INOMICS

All You Need to Know About
Studying in the UK
Applying to Master's Programmes

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What is INOMICS? A foreword

INOMICS has been offering students and professionals a comprehensive online resource for their academic and career choices since 1998.

In the more than 15 years that we have been online, we have succeeded in accumulating high-quality content for our users interested in accessing postgraduate education. We know how important it is to have centralised access to information about the wide range of educational opportunities around the world in order to make smart, informed choices.

In order to help students in this endeavour, we have developed a complete report with key pieces of information to help students find the right Master's programme for them. Statistics about application requirements, percentages of international students, funding options and postgraduate opportunities in students' dream locations are all part of the final product of our research.

We hope that the information presented here will support students around the world in making informed career decisions, regardless of their country of residence or educational level. If you have any suggestions or comments about this report, please feel free to get in touch with the INOMICS team and we will be happy to assist you with any queries.

Kind regards,
Andreas Hoffmann,
CEO, INOMICS GmbH
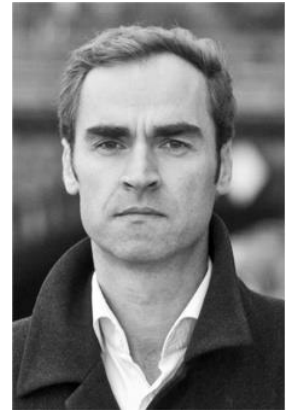
I. Introduction

Choosing a Master's programme can be a daunting prospect. From which subject to study to where to study, the list of decisions can really add up when it comes to choosing the next step in your academic career.

With the aim of helping you with this decision-making process, this report contains key information about application procedures to Master's programmes at UK universities. Moreover, a general overview of application requirements, acceptance criteria and an outline of the perfect profile, as expected by UK admission offices, has been included. We hope this information will help you as you make this important choice, while also helping you develop your career successfully.

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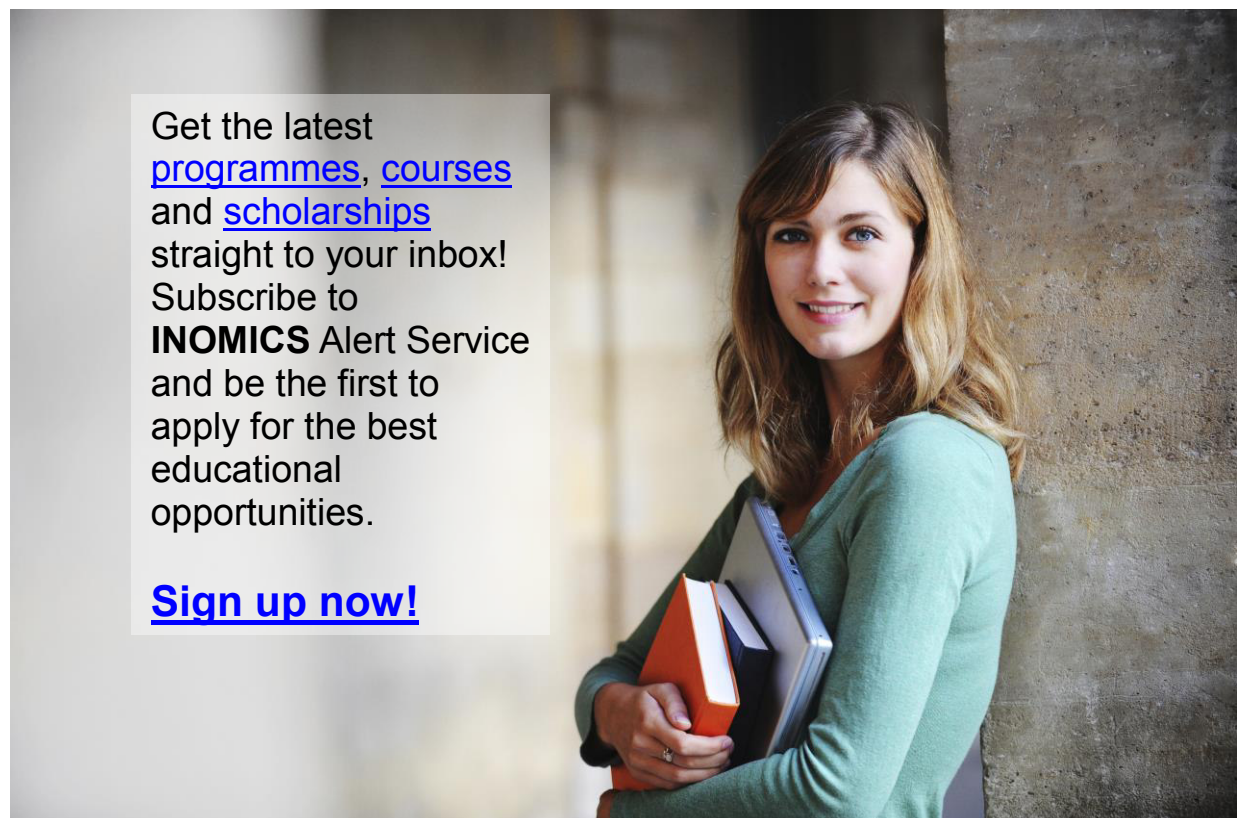
To download specifications of requirements per discipline, please visit this page.

