



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia





There are a wealth of opportunities
all over this vast and rich continent





The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia

CONTENTS

Intro and overview **4**

Why Asia? **6**

A guide to...

Hong Kong **10**

India **18**

Japan **26**

Singapore **36**

South Korea **46**

Where to study in Asia **53**



In recent years, Asia's popularity amongst international students has been growing steadily - for good reason (or rather, reasons!).





The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia

The root of this growth in popularity is the economic booms that have been happening across Asia, allowing for greater investment in higher education and ever-more appealing post-graduation employment opportunities.

As a result, global university rankings consistently have Asian institutions climbing into the leaderboards and posing serious competition to more conventional study destinations like the USA, Canada or the UK.

In fact, even within Asia we've seen former underdogs like Singapore and South Korea creeping up on the more established higher education offerings of countries like Japan and Hong Kong.

There are a wealth of opportunities all over this vast and rich continent - far too many for us to explore meaningfully in one guide!

So we'll be zeroing in on some of the most popular Asian study destinations: Hong Kong, India, Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

And fortunately, BridgeU's intelligent matching tool can connect students with their perfect-fit courses in all of these distinguished destinations!

It's almost inevitable that some of your students will be considering higher education options in Asia. To make sure you can advise and guide them, keep reading our Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Why Asia?**

WHY ASIA?

Seasoned guidance counsellors might be accustomed to sending the majority of their students off to study in well-established, generally English-speaking countries like Australia, Canada, the USA and the UK. Even those who haven't worked in education for long (or at all!) might have strong impressions of those being the top international study destinations.

And those impressions aren't wrong. They're just becoming less relevant and definitive as other destinations - many in Asia - attract more and more students from all over the world. But why is that happening?

There are lots of factors which make Asia a great bet for post-secondary education.

Here are a few of Asia's biggest draws relating to education, employability and lifestyle.





The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Why Asia?**

Education

Of course, when considering study destinations, educational criteria have to be pretty heavily weighted. And there's no doubt that these are driving students towards Asian universities.

The continent is home to some of the highest ranking universities across a wide range of subjects.

14 of the top 50 spots in the QS World University Rankings for 2022 are taken up by Asian universities!

We'll look a little closer at some of the top contenders when we dive into specific countries, but overall, there's no doubt that Asian universities offer real educational excellence.

Students can also find some of the most cutting-edge technologies and research in Asia - which is unsurprising given the reputations of countries like Japan for being ultra-modern, innovative and tech-savvy.

Even for students who aren't so keen to pursue STEM subjects, Asian countries offer dynamic and compelling educational experiences. They have some of the most ancient and rich literary traditions, fascinating histories, influential and intricate artistry and architecture... Everything a student of the Arts could want.

Plus, these are invaluable cultural perspectives from which to study complicated political and sociological questions - think of the unique relationships between Hong Kong and China, Singaporean sovereignty and the separation of North and South Korea.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Why Asia?**

Employability

For most students, a return on their investment of time, money and effort put into their degree is expected, usually with professional rewards forming at least part of their ambitions. Knowing that a qualification will increase their chances of getting a job further down the line is always going to be a strong source of encouragement.

But while a degree will certainly boost employability, not all degrees are made entirely equal. And there are many ways in which studying in Asia can multiply the potential return on their investment compared to studying elsewhere.

Studying in Asia gives students a chance to develop their global competence and language skills, as well as experience living in a quickly developing and adaptable environment.

In fact, Asian universities rank very highly for employability, with 11 taking top spots in [QS's global Graduate Employability Rankings](#). Some highlights include:

- China's Tsinghua University in 6th place
- The University of Hong Kong in 10th
- The National University of Singapore in 17th
- Peking University in 23rd
- The University of Tokyo at 25
- Fudan University 33rd
- Seoul National University in at 34

So why are graduates from Asian universities so employable? Studying in Asia gives students a chance to develop their global competence and language skills, as well as experience living in a quickly developing and adaptable environment.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Why Asia?**

Lifestyle

Of course, education and employability are key factors in students' decision-making: any sensible choice in higher education has to be driven by them. But where students go to university will define every aspect of their lives for at least three years, from who they meet to what they eat.

Lifestyle factors can't be dismissed. And luckily, Asia has lots of appealing qualities when it comes to student experience. In fact, it has eighteen cities in the [top 100 cities for students!](#) There are lots of destinations that combine safety with a lively, dynamic atmosphere, and impressive modernity with rich cultural heritage.

Lots of these regions also offer an incredible range of downtime activities from ancient temples and astounding museums, to mountain peaks and sandy beaches, to huge arcades, pumping karaoke and jaw-dropping cinemas. Snow sports, water sports, adventure trails and more are all within reach in this incredible continent!

What's more, there's no shortage of travel opportunities. Students will have countless breathtaking scenes of natural and cultural beauty and a veritable wealth of variety right on their doorstep.

Affordability

A major draw of Asian universities is that they offer the prestige and rigour of other popular destinations like the UK and the USA without the hefty price tag.

In fact, tuition fees in Japan and South Korea generally clock in at under 5,000 USD per year - a miniscule fraction of what international students pay to attend top American universities.

It's not just in terms of the universities' fees that Asia can be more affordable; the living costs also tend to be lower than in Europe, North America or Australia. Of course, expenses vary quite a bit depending on exactly which country and city students choose. We'll take a look at destinations more in-depth next!



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Hong Kong**



HONG KONG



Now that you know why your students are (or should be!) keen to study in Asia, let's look a little closer at where they might like to study. We'll explore some of the most popular Asian study destinations, considering everything from academic ethos and applications to student life and visas.

The first stop on our tour is Hong Kong!

If your students are interested in studying in Asia, chances are they've considered Hong Kong. It's a really exciting destination and unique in many ways - not least in its blends of Eastern and Western, tradition and modernity.

This is visible even in Hong Kong's distinctive skyline, where traditional architecture sits alongside many, many heart-stopping skyscrapers. Here students can find cosmopolitan, fast-paced and varied experiences and meet some truly fascinating people.



AT A GLANCE

Hong Kong has five universities in the **QS Top 100**

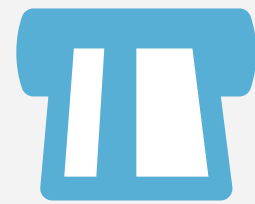



7 million
people in just around
1,100 sq km



Hong Kong is one of the world's most densely populated areas and is the city with the most skyscrapers in the world

Yearly tuition fees start at around



11,500 USD

Popular Institutions
University of Hong Kong
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
HKUST Business School
City University of Hong Kong
Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Top Subjects
Accounting, finance and economics
Business and management
Engineering
Architecture
Dentistry
Mathematics
Politics and social sciences
Media
Education



It's ranked as the **15th best student city** in the world



LIFE IN HONG KONG

Although Hong Kong is close to China (literally and figuratively), it has its own government, currency, legal system, and social norms; hence the popular phrase “one country, two systems”.

