

Mental health support in the UK

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Note: UKCISA doesn't provide mental health advice on our advice line but the following information should direct you to useful support and organisations.

Moving to a new country, learning different methods of studying and forming new friendship groups can be a very exciting time when you study in the UK. But it can also be very scary if you're adapting to a new climate, potentially speaking in a different language and feel far from your friends and family.

Starting a new university, school or college is a big change and *all* students, whether from the UK or elsewhere, may feel overwhelmed at some point. You're not alone.

You may experience feeling isolated, distressed, anxious or lonely. International students can have many concerns, including:

- Language barriers
- Not understanding cultural references
- Financial worries
- Exam stress
- Worrying about proving yourself to your parents

There are small steps you can take; making sure you don't isolate yourself by going outside to a public place can help, or talking about how you're feeling with a tutor or a friend from home. We have [more advice about how to cope in our blog](#).

Our student ambassadors offer advice on looking after your wellbeing:

- [Tips on looking after your mental health](#)
- [Reflect on your wellbeing](#)

If you're feeling upset, like you can't get motivated or cope with your studies please speak to someone about it. The NHS provides a [useful overview of where and when to seek help](#).

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Attitudes to mental health in the UK

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Students often say that they don't want to draw attention to any issues because in their home country they don't recognise it as an illness or it is frowned upon.

'[in China] we only go to help if we get hurt physically, but not mentally.' ([Read one of our members' research reports featuring this quote](#) which includes lots of international student thoughts about mental health, counselling and wellbeing.)

In the UK organisations are increasingly creating campaigns to encourage 'time to talk'. This may be different from perceptions of mental health in your home country. [Read our myths about mental health](#).

When you arrive in the UK you may experience 'culture shock' as you adjust to a new culture. This is normal, usually temporary and to be expected. [Read our advice about coping with culture shock](#). However, if you feel like you've been experiencing these feelings for a period of time you may benefit from some additional help.

Where to get help

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There are lots of places that can help you and provide support so please don't suffer in silence. Click to read more information on the items below:

[At your institution](#)

Most institutions will have a dedicated welfare or wellbeing department who you can talk to or will direct you to relevant services. The department may be called wellbeing, health service, counselling or support services, if you can't find it the international office will tell you where they are located.

They'll speak to you in confidence (for example your parents won't be told you've gone to see them)

In the UK, counselling services have strict confidentiality policies. This means that no-one will know if you have attended the service (including your friends or family) unless you agree to share any information about you.

You can also speak about your worries to your academic tutor and they'll explain where to go for support.

[Other organisations](#)

If you'd rather talk to someone outside of your university, school or college there are lots of organisations who can help:

- [GloballyMindEd](#) is a website set up specifically to support international student mental health
- [Student Minds](#)
- Nightline (this is a service open at night for students run by students. [Read our blog written by a Nightline student volunteer](#) - find out if your [institution is covered by a Nightline](#))
- [Mind](#)
- [Nightline](#)
- [Samaritans](#)

[Your doctor](#)

If you've been feeling distressed and it doesn't seem to be improving please visit your local doctor (usually referred to as your GP - General Practitioner). GPs in the UK support both your physical and your mental health. If you need to register for a GP, [read our information about how to do this](#).

[Online tools](#)

If you would like to assess your own mental health there are numerous tools available. One example is [Students Against Depression](#).

[Worried about a friend?](#)

If you're looking at this page on behalf of a friend do pass on the website address of this page.

Organisations like Student Minds offer support about how to help a friend or family member. There is some useful advice at studentminds.org.uk/supportforafriend

Barriers to wellbeing

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There are numerous issues that may have an impact on your wellbeing, from feeling some pressure to succeed in your studies to your home country's perceptions of mental health.

The barriers mentioned below are quotes from international students. You can view the full reports at ukcisa.org.uk/wellbeing or read blogs from students at ukcisa.org.uk/student-wellbeing

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