

A student and parent guide to choosing an education agent

For schools and agents to share with parents



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Introduction

Choosing an international study destination for your child is one of the most important decisions you can make. Wider family and friends may be able to help but making a final choice and applying to an education provider for your child can be daunting. This is why some families get help from an education agent, consultant or counsellor.

This guide is for you, your family and child to understand the role of agents working with UK-bound students and the service they should provide.

Boarding Schools' Association (BSA) runs a certified agent scheme supporting schools in their due diligence in identifying reputable and ethical agents supporting families in identifying and applying for school places. [View the list of BSA certified agents.](#)

Who are we?

- **BSA (Boarding Schools' Association):** The voice of boarding schools.
- **BAISIS (British Association of Independent Schools with International Students):** Championing support for international students.



A good education agent will help you to:



01

Confirm that the UK is the right study destination for your child(ren), and to understand the study options and visa requirements.

02

Identify education providers that meet your academic, personal and financial circumstances, expectations and aspirations. This may include supporting arranging meetings, visits/tours around your availability.

03

Apply to your chosen education providers.

04

Evaluate offers and provide guidance on admissions deadlines and requirements.

05

Gather and submit the documents needed for any visa applications.

06

Prepare your child to come and study in the UK.



They will have:

Committed to the national code of ethical practice for UK education agents

The national code sets out the behaviours and values that are expected of education agents that represent the UK - [National code of ethical practice for UK education agents](#).

BSA certified agents commit to the BSA code of conduct and the national code as part of their application.

Demonstrable commitment to training and continued professional development

Agent and counsellor training is a key part of the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) to support and promote ethical practice, professional knowledge and competency. There are different training providers, with the AQF recognising:

- [BSA and BAISIS](#) provide online agent, consultant and counsellor training, designed to improve understanding of the UK primary and secondary school system, safeguarding and the UK as a study destination. This training does not constitute formal accreditation but those who successfully complete this training receive a certificate of completion, valid for two years.
- [The British Council](#) provides online agent and counsellor training, designed to improve understanding of the UK as a study destination. This training does not constitute formal accreditation but those who successfully complete this training receive a certificate of completion, valid for two years.

Checklist

Use this checklist to identify good quality education agents:

Is the education agent listed on the BSA certified agent list?	✓
If you know where you want to apply, is the education agency listed on the BSA certified agent list? Has the agent previously worked with the school/college you'd like to apply to?	✓
What are other families saying about the education agent? Note: Even the best agent can't make everybody happy, but this will help you decide if they are right for you and your child.	✓



Important sources of information

Boarding Schools' Association (BSA)

[BSA](#) is a membership association for boarding schools worldwide, with certified agent and guardian schemes to champion excellence across the boarding sector.

BSA Legal

[BSA Legal](#) offers specialist UK immigration support relating to independent schools.

British Association of Independent Schools with International Students (BAISIS)

[BAISIS](#) champions support for international students whether day or boarding, sharing best practice in academic and pastoral provision for international students in British independent schools and English medium schools.

UK Agent Quality Framework

The UK's [set of tools and guidance](#) for ethical practice in international student recruitment.

What you should expect from your education agent:

- A well-trained agent will explain the UK education system, the different UK regions and the schools/colleges they represent and have good knowledge on. They should give you a good understanding of the many options open to your child in the UK.
- They should know what the [national code of ethical practice for UK education agents](#) is and show you a copy. Familiarise yourself with the national code to see how your education agent is doing.
- Many education agents will regularly attend training delivered by their partner education providers, BSA/BAISIS, the British Council, and UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).
- The UK does not require a licence for agents to recruit students to UK schools/colleges, but agents operating in your country may require a local licence. Do your research beforehand to find out if this applies. This may include checking with your government's education department or official agent association websites.
- Agent fees are typically covered by the school/college in the form of a commission payment, which covers the agent's operating costs. Regardless of whether the agent is paid a commission or not, they should give you high-quality and unbiased advice.
- Some education agents may charge for additional services. They should be clear with you at the start of the process if they will charge you any fees and what they are for. If you are unsure you may check with the education providers you plan to apply to.
- Agents cannot provide you with favourable entry requirements, alternative application options, or access to information that differs from a student/parent applying directly. If an agent claims to be able to do this, contact the education provider you are applying to, report it, and seek clarification. Also then report this to the BSA.



- If you are not satisfied with an education provider's response or have any complaints regarding agent conduct, concerns can be reported to the UK Home Office, or directly to the BSA or BAISIS.
- Many education agents may not be licenced UK immigration advisers but some can still provide effective guidance with your visa application. If you receive immigration advice from an agent, make sure you also understand the requirements you need to meet. You can find advice on how to apply and how to protect your child's immigration status once they are in the UK at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk), or via [BSA Legal](#).
- You can ask to speak to families the education agent has previously supported in taking up a place in the UK. Speaking to them can be a useful way to find out about their experiences. Remember every family's situation is different so their application or visa processes may differ from yours.
- Some education agents offer additional help after your child arrives in the UK, e.g. providing visa updates, accommodation support, etc. Other options are often available and you shouldn't feel pressured to access any of this additional support unless you want it. If offering accommodation services, there is specific guidance for this. Please visit BSA for more information.

Remember: where and what your child studies is your decision.

Education agents are there to help you make an informed decision on the best options for your child. Not to decide for you. Be open to any ideas they may suggest but remain firm about what you want. If you believe you are not receiving the best service, contact the education providers you are applying to directly and ask the BSA to investigate your complaint. Similarly, if you have had a good experience, support other families and students by recommending them and providing reviews.

Whilst some agents do charge fees for their service, this should be explained clearly from the start. Agents should not hold money or make payments on your behalf. If you are unsure about an agent asking you for money, check with the institution you are applying to see if this is legitimate.



Get in touch

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