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II. Methodology

This Report has been produced using an analysis of the application requirements for programmes at 30 popular universities from across the UK.

We analysed what documents are required for applications, the profiles explicitly desired of applicants and secondary data that indicates the profiles of accepted students. Moreover, we have collected and analysed application deadlines, acceptance rates and expected scores for English proficiency certificates to identify trends and standards for UK university applications.

We hope this report helps you with the process of applying to UK universities and in making the best choice for the next step on your career path.

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III. Selecting a Programme

It is fairly easy to go through a long list of Master's programmes and choose ones that seem to fit your career profile. However, the task does not stop there. In fact, it is after reducing your list of prospective universities and courses from the thousands available to a shortlist of ten or so that the decisions start to get really tough. At this point, it is time to think carefully about your qualifications, goals and interests.

As well as considering your subject preference(s), it is crucial to look at other important factors to reach a decision about the best programme for you. For example funding options, local infrastructure (your want to be able to get to/away from the university easily!) and social life on campus. Even more if you decide to go abroad, those factors can make a huge difference once you will spend at least the next two years in a completely different environment than home. Figure 1 gives an overview of key issues to keep in mind.

Looking for the next step in your career?
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Figure 1. What to consider while choosing a Master's programme

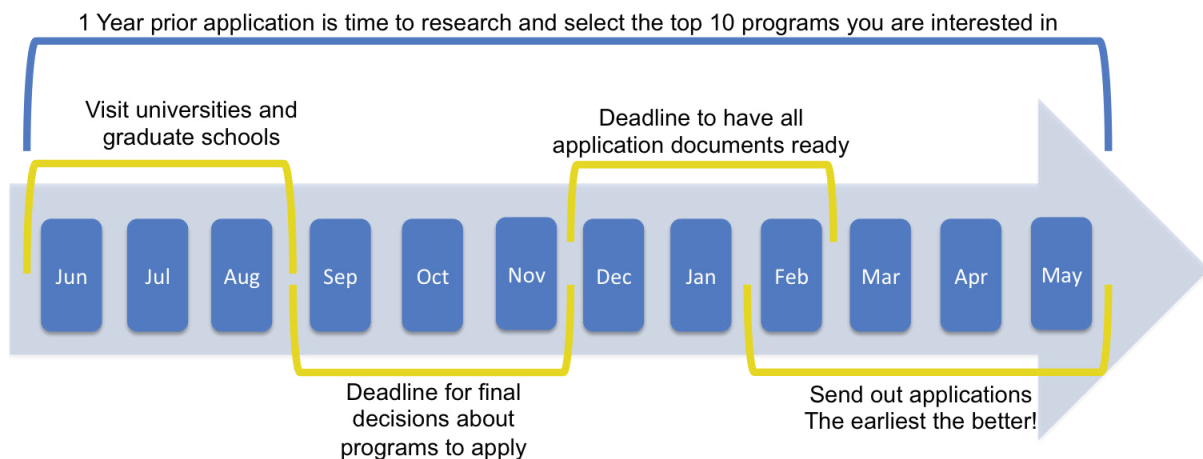| Programme type	• Type of programme • Personal areas of interest • Career goals
Programme credibility and future opportunities	• Reputation of the institution • Research opportunities • Transferability of the qualification/Possibility for further studies • Opportunities upon graduation • Employment rates
Entry requirements and application	• Entry requirements • Contact with faculty and current students • Language requirements
Living costs and funding	• Scholarship possibilities • Living costs/Personal financial considerations • Working opportunities while studying • Student accommodation options
Social and cultural issues	• Study location • % of international students • Student benefits • Proximity to home
Resources and infrastructure	• Availability of facilities • Research facilities • Average class size • Career services

