



UNIVERSITIES OF
OXFORD & CAMBRIDGE
ALUMNI NETWORK

POLAND

Oxbridge Society of Poland
Educational Consulting in Poland
Report
June 2019

Introduction

Increasing numbers of Polish students are applying to study abroad, particularly at undergraduate level and particularly in the UK. There are several companies and individuals providing different types of consultancy and mentoring services to support these hopeful students through their preparations and the application process and they operate on very different models. Where fees are charged, there is very limited public information on pricing.

The Oxford & Cambridge Alumni Society of Poland decided to prepare a short overview of the market which, for the sake of this report, we have referred to as the “Educational Consultancy” market, irrespective of which model is used by particular organisations.

The report aims to **help students and parents understand who is operating on the market, how the market works** in Poland, the **different types of support and services that are available** and how much parents should typically be budgeting for the costs. The report is being published on our website and circulated to interested parties.

Scope & Disclaimer

We prepared a list of basic questions covering the activities of the organisations and asked them to complete it during a telephone interview, or by completing the questionnaire by email. To compile the list of organisations to approach we conducted an internet search and spoke to agencies and consultancies we knew of. The list is almost certainly not exhaustive – the market is growing very fast and many agencies work on referrals, without having their own internet sites. **We only spoke to agencies about their support for students applying to university in the UK.** Some participating organisations also assist with applications to US and other European countries and there are other organisations that provide support for other countries. Students should research carefully which organisations support which countries/universities.

All the information contained in the report is based on what the organisations themselves told us about their operations as well as our own research and discussions with students, parents and other stakeholders. We did not verify the information and take no responsibility or liability for any erroneous information included in the report and do not guarantee the veracity of the information presented in this report.

Studying abroad

Since Poland joined the EU in 2004, significant numbers of Polish students apply each year to study abroad, taking advantage of the right of access to higher education institutions across EU member states. Polish students have enthusiastically applied to study abroad, and courses in the UK have been particularly popular. Each year around 150 Polish students secure a place at Oxford or Cambridge and the proliferation of PolSocs at UK universities, which get together for an annual congress, is testament to the large number of Polish students studying across the UK.

Support for the application process

The application process for UK universities has many more stages than the Polish system with specific documentation, language exams as well as entrance exams for some universities and subjects.

Accompanying the increased opportunities for Polish students to study abroad, was the need for advice and support in how to go about applying for, and successfully securing, places. In response to this demand several companies and organisations were set up to assist students not only with administrative advice (where to find information about universities, how the application process works, what financial support is available and how to secure it), but also with guidance and advice on how to prepare for interview and how to present one's achievements properly to improve the chances of securing a place. These companies also often offer extra tuition to prepare for matura/IB as well as any additional entrance exams for specific universities or subject.

Based on our discussions with those engaged in the market (both students and suppliers) **the market can loosely be divided into three models.**

The Agency Model

Under this model **the agency represents specific universities** (sometimes only a few, sometimes many). These agencies have signed contracts with the universities they represent. **The university pays a fee to the agent at the moment when a student takes up a place at a given university.** The student (or their parents) pay nothing for the support. Students should be aware that **some of the UK universities will not engage agents** and therefore no agent will be offering support with application to that university. This is more typical for the UK top-ranking universities within the Russell Group¹, although some will have agents, so students should check carefully which universities are on offer.

The Educational Consultancy Model

The second model is that of the **Educational Consultancy**. The consultancy does not have any signed contract with particular universities but **charges the student/parents a fee for the support provided.** Educational consultancies can therefore in theory support applications to any university, although **there is a tendency for educational consultancies to support applications to the leading, Russell-Group universities** with very high entry requirements. In addition to support with application procedures and administration, many educational consultancies also provide support with university choice, advice on appropriate content of personal statements, preparing for interview and in some cases coaching on specific "matura"/IB subjects to get candidates to the appropriate level. **Fees are not openly publicised on websites and charges are often agreed on an individual basis, dependent upon the scope of support provided.**

Voluntary, Non-Profit organisations

The third model is the not-for-profit voluntary organisation, where **support is offered to candidates for free.** This typically covers mentoring by current/former students who have gone through the process at the same universities to which the students are applying and can share their experiences and advice both about the university courses, entry requirements and application process. Some organisations also offer participation in voluntary activities which can enhance the candidate's CV.

¹ The Russell Group is a self-selected association of twenty-four public research universities in the United Kingdom. The group is headquartered in London and was established in 1994 to represent its members' interests, principally to government and parliament. As at 01.01.2019, the list of members includes: University of Birmingham, University of Bristol, University of Cambridge, Cardiff University, Durham University, University of Edinburgh, University of Exeter, University of Glasgow, Imperial College London, King's College London, University of Leeds, University of Liverpool, London School of Economics & Political Science, University of Manchester, Newcastle University, University of Nottingham, University of Oxford, Queen Mary, University of London, Queen's University Belfast, University of Sheffield, University of Southampton, University College London, University of Warwick, University of York. Source: Wikipedia.

