international students is distinctive in that they come into contact with students from a wide range of cultural, social and academic backgrounds and with a wide range of expectations about education and about ethical behaviour and professional conduct. UKCISA and the Association of International Student Advisers (AISA) have produced a Code of Ethics (see 'Sources of further information') for the guidance of all staff advising international students, which readers may wish to consult.

⁸ The British Council's definition of an agent is used here: 'an education agent is defined as an individual, company or other organisation providing services on a commercial basis to help students and their parents gain places on study programmes overseas' (Education UK - Developing the UK's International Education Agent Network, Education UK, British Council, prepared by Jean Krasocki, 2002).

Staff engaged in international recruitment activity should be appropriately informed, trained and supported to undertake their roles (see also 'Overarching principles'). This may mean that they are conversant in the application and admissions process and understand the implications of student visa applications. Staff may also benefit from cross-cultural awareness training.

Use of education agents and appointed representatives

Institutions contracting the services of external agents should ensure that due diligence is undertaken during the selection process and that all reasonable effort is undertaken to ensure that the agency is reputable and competent in UK higher education advising. Institutions may wish to consider incorporating the British Council Guide to good practice for education agents (see 'Sources of further information') as part of their legal contracts with agencies.

Institutions should regularly review, support and train their appointed representatives.

Institutions are encouraged to reflect regularly on the service and support provided by agents and appointed representatives and, in recognising the significance of the role played by third parties acting on behalf of the institution, should actively manage these relationships in support of students' experiences.

Institutions may wish to consider making publicly available an up to date list of all accredited representatives used by the institution and provide signposted information on appointed agents for international applicants.

Institutions should seek feedback from students who have engaged with external agents prior to enrolling at the institution and have in place means of acting on this feedback where appropriate (see also 'Overarching principles').

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx

Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-2.aspx

British Council

The British Council offers a **range of services** to support HEIs in marketing and recruitment, including working with agents. These include:

A **professional development training course** and a **global online database of agents** to help institutions searching for agents in specific countries:

www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-services.htm

Guide to good practice for education agents

www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-agents-good-practice.htm

UKCISA

UKCISA offers a **range of publications and resources** aimed at supporting those who support international students. They include:

Code of Ethics (published jointly with the Association of International Student Advisors):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/join/code_of_ethics.php

Web-based self-study course - 'New to International':

www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/new_to_international.php

Training programme that includes training on marketing and recruitment, training in giving immigration advice, and cross-cultural awareness:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/training_programme.php

Others

Provision of Education to International Students - **Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions**, Irish Higher Education Quality Network

International Student Recruitment and Support - **Good Practice Guidelines for Scottish Education Institutions**, Education UK Scotland

A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience (2010) UK Higher Education International Unit

Academic Cooperation Association (ACA) **Support Services for International Students:**

www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/documents/ACA_Flyer_21_06_FINAL.pdf

National Union of Students (NUS) **Charter for a global university:**

www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6006/NUS-Charter-Global-University.pdf

Higher Education Liaison Officers (HELOA) **Code of Practice:**

www.heloa.co.uk/whatisheloa/codeofpractice.html

4 Admissions

The guidance in this section relates to the admissions stage, in between the point of marketing and recruitment, and pre-arrival when an offer has been accepted by a potential student.

The *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* contains precepts and guidance relating to recruitment and admission that institutions work with. The guidance given in this section should be seen as complementary to the *Code of practice, Section 10*. Similarly, there may be precepts and guidance in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* that are relevant to this section of the guidance.

Information for applicants

It is recommended that at the point of admission, the information that an HEI makes available includes, as a minimum, the following, some of which may also be included at the stage of marketing and recruitment:

- admissions policies and processes, including any variation for international students and processes for entry part-way through an academic year
- application deadlines and processes for considering applications
- student classification for tuition fee purposes, tuition fees and other compulsory charges
- application fees
- payment deadlines and refund procedures
- living costs
- how students who need a visa should go about securing one, signposting relevant organisations and sources of further information, advice and guidance
- contact point for enquiries
- entry requirements, including English language proficiency
- details of where students may need to satisfy UKBA requirements (including for English language competency) in addition to the entry requirements set by the institution
- availability of pre-sessional courses or academic study skills courses.