Of course, not all of this information can be found on university websites. For this reason, you should also interact with the universities you are interested in, visit their webpages and why not contact them to ask about key information. You can find useful links with valuable information that help you taking a decision under useful sources of information.

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IV. Planning Your Application

The general rule says the earlier to apply the better, even more in the case of UK universities who receive thousands of applications to process and decide about at the same time they appear. Definitely you do not want to miss your possibility to study in a prestigious university because your documents arrive late, when others took all the available places.

Around 85% of all Master's programmes in the UK start in the autumn term, i.e. September or October. If you plan to begin your studies during the autumn term, **Figure 2** will give you an overview about when to look for information about programmes and universities, when to visit campuses and most importantly, when to apply. Please be aware that this timeline is only an overview, so be sure to check the application information for each individual programme to which you would like to apply.

Figure 2. When to apply to UK Universities – Timeline for Autumn Term Entrance

1 Year prior application is time to research and select the top 10 programs you are interested in

Visit universities and graduate schools

Deadline to have all application documents ready

Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May

Deadline for final decisions about programs to apply

Send out applications The earliest the better!

Many universities break down the application deadlines into first application window or early application dates and second period or late application deadlines. Do not trust time and leave all for the end. If it is well known that the late application window is often only for UK/EU students due to less immigration procedures, it does not mean the reservation of places for the very end for those who want to apply between June and August. Vacancies are gone in the same way good applications are accepted, so try to be among the firsts.

Be aware that most programmes begin only in the autumn term, so be sure to check each course individually. Only very few universities offer master's programmes beginning in the spring term. Being unusual we recommend you to check university websites for updated information.

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Most UK universities organise open days and student recruitment events. Such events are very useful to get in touch directly with future advisors, professors and fellow students. Find out when these are taking place, and check the university website to reserve a place (some open days have a limited capacity).

Finally, it is always important for international students to begin the application process well in advance. Plan plenty of buffer time in case there are delays regarding getting documents, visas or other immigration related components.

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V. Revising Application Documents

UK universities generally ask for an application form, payment of application fees, academic transcripts, a statement of purpose (also called a cover letter or letter of motivation) and references (also called supporting letters or letters of reference).

Depending on the number of applicants and type of programme, some applications also require postgraduate test scores, such as the GRE or other exams. These require preparation time and buffer time for the delivery of results. Always plan ahead and do not miss the deadline for sitting an exam.

Figure 3 gives you a practical checklist to help plan your application.

Figure 3. Overview of requirements for applying to a Master's programme in the UK

- Application form
- Academic transcripts
- Statement of purpose
- References or supporting letters
- Entrance exam scores
- Application fees
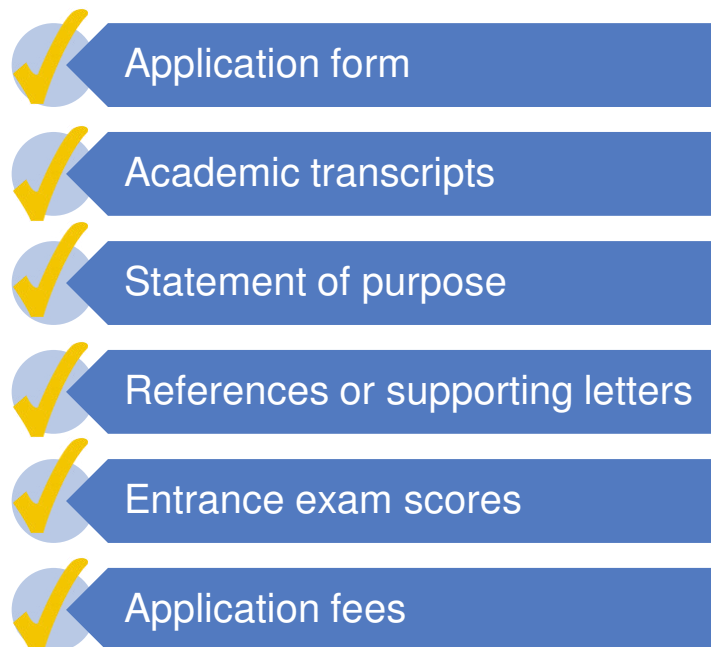
VI. English Proficiency

If you want to study in the UK you need to have a very good level of English and actually prove it.