Regulation/Accreditation

It is worth noting that the **educational consultancy market is not regulated**, although some years ago the British Council introduced a **voluntary certification process** for agents, advisors, counsellors and consultants centred around promoting and supporting quality, professionalism and integrity. Since 2006, training has been a core component of the strategy and the British Council provides a Massive open online course for international education agents, counsellors and consultants with advice on becoming a professional education agent for the UK.

The British Council maintains a database of trained agents from around the world who have completed the British Council's training and are signed up to an ethical code of practice. The list can be found here:

https://agent-training.britishcouncil.org/GAL?_ga=2.86639768.1487153685.1560367818-1072198408.1560367818.

This database is searchable by country. Some agencies are accredited by UCAS, the British university recruitment system, others by ICEF. www.icef.com.

The British Council organises an annual Study UK university fair in Poland at which 30-40 UK universities present their offer to potential students. The 2019 edition will take place from 20-22 November. 20th November in Gdańsk, 21st November, Warsaw, 22nd November Kraków. Details about this year's fair will be available on the British Council website shortly. www.britishcouncil.pl

Survey results

We approached **22 organisations** between 6th May and 10th June 2019 of which 14 responded. They were presented with a list of questions which they answered either over the telephone or by email. A full list of the organisations approached, their websites and their participation status can be found in the **Appendix** to this report.

The results are split into four tables: the first two cover the model, university coverage and costs, the second two cover the services offered.

Conclusions

As the content of the following tables show, there are a range of offers on the market to cater for different aspirations and different budgets. **Pricing is not transparent and comparison between the services of the educational consultancy (paid) companies is difficult.** Students and their parents **should research thoroughly the offers on the market** to ensure they secure suitable support at an affordable price. They should also ensure they **obtain a written contract for any paid services, which clearly states the scope of support to be provided and the number of hours of support the student will receive.**

Comparative models, university coverage and cost /1

Company Name	Founded	Model	Universities	Certification	Costs	Oxbridge programme / cost	Average length of time with student	How many students p.a. / % typically placed p.a.
Art Institute (formerly Art. Portfolio)	2007	Educational Consultancy (parent paid)	UK - design schools (anything creative - arts & IT)	British Council	no information given	No / n.a.	6-12 months	10 / 80%
Baltic Council for International Education	1994	Agency (university paid)	All UK universities (incl Oxbridge)	ICEEF, Quality in English, English UK, IALC et al	consultations free of charge	Yes - all aspects covered / no info	3-6 months	>500 / no info
Conversa Anna Czuba	2005	Agency (University paid) and also Educational Consultancy where no agency agreement	UK - 8 universities	British Council	Free where agency agreement, max 400zł where paid	No / n.a.	depends on requirements	20-100 / 95%
Edukatio Centrum Edukacyjne	2013	All options are available depending on different types of consultancy	UK, USA & Canada	Education UK certificate for counsellors – issued by The British Council in 2015 + 3 US certifications	Dependent upon services selected	Yes / dependent upon candidate's needs	couple of months to several years	no info / 100%
Elab - Education Laboratory	2012	Agency (University paid) & Educational Consultancy	c. 100 UK university partnerships	British Council & UCAS	Depends on type of support. From GBP 0 - GBP 1000.	Yes: mentoring, interview practice, Personal Statement, critical thinking course / up to GBP 8000	a few months. For comprehensive programmes up to 2-3 years	c. 700 enquiries / 100% of supported applications take up a place
Episteme	2003	Agency (University paid)	UK	Yes	Free	No / n.a.	months-years	no information / 100% placement
Global Education	2006	Agency (University paid)	UK & Holland	UCAS	Free	No / n.a.	2-3 days	c.100 / 99.9%
Nauka w Anglii	2015	Agency (University paid)	c. 10 mid-ranking, non Russell Group incl Anglia Ruskin, Bradford, Coventry, UCBirmingham	UCAS	Free	No / n.a.	6-12 months	150 supported / 50% choose to take up places