Admissions policies and procedures

Institutions should have in place policies and procedures for admission that are fair, clear, explicit and implemented consistently.

Institutions should ensure that the admissions and selection processes for individual programmes are made clear, and that any variations in the processes for international students, including between EU students and others, for example in regard to interviews, auditions or other selection tests, are highlighted. In particular, institutions should make clear whether applicants are required to come to the UK to attend an interview or audition.

Institutions are encouraged to consider carefully the impact of immigration requirements and timelines for obtaining a visa in the design and operation of their admissions processes for international students.

Institutions are encouraged to make students aware where they may need to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate - which applies to courses

leading to postgraduate awards in certain subject areas - as the application process may take several weeks in addition to visa application.

Applicants should be advised of the deadline for submission of applications, together with an indication of how long the decision-making process will normally take.

A clear point of contact should be provided for enquiries about the admissions process. All staff involved in the admissions process should have a good understanding of international perspectives and an appreciation of cultural differences (see also 'Overarching principles').

A contact point should be provided for enquiries about the equivalence and acceptability of qualifications, and about accreditation of prior learning, where applicable, including the transfer of credit. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that staff are appropriately informed, trained and supported in this context (see also 'Overarching principles').

With regard to entry requirements, institutions may wish to consider identifying examples of equivalent qualifications for entry for the benefit of entrants who have not previously studied in the UK.

Institutions should make clear the English language requirements for their programmes, together with the qualifications and tests that will be used as evidence that these requirements are met. Institutions should also make clear to students such cases where language competency upon completion of the programme, or at points within it, is expected to be greater than at the point of entry.

The cost of tuition fees, including any applicable bench fees or other compulsory charges (for example, for course materials, fieldwork, and so on) should be specified in the offer letter or accompanying documentation. This should include a clear explanation of what is and is not included in the fees. If fees may change over the duration of the programme (for example, due to incremental shifts) this should be noted. Indicative information on living expenses should also be provided.

Institutions should be clear about the classification that they have arrived at for fee purposes and the process for any appeals against this decision.

Payment deadlines, and any requirements for the payment of deposits, should be specified, and the circumstances in which refunds may be made should be explicit.

Institutions should encourage applicants to disclose any disability at any early stage in the admissions process and discuss the requirements of disabled applicants in good time in order to make decisions about reasonable adjustments. The *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* contains precepts and guidance that institutions work with in this context.

The offer letter should set out clearly the conditions of the offer and the obligations placed on students. Institutions should inform potential students in good time of any significant changes to a programme after an offer had been made.

Selection policies and procedures

Institutions should have in place selection policies and procedures that are clear and followed fairly and consistently.

Entry requirements should be transparent and will underpin judgements made during the selection process for entry.

In relation to assessing the equivalency of qualifications, staff should seek advice and guidance where necessary, such as via UK NARIC.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx

Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-3.aspx

Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) - Amplified version (2010)

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-2.aspx

UKCISA/PMI2

UKCISA signposts **practice case studies** in the area of admissions on its website:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

UK NARIC

UK NARIC is the national agency responsible for providing **information, advice and guidance on qualifications from overseas countries**:

www.naric.org.uk/

Others

The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established in 2006 and works closely with HEIs and other stakeholders on the **continuing development of fair admissions**. The SPA website includes good practice guidance in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation:

www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/index.html

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) offers **training and advice to HE staff** supporting the admissions process:

www.ucas.com/he_staff/

Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS):

www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/what-we-do/services-we-deliver/atas/

5 Pre-arrival

The guidance in this section relates to the stage in the typical international student lifecycle between acceptance of an offer and arrival in the UK. As such it deals mainly with the information and instructions that institutions provide in order to help applicants to settle in as quickly and easily as possible upon arrival in the UK. Pre-arrival information will cover general information about living in the UK, in addition to information about studying at the particular institution.

The *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* contains precepts and guidance relating to recruitment and admission that institutions work with. The guidance given in this section should be seen as complementary to the *Code of practice, Section 10*.