All UK universities ask for proof of your capability to communicate in English. In order to prove your English proficiency, most universities require at least one of the following:

- You are from a majority English speaking country
- Your previous education was in a majority English speaking country
- An accepted test in English language at a level specified for the subject area, within two years of the start date of the course
- An English language pre-sessional course at the university at which the programme is taught
- A minimum of eighteen months work experience in a majority English speaking country

It is important to note that all universities reserve the right to ask individual applicants for additional language requirements if necessary. **Table 1** shows an overview of requirements for all disciplines plus the expected scores per modules. Remember this is only guidance, you must keep updated checking the university websites.

Table 1. Typical Acceptable English language qualifications - General overview

English Test	Overall	Reading	Listening	Writing	Speaking
British Council International Language Testing System (IELTS Academic Version)	From 6 to 7 according to the discipline	5.5 to 7	5.5 to 7	5.5 to 7	5.5 to 7
Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Internet-based version	92 to 110 according to university and discipline	18 to 24/30	17 to 22/30	20 to 24/30	17 to 25 /30
Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English	B-C	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English	A-B	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pearson Test of English (Academic)	62	59	59	59	59

VII. Meeting Expectations of Universities

UK universities are well known for their high-quality education, the engagement of their students and for offering multicultural environments. Taking into account the overwhelming number of students who apply to UK universities, the demands of admissions offices are quite precise; focusing on the potential contribution that a student can make to the course and university at large.

Admission tutors are without doubt the best people to give you advice on applying to universities. In an article prepared by The Guardian, recruitment officers and admission tutors from recognized UK universities share useful tips about the profile a student should show to be successfully accepted. **Figure 4** summarises some of the qualities that universities look for in student during applications.

Figure 4. UK Student Profile – What admission offices want to see?

In your application, emphasise your potential while also highlighting examples of previous academic and career experience. Emphasise your exemplary fit for the given course and show the admissions office why you are a top candidate by explaining precisely what you will contribute to the programme to which you are applying.

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VIII. Getting Accepted

If you apply to UK universities expect to get some rejections. The massive amount of students who apply and the high level of requirements make the possibility of rejections very luckily. However it varies from subject to subject. If you are still trying to decide between 2 subjects, information about acceptance rates can make a difference when choosing where to finally apply.

Acceptance rates give an idea of how competitive the application process for any one course might be. At the same it gives an idea how good your application and profile need to be to get accepted. While some universities publish acceptance rates on their website, others do not provide any data.

We have collected average numbers to help you prepare your application and anticipate the level of competition. You can find this information in **Figure 5.**

Figure 5. Percentage of Students Accepted by UK Universities

Programme	Acceptance Rate
Economics	36%
Finance	35%
Accounting	36%
Maths & Stats	19%
Law	24%
Political Science	20%
Engineering	34%
Business	26%

Once you are aware of the approximate acceptance rate of universities, the next step is to increase your chances to get accepted. During the application process universities need to see that you match the student profile of the programme you apply for. You have 2 channels to do that: your application documents and in some cases an interview. **Figure 6** gives you an overview of what comprises a successful application to UK universities. The graph shows a list of steps you must take into account to make an outstanding application. Only if you impress admission offices with your material you can get the chance of showing your potential in a face-to-face interview.

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Figure 6. Successful Application to UK Universities – What you need to do

A Combine top academic records with personal story and experience

B Focus documents on why you are applying to the given programme and institution

C Present your material according to the ambitions and aspirations of the university or postgraduate institution

D Display excellent marks in previous studies and strong English skills

E Match characteristics and abilities to student profiles described by the admissions office

F Include a writing sample of already published work in a relevant discipline

The combination of academic records, a personal story and academic and/or career experience is the key to success. Moreover, being confident, direct and clear whilst explaining your reasons for studying a Master's will highly increase your chances. Finally, offering a detailed explanation for how you think your skills will contribute to the study programme will help you stand out to admissions officers. Remember, sending out mass applications leads to weak applications and rejections.

