



CAMBRIDGE

Where can Cambridge take your students?

Exploring university pathways and progression

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Global factors

Structural shifts and policy changes

Visa and immigration policies:

- Tighter visa rules, caps and financial requirements.
- Visa reliability: a decision factor for some students.

A broader range of global study destinations:

- From big 4 to big 14.
- Increasing interest in Europe and Asia.
- Branch campuses and education hubs.
- 2 + 2 programmes.



Study in Malaysia – welcome centre

Changing student behaviour and demand

Affordability and ROI:

- Students prioritise cost, employability and post-study work.
- Increasing price sensitivity due to inflation/currency fluctuations.

Overall demand still growing but uneven:

- Global student numbers still growing towards ~ 9 million studying HE abroad expected by 2030 (5 million in 2018 and 7 million in 2025).
- Sustained interest in career aligned degrees including STEM and health.

Sources: ICEF Monitor, British Council, ETS, Study Portals

Destination survey



90%

progressed to university



40%

progressed to university abroad

Executive summary



Changing destinations

Schools report a clear cooling towards the US, driven by visa difficulty, politics and safety concerns, alongside diversification into Australia, continental Europe and Asian hubs such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia and Türkiye.

Multi-destination and back-up applications are now the norm, with Brexit continuing to steer European students away from the UK.



Geopolitical instability

For the third year running, we have seen geopolitical tensions cited as an influence on student destination.

Global tensions, wars, unpredictable immigration regimes and safety and racism fears (the US most often) are both redirecting students away from specific destinations and making parents more cautious overall, with many now favouring an undergraduate degree at home and overseas study only later for postgraduate study.

Executive summary



Improving domestic education

Home-country higher education is increasingly seen as a credible alternative, thanks to stronger and better-ranked universities, new private and interdisciplinary institutions, foreign branch campuses opening locally (notably in India), and the growth of English-taught programmes that offer global exposure without relocating.



Financial reasons

Cost is the most cited factor overall: rising tuition and living costs in destination countries, compounded by weak local currencies and limited scholarships, are pushing students towards local options.

Many families now judge a shorter, later master's abroad better value than a full undergraduate degree overseas.

Executive summary



Awareness and guidance

Respondents credit increased study abroad with more structured in-school counselling and university guidance programmes, campus fairs and visiting university representatives, and easier access to information through social media and education consultants. Several schools link increases in their own numbers directly to having built or expanded this guidance provision, making it a demand-side driver distinct from financial or geopolitical factors.



Undergraduate at home - Postgraduate abroad

A shift is the move towards completing an undergraduate degree at home and considering overseas study only later for a master's. Schools across South Asia, Pakistan and parts of SE Asia describe families judging a shorter, one-to-two-year postgraduate programme abroad as more affordable and lower risk than four years overseas, particularly given cost, visa uncertainty and safety concerns at undergraduate level.

Executive summary



Emerging subjects

The strongest cross-regional trend is a surge in technology fields, led by Computer Science, AI, Data Science, Cybersecurity and Robotics, with AI the newest growth area. Schools tie this to employability, and some note movement within fields, such as Computer Science towards AI and Business Administration towards Business Analytics.