Information for entrants

It is recommended that at the point of pre-arrival, the information that an HEI makes available includes, as a minimum, the following, some of which may also be included at earlier stages:

- joining instructions*
- details of any 'meet and greet' services made available by the institution
- what to expect upon arrival from immigration control, including what documents are needed, when, and where students will need to bring them
- details of any accommodation that the HEI makes available or privately-run accommodation
- details of the registration/enrolment process and the documents that entrants will need
- details of any orientation/induction programmes that the HEI makes available
- services and support (academic and non-academic) available to students at the institution
- access to banks
- basic guidance on personal safety and British law
- arrangements for healthcare, including students' entitlements
- insurance that may be necessary
- deadlines for fees and information about how to make payments
- signposting to useful sources of information about coming to and living in the UK, including entitlements or restrictions on working while studying, such as from UKBA, the British Council or UKCISA (see 'Sources of further information').

*Joining instructions should include:

- advice on where students need to go and what they need to do immediately on arrival
- guidance on how to arrive safely at the institution or accommodation
- emergency and out-of-hours contact details which, as a minimum, should include the UK's emergency telephone number (999)
- a recommendation that students make appropriate arrangements to access money upon arrival in the UK and/or to finance themselves until such access can be arranged
- details of how students can contact home upon arrival to confirm that they have arrived safely.

Pre-arrival information should be timely and accessible (see also 'Overarching principles').

Institutions should consider providing contacts (email and telephone) for international students seeking further information, advice and guidance or for clarification of any of the information provided.

Institutions may also signpost students to sources of practical help and guidance which they can engage with prior to the start of their programme, for example, UKCISA's 'Prepare for success' initiative (see 'Sources of further information'). Institutions may also offer pre-sessional courses around study and language skills.

Accommodation

The provision of accommodation is a significant part of the service that institutions often provide for international students. Although falling outside of the sphere of QAA's influence, some general principles around the information that institutions provide about accommodation and healthcare (below) are included here in recognition of their importance and the impact that a student's personal welfare can have on their academic experience.

Institutions may wish to advise students about the availability and range of student accommodation, including that managed by the institution or by private suppliers. Such information might include details of the suitability of particular student houses, flats or halls of residence for specific groups of students, such as those with families.

Institutions might consider including information about deadlines for applying for student accommodation and guidance on whether, when and how deposits and rent are payable. At this point, institutions might also clarify whether, and to what extent, they are responsible for accommodation that is managed by, or on behalf of, the institution. In this context, institutions may draw students' attention to legal agreements, such as rental contracts, which detail mutual obligations.

Healthcare

As with accommodation, healthcare arrangements are outside of the sphere of influence of QAA but some principles around the information that institutions provide in respect of healthcare are included here in recognition of the significant impact that students' personal welfare can have on their academic experience.

Institutions may wish to consider giving advice and guidance to international students concerning the availability of, and the entitlement to use, healthcare services in the UK. This should include an explanation about how healthcare services can be accessed and whether costs are likely to be incurred when using healthcare services in the UK.

The advice and guidance that institutions provide around healthcare arrangements for international students in the UK might include the circumstances in which students should consider taking out insurance cover for incidents of ill health, which make medical treatment necessary, or which may lead to a transfer home.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

Information and resources aimed at students

The British Council

Education UK website - information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org/

Comfort zone - a guide aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/comfortzone

UKCISA

Information sheets for international students on aspects of life and study in the UK:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Prepare for Success - an online resource comprising learning activities designed to enable international students to prepare for their studies in the UK:

www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk/

The International Student Calculator - an online student lifestyle calculator designed to help international students to plan and manage their finances for study in the UK:

www.studentcalculator.org.uk/international/

Information and resources aimed at institutions

UKCISA signposts **practice case studies in the area of pre-arrival**:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

6 Enrolment, orientation and student services

This section is concerned with enrolment, orientation and student services once students have arrived in the UK. Section 5 of this guidance recommended that institutions provide details of enrolment, orientation and student services before students arrive in the UK. Some general principles are set out here that apply to all services and support provided by, or on behalf of, an institution which are made available to international students. The guidance does not enter into practical detail around student welfare, finance, accommodation, leisure, sporting, social or spiritual activities, however. Detailed guidance on the management and provision of accommodation and campus services can be found in the UK HE International Unit's guide to enhancing the international student experience (see 'Sources of further information').

