

TOP UK UNIVERSITY SHORTLISTING WORKSHEET FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

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Before You Start: The Mindset Shift

Most Indian students shortlist UK universities in **exactly the wrong order**. They start with rankings, pick the most prestigious names they've heard of, and then work backwards to check if they're eligible.

This worksheet asks you to do the opposite. Start with your profile, your goals, and your budget. Let the right universities emerge from that, not from a league table.



STEP 1: KNOW YOUR PROFILE

Answer these honestly before looking at a single university.

Academic Background

My undergraduate degree is in: _____
My final CGPA / percentage is: _____
My strongest subjects/areas: _____
Any backlogs or academic gaps? (Yes/No): _____
If yes, briefly what happened: _____

English Proficiency

Have I taken IELTS/TOEFL/PTE? (Yes/No/Planning to): _____
My current or target score: _____

→ [IELTS preparation guide](#)

A degree from a well-matched university where you thrive, graduate on time, and land a relevant job is worth more than a name-brand rejection or a miserable two years somewhere that wasn't right for you.

Most UK universities require IELTS 6.0–7.0 overall. Research-focused and Russell Group universities typically require 6.5–7.0 with no band below 6.0.

Work Experience

Do I have relevant work experience? (Yes / No): _____

If yes, how many years and in what field: _____

Note: Most UK Master's programs do not require work experience, but it strengthens applications significantly, especially for business and management programs.

Budget

My annual tuition budget (in GBP): _____

My annual living cost budget (in GBP): _____

Am I actively seeking scholarships? (Yes / No): _____

→ [Funding your studies](#)



STEP 2: GET CLEAR ON WHAT YOU ACTUALLY WANT

Course Focus

What specific field do I want to study? (Don't just write "engineering", write "structural engineering" or "renewable energy systems" or "machine learning")

Why do I want this specific field at the postgraduate level? What gap does it fill?

Do I want a taught Master's (coursework-based) or a research Master's (MRes / MPhil)?

- Taught Master's → structured modules, dissertation at the end, 1 year, better for career changers and those wanting industry roles
- Research Master's → mostly independent research, suited for those planning a PhD or academic career

My preference: _____

Career Goals

What do I want to be doing professionally 3-5 years after graduation?

Do I want to stay and work in the UK after graduation? (Yes / No / Unsure)

- The UK Graduate Route visa allows 2 years of post-study work (3 years for PhD graduates). All UK universities offering qualifying programs are eligible.

→ [UK student visa guide](#)

Do I want strong industry connections and placement support, or a more research-focused environment?

Location Preference

London is expensive but has the highest density of employers and networking opportunities. Other cities, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Glasgow, and Nottingham, offer a lower cost of living with strong universities.

My preferred location or openness to location:



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***This step matters
more than rankings.
Be honest.***

STEP 3: UNDERSTAND THE UK UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE

Not all UK universities are the same. Here's a quick map to help you place them:

Russell Group (24 universities)

The UK's research-intensive universities. Includes –

- University of Oxford
- University of Cambridge
- Imperial College London
- University College London
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- King's College London
- The University of Edinburgh
- The University of Manchester

and others. Highly competitive. Strong for research, academia, and top-tier employer recruitment. Higher tuition and living costs, especially in London.

Best for: students with strong academic profiles (70%+ or 8.0+ CGPA equivalent), research aspirations, or targeting top-tier graduate employers.

Top Non-Russell Group (Strong Teaching Universities)

Universities like–

- The University of Bath
- The University of Surrey
- The University of Leicester
- Loughborough University
- Coventry University
- The University of the Arts London

Excellent teaching quality, strong industry links, often better value for money, and less competitive admission.

Best for: students with solid but not exceptional grades, those prioritising employment outcomes over prestige, and those on a tighter budget.



Specialist Universities

- Royal College of Art
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
- Cranfield University

Highly specialised, often world-leading in their specific area, not relevant for most fields, but exceptional if your subject aligns.

Best for: students with a very specific academic focus where a specialist institution genuinely leads.

→ [Top UK Universities](#)



STEP 4: BUILD YOUR SHORTLIST: THE 2-3-2 METHOD

Aim for 7 universities total, split into three tiers.

2 Reach Universities

Universities where your profile is slightly below their average admitted student. You have a genuine chance, but it's not guaranteed. Apply because the program is exceptional or the outcome is worth the risk.

University	Program	My concern about eligibility
1		
2		

2 Safe Universities

Universities where you comfortably exceed requirements and are confident of an offer. Do not dismiss these; having a confirmed offer in hand reduces anxiety and gives you negotiating clarity elsewhere.

University	Program	Offer likely because
1.		
2.		

3 Match Universities

Universities where your profile is solidly within their typical admitted range. You meet or exceed their standard requirements. These are your core applications.

University	Program	Why it's a good fit
1.		
2.		
3.		



This is the most reliable way to ensure you have strong options without wasting time on universities that are either too far above or too far below your profile.

STEP 5: COMPARE YOUR SHORTLISTED UNIVERSITIES

Use this table to compare your shortlisted universities side by side. Fill in one column per university.

Factor	Uni 1	Uni 2	Uni 3	Uni 4	Uni 5
Program name					
Duration					
Annual tuition (GBP)					
IELTS requirement					
Entry GPA / % requirement					
Application deadline					
Scholarships available					
City					
Graduate Route visa eligible					
Industry links/placements					
Ranking (QS Subject)					
My gut feeling (1-10)					

A note on rankings: Always use QS Subject Rankings, not overall university rankings. Overall rankings are dominated by research output and don't reflect teaching quality or employability in your field.

→ [Study Costs in the UK](#)

A university ranked 200th overall can be ranked 30th in your specific subject.