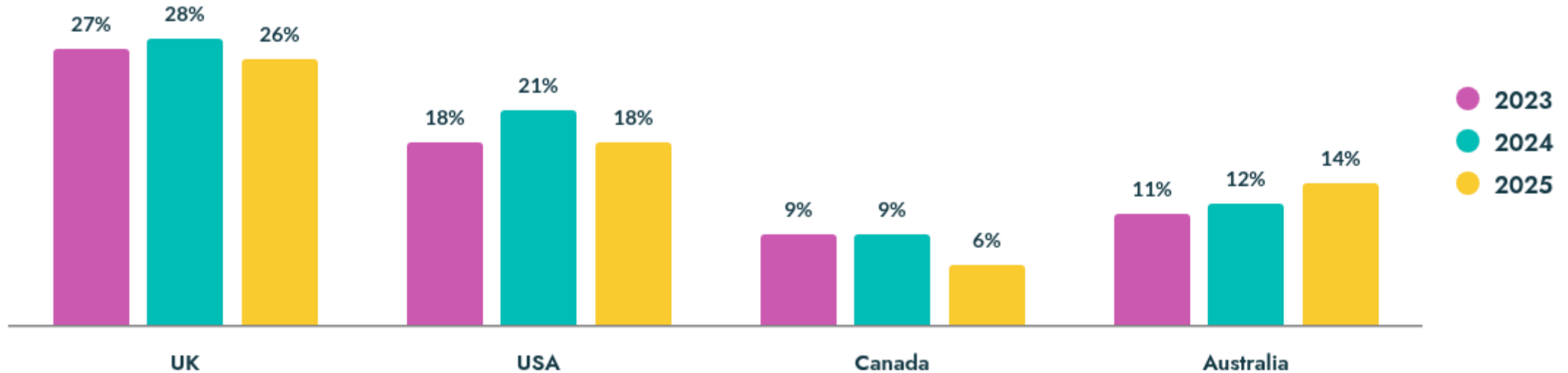


Other subjects increasingly popular

Beyond technology, schools report growth in Psychology, Law and Business, rising interest in interdisciplinary and dual-degree programmes (especially in East Asia, moving out of Business and Finance into STEM), steady Engineering growth, mixed Medicine demand often capped by domestic places, and a notable decline in modern foreign languages.

Trends in student destinations: international students only

The chart shows the trends in the proportion of Cambridge students progressing to university in the top four destinations for the past 3 years, excluding domestic students.



Study in the UK

Applying to the UK

- UK universities have varied minimum entry requirements, based on:
 - Popularity of the course (competition for places)
 - Subject knowledge / experience requirements (e.g. Maths, Sciences)
- Most universities will require 3 International A Levels
- Some courses require admission tests and/or interviews
- A holistic approach to admission – just meeting the requirements is not always enough – looking at other things like the personal statement, IGCSE grades (or equivalent)
- Students to check individual university websites
- Applications via UCAS (see www.ucas.com for lots of information including deadlines and how to become a UCAS centre)



The UK as a university destination for Cambridge International A Level students*

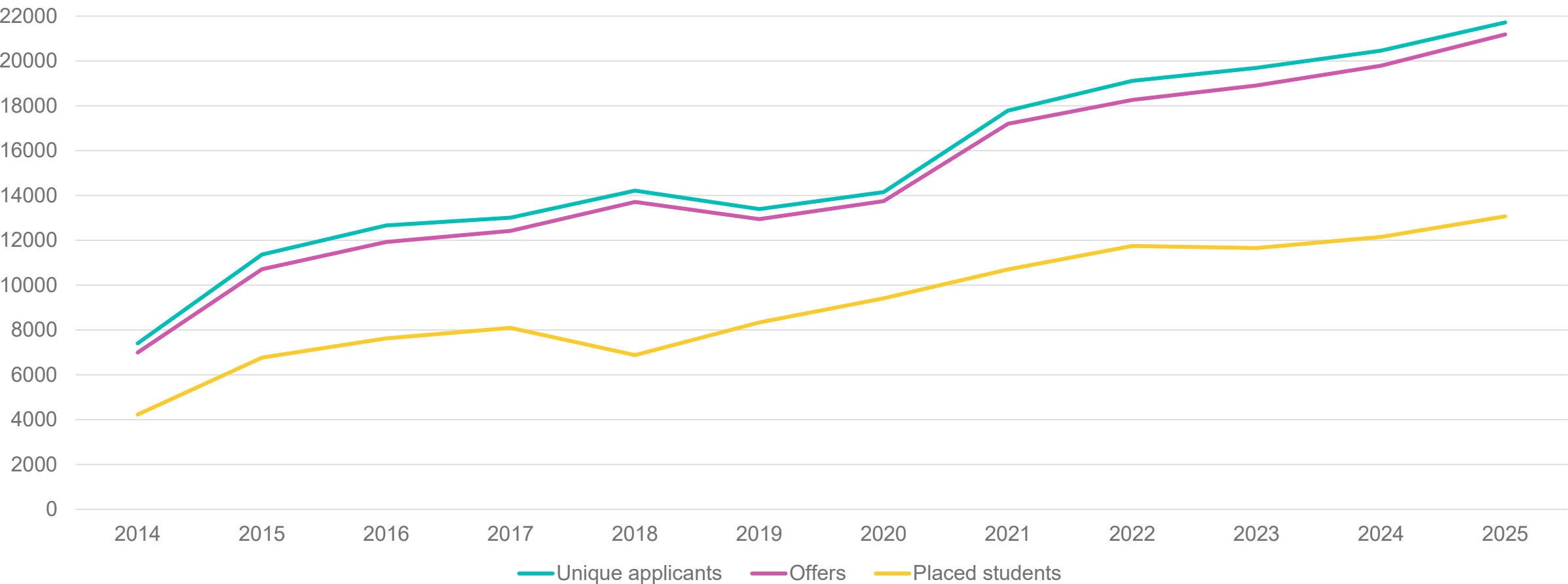
- The **most popular destination** for Cambridge students
- Number of Cambridge International A Level students applying to UK Universities **increased by 6%** last year
- **12% of placed undergraduate international students** applying to UK universities via UCAS were Cambridge International A Level students
- Most popular subjects applied for last year were **Engineering** and **Business & Management**
- Most popular Universities applied to last year were **UCL** and the **University of Manchester**