Enrolment

Institutions should give clear information in advance regarding any documents that students will be required to produce for the purposes of enrolment (see also 'Pre-arrival'). Institutions should explain the process of enrolment and its purpose to entrants - this might include explanation of the institution's and the student's respective responsibilities towards UKBA.

Orientation

Orientation programmes can support international students in settling into the institution, through having an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the services and support that are made available and to begin the process of integration with other students.

It is recommended that orientation should cover, as a minimum, the following, some of which will build upon information provided at the pre-arrival stage:

- advice on settling in and information on living in the UK
- details of social, sporting, spiritual (faith-based) and leisure facilities on campus
- advice on recognising and dealing with cultural shock and sources of guidance and support
- arrangements for healthcare and personal welfare
- details of any 'buddying' schemes or similar
- academic support, including for language proficiency
- support for employability and careers education and guidance, including any opportunities for short-term employment or work experience.

This guidance is not prescriptive about the form that orientation programmes should take, but it is recommended that institutions consider the needs of diverse groups of students - for example those with dependants, part-time learners, mature students, and so on.

In designing orientation programmes, institutions may also wish to consider how best to facilitate integration between international and domestic students - for example, in orientation programmes designed specifically for international students, institutions may signpost 'fresher's week' or similar schemes designed to welcome new students to the institution and encourage international students to attend.

Where institutions run 'buddying' schemes or other opportunities designed to encourage interaction between international and domestic students, these should be explained and information about them disseminated during orientation. Students' unions can also play a

role in facilitating integration between international and domestic students, and institutions are advised to work with the students' union in this context.

Institutions should also be aware of the need for orientation for students who join part-way through an academic year and have in place appropriate arrangements.

Student services

Institutional staff and external suppliers with responsibility for managing student services and support, and advising students in such contexts, should be aware of the diversity of the student body and have an understanding of the needs of international students. They should be appropriately trained and supported to understand the perspectives of students from different countries or cultures in order to meet their needs (see also 'Overarching principles' and 'Sources of further information' on cross-cultural awareness).

Where possible, services and support for international students should be seen as part of institutions' core service to all students in order to foster an inclusive environment and promote integration and inclusion of international students in all aspects of university life (see also 'Overarching principles'). Students' unions can be a source of advice in this respect.

For international students whose usual residence is outside of the UK, it is recommended that institutions should have in place continuity arrangements in the event of a natural disaster or crisis event in the student's home country. Institutions should be in a position to exercise care and due diligence towards international students in cases of disaster recovery or major incidents.

International students will frequently require immigration advice - such advice should only be given by those who have been appropriately trained to do so.

The services and support that an institution makes available should include information about financial matters and any support schemes in the case of financial hardship.

Institutions should consider signposting networks and events available via the local community, which can aid further in integration and inclusion and provide opportunities to experience UK culture.

The availability of services and support should be clearly and accessibly communicated to international students (see also 'Overarching principles').

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-3.aspx

British Council

Education UK website - information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org/

UKCISA

Good Practice Guide series includes guides on planning and running orientation, managing accommodation, giving financial advice, mentoring schemes, volunteering schemes, students in crisis:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/good_practice_guides.php

and international students with disabilities (in association with Skill: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/disability.php

Training programme includes training for HE staff advising international students during orientation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/training_programme.php

Benchmarking survey of student services and support across universities and colleges (2010-11):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/research_reports.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Good practice case studies in the area of orientation, student support and advice, social integration, and student representation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

Internationalising Students' Unions project run by the NUS aims to support students' unions to increase involvement and engagement of international students with the students' union, including its running and the services and activities it makes available. The project is developing training courses for staff, officers and students, as well as a database of case studies and good practices:

www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/33768/1204/

The International Unit

A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience (March 2010) - a guide for HEIs drawing on data collected through the International Student Barometer on students' experiences:

www.international.ac.uk/our_research_and_publications/index.cfm

7 Academic induction and learning and teaching

The information that an institution makes available to international students early on in the student lifecycle can help students to prepare for entry into a UK higher education programme (see also 'Marketing and recruitment; 'Admissions'; and 'Pre-arrival'). Institutions have an opportunity at the point of entry to induct students into the academic experience, including further detail on what they can expect from their programme of study, what is expected of them, and the institution's rules and regulations. Academic induction, and ongoing support for learning, is the focus of this section.