While it’s difficult to summarise this complex and unique culture, there is one quite definitive aspect to life in Hong Kong: crowds.

For students who like hustle and bustle, lots of people and a fast pace, Hong Kong is a great bet.

There’s also that fascinating blend of modernity and tradition which means students can hop on the efficient public transport to explore traditional markets or flagship designer shops, or head to one of the country’s many museums, galleries and cultural hubs.

If they ever need a break from the busy city life, students might go to a nearby island to climb impressive mountains or enjoy a calming day on the beach.





UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

While different institutions can set their own timetables, for the most part they follow the same pattern and calendar. Usually, there are two semesters: the first runs from early September to late December, and the second from mid-January to May.

Most Bachelor's degrees in Hong Kong last four years and allow students to choose a major and a minor, as in US institutions. Students apply for a broad area (e.g. Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Sciences) or a slightly narrower one (e.g. Bachelor of Arts in Architectural Studies) and choose classes from their respective syllabi. Some universities will allow students to study 'double majors' or 'double degree programmes'. That means students have to complete the credit requirements for *two* majors, and consequently often study for longer.

The general academic ethos in Hong Kong is quite holistic, and students are encouraged to develop practical skills and transferable soft skills alongside their subject-specific studies.

There's a strong emphasis on exams, so students who tend to crumble under pressure should be prepared! Unlike in many exam-heavy cultures, though, there's a focus on *why* students are learning something, rather than an expectation that they'll learn by rote to pass an exam.

Another key aspect is the social etiquette that means passionate classroom debates are less common: manners are imperative, especially towards professors.



Summary

Most Bachelor's degrees in Hong Kong last four years and have students choose a major and a minor, while some universities will also allow students to study 'double majors' or 'double degree programmes'.



APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

Application deadlines

In Hong Kong, application deadlines and enrolment dates can vary quite a bit between different institutions, so students should look early into each university they're interested in.

Most universities accept applications from September - December, so students should prepare as soon as possible.

Because the application window to Hong Kong universities runs during the autumn term, from September to December, students should aim to complete the bulk of their application during their penultimate year of secondary school. Offers tend to be sent out sometime around February, after which students have a few months to send in supporting documents (e.g. visa application, proof of identity, academic qualifications and evidence of having sufficient funds).





The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Hong Kong**

Admissions requirements

For the most part in Hong Kong (and in fact, broadly across all the regions in this guide), references and recommendations are less important to applications than in countries like the UK and the USA, where they can be make or break. In fact, some universities might not ask for them at all.

But don't put your feet up too soon! Many Hong Kong universities do require at least one reference, often called a Referee's Report. It should be written by one (sometimes two) teachers with a close academic relationship with the student. Still, admissions departments in Hong Kong (and in many other Asian countries) often keep the focus more closely on applicants - which means interviews!

Interviewing undergraduate applicants is much less common in other parts of the world, so students interested in studying in Asia should definitely prepare themselves for this aspect of the application. You might want to help them practice and prepare, too.

Aside from interviews, academic performance is typically the deciding criterion in Hong Kong universities, and generally across the other Asian regions we'll explore. It's evidenced in the form of transcripts but most especially exam results (IB, AP, SAT etc).

On top of interviews, transcripts, exam results and English proficiency, students may need to provide personal statements. Again, requirements do vary between universities and programmes, so it's important students research thoroughly and early!

As classes are almost always taught in English, students with a different first language will usually have to prove their proficiency (e.g. IELTS or TOEFL).



Summary

Admissions departments in Asia tend to focus on the applicants and their academic aptitude. That means less focus on references and long-term transcripts, and more focus on exam results and interviews.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Hong Kong**

COSTS

Tuition fees & funding

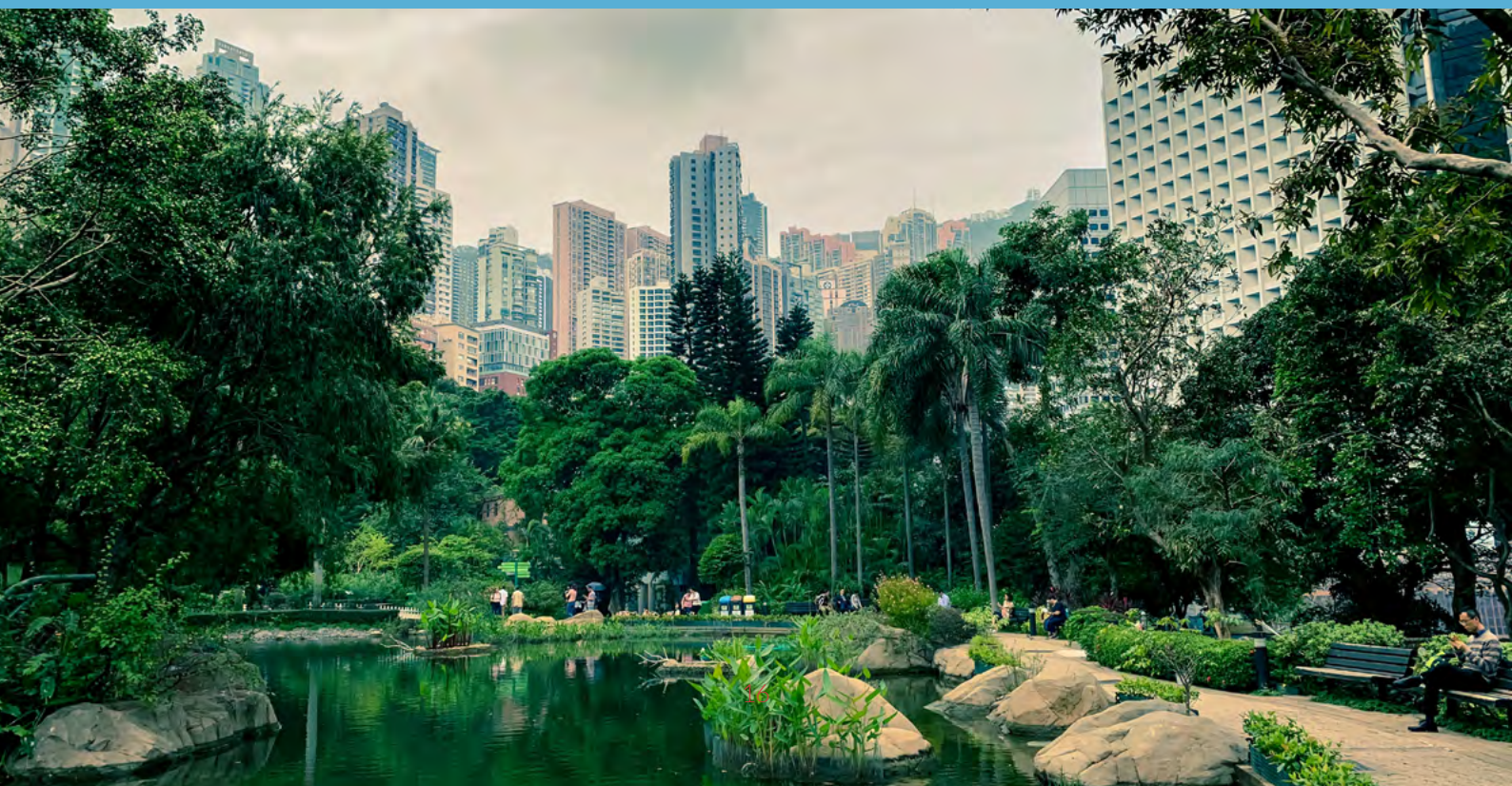
Tuition fees can vary significantly, usually ranging from 90,000 HKD to 270,000 HKD (that's around 11,600 USD - 35,000 USD) per year.