You may find the case, especially in top universities and programmes, where application documents are no enough to get accepted. Interview rounds are the next step and usually the most stressing. In an interview you normally get from 20 minutes to 1 hour to sell yourself. University admission have the base of your personal statement, so what is the best is to follow the line and defiantly convince them to pick you up because you will be a great addition to their list of students and later on alumni.
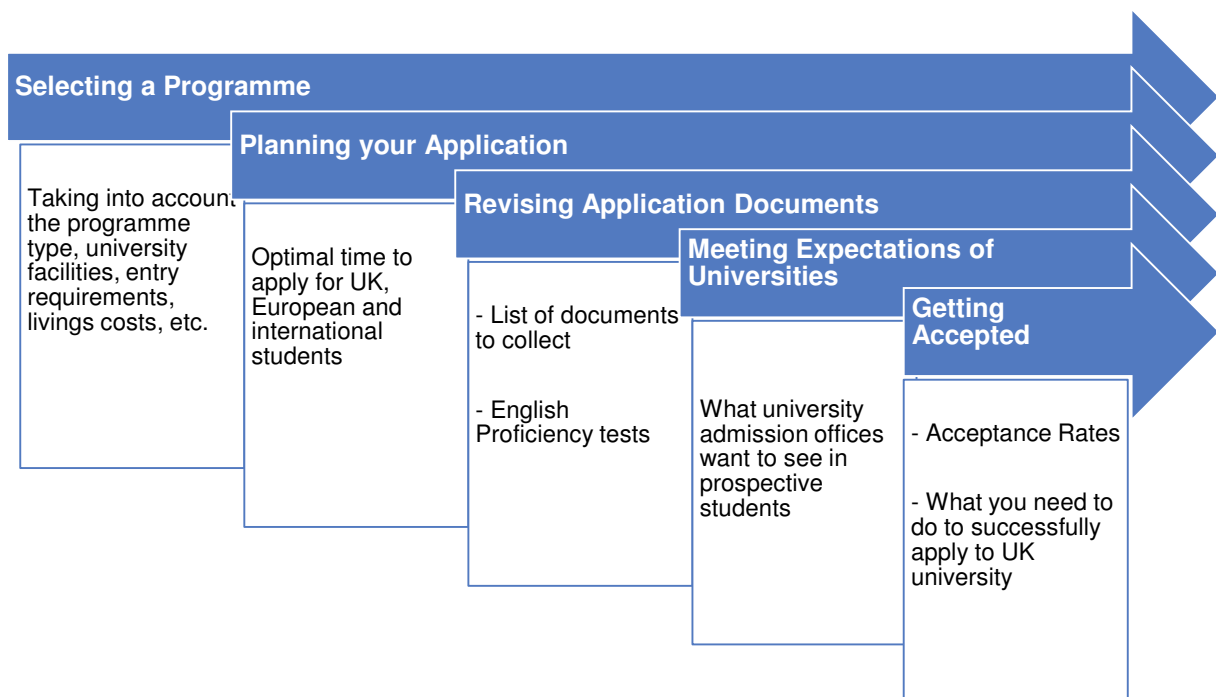
Applying for a job and applying for a university may not be the same but they should be taken with the same amount of responsibility and preparation. You should prepare for obvious questions about your career choices, but also for information about the university and programme you are applying for. Show your own commitment and willingness to study; there is no better motivation than your own instead of parents' wishes or former professor's recommendations.

Finally keep in mind that each answer you give is an opportunity to show how many of the qualities explained in Figure 5 you possess. Make your answers clear and make the admission officer to remind you for your brilliant approach to his questions.

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IX. Summary

Applying to a UK university requires time and attention. You need to be sure about your preferences and profile before getting on board. Here you find a small summary of steps you should follow to successfully enrol into a master's programme. Remember that the success your future studies depends mostly on how good and assertive you are making this decision:

Figure 7. Steps for Successful Application to UK Universities

Selecting a Programme	Planning your Application	Revising Application Documents	Meeting Expectations of Universities	Getting Accepted
Taking into account the programme type, university facilities, entry requirements, livings costs, etc.	Optimal time to apply for UK, European and international students	- List of documents to collect - English Proficiency tests	What university admission offices want to see in prospective students	- Acceptance Rates - What you need to do to successfully apply to UK university

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X. Useful Sources of Information

Of course, not all of this information can be found on university websites. For this reason, you should also interact with the universities you are interested in – contact them directly to ask about key information that may help you make your decision. Depending who you talk to, you might also get points in your favour by making yourself known to a member of staff responsible for admissions.

