



SOUTH KOREA

Brief Background: South Korea, officially known as the Republic of Korea, has seen a rapid increase in international students in recent years. In 2017 there were nearly 124,000 international students enrolled in Korean institutions, a 19 percent increase from 2016. The Korean government is actively working to internationalize universities and develop international student support systems with the aim of increasing that number to 200,000 by 2023. In 2017, there were 2,767 American students in South Korea, making the US the fifth leading country of origin within Korea's international student population.

Higher education institutions in Korea are largely divided into junior colleges (two- to three-year programs), universities (four-year programs), and graduate schools. The majority of institutions are private, with only 58 public institutions out of 430 nationwide. The International Education Quality Assurance System (IEQAS)—a national structure—ensures Korean universities offer global competitiveness and desirable conditions for international students. Under the system, a joint delegation from the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice monitor and assess universities' educational responsibilities to international students, with IEQAS certification awarded to those meeting the required standards. In 2017, the number of IEQAS-certified institutions in South Korea was 139, comprising 111 universities, 22 junior colleges, and six graduate schools.

Good to Know: South Korean university degrees generally take at least four years to complete, with some variation depending on the field of study. Most universities

offer English-taught programs, the number of which is steadily increasing.

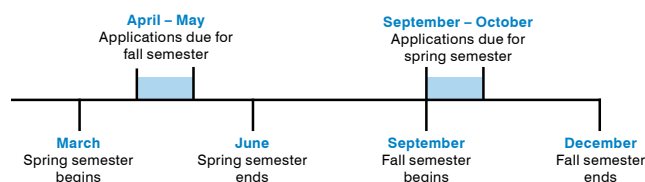
International students may pursue associate, bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degrees in diverse academic fields by enrolling at a Korean university or college as a full-time student. Classes are often conducted in Korean, but reading materials are generally in English and coursework can usually be written and submitted in English. There is also an increasing number of programs that are offered entirely in English.

Many South Korean universities have an affiliated Korean language center that provides intensive training to prospective international students and others interested in learning the language. Programs last from 10 to 12 weeks, but some universities also offer short-term programs of two to six weeks.

Universities generally require students to have achieved at least a level 3 on the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) before enrolling in a degree-seeking program, with level 2 being permissible for science and engineering programs. Universities offer Korean language training courses to help enrolling students bring their language proficiency to the required standard, however this requirement can be waived for students applying to programs delivered entirely in English, or for certain programs with separate entry requirements for native English speakers.

Nonetheless, a basic command of the Korean language is recommended to get the most out of student life in South Korea. For more information visit the [TOPIK website](#).

Academic Calendar: An academic year in South Korea is split over two semesters. The first semester of the academic year is in spring (March through June) followed by one in fall (September through December).



The long vacations offer an ideal opportunity to make the most of the seasonal leisure. Ski trips in winter and beach holidays in summer are common activities for students studying in South Korea, which boasts an abundance of both mountains and coastline.

Search: More information on studying in South Korea can be found on the [Study in Korea website](#), run by the National Institute for International Education (NIIED), a division of the Ministry of Education.

The site contains detailed information about South Korean universities, international student admission, a list of IEQAS-certified universities, and a calendar of local Overseas Study in Korea Fairs, virtual fairs, as well as a guide to the Korean Government Scholarship Program (KGSP). Students can look up institutions based on

criteria such as university classification, courses, region of the country, and whether scholarship support, English lectures, and dormitories are offered.

Apply: Applications can be made directly through university websites. Alternatively, some universities also accept online applications through the [Study in Korea portal](#).

The academic year starts with the spring semester. It's more common for students to apply for admission in the spring semester, however many universities also allow students to first enroll in the fall.

Because the application requirements and selection process (including interviews and document submission) are different for each university, it is vital to confirm them prior to application, either via the university's website or by contacting its international admission department. In particular, the visa issuance requirements for international students are subject to the guidance and procedures of the university sponsoring the visa.

A professional degree can be obtained as part of an undergraduate program, but the number of universities offering them is limited. In the case of specialist programs (e.g., medicine), support for international students is not universal. Before applying, check with each university and program as to whether it can accommodate international students.



Deadlines: Applications to begin studying in the spring semester are accepted from September to October; fall semester applications are open from April to May.

As the deadline for admission is different for the spring and fall semesters, and there are differences in the admission schedules of each university, check the application deadlines with each university.