Nevertheless, Hong Kong is eager to attract students from overseas, and both universities and the government offer scholarships to international students (usually based on their merit).

Living expenses

Day-to-day living expenses will depend on students' lifestyles, but they might want to factor in around 50,000 HKD (6,400 USD) per year.

Unfortunately, international students are not usually permitted to take up part-time work to help cover these expenses, so students who need to maintain an income throughout their degrees might want to look at destinations with more lenient rules.





ACCOMMODATION

A key consideration for students considering living in Hong Kong is where they'll live. Different universities can have very different options when it comes to student accommodation, so it's definitely worth giving it some thought - especially for students who prioritise certain living conditions.

International students at Hong Kong's universities will often have the option to live on campus during at least the first two years of their degree (in student accommodation known as a 'hostel'). However, with space in Hong Kong at a premium, these rooms can often be quite compact, and students should expect to share some communal areas, and sometimes even their bedroom.

For students who like a bit more independence and privacy, off-campus accommodation is an alternative. But finding it can be quite a costly and time-consuming endeavour, so students should be prepared to start early!



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **India**



INDIA



Next up we come to the ever-exciting India! While it has traditionally been seen as a country that predominantly sends international students rather than receiving them, India has been growing more and more popular as a study destination: pre-pandemic, more than 30,000 international students were travelling to Indian universities each year.




AT A GLANCE

India has three universities in the **QS Top 200**





1.3 billion
The second largest population in the world



The country's official languages are Hindi and English (but states can have their own official languages in addition)

Yearly tuition fees start at around



5,300–8,300 USD

Popular Institutions
Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IITB)
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD)
Indian Institute of Science
Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IITM)
Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK)
University of Delhi

Top Subjects
Technology
Business management
Computer science
Electrical engineering



India has the **3rd largest higher education system** in the world (after the US and China)



LIFE IN INDIA

India's economy is expanding quickly, and it's an exciting and dynamic place to live. In fact, the top two most dynamic cities in the world are both in India (Hyderabad and Bengaluru), while Chennai and Delhi take the fifth and sixth spots.

The culturally curious amongst your students will be well taken care of with the 37 UNESCO World Heritage sites (need we mention the iconic Taj Mahal?).

That being said, travelling around India isn't the easiest thing, and students from countries with highly-modernised transport systems might need time to adapt. Trains are, luckily, very common, but they're not always the cool, comfortable experience some expect. Carriages are usually divided into classes ranging from 'sleeper' (which is very crowded, noisy and - unsurprisingly - hot), to 'AC 1', a handy name for an air-conditioned and less busy carriage, which is often cleaner. Students who want the more luxurious option are in luck, because ticket prices are cheaper than in many places.

Overall, the thing to keep in mind about India is that it's rich and varied, and students should arrive with arms and minds open.

There's a wonderful array of languages, cultures, religions, people and experiences, along with millennia of history.



UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Types of university

There are a huge number of educational institutions in India, where quality is just as strong as quantity: it's the third most represented country in the Times Higher Education Asia University Rankings in 2021 and the second most represented in its rankings of universities in emerging economies. India also has lots of types of higher education institution. The five most common are:

- Central universities (controlled by the central government)
- State universities (controlled by individual regions)
- Deemed-to-be universities (given equal status to universities by the central government)
- Institutes of National Importance aka INI (funded by the central government)
- Private universities (funded and controlled by private organisations)



Note

One important thing to be aware of is that fake universities are not uncommon in India. Students should be especially wary when researching Indian options, and be sure their choices are legitimate. For peace of mind, they might use resources like the Indian government's list of institutions.

Broadly speaking, central universities and INI are the best bets for international students as they offer scholarships and high-quality education.

A word on teaching style: in part because of India's colonial past, many universities' (and schools') approaches draw from traditional British models. That means there can be quite a reliance on rote memorisation and discipline, rather than discussion and creativity. If students like more of a lecture-style and authoritative approach to teaching, then India may be a good fit!



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **India**

Types of degree

In India, the options are endless! Students can study popular subjects like engineering or business administration, but there are also niche and unique courses on offer - everything from Yoga to Ayurveda (an alternative medical approach).

As you probably guessed from the top institutions on India's 'At a Glance' section, STEM is particularly strong here. Nevertheless, there's actually what's being called a 'liberal arts wave' sweeping India, with lots of private institutions dedicated to the liberal arts springing up. Existing, established universities are also adapting their curricula to embrace a liberal arts ethos. So there are lots of great options for students!

Indian degrees bear some similarity to British ones, with a variety of Bachelor's degrees which typically take three years to complete. Like in the UK, there are some exceptions: certain STEM courses and Law last four or five years.

The Indian academic year - much as the UK's and many other countries' - is made up of an autumn semester and a spring semester. But rather than starting in September and ending around June, the academic year typically runs from July to April/May.





APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

Unlike in the UK, students usually apply directly to individual Indian universities rather than through a centralised system (like the UK's UCAS). As ever, deadlines and requirements vary so early research is imperative!

To make the application process easier, there is also the Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) scheme.