If you are interested in getting advice about how to prepare your CV, cover letter and how to prepare to English exams, we invite you to visit our:

Advice Section

Visa Requirements for Studying at a UK University
How to Fund a Master's Degree in the UK
Writing a Successful Motivation Letter for UK University Applications
Letters of Reference for UK University Applications
Which English Language Exams to Take for UK Universities and How to Study
Application Requirements for Studying a Master's in the UK
How to Apply to a Master's Programme in the UK
Entrance Exams for Applying to a Master's Programme in the UK

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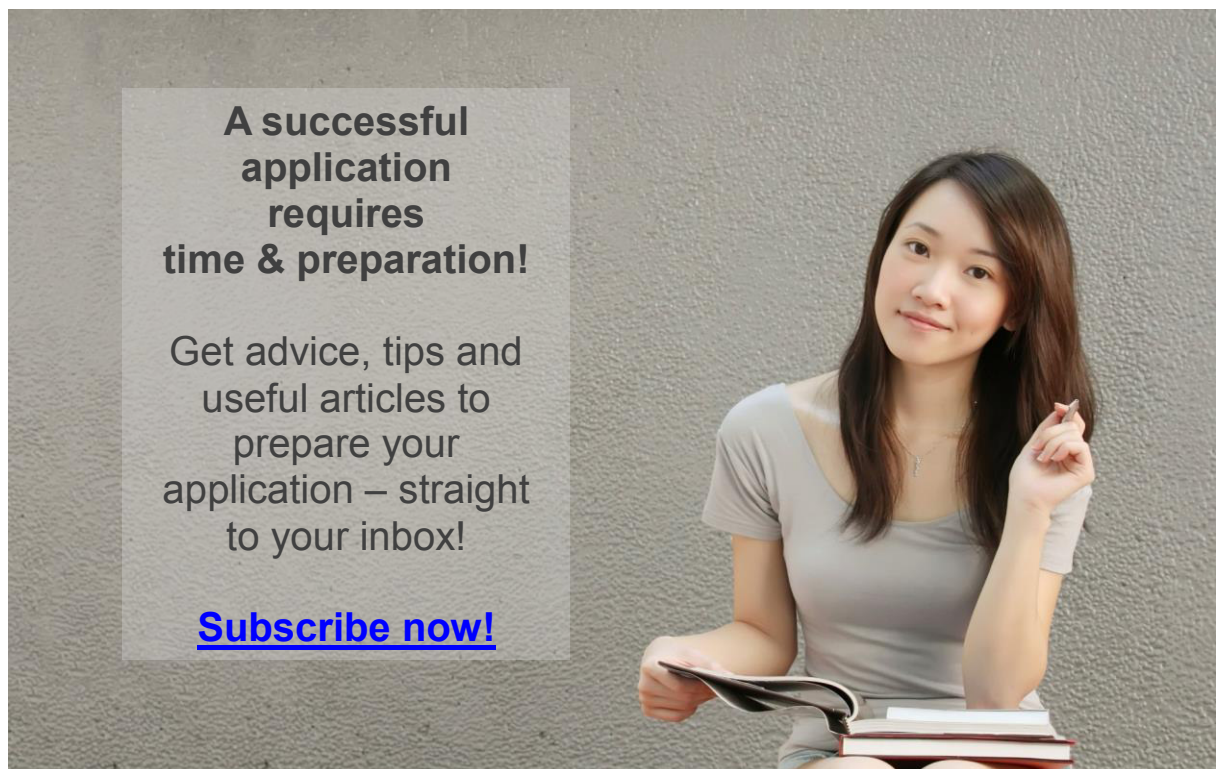
How to Write a Cover Letter: Five Steps to Success
Proficiency Exams in French, German and Spanish: Top Language Certificates
Why Study in the UK? 5 Reasons to Choose Britain for Study Abroad
How to Apply for a Master's Scholarship
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