



Bearing

SAFETY & SECURITY

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The Case for UK Ready

Why the arrival window matters for international students - and how a structured safety orientation helps institutions turn a shared concern into a visible strength.

A BEARING SAFETY & SECURITY PROGRAMME

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01 The Problem

More than half a million international students arrive in the UK for the first time each year, counting higher education, language schools and pathway programmes - for most, the opportunity of a lifetime. The arrival window is the point where that opportunity is most fragile, and the evidence is now clear enough to prepare for it.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of international students arrive in the UK to study. Most settle well. The difficulty is the arrival window - the first weeks, before a student knows how the country works. In that period they are new, visible, and carrying money for fees and living costs. Criminals understand this, and the data shows they act on it.

The risks are not abstract. They cluster into four areas, each supported by current UK evidence: personal theft, targeted fraud, harassment, and a general unfamiliarity with how to get help. None of these is rare. All of them are addressable with preparation.

FOUR DOCUMENTED RISK AREAS

- **Phone and personal theft, concentrated in London.** The Metropolitan Police recorded 71,391 mobile phone theft and robbery offences in London in 2025 - around 195 a day.
Source: Metropolitan Police, February 2026..
- **Targeted fraud.** The UK Government's Stop! Think Fraud campaign highlights that international students are disproportionately targeted for fraud - because they are new to the country and do not yet know how UK banking and housing systems work.
Source: Stop! Think Fraud campaign (Home Office, with NatWest), 2025.
- **Sexual harassment.** The Office for Students' 2025 survey of 51,920 final-year undergraduates in England found that 24.5% had experienced sexual harassment since starting higher education.
Source: Office for Students, Sexual Misconduct Survey, 2025.
- **Not knowing how to get help.** Many students arrive with no orientation to UK emergency services (999, 101, 111), banking norms, or how and where to report a crime - the named vulnerability across government and sector guidance.
Source: UKCISA and multiple university guidance.

The trend on several of these measures is improving - London phone theft, robbery and knife crime all fell year-on-year in 2025. The picture is one of high absolute risk on an improving trend, not a deteriorating one. The exposure during the arrival window remains, and it is that window UK Ready is built to address.



02 Why International Students

The same crime looks different when the victim is three weeks into a new country. Unfamiliarity, isolation, and funds held for fees turn ordinary risks into targeted ones.

International students are not simply exposed to the same risks as everyone else. They are singled out. Fraudsters specifically target them because they are new, hold large sums, and do not yet know which contacts and demands are legitimate. Government, banks and universities all recognise this directly.

The most serious cases show how far this can go. In so-called virtual kidnapping scams, fraudsters posing as officials isolate a student from their family and coerce them into faking their own abduction, while a ransom is extorted from parents overseas.

THREE VERIFIED UK CASES

Imperial College London, December 2024. A student was subjected to a roughly three-week ordeal by fraudsters posing as officials, and coerced into paying around £250,000 for “bail”, which was unrecoverable.

Reported by Imperial’s student newspaper, February 2025.

University of Edinburgh, 2026. A first-year student was reported missing after his family could not reach him; he was found unharmed, having been coerced into sending videos to scammers demanding money from his family.

Reported 2026.

University of Southampton, 2021. A student was defrauded of £31,000 by fraudsters posing as Shanghai police.

Reported by BBC News, 2023.

WHY THEY ARE TARGETED

- New to the country - UK systems are unfamiliar
- Holding significant funds for fees and living costs
- Often isolated, with family thousands of miles away
- Uncertain which authorities and demands are genuine

WHY IT GOES UNREPORTED

- Unfamiliarity with UK reporting systems
- Language barriers and shame
- Fear that contact with authorities could affect a visa
- No trusted local contact to turn to first

Underreporting compounds the problem. Because these crimes are often unreported, institutions can underestimate how much is happening within their own cohort - which is precisely why a preventative, orientation-led approach matters more than a reactive one.



03 Why It Matters to Institutions

Institutions already take student safety seriously. What has shifted is the context around it - regulatory, legal and commercial - in ways that make demonstrating that care more valuable than ever.

Every institution we speak to already invests seriously in student welfare. What has changed is the context around it: the regulator, the courts, and the sector's own finances now all reward institutions that can evidence what they do - not just do it well.

FOUR REASONS IT IS WORTH EVIDENCING

1 • A regulated legal duty — OfS Condition E6

From 1 August 2025, the Office for Students' new Condition E6 requires English higher education providers to take significant, credible steps to prevent and respond to harassment and sexual misconduct - including reporting routes and training. Many providers are rolling out mandatory student training, which a structured orientation directly supports.

2 • A widening duty of care

The legal direction of travel raises institutional exposure. A fresh Parliamentary debate on a statutory duty of care took place in January 2026, and recent common-law judgments have found a duty to carry out reasonable investigations into student welfare and misconduct. Demonstrating diligence matters.