The Direct Admission of Students Abroad (DASA) scheme is an admissions platform that allows international students to apply to multiple Indian universities at once (like the aforementioned UCAS!). However, this is only available for students who are applying to study certain subjects (like engineering and architecture) at National Institutes of Technology and other centrally-funded institutions.

Students should be aware that on top of the usual transcripts, test results, references and other supporting documents, many Indian universities - including all IITs and IISc - have entrance exams.

Because courses are taught in English, students are required to prove their proficiency using tests like IELTS or TOEFL, too.



Note

One notable stipulation for international applicants is the requirement to have a medical examination and provide a certificate of health when entering India. As part of the examination, students must be tested for HIV (a positive result means they're not admitted). There's also a 50 USD medical fee which covers medical insurance for the first year.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **India**

COSTS

Tuition fees & funding

India's low tuition fees are one of its big draws for international students. Costs vary between institutions but fall around 3,300 USD to 8,300 USD - a fraction of other leading destinations.

Living expenses

Living expenses are also extremely low: a three-course meal typically costs less than 10 USD, and public transport can be as little as 30 cents.

Overall, your students could feasibly survive with a day-to-day budget of 4,500 USD per year, although they may want to bump it up a little depending on their lifestyles and habits.





ACCOMMODATION

Students in India usually have a choice between university-owned and private accommodation. Of course, different universities have different provisions, with rooms ranging from single all the way up to community dormitories of six.

University halls (also known as hostels like in Hong Kong), often have a lively campus spirit, especially in the communal cafeterias which serve students three meals a day.

Campuses tend to have convenience stores, too, so students can stock up or grab last-minute essentials.

Renting privately is another good option for a lot of students in India, particularly as rent tends to be relatively affordable.

Students who do choose to rent privately can still enjoy the convenience and community of eating on-campus with the eateries and cafes that tend to be scattered around universities.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Japan**



JAPAN



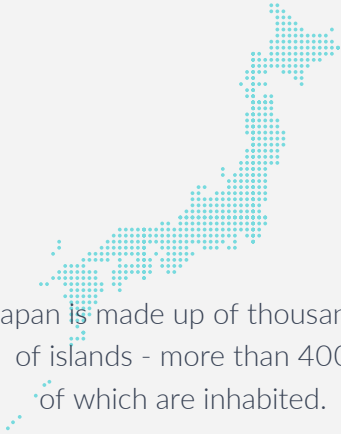
Japan is renowned as an economic and educational powerhouse, and its successes in both of these areas are perhaps closely related; both are underpinned by a strong work ethic, comprehensive research and a penchant for innovation. And, of course, without an exceptional educational system, world-changing creations and entities like Toyota, Sony and Panasonic wouldn't come to be.



AT A GLANCE

Japan has five universities in the **QS Top 100**




Japan is made up of thousands of islands - more than 400 of which are inhabited.



2 Japanese cities sit in the **top 20 student cities** in the world

Yearly tuition fees start at around



4,800 USD

Popular Institutions

- University of Tokyo
- Kyoto University
- Tokyo Institute of Technology
- Osaka University
- Tohoku University

Top Subjects

- Education
- Mechanical, aeronautical & manufacturing engineering
- Computer science
- Economics
- Ancient history and classics
- Medicine
- Dentistry



It's the world's **3rd largest economy** (after the USA and China)



LIFE IN JAPAN

For students who combine academic excellence and research rigour with creative thinking, Japan might be an educational utopia!

And there can be little doubt that Japan is a wonderful place to live and study - Tokyo is ranked as the third best student city, and Kyoto is nearby at number 19.

The country as a whole is safe, and packed with rich ancient history as well as astonishing modernity.

What's more, the growing international student (and general expat) population adds even more diversity and variety, and means students won't feel isolated or alienated.

But these varieties and contrasts also make it difficult to summarise life in Japan meaningfully (a recurring challenge!). It's synonymous with both a break-neck pace of living and development, and an incredibly traditional, zen tranquility. Students can seek out the rhythms that best suit them, and factor this in as they compare Japanese universities.

One thing that holds true across Japan is that there's no shortage of heritage sites, natural beauty and cultural hubs for students to explore. And fortunately, Japan has a world-famous public transport system to explore all this with! Students might want to avoid rush hour, though, as it can get really busy in the big cities.



UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

Students who consider rankings a priority might be interested to know that Japan is the country with the most universities in the 2021 Asia University Rankings: a total of 116 made the list!

If your students are keen to study in Japan, they'll be happy to hear that Japan is keen to have them, too.

The Japanese government has been on a drive to increase its international student population in recent years, and has made applying to and attending university in Japan as easy as possible.

One great example of this is the fact that international students are now allowed to begin their courses in September, despite the fact that Japan's academic year typically starts in April (the first semester is April - August, and the second is September - March).

And many universities embrace this international ethos more broadly. They often take a bilingual approach, and encourage students to learn and use both Japanese and English. As a result most courses require at least some Japanese proficiency.



Note

In Japan, universities provide plenty of contact hours – more than students in countries like the UK might expect (especially those studying humanities). Attendance tends to be strictly monitored - and punctuality is a big thing. On the flip side, there's slightly less emphasis on independent work, so students who struggle with self-motivation and discipline might fare well here.



Types of university

The vast majority of Japanese universities (about 80%) are private, but it's worth noting that public universities are generally more highly esteemed.

This is particularly true of the so-called National Seven Universities, which used to be imperial colleges and are still at the forefront of academic excellence and research innovation. You could think of them as similar to the USA's Ivy Leagues, the UK's Russell Group or Australia's Group of Eight. These are:

- The University of Tokyo
- Kyoto University
- Osaka University
- Nagoya University
- Tohoku University
- Hokkaido University
- Kyushu University

Students can also think about whether they want to apply to a research university or a junior/technical college (Senmon Gakko) which can impart more vocational qualifications. There are also KOSEN, which are higher education institutions dedicated to engineering.

All these options can lead to Bachelor's degrees (although junior college courses don't always!), and tend to take four years of training/study, plus the preparatory year of Japanese language learning which is often required. Certain subjects like medicine and veterinary science take longer (usually six years), while some junior college programmes are just two or three years.



Note

If your students are particularly keen to have breadth in their degree, they might want to check out the University of Tokyo. There, students' first two years are made up of quite a broad curriculum of liberal arts classes. The final two years are then spent within one of the universities' departments (grouped into ten major Faculties) - the one they can choose will obviously depend on their preference as well as their performance.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Japan**

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

Application deadlines

Different universities and different courses in Japan follow their own dates and procedures, so as ever students need to look into the programmes they're interested in.

For the most part, Japanese universities have two recruitment cycles: from November, students can apply for the spring semester which begins in April; from March, they can apply for the autumn semester which begins in September.





