K12 ACADEMICS — INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERIES

Studying in Mexico

A guide for international students & families — how Mexican higher education works, the Temporary Resident Student Visa, near-free public tuition, Spanish & English programs, and work.

K12 ACADEMICS

Find Your Community

2026 EDITION

ABOUT K12 ACADEMICS

The world's largest education resource.

Online since 2004, K12 Academics has helped millions of families, students and educators **find the right school, college, camp, business and program in their community** — for every kind of learner.

NEAR-FREE PUBLIC TUITION, LATIN AMERICA'S TOP UNIVERSITY

Mexico offers **near-free public tuition** at world-class universities (UNAM, Latin America's #1), **growing English-taught programs** at private universities like Tec de Monterrey, and superb value amid a nearshoring job boom — with 30,000+ international students. Non-EU students get a **Temporary Resident Student Visa**, exchanged for an INM residence card after arrival. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

General guidance, not legal or immigration advice. Mexican rules, tuition, and the funds requirement change and vary by consulate. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with the Mexican consulate, the National Migration Institute (INM), and your university**.

1

STEP 01 OF 10

Understand Why Students Choose Mexico

WHAT TO KNOW

Mexico offers **near-free public tuition, Latin America's top university (UNAM), superb value, Spanish immersion, growing English-taught programs, and a nearshoring job boom** — an outstanding-value destination for the Americas and beyond.

BY THE NUMBERS

Near-free	UNAM	Nearshoring
public tuition	#1 in Latin America	job boom

HOW TO HELP

Weigh Mexico's **near-free public tuition and value** against fierce competition for public places and the Spanish requirement — for affordable, high-quality study, it's hard to beat.

GOOD TO KNOW

At public universities, **international tuition starts around $1,000/year** — freeing your budget to live and travel; the peso stretches far.

2

STEP 02 OF 10

Understand the System

WHAT TO KNOW

Two very different routes: **public universities** (UNAM, IPN, Universidad de Guadalajara, BUAP — near-free, competitive, mostly Spanish-taught) and **private universities** (Tec de Monterrey, ITAM, Universidad Iberoamericana — pricier, easier entry, growing English-taught coursework). You apply **directly to each**.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public	Private	Apply directly
UNAM, IPN (near-free)	Tec de Monterrey, ITAM	to each

HOW TO HELP

Choose between **near-free public universities** (competitive, Spanish-taught) and **private universities** (pricier, easier entry, more English) — a choice of cost, language, and experience.

GOOD TO KNOW

A public UNAM degree and a private Tec degree differ greatly in **cost, language, and experience** — choose deliberately.

3

STEP 03 OF 10

Get the Temporary Resident Student Visa

WHAT TO KNOW

For programs over 180 days you need a **Temporary Resident Student Visa (Visa de Residente Temporal Estudiante)**, applied for at a Mexican consulate (processing ~1–4 weeks). After arriving, you must complete the **INM residence card (canje) within 30 days**, renewed annually. Apply as soon as you accept your offer.

BY THE NUMBERS

Temporary Resident	At the consulate	INM card
Student Visa (>180 days)	~1–4 weeks	within 30 days

HOW TO HELP

Apply for the **Temporary Resident Student Visa** at a Mexican consulate once you accept your offer, then complete the **INM residence card within 30 days** of arrival.

GOOD TO KNOW

Apply **early** — allow a buffer for consular processing (1–4 weeks), especially for an August start.

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STEP 04 OF 10

Apply to Universities

WHAT TO KNOW

Apply **directly to each university** (no central portal), for the **August or January intake**. Public universities run competitive **entrance exams** (UNAM admits a small fraction); private universities have their own tests and interviews. Prove **Spanish (DELE, usually B2+)** or English (TOEFL/IELTS) per the program; documents need certified translation.

BY THE NUMBERS

Apply directly	Public	Spanish/English
Aug & Jan intakes	competitive entrance exam	DELE or TOEFL/IELTS

HOW TO HELP

Apply **directly** to each university for the Aug/Jan intake, sit the entrance exam (public) or its test (private), and prove Spanish (DELE) or English as required.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **UNAM admission exam is highly competitive** — with DELE B2 and a year of runway it's worth attempting, since failing costs time rather than money.

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STEP 05 OF 10

Plan for Tuition & Scholarships

WHAT TO KNOW

Public universities charge international students roughly **$1,000–5,000/year** (among the lowest in Latin America); private universities (Tec de Monterrey, Ibero) run **$10,000–20,000/year**. Scholarships come from **AMEXCID** (the Mexican government agency) and the universities themselves.

BY THE NUMBERS

Public	Private	Scholarships
~$1,000–5,000/yr	$10,000–20,000/yr	AMEXCID + university

HOW TO HELP

Budget the tuition (public near-free; private US-private-level) plus low living costs, and pursue **AMEXCID** and university scholarships.