Application Fees: Though it varies from one university to another, application fees generally range from 100,000 to 200,000 won. Other minor administrative fees, such as those assessed when obtaining and submitting the required documents, may also apply.

Admission Requirements: Applications are open to international candidates who have graduated (or are expected to graduate) high school in their home country and whose parents are not Korean nationals. An applicant's TOPIK score must be level 3 or above (level 2 for science and engineering programs) to be eligible. However, requirements can vary by institution, so it is important to check before applying. In some cases, applicants without the required TOPIK score can take a Korean language course to bring them up to the required level before beginning their academic program. In the case of universities that have separate entry criteria for native English speakers and for programs delivered entirely in English, the Korean proficiency requirement can be waived.

As admission criteria may differ, check the specific requirements and other information provided on the website of each university to which you plan to apply.

Upon Acceptance: Once a student's acceptance is confirmed, the university will provide specific details and instructions for admission and visa applications. The institution will guide students in applying for a D-2 visa. Students will receive a Certificate of Admission that they will need to take, along with other relevant documents, to the Korean consulate in order to be issued the D-2 visa.

Tuition and Fees: Generally, the fees for private universities are 3 to 5 million won per semester, while those of national universities are 2 to 3 million won. Some private universities also charge a one-time admission fee of 800,000 won.

There is some variation depending on university and program, so it is important to check the university website or contact the institution's admission office before applying.

There is a range of excellent scholarship opportunities available for international students, including KGSP scholarships, which pay all tuition fees and provide a living allowance for the duration of study, including a year of fully-funded Korean language tuition. Visit [Study in Korea](#) for more details.



Photo courtesy of Alexis

South Korea

“The best part of being a student in Korea, in my opinion at least, is the opportunity to develop a more globalized mindset and gain experiences that would be impossible to have while living in my home country. I have found that Korean students are very kind and open to foreigners and I have gained a number of sincere friendships during my time in university.”

—Alexis Fox, Wisconsin, Hanyang University

Housing: According to a 2017 survey by NIIED, 58 percent of international students make use of the dormitory facilities available on university campuses.

Most universities have on-campus dormitories available for international students. The fees vary, but are generally between 200,000 and 500,000 won per month. Both dormitory fees and non-university housing prices vary from area to area, with downtown Seoul being notably more expensive for non-university housing.

Check directly with universities for information about dormitory fees and availability. Detailed information about the cost of living, and other aspects of life in South Korea, can be found through [Study in Korea](#).

Photo courtesy of Alexis



“The most difficult thing I have experienced is fully understanding the requirements for graduation due to language barriers. There are times when notices are given in Korean without translation, or with a hurried translation that is a bit difficult to understand. The office staff at my university have been very kind and helpful in this regard and are always willing to answer questions.”

—Alexis Fox, Wisconsin, Hanyang University

Visa and Other Permits: International students must obtain the relevant visa—D-2 for academic programs; D-4 for language training programs—before entering the country. Any non-Korean staying in the country for more than 90 days is issued an Alien Registration Card (ARC), which they must keep with them at all times.

International students are able to take part-time jobs working up to 20-25 hours per week (dependent on their course of study), provided they obtain prior approval from their university and make a formal application at the Immigration Office.

Due to the strictness of immigration law, it is advisable to check the proper procedures with the international student advisory department of the university in all visa-related matters, including part-time employment.

A range of programs offering career advice and support are available to international students after graduation.

Advice from the Field: South Korea is a very comfortable and convenient place to live, boasting very low crime rates; world-leading information and communications technology and internet speed; highly efficient and

affordable public transportation; and a host of public conveniences and facilities, not to mention internationally renowned pop culture.

One of the greatest advantages international students in South Korea enjoy is the financial manageability compared with studying in other developed countries. In recent years the government has invested heavily in developing policies to maximize both the safety and meaningfulness of the international student experience. Studying in South Korea offers students the chance to broaden their horizons, discovering simultaneously the mysteries of the East and the world of academia, living in a creative and dynamic culture blending 5,000 years of history with cutting-edge modern technology.

A guide to South Korean universities and international admission can be found on the [Study in Korea website](#). Refer to the [Guidebook for International Students](#) for detailed information about each university's admission policies and procedures.

Korean universities have developed alumni networks locally and abroad. NIIED also runs KGSP Alumni associations in various countries.