Admissions requirements

One important aspect to note about Japanese applications is that entrance exams are generally required, in addition to language proficiency and standardised subject tests (like SATs).

Many universities use the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (often referred to as the EJU), although not always in the same ways. Universities and faculties can decide which sections of the exam applicants need to sit.

Students' past grades are usually less important than in countries like the USA. In fact, students who might not have excelled in school could still get into a top university in Japan if they ace the entrance exams.

Some universities will use the EJU as well as their own entrance exams. Combined with the language proficiency and SATs, that can be a lot of tests!

The silver lining is that students' past grades are usually less important than in countries like the USA. In fact, students who might not have excelled in school could still get into a top university in Japan if they study up and ace the entrance exams.

It's also worth mentioning that the Japanese visa application takes quite a bit of time and work compared to many countries. Students first need to get a Certificate of Eligibility from the Ministry of Justice. Thankfully, their university applies for it on their behalf, so there's not lots of paperwork for them to worry about for this first stage. They do still need to factor in plenty of time, though - it can take up to three months to be dispensed. Only then can students apply for their full visa.



COSTS

Tuition fees & funding

Within an Asian context, Japanese tuition fees aren't staggeringly cheap, but they are generally cheaper than many other top international destinations. Universities charge around 535,800 to 1,726,000 JPY (4,800 to 15,750 USD) per year of tuition.

Interestingly, universities' rankings aren't necessarily correlated with their fees: the top two universities in Japan (the University of Tokyo and Kyoto University) charge 535,800 JPY (4,885 USD). That's because these universities are public, and so charge the same fees across the board!

Thankfully, part of the Japanese drive to welcome more international students has been creating and granting more scholarships to international students.

One good example of Japanese scholarships is the MEXT scholarship, so called because it's dispensed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology, which is often abbreviated to MEXT. It covers return air fare, tuition fees and a monthly grant of 117,000 JPY (just over 1,000 USD) - which should be enough to live comfortably in Tokyo! Recipients hold their award for five to seven years, including the one-year preparatory education in Japanese language which is often required. Applications are made through students' embassies or consulates.



Summary

Some of the most prestigious universities in Japan are public, meaning they all charge the same fees - which are relatively low!



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: Japan

Living expenses

That being said, there's no getting around the fact that Japan isn't a cheap place to live, particularly cities like Tokyo. Sources like JASSO (the Japan Student Services Organization) estimate that students would need around 100,000 JPY (nearly 1,000 USD) per month for living expenses.

Students can usually also obtain permission to work during their studies, with the permit allowing up to 28 hours a week during term-time and eight hours a day while universities close.





ACCOMMODATION

This is another area where Japan's drive to increase its international student population is clear. Traditionally, university accommodation hasn't been a huge thing in Japan as it's common for Japanese students to live at home with their families while they study.

Of course, that has left international students to find their own private accommodation. But in recent years, Japanese universities have started realising that many would prefer the convenience, security and community of having university housing and as a result have been building suitable options.

Nevertheless, most international students opt for private solutions, partly because building fully operational accommodation takes time, so there still aren't that many rooms available! Plus, there are often stricter rules (like curfews or wake-up calls) which students seeking newfound freedom aren't so keen on.

There is also quite a strong culture of guesthouses in Japan, which save a lot of hassle on organising WiFi, electricity supplies and so on. Houses can be as small as three people, or accommodate much larger groups - even up to 50!



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Singapore**



SINGAPORE



Now we arrive at the mesmerising Singapore! Offering a high quality of life and world-class universities, Singapore is an excellent choice for students hoping to study in Asia (or indeed anywhere): it was recently ranked as the 17th best student city in the world.



AT A GLANCE

Its two flagship universities are **11th and 12th in the world**



Around 38%

of the population are foreign students/workers or other international permanent residents



The official languages are English, Malay, Mandarin and Tamil - over 75% of the population is fluent in English

Yearly tuition fees start at around



14,400 USD

Popular Institutions

National University of Singapore
Nanyang Technological University
Singapore Management University

Top Subjects

Civil and structural engineering
Electrical engineering
Computer sciences
Economics
Creative media
Communications



Singapore was recently ranked as the **17th best student city** in the world



The country comprises over **60 islands**



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Singapore**

LIFE IN SINGAPORE

There's a strong British influence in Singapore, owed to its colonial past and a strong continued expat presence. As a result, it offers a unique blend of Eastern and Western traditions (and cuisines!).

This blended past paved the way to a generally inclusive and welcoming ethos, creating a cosmopolitan atmosphere and dynamic and varied way of life, in which students get to learn about lots of different cultures. There's also incredible variety in the pastimes on offer: students needing to wind down can head to the beach, while those who want to blow off steam can spend the day in a theme park.

As well as diverse and fast-paced, Singapore is extremely safe and clean. Of course, that means students need to abide by its strict rules (one famous example being not chewing gum).

For students looking for prestigious universities, a fast-paced lifestyle, multicultural surroundings and a clean, safe environment, Singapore is a great bet.





UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

University options

Singapore's two flagship universities are some of the best Asia has to offer: the National University of Singapore is the best in all of Asia, while Nanyang Technological University comes in 3rd!

Additionally, it's not just in its societal makeup that Singapore is multicultural; it's also taken a very international approach to academia. Alongside its six national universities, the country hosts world-class universities from abroad, including:

- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- Johns Hopkins University
- Georgia Technological University
- Chicago Graduate School of Business
- INSEAD France Business School
- Newcastle University

Singapore also has a great array of polytechnics, art schools and other vocational and specialised institutions.



Types of degree

The Singaporean system bears close resemblance to other popular international destinations - the UK, the USA and Australia. As is usual in those countries, the academic calendar is made up of two semesters. The first runs from the start of August through to the beginning of December, while the second begins in mid-January and ends mid-May.

Singapore could be seen as sitting in the 'sweet spot' between the hyperspecialization of UK degrees and the breadth of American ones.

Degrees typically take three or four years to complete. Like in the USA, students usually arrive at university with a major in mind, and take at least the required number of credits in that field. The interdisciplinarians needn't worry, as students are usually allowed to take some classes outside of their major each year.

One interesting aspect to note of Singaporean degrees is their 'common curricula', which are similar to the USA's general education. Essentially, it's a collection of mandatory classes meant to instil general knowledge and interdisciplinary thinking, which usually takes up around a third of a student's degree.

Singapore also offers double majors, double degrees and joint degree programmes.