STEP 6: COURSE-SPECIFIC SHORTLISTING ADVICE

Engineering (Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Aerospace)



Prioritise universities with strong industry partnerships, accreditation from bodies like IMechE, ICE, or IET, and access to research labs or

industry projects. Loughborough, University of Bath, University of Sheffield, and Imperial College are consistently strong. Check whether the program is accredited; this matters for professional registration later.

Computer Science & Data Science



The UK has a growing tech cluster in London, Manchester, and Edinburgh. Look for programs with-

- industry modules
- live project components, or
- links to specific companies.

University of Edinburgh, University of Manchester, UCL, King's College London, and University of Southampton are strong choices. For Data Science specifically, check whether the program is more statistics-heavy or CS-heavy; they suit different profiles.

Medicine & Health Sciences



Undergraduate medicine in the UK for international students is extremely expensive (£35,000-£50,000+ per year) and

highly competitive. Most Indian students pursue postgraduate routes-

- MSc Public Health
- MSc Global Health, and
- MSc Clinical Research.

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UCL, University of Edinburgh, and University of Birmingham are leaders in this space.

Social Sciences (Economics, International Relations, Political Science, Sociology)

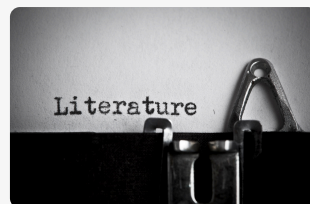


LSE dominates this space globally, but it is extremely competitive. Strong alternatives include -

- The University of Warwick (Economics)
- University of Exeter
- University of Leeds, and
- University of Glasgow

Look for programs with strong dissertation supervision in your specific research interest; who the faculty are matters more in social sciences than in vocational fields.

Humanities (Literature, History, Philosophy, Cultural Studies)



Oxford and Cambridge for research. For taught programs

- University of Edinburgh
- University of York

- King's College London, and
- SOAS University of London are well-regarded.

Funding is harder to find in the humanities; factor this in when shortlisting.

Business & MBA



For MBA:

- London Business School
- Said Business School (Oxford)

- Judge Business School (Cambridge)
- Warwick Business School, and
- Cranfield

are the top tier.

For MSc Management or specialised Master's in Finance, Marketing, or HR:

- University of Bath
- University of Exeter
- Durham University, and
- The University of Strathclyde

offer strong programs with better admission odds than the very top schools.

→ [Programme Search- find courses by subject](#)

STEP 7: COST OF LIVING BY CITY

Tuition is only part of the cost. Living expenses vary significantly by city. Use these estimates for planning.

City	Estimated Monthly Living Cost (GBP)	Notes
London	£1,500–£2,200	Highest cost, highest opportunity
Edinburgh	£1,000–£1,400	Strong university city, lower cost
Manchester	£900–£1,300	Large Indian student community
Birmingham	£900–£1,200	Growing tech and finance sector
Leeds	£900–£1,200	Affordable, strong universities
Nottingham	£800–£1,100	One of the most affordable university cities
Glasgow	£900–£1,200	Strong research universities

These figures include accommodation, food, transport, and personal expenses. London will almost always be at the top of this range.

UK Study Costs breakdown



STEP 8: SCHOLARSHIP CHECKLIST

Before finalising your shortlist, check whether each university offers scholarships to Indian students. Many do, but deadlines are separate from admission deadlines and often earlier.

National Scholarships (Apply Separately)

- Chevening Scholarship: fully funded, for outstanding Indian students, highly competitive, requires 2 years of work experience
- Commonwealth Scholarships: for development-focused study, apply through India's Ministry of Education
- British Council GREAT Scholarships: partial funding, available for specific subjects at partner universities

University-Specific Scholarships

Most Russell Group and many other universities offer merit-based partial scholarships ranging from £2,000 to £10,000. These are usually applied automatically when you accept an offer, but always check the specific process.

Questions to research for each shortlisted university:

- Does this university offer scholarships for Indian students specifically?
- Is there a separate scholarship application, and what is its deadline?
- Does this scholarship require a personal statement or essay beyond the admissions SOP?

→ [Funding your studies guide](#)

STEP 9: APPLICATION TIMELINE

Work backwards from your target intake. Most UK universities have a September intake. A small number offer January intakes for certain programs.

→ [UK Intakes guide](#)

Milestone	Target Date	Done?
IELTS / English test booked		
IELTS score achieved		
University research completed		
Shortlist finalised (this worksheet done)		
SOP drafts started		
LOR requests sent to recommenders		
Applications submitted		
Scholarship applications submitted		
Offer received		
CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance) received		
Student visa application submitted		
Accommodation booked		
Pre-departure checklist complete		

→ [How to apply to UK universities / Pre-departure guide](#)

STEP 10: FINAL SHORTLIST DECISION

Before you submit, read through your list one more time and answer these questions for each university:

1. Do I genuinely want to attend this program, or am I applying just to have a backup?
2. Can I realistically afford it, including living costs, without dangerous financial strain?



3. Does this program lead directly toward the career outcome I described in Step 2?
4. Have I read the module list, not just the program overview page?
5. Do I know at least one specific thing about this program that I can write about in my personal statement?

If you answered No to any of these for a university, reconsider whether it belongs on your list.



NEED HELP?

Shortlisting is one of the most important decisions you'll make in your study abroad journey. A wrong choice costs you time, money, and in some cases, years of your career. If you'd like a counsellor to review your shortlist based on your specific profile and goals:

- [Talk to a Gradstar counsellor](#)
- [Explore all UK university options](#)
- [Start your programme search](#)
- [Book accommodation](#)
- [Student visa information](#)



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