Academic induction

Institutions should introduce international students to the UK academic system and UK academic culture. In their marketing and recruitment, institutions may already have given some high-level information about higher education in the UK (see 'Marketing and recruitment'). At the stage of academic induction, this should be followed up and complemented by more detailed information about academic practice (and malpractice).

It is recommended that induction should cover, as a minimum, the following, some of which will build upon information provided at the marketing and recruitment stage:

- learning and teaching methods
- assessment methods and criteria for assessment
- grading and classification systems where appropriate
- feedback on assessment - types and usage
- academic practice and malpractice (for example, plagiarism)
- the institution's expectations towards students as active and independent learners
- academic support including, where relevant, the use of tutors and tutorials
- the institution's rules and regulations governing the academic experience including its complaints and appeals procedures*
- opportunities for student representation and feedback.

* In the context of complaints and appeals procedures, institutions may also wish to signpost students' recourse to independent bodies, including the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) (England and Wales) and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) (Scotland).

The guidance is not prescriptive about the form in which an institution makes the information at induction available, which could be through reference to Student Charters, programme specifications, course handbooks, and so on, but it should be clear and accessible (see also 'Overarching principles').

The process of academic induction should be ongoing, focusing in particular on key points during the academic cycle such as examination periods. During academic induction, and beyond, institutions should ensure that international students recognise and understand what constitutes good academic practice and what the institution's regulations are relating to malpractice, including its consequences, all of which can vary considerably across different national contexts. Institutions should clearly illustrate, for example, by using examples, what constitutes academic malpractice or a deviation from accepted academic practice in the UK.

Induction should prepare international students for an active and engaged student learning experience. As such, institutions should seek to make students aware of opportunities for giving feedback, for example through completing student surveys and taking part in focus

groups, as well as through engagement with student representatives and the students' union.

To ensure that international students actively and consistently use the information provided during academic induction, institutions should provide guidance as to where and how the information provided during academic induction can be accessed throughout the academic year. Students may also benefit from periodic reminders of the information provided during initial induction during their programme of study.

Provision should be made to induct students who enter part-way through an academic year, after the start of a programme.

Learning and teaching

The guidance in this section sets out a number of principles relating to learning and teaching but does not attempt to offer detailed pedagogical advice. Those seeking practical guidance in this area are encouraged to visit the web pages of the Teaching International Students (TIS) project, a joint initiative of the Higher Education Academy and UKCISA, with funding from the Prime Minister's Initiative 2 (see 'Sources of further information').

Staff involved in programme delivery should be encouraged to pay attention to the composition of taught classes and to consider the needs of all students in the class, including international students. The institution should support frontline teaching staff through, for example, professional development opportunities, to assist them in developing inclusive teaching and assessment practices (see also 'Overarching principles').

Institutions may wish to consider reflecting global perspectives during the development and periodic review of modules and programmes, taking account of student feedback, with the aim of ensuring that the curriculum gives all students an equal opportunity to engage with it.

Methods of teaching and assessment should be inclusive, giving all students an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential.

For students on work placements, institutions should seek to support the placement host in understanding the particular educational and cultural needs of the student (see also the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*).

Institutions should ensure that their quality assurance processes take account of international students' experiences alongside those of domestic students (see also 'Overarching principles').

In recognising the particular needs of international students whose first language is not English, institutions should have in place appropriate arrangements to enable students to cope with the demands of the programme in the context of the continual development of their language skills.

International students may also benefit from support for the development of study skills (as may domestic students) and institutions should consider how best to support students in making the transition to, and coping with the demands of, the particular programme of study.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-2.aspx

Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-3.aspx

Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-6.aspx

Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-7.aspx

Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-9.aspx

UKCISA

Resources and training for HE staff around cross-cultural awareness:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/pubs_crosscultural.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Good practice case studies in the area of teaching and learning:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

The Higher Education Academy (HEA)

The HEA offers a variety of **resources and support** to staff in institutions in support of students' learning experiences:

www.heacademy.ac.uk

The Academy's work on internationalisation includes the **Teaching International Students Project** focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning for international students, through providing advice and guidance to lecturers. The TIS project's website, includes a range of resources including case studies:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/internationalisation