Double majors and double degrees allow students to split their focus between two disciplines (like Business Management and Global Affairs). But a double major degree is limited to one Bachelor track (e.g. BA or BSc). A double degree, on the other hand, combines two separate pathways (so students can graduate with a BA/BSc for example).



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Singapore**



A joint degree means students receive a degree from two institutions. Several institutions partner with foreign ones to confer these joint degrees - for example, The National University of Singapore offers joint degrees with both Australia National University and the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.



Note

There are even entire universities - not just degrees - which have been created in partnership with foreign institutes, like the Singapore University of Technology and Design, which was developed with the US's Massachusetts Institute of Technology and China's Zhejiang University.

It's also worth noting that Singaporean degrees put a lot of emphasis on globality! Programmes are almost always taught in English, so students will need to have (and prove) a good level of proficiency. Students are also strongly encouraged to travel as part of their degrees, often via overseas internships and summer exchanges.

There's often quite a strong focus on exams. But don't worry, like in Hong Kong, instruction in Singapore generally avoids encouraging simple rote memorisation, instead showing students the value and importance of what they're learning and its real-world applications.

In addition (like in Hong Kong and India) the teaching style is usually teacher-led (think lectures rather than seminars), with less class discussion than is common in some cultures.



APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

You might be noticing a pattern here: university applications in Singapore are also not centralised. That means universities set their own requirements and deadlines (although for the most part they ask for the same documentation as other countries). Students need to research thoroughly and early - particularly as some universities cap the amount of programmes each student can apply to.

As a broad overview, there are three main enrolment phases in Singapore: February/March, July/August, and October/November.

The one your students are most likely to apply for probably depends on the type of institution they have in mind. Publicly-funded universities tend to enrol students around August, with some also offering a February intake. Vocational colleges and polytechnics, meanwhile, often have April and September enrolments.

Another factor that can affect when students can apply is, interestingly, the qualifications they're working towards (e.g. A Level, IB). You can see this on [NTU's admission guidance](#).



COSTS

Tuition fees & funding

Admittedly, Singapore isn't an especially cheap place to live or study. Such high quality of life and academic excellence don't come cheap!

As with application procedures, Singaporean universities set their own tuition fees, but they're usually around 17,550 to 120,000 SGD (13,000 - 90,000 USD) per year.

Fees can vary quite a lot not just between institutions but within them. For example, fees for international students at NUS range from around 29,850 to 161,800 SGD (22,200 to 120,300 USD). As a general rule, STEM subjects are on the pricier end - although Music costs 123,750 SGD (92,000 USD)!

Fortunately, there are plenty of other scholarships students can look into. Some might cater to specific nationalities, while others are designated to certain programmes.



Note

The Singaporean government also offers good scholarships to international students, namely the Singaporean Ministry of Education tuition grant, which can bring down the tuition fee range to 17,550 - 64,650 SGD (13,000 - 48,000 USD). The actual amount students receive is determined by their nationality and the course they're studying.

Any student holding an offer to an institution in Singapore can apply for the Singaporean Ministry of Education's tuition grant, but it's not guaranteed: selection can be very competitive, and it's based on merit. There's also a vital stipulation in that students are legally committed to working for a company registered within Singapore for at least three years after they graduate, with the minimum commitment rising to five or six years for students of medicine and dentistry.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Singapore**

Living expenses

There's no getting around the fact that students' day-to-day costs in Singapore can be quite high. But there is a silver lining in the form of generous and commonly-offered student discounts! In total, students are usually advised to budget around 8,000 USD per year in living costs.

They're also generally allowed to work while they study: 16 hours a week during term time, and full-time when universities close.





ACCOMMODATION

This has a big part to play in students' overall expenses. Those looking to keep prices down might want to opt for student dorms or share an apartment with fellow students.

In university accommodation, students can expect to share amenities and appliances (e.g. kitchen) with around five other people. Whether the bedroom is shared depends on the institution as well as students' personal preferences.

A quirk of the Singaporean system is that many of its on-campus accommodations have adopted a strong collegiate ethos.

The collegiate accommodations that exist on many Singaporean campuses are known as Halls of Residence. So strong is the community spirit that students are often expected to take part in extracurricular activities to remain residents!

There are also Residential Colleges which are a little more relaxed.

It's usual for students to make the most of university-owned housing in their first year, and then move onto shared apartments for the rest of their degrees (priority for university housing is typically given to first-years). Universities can usually give support with this and tend to have lists of verified housing providers.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **South Korea**



SOUTH KOREA



It's the last stop on our tour, and we've arrived in South Korea! South Korea offers another mighty powerhouse of education, particularly in STEM. It's a very amenable option for international students, offering lots of courses taught in English and based on familiar American models - though in fact, many of its degrees surpass popular western alternatives in excellence!



AT A GLANCE

South Korea has six universities in the top 100 worldwide and the 17 in top 100 for Asia





The capital city, Seoul, is classed as a 'megacity' due to its population of more than **10 billion**



People are usually addressed by their titles rather than their names (particularly when talking to someone 'senior')

Yearly tuition fees start at around



4,000 USD

Popular Institutions
Seoul National University
Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST)
Korea University
Yonsei University
Pohang University of Science and Technology

Top Subjects
Finance
Economics
Education
Medicine
Dentistry
Pharmacology
Computer sciences
Mechanical, aeronautical & manufacturing engineering
Social sciences



2 cities are in the **top 100 student cities** in the world.



LIFE IN SOUTH KOREA

Here we find another Asian Tiger which marries tradition and modernity in a fascinating and engaging way, and has a thriving pop culture scene which any student would feel invigorated by. In fact, South Korea is generally considered a great place to live, and Seoul even ranks as the third best student city in the world (Daejeon also makes the top 100, at 78).

There's plenty to keep students busy (or rather, distracted - their workloads will most likely keep them busy enough!).

Students can explore national parks and forests filled with wildlife, find tranquility in Buddhist temples or snow-capped mountain peaks, or even head out to a nearby island for a change of air and pace.

Public transport is generally excellent, and the culinary scene is varied, affordable and delicious. Students can also find lots of entertainment options in karaoke, impressive cinemas, theme parks, museums, skiing and more!





UNDERGRADUATE DEGREES

While education in South Korea used to closely resemble China's quite rigid, teacher-led approach, over the past couple of decades its system has modernised and loosened somewhat, allowing for more independent learning. Nevertheless, South Korea's reputation for academic excellence doesn't come without work, so students should be prepared to take on a full workload and manage their time carefully.

Education in South Korea is highly valued and high-pressure: on the day of big exams, commuters have been known to collectively travel later - and we're not just talking about opening up shop a bit late. The entire economy (including the stock market) was pushed back an hour - all business hours changed for students! Any student stuck in traffic could even call for an emergency police escort. Plus, the military delayed or cancelled air force and firing drills and the Transportation Ministry banned airport landings and departures!