3 • A commercial dependency

International students are financially central to the sector. In 2024/25, fee income from international students was £12.4bn - 23% of total sector income. Protecting that cohort is a commercial priority as much as an ethical one; a high-profile safety failure threatens both duty-of-care standing and the recruitment pipeline. Retention is also licence-critical. Sponsor licences require an enrolment rate of at least 90% and a course completion rate of at least 85% under the UKVI Basic Compliance Assessment.

4 • A recruitment factor

Safety is not a QS ranking indicator, and it is a decisive factor in destination choice. 75% of prospective international students rank safety and a welcoming place among their top five factors when choosing where to study, and QS advises universities to reassure parents specifically on safety and return on investment. With international enrolments down 6% in 2024/25 - the steepest annual fall on record - a visible safety offer is a differentiator in a contracting market.

THE POSITION, PLAINLY

An institution that can evidence structured safety preparation for its international students then strengthens its regulatory position, demonstrates the care it already provides, and protects the cohort its finances depend on - in a single step.



04 The Solution

UK Ready is a structured, two-phase safety orientation delivered at the point of arrival - the first complete, two-phase safety programme for international students arriving in the UK.

UK Ready addresses the arrival window directly. Students complete an online foundation before they land, then attend a practical, in-person day in their first weeks in the UK. It is designed and delivered by a team with backgrounds in military service, UK policing, professional security, FREC-qualified emergency medicine, Level 3 Supervising First Aid for Mental Health, and professional education, and held to a professional educational standard within a full safeguarding framework.

PHASE 1 · ONLINE FOUNDATION

- 10 modules, around two hours of video, self-paced
- Completed before arriving in the UK
- Covers UK life and law, London travel, scams and fraud, emergencies, theft, wellbeing, night safety, harassment, and serious incidents
- Ends with a personal safety plan, submitted for review

PHASE 2 · PRACTICAL DAY

- 6 sessions, 7 hours of content, maximum 16 students
- Delivered in the UK in the first two weeks of arrival
- Situational awareness, conflict deescalation and personal safety, first aid for mental health, and hands-on emergency first aid
- Closes with live scenarios, certification, and a completion report

WHY IT ANSWERS THE PROBLEM

It teaches UK systems explicitly: 999, 101 and 111, banking norms, reporting routes, and the Ask for Angela scheme - because “not knowing the system” is the named vulnerability.

It targets the best-evidenced risks: theft, fraud, harassment, and not knowing how to get help - the four areas set out in section 01.

It produces evidence: a named certificate and a parent completion report, supporting an institution's E6 and duty-of-care record. Designed to CPD accreditation standards; accreditation in progress.

It covers mental health directly: a dedicated session on recognising when a student or a peer is struggling, delivered by an instructor holding the Level 3 Award in Supervising First Aid for Mental Health.



REF

References

Every figure in this paper is drawn from a published UK source. Full references are listed below for verification.

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- 2 Targeted fraud.** Stop! Think Fraud campaign (Home Office, in partnership with NatWest), "Students urged to Stop! Think Fraud as more than half face scams", GOV.UK, 2025.
- 3 Sexual harassment.** Office for Students, "Sexual Misconduct Survey 2025 - analysis of results" (survey of 51,920 final-year undergraduates in England; 24.5% harassment, 14.1% assault/violence), 2025.
- 4 OfS Condition E6.** Office for Students, "Condition E6: Harassment and sexual misconduct" (ongoing condition of registration, in force from 1 August 2025), 2025.
- 5 Virtual kidnapping - Imperial College. *Felix*** (Imperial College London), "New fraud tactic targets Chinese students in the UK" (approx. £250,000 / 2.5m yuan, December 2024), 28 February 2025.
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- 7 Sector income.** House of Commons Library, "International students in UK higher education" (fee income £12.4bn, 23% of total sector income, 2024/25), citing HESA, 2026.
- 8 Fraud - University of Southampton.** BBC News, reporting on a University of Southampton student defrauded of £31,000 by fraudsters posing as Shanghai police, 2023.
- 9 Duty of care.** UK Parliament (Hansard), Westminster Hall debate on a statutory duty of care for students, 13 January 2026; and the Abrahart and Feder & McCamish judgments.
- 10 International student numbers.** HESA / House of Commons Library: 685,565 international students enrolled in UK higher education 2024/25, of whom approximately 404,555 were first-year entrants; a further ~170,000 arrive annually via language schools, foundation and pathway programmes. British Council analysis of HESA and UKVI data, 2026.
- 11 Ask for Angela.** Metropolitan Police, "Ask for Angela" venue-safety scheme (adopted by the Met, 2016).

→ Sources checked and current at time of publication.



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- 12 International student demand.** QS International Student Survey 2024, reported in QS Insights Magazine Issue 24, "Building the safety net"; and QS, "How do students from the big international student source markets differ?", 15 January 2025.
- 13 Enrolment decline.** HESA, Higher Education Student Statistics 2024/25 - 685,565 international students enrolled in UK higher education, down 6% year-on-year.
- 14 Sponsor compliance.** UKVI, Student Sponsor Guidance - Basic Compliance Assessment thresholds: minimum 90% enrolment rate and 85% course completion rate.

→ Sources checked and current at time of publication.