Comparative models, university coverage and cost /2

Company Name	Founded	Model	Universities	Certification	Costs	Oxbridge programme / cost	Average length of time with student	How many students p.a. / % typically placed p.a.
Oxfordon	2006	Agency (University paid)	UK	British Council	Free	No / n.a.	up to 3 years	c.200 / 100%
Perfect	1992	Agency (University paid)	UK (different ones each year)	ICEF recognised www.icef.com	Free	offer residential preparation programmes in Oxford and Cambridge. / 1 year program (including accommodation) starts from about 20,000 GBP	a few months or longer	about 300 / 90% success rate
Project Access	2015	Non-profit	UK and USA, mainly Russell Group	Project Access International (parent body) certified	Free	Yes: as for all services / free	4-5 months	2017/18: 500 applicants to the project, 193 mentors, 56 offered places at top 5 UK universities
Smart Prospects	2013	Agency (University paid)	All	British Council accredited	Free	No/n.a.	1-3 months	c. 1000 p.a. / 75% placement
Swan School*	2009	Educational Consultancy (Parent paid)	UK	British Council and UCAS	Depends upon scope	not separate, part of main services	1-3 years	c. 30 / 100%
Young Talent Management	2011	Non-profit + Educational Consultancy (parent paid)	UK (incl Scottish)	No (but connected to British Alumni Society**)	All voluntary activities conducted with BAS are free** / guardianship & other services prices agreed individually	Oxford Masterclass (www.oxfordmasterclass.pl), plus individual coaching / Pricing agreed individually	6 months - 3 years	non-profit c. 200 Guardianships / tailored support max 10 students p.a. / 100% placement

* **The Swan School** operates as a school but we have only looked at their educational consultancy business

The **British Alumni Society in Poland brings together graduates of scholarship schemes offered by the British Council and British Embassy in Warsaw. BAS organizes seminars, debates, discussion clubs and mentoring programmes and a flagship secondary school scholarship scheme. BAS has also developed several educational programmes for Middle and Secondary School students in Poland. Those come under Young Talent Management, an autonomous division of BAS, specifically dedicated to this age group. Participation in Young Talent Management group activities is free.

Services Provided /1

Company Name	Services							
	Choosing univs	Support with completion of application and PS drafting	Interview Coaching	Visits to Universities	Mentoring	Tutoring in IB/Matura subjects	Events & Activities to support application	Other services
Art Institute (formerly Art. Portfolio)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Baltic Council for International Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Conversa Anna Czuba	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes if sufficiently large group	Yes (Ambassador programme)	No	No	No
Edukatio Centrum Edukacyjne	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	send teenagers abroad for: language courses, professional skills courses, academic subjects, international exchange, etc.
Elab - Education Laboratory	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Medicine specialists - 150hrs preparation	Yes: annual Elab Educational Fair, cooperation with SGGW Medical dept.
Episteme	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (students)	No	Yes	Yes
Global Education	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, but give info on open days	Yes for Oxbridge	No	No	Skype chats with universities, webinars and workshops, info about competitions
Nauka w Anglii	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (only for administration of application)	No	No	No

Services Provided /2

Company Name	Services							
	Choosing univs	Support with completion of application and PS drafting	Interview Coaching	Visits to Univs	Mentoring	Tutoring in IB/Matura subjects	Events & Activities to support application	Other services
Oxfordon	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, but give info on open days	Yes (Ambassador programme)	No	Suggestions for volunteering	No
Perfect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	-
Project Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Sometimes	Yes - mentors from Oxford & Cambridge	No	Encourage but don't organise	Scholarships for students with places, interview bootcamp.
Smart Prospects	Yes	Yes	No	No	Not formally, but have former students as Ambassadors to help	No	No	Keep in touch with students during and after studies
Swan School*	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	contact with students, medical workshops	Make school resources available to external clients
Young Talent Management	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No, but support for Oxbridge exam preparation	Yes on behalf of the British Alumni Society (Master class Gavel Club, Debates crew, Media crew, Junior Ladies' & Gentlemen discussion club, Great Poles project)	Educational guardianship for children aged 14-18

Appendix

List of organisations approached and their response

- Artportfolio – www.artinstitute.eu (formerly www.artportfolio.eu) – participated
- Baltic Council for International Education – www.balticcouncil.org/en/sakums/ – participated
- Conversa Anna Czuba – in Google but no www – participated
- Edukatio Centrum Edukacyjne – www.edukatio-edu.pl – participated
- Elab – Education Laboratory – www.elab.edu.pl – participated
- EPISTEME – www.studiabrytyjskie.com – participated
- Global Education – www.studiawanglii.pl – participated
- Nauka w Anglii – www.naukawanglii.pl – participated
- Oxfordon – www.studiawanglii.pl – participated
- Perfect – www.studiazagranica.info – participated
- Project Access – www.projectaccess.org – participated
- Smart Prospects – www.sp.edu.pl – participated
- The Swan School – www.theswanschool.edu.pl – participated
- Young Talent Management – www.youngtalentmanagement.pl – participated
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- EduAbroad – www.studazagranica.pl – no response to email questionnaire
- Brytanka Doradztwo Edukacyjne – www.brytanka.com – no answer
- Studybritannia – www.studybritannia.com – no response to email questionnaire
- British Uni.com (part of Study First Group) – www.britishuni.com – didn't respond
- Oxford Elite Education – www.oxfordeliteeducation.com – didn't answer telephone
- Albion House Katowice – no www – didn't respond to email questionnaire
- BP Professional Education Agent – no www – no response to phone number
- Academaiea/Andrzej Dethloff coaching services (not the Akademaiea High School) – no www – declined to participate