Many university programmes are available in English (a large amount of these are in engineering and computer science), but vocational courses are usually only offered in Korean.

The academic year in South Korea is usually split into two semesters. The first begins in mid-February and ends mid-June, while the second starts at the end of August or early September and lasts until mid-December when exams begin. Degrees typically last four years.

South Korean universities use the American credit system, requiring students to earn a minimum amount to graduate. Often, students can take on majors and minors, too, tailoring their degrees to their interests.



Note

High-achieving students with broader interests also usually have the possibility of taking a double major, which might bring up the total degree duration to five years instead of the standard four for a Bachelor's degree.



APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

As has been the case throughout this guide, applications to universities in Singapore are made to each individual university rather than through a centralised portal. Students need to check where they'd like to apply, what they need to provide, and when.

Nevertheless, universities tend to follow a similar timeline, with most universities expecting applications between September and November of the year prior to enrolment. Often, students do have the option to begin in September, in which case deadlines tend to be around May or June.

The exact documents required can vary between universities and programmes, but for the most part are similar to elsewhere: transcripts, final exam results, references, language proficiency tests, and proof of finances.





COSTS

Tuition fees & funding

Like applications, universities' fees are set individually. Still, they actually tend to charge very similar amounts - although some universities vary their fees according to the subjects studied.



Note

Seoul National University provides an example of the variety between fees according to subject. Its most recently advertised tuition fees for humanities students are 2,640,000 KRW (around 2,100 USD) whereas medicine costs 5,074,000 KRW (close to 4,500 USD).

To give a general idea, tuition fees tend to sit around 2,500 - 4,000 USD.

Alongside relatively low fees, South Korea provides scholarships that are not only plentiful but usually generous, covering 30-100% of tuition, and often air travel and living costs.

Here again, there are great governmental scholarships: the Global Korea Scholarship covers students' flights, rent, tuition fees, an intensive Korean language course and up to 70% of students' living expenses (around 1,000,000 KRW, or 890 USD).

Living expenses

That 1,000,000 KRW from the Global Korea Scholarship could actually be a reasonable amount for students to live off entirely per month - including their rent.

It's estimated that students living quite frugally could spend just 800,000 KRW (around 680 USD) each month, though a more realistic amount might be 1,000,000 - 1,200,000 KRW (890 - 1,000 USD).

International students can also work to help fund their studies, usually up to 20 hours per week during term-time, and without limits during university breaks and weekends.



ACCOMMODATION

The most popular student accommodation option in South Korea is what's known as goshiwon, a shared accommodation which both domestic and international students tend to favour. Rooms are usually single and quite tight, but other spaces (like the kitchen and sometimes bathroom) are shared between a group. Essentially, it's quite similar to dorms in the USA or halls in the UK, except it's usually privately owned.

There are also other types of shared accommodation provided by both universities and private landlords, with rooms ranging from single to four people. University-owned options tend to be cheapest, although there's quite a range in fees depending on students' choices and the city.

However, both university-owned accommodation and goshiwons can have quite strict rules in place regarding things like guests, curfews or even whether students can eat/cook in their rooms.

A roomier, slightly pricier option is to find a one-bedroom apartment or 'officetel'. In this case, students won't have extra rules to abide by, but they will have to make their own arrangements for electricity, WiFi and so on. Luckily, they're usually at least partly if not fully furnished.



Note

'Officetels' are similar to the one-bed/studio set-up, but they're in professional office buildings. It might sound quite odd, but it has benefits - like the fact these buildings usually have great cafes and restaurants within them! They also tend to be more modern and slightly up-scale compared to standard one-beds, but that does make them more expensive.

Students looking to save money without sacrificing on freedom can also look into shared houses, which are common in South Korea, and welcoming to international students.



The Ultimate Guide to Studying in Asia: **Where to Study in Asia**

WHERE TO STUDY IN ASIA

With so many brilliant options, you might think deciding where to study in Asia will overwhelm your students. But there's no need to panic! There are a few factors which your students can use to narrow down their options.





What subject do they want to study?

An obvious starting point to narrowing down their best fit might be the areas they're most interested in pursuing.

Of course, all of these countries have world-leading institutions which doubtless provide stellar programmes in almost every field imaginable, so this list is certainly not something to live by! It's simply a way of steering students if they don't know where to start.

Having said that, the countries we've covered have a lot of overlap in terms of the subjects they're strongest in. Generally speaking, students interested in STEM will find excellent options across the board - particularly in fields related to engineering and computer science.

Students hoping to study finance and its related fields also have a huge array of high-ranking programmes to choose from across all of these regions.

If dentistry is their passion, then **Hong Kong**, **Japan** and **South Korea** have some of the best instruction in the world.

Students keen to pursue teaching for themselves might also want to focus more closely on **Hong Kong**, **Japan** and **Singapore**. If social sciences are their bag, then maybe **Hong Kong** or **Singapore** are the place to be.

The more artistically minded might check out some of the courses on offer in Singapore, too, where media and the creative industries are really strong.



How flexible is the curriculum?

Of course, many students won't be as certain about a specific field they want to pursue. They might be hoping for a more liberal approach to learning, and a system that allows them to try out different areas.

If that's the case, they might prefer to look at regions which commonly embrace the majors, minors and credits model popular in North America.

Hong Kong, **Singapore** and **South Korea** should fit the bill nicely!

Is English language a priority?

Another quick way to rule out degree programmes is their language of instruction. Again, this is by no means definitive, and students will be able to find some English-taught courses in every region. Nevertheless, they're doubtless much more widely available in some places.

If your students are set on learning solely in English, then they'll have an easier time focusing their searches in Hong Kong, India and Singapore.



Are they keen to live in university housing?

Some students might be as concerned about their living situation as their learning. In fairness, it can be really difficult to excel academically if they're really uncomfortable or unhappy with where they live!

Different students will have different opinions about whether on- or off-campus accommodation is best. But for those who are firmly in the on-campus camp, universities in **Hong Kong**, **India**, **Singapore** and **South Korea** might be more suitable. As ever, there are definitely universities in all these regions which provide some housing.

Of course, accommodation ownership isn't the only factor that matters when deciding where to live. Some students love a strong communal ethos and organised fun in their accommodation, while others prefer to be left to their own devices and find friends and entertainment for themselves. **Hong Kong**, **India** and **Singapore** all offer very collegiate and spirited dorm experiences, with plenty of organised activities and socialising.

Do they prioritise multiculturalism?