The **Professional standards framework** for teaching and supporting learning plays a role in professional development of teaching staff:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf

Others

The website of the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) includes **resources and publications** that institutions may find helpful in the context of support for students' language skills:

www.baleap.org.uk/

8 Employability, careers, graduation and departure

This section addresses the support for employability⁹ and careers¹⁰ that institutions make available. Support for international students in respect of careers education and employability brings with it additional challenges and opportunities for institutions such as understanding employment sectors and marketplaces in countries other than the UK, and understanding the implications of UK immigration rules on opportunities for short-term work experience and longer-term employment during and after a student's studies.

The *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* contains precepts and guidance that institutions work with - the guidance given in this section should be seen as complementary to the *Code of practice, Section 8*.

This final section also covers the support that institutions provide at the point of graduation and departure, an important stage in the student journey. Although all students will be entering a period of change, making the transition into employment or further study, international students may face the additional challenge of leaving behind a culture or lifestyle to which they may have become accustomed.

General principles

Institutions should manage international students' expectations of careers education, employability and related services during the early stages of marketing, recruitment and admission and re-state this information at the stages of pre-arrival and induction. This information should provide a realistic picture of the opportunities that an institution makes available to students to prepare for entry into employment and the information, advice and guidance that it makes available in respect of careers education. The institution should also make clear what students need to do for themselves in respect of preparation for employment and careers.

This guidance is not prescriptive about the ways in which institutions will structure their support for careers education and employability, which may be through a variety of means including in an embedded way as part of academic programmes or modules, through work-based learning and placements, or through access to specialist careers units.

Those working with international students in support of careers education and employability should be appropriately trained and supported in respect of the particular needs and perspectives of this group of students (see also 'Overarching principles'). This will include being aware of any restrictions on employment which apply to those on student visas..

Institutions should encourage international students to develop their transferable skills and to prepare themselves for employment using the resources that the institution provides.

In addition to preparing students for entry to employment, institutions should also offer advice and guidance to all students on options for further study.

⁹ Employability is defined in the *Code of practice, Section 8* as: 'a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits the workforce, the community and the economy'.

¹⁰ Careers education is defined in the *Code of practice, Section 8* as: 'a range of teaching and learning activities, associated with career contexts, preparation, development and planning. It can be taught through specific modules (generic, customised or bespoke), through cross-curricular integration or outside of the curriculum'.

Specialist careers support for international students

In response to the particular needs of international students, institutions may wish to consider the following:

- providing or highlighting sources of guidance on legislation with regard to working in the UK both during and after study
- providing or signposting access to a database of employers or employment opportunities in the country of interest
- facilitating access to alumni networks which can assist in preparation for employment and employment opportunities
- careers fairs with multinational or virtual recruitment fairs involving overseas employers.

Preparing to leave the institution

Institutions should make clear the regulations and practicalities involved in formally leaving the institution to ensure a smooth departure, so that international students understand what is expected of them and when, for example returning library books, closing of accounts, final payments of accommodation bills, and so on.

Institutions should explain to international students details of the graduation process, and make clear to students what documents they will receive upon graduation, for example, a degree certificate, transcript or diploma supplement.

Institutions may wish to consider the development of re-orientation programmes or other mechanisms such as departure events or introduction to alumni networks designed to assist students with acclimatising back into their former culture or lifestyle.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-8.aspx

UKCISA

Information sheets for international students including guidance on preparing to return home:
www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

PMI2

The National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) have developed a **range of services and resources** aimed at both international students and HE staff advising them:
www.nases.org.uk/content/index.php?page=22962
www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/312-PMI2-Employability-Projects

These include:

- International Virtual Careers Fairs for institutions, employers and international students from across the UK
- online database of international vacancies and employers available through the University of London Careers Group website (International Job Online) and through the Prospects website (International Graduate Jobs)
- the 'morethanwork' NASES website designed for international students seeking part-time work while studying in the UK
- a series of country guides providing useful information about the labour market and how to find and apply for jobs.

UKCISA signposts **practice case studies** in the area of employment and work experience, and on re-orientation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

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Appendix 1: Membership of the Advisory Group

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