*All data based on UCAS EXACT data



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Cambridge International A Level students applying to UK Universities*



*All data based on UCAS EXACT data

Top 10 International A Level applicant source markets applying to UK universities in 2025*

1. China
2. United Kingdom
3. Malaysia
4. Pakistan
5. India
6. United Arab Emirates
7. Kenya
8. Zimbabwe
9. Spain
10. Indonesia

*All data based on UCAS EXACT data



Top 11 universities (placed students)*

1. UCL (University College London)
2. University of Manchester
3. The University of Edinburgh
4. King's College London, University of London
5. University of Bristol
6. Imperial College London
7. University of Warwick
8. University of Leeds
9. University of the Arts London
10. Durham University
11. University of Exeter

*All data based on UCAS EXACT data



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In conversation with a UK University



University
of Exeter

RUSSELL
GROUP

TEF
2023

Overall: **Gold**

Student experience: **Gold**

Student outcomes: **Gold**

Teaching Excellence Framework

Top 15 most targeted
university by leading
graduate employers

The Graduate Market in 2026, High
Fliers Research

30,000 students
from more than 150
countries

Twenty subjects ranked in
the UK top 10 – from
Accounting to Zoology

The Complete University Guide, The Times
Good University Guide, or The Guardian
University Guide, 2025/26



Triple accredited
Business School

AMBA, AACSB, EQUIS

1%



450 clubs and societies
and no. 1 sports
university in the south
of England and Wales



Working with schools

Supporting progression

- University Pathways & Progression team working closely with higher education globally.
- Country specific information online.
- Extensive recognition and credit database.
- School profile templates.
- Find out more at the Cambridge Showcase at the West Hub.



Join our counsellor newsletter

- Aimed at guidance counsellors/advisers in school supporting local and international progression.
- Will spotlight different study destinations and share experiences of Cambridge learners in higher education.
- Receive updates from Cambridge on our developments supporting university pathways and student progression.



How can Cambridge most effectively support you?

- In-person events with universities/sector bodies (for teachers and counsellors)
- Virtual events with universities/sector bodies (for teachers and counsellors).
- Professional development programme for counsellors.
- Monthly webinars/podcasts for advisers and counsellors.
- Monthly webinars/podcasts for students and parents.
- Resources to support the development of a counselling programme in school
- Expanded content at existing Cambridge events



Feedback



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Any questions?

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Thank you!

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