A lot of students want to study abroad not just for academic excellence and personal adventure, but to mix with a wide range of people and cultures. Even international students who aren't such social butterflies often feel more at home in cosmopolitan places - they don't feel they stand out so much!

While all of these regions are pretty multicultural, and the degree of multiculturalism will also vary quite a bit within each one, there are a few stand-outs: **Hong Kong**, **Japan** and **Singapore** are particularly celebrated as cultural melting pots and welcome a lot of international students.



Do they want lots of opportunities for cultural and geographical exploration?

Again, studying abroad is about more than just the academic experience. While the move is enough of an adventure in itself for many, some students hope to travel around their chosen study destination during downtime.

If they're looking for a wealth of archaeological, architectural and natural wonders, any of the regions we've discussed are a good bet. But particularly strong are perhaps **India**, **Japan** and **South Korea**.

Is budget a top priority?

Often final decisions come down to budgetary constraints. And there's no doubt that there are a couple of options in this guide that fall on the pricier side in terms of fees and/or living expenses.

For students who want to keep costs low, India and South Korea could be safer options.

Of course, every country has good scholarship offerings, and students can adapt their lifestyle and accommodation choices to their budgets so that they can study at the university that best fits!



Do they want to be able to work while they study?

On a related note, some students hope to take on part-time work during their degrees. Their motivations might be financial or professional (or often both), but there's no doubt it's a noble - if challenging - aspiration.

Unfortunately, not every destination makes it easy or even possible for international students to get work permits. In fact, neither **India** nor **Hong Kong** do.

That means students should look to **Japan**, **South Korea** or **Singapore**, which allow for 28 hours, 20 hours or 16 hours per week respectively of work during term-time.

Conclusion

Students need to balance their priorities, their strengths and their aspirations

Ultimately, where they choose to study will be determined by a huge range of factors. These are just a few that can help to get them thinking about some of the criteria they'll need to consider.

Making lists of crucial factors is decidedly not easy, and students will likely seek guidance from you. Likewise, interrogating their own ambitions and abilities takes a lot of time and deep thought. Then there's carrying out all of the research and creating shortlists... All in all, it's a lot of work before even starting on the applications!

Luckily, there are ways of making it easier. We would recommend BridgeU, which helps students assess their experiences and skills and carry out thorough university research, and even compiles shortlists of institutions categorised into Reach, Match and Safety options.

To help students make informed and balanced decisions about where and what to study in Asia, you can create a free BridgeU account and let them explore all our data on over 28,000 universities! They'll find their perfect fit and get to work on the strongest applications possible, setting them on the most prosperous path for them.



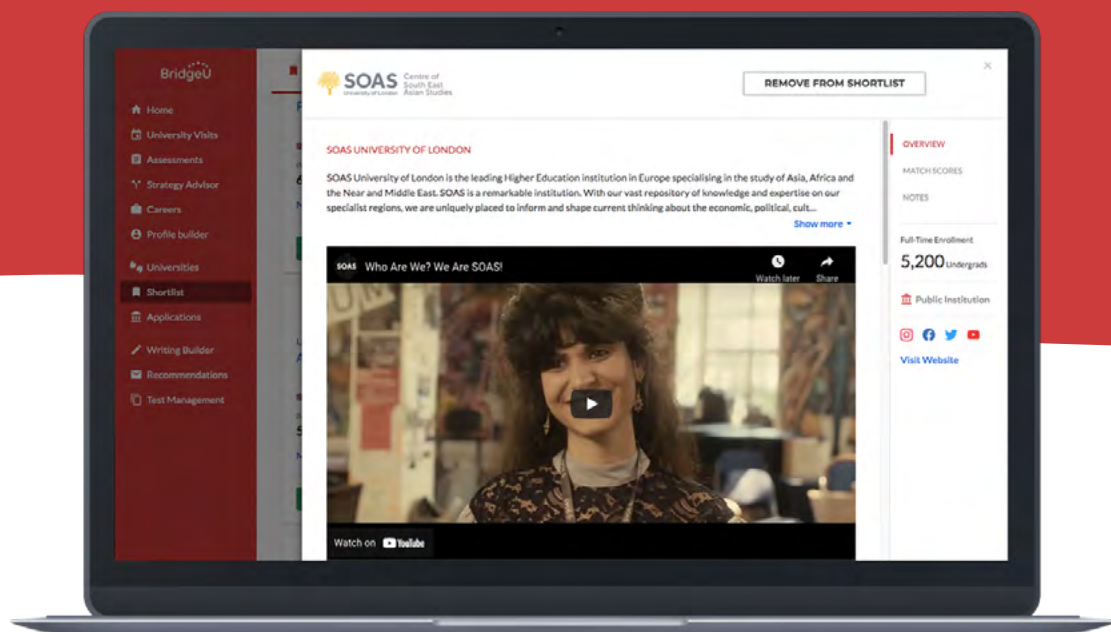
QUICK COMPARISON

	HONG KONG	INDIA	JAPAN	SINGAPORE	SOUTH KOREA
Tuition (USD per year)	11,600–35,000	3,300–8,300	4,800–15,750	13,000–90,000	2,500–4,000
Average university accommodation (USD per month)	160–550	55–180	90–180	115–600	50–225
Private rent (USD per month; not including utilities)	950–1,900	200–400	500–990	700–6,000	400–1,500
Weekly hours international students can work	0	0	28 during term-time, full-time when universities are closed	20 during term-time, full-time when universities are closed	16 during term-time, unlimited when universities are closed (including weekends)
Bachelor's degree duration	4	3	4	3 or 4	4
Enrolment	Early September	July	April or September	Early August	Mid-February to early March
Widely-available English-language courses	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Flexible curricula	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Collegiate accommodation	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Best fields to study	Dentistry Education Engineering Technology Finance	Engineering Computer science Business Medicine	Engineering Economics Education	Engineering Technology Finance Creative Media and communications	Engineering Finance Technology
Best student cities (+ world ranking)	Hong Kong (15)	Mumbai (106) Bangalore (110)	Tokyo (3) Kyoto (19)	Singapore (17)	Seoul (3) Daejeon (78)



BridgeU provides free world-class university & careers guidance for global secondary schools, to empower your students, inform your guidance strategy and improve outcomes.

Founded in 2014, BridgeU is the market leader in university & careers guidance for global secondary schools. We partner with schools in over 100 countries and we match students with over 26,000 universities. Our free platform gives global schools a comprehensive end-to-end solution for the entire university research and application journey.



To discover how BridgeU can deliver better outcomes for your school, get set up with your free account today:

bridge-u.com/book-meeting-schools/