GOOD TO KNOW

Public tuition is **near-free but entry is fiercely competitive**; private tuition is higher but entry is easier — weigh cost against competition.

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STEP 06 OF 10

Meet the Financial Requirement

WHAT TO KNOW

For the visa you show **proof of funds** for living without working — consulates commonly want evidence of a monthly balance (based on a minimum-wage formula; figures vary, so confirm) — plus **health insurance** ($200–500/year; you can join the public IMSS system). Documents need certified Spanish translation.

BY THE NUMBERS

Funds	Insurance	Translated
monthly balance (confirm figure)	IMSS or private	certified Spanish

HOW TO HELP

Prepare **proof of funds** (a monthly balance per the consulate's formula) and **health insurance** (IMSS or private) — and confirm the exact figure with your consulate.

GOOD TO KNOW

The exact funds figure **varies by consulate** — always confirm the current requirement before applying.

7

STEP 07 OF 10

Meet Language Requirements

WHAT TO KNOW

Most public-university programs are taught in **Spanish** (a **DELE certificate, usually B2+**, is often required); **English-taught programs are growing** at Tec de Monterrey and in graduate study (TOEFL/IELTS). Spanish fluency widens your options and enriches daily life.

BY THE NUMBERS

Spanish	English	Spanish
DELE B2+ (most)	Tec & graduate	widens options

HOW TO HELP

Prove **Spanish (DELE B2+)** for most public programs, or **English (TOEFL/IELTS)** for growing English-taught options — and build Spanish for daily life and career reach.

GOOD TO KNOW

English-taught programs are **concentrated at Tec de Monterrey and in graduate study** — most public undergrad is in Spanish.

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STEP 08 OF 10

Prepare for the Move

WHAT TO KNOW

After arriving, complete your **INM residence card (within 30 days), set up banking, and arrange housing**. Living costs run **$500–900/month** (Mexico City higher; smaller cities cheaper); a student card unlocks discounts. Note Mexico City's altitude, and check regional guidance for safety.

BY THE NUMBERS

INM card	Housing + banking	$500–900/month
within 30 days	set up	living costs

HOW TO HELP

Handle arrival admin — **INM card (30 days), banking, housing** — and budget $500—900/month; check regional guidance and note the altitude in Mexico City.

GOOD TO KNOW

Keep your **insurance documents for the annual INM card renewal**, and check current regional guidance on safety.

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STEP 09 OF 10

Understand Work Rules

WHAT TO KNOW

Student work is **tightly restricted**: INM can authorise work for a student resident, but only under strict conditions (higher-education/postgraduate/research level, a written job offer with the employer's INM registration, and a university consent letter) — casual jobs are ruled out. **Internships** are the real career engine.

BY THE NUMBERS

Work	Conditions	Internships
INM-authorised only (strict)	job offer + uni consent	the real route

HOW TO HELP

Understand that **work needs INM authorisation under strict conditions** — plan to fund your studies, and use **internships** (the real career route) linked to your program.

WATCH OUT

Casual jobs are **ruled out**; any work needs INM authorisation with a formal offer and university consent — internships are the practical path.

10 STEP 10 OF 10

Thrive & Work After Study

WHAT TO KNOW

Mexico's **nearshoring boom** is reshaping the job market — strong demand for engineers, manufacturing, and Guadalajara's tech sector — and internships often lead to roles. Confirm the current post-study work pathway, and use your Spanish for Latin American and US-adjacent careers.

BY THE NUMBERS

Nearshoring boom	Internships	Spanish
engineers, manufacturing, tech	lead to roles	regional careers

HOW TO HELP

Leverage Mexico's **nearshoring boom** (engineering, manufacturing, Guadalajara tech) via internships, build Spanish for regional careers, and confirm the current post-study work pathway.

GOOD TO KNOW

The **nearshoring boom** is a real tailwind for engineering, manufacturing, and tech graduates — internships are the way in.

QUICK REFERENCE

Studying in Mexico: The Essentials

A snapshot — figures and the funds requirement vary by consulate, so confirm with the Mexican consulate, INM, and your university.

The system

Public universities (UNAM — #1 in Latin America — IPN, Universidad de Guadalajara, BUAP; near-free, competitive, mostly Spanish) and private universities (Tec de Monterrey, ITAM, Universidad Iberoamericana; pricier, easier entry, growing English); apply directly, two intakes (August, January).

Visa & card

Programs over 180 days need a Temporary Resident Student Visa (at a Mexican consulate, ~1–4 weeks); complete the INM residence card (canje) within 30 days of arrival, renewed annually.

Tuition & scholarships

Public ~$1,000–5,000/year (among Latin America's lowest); private $10,000–20,000/year; AMEXCID and university scholarships; living costs $500–900/month.

Money & language

Show proof of funds (a monthly balance per the consulate's formula — confirm) plus health insurance (IMSS or private); Spanish (DELE B2+) for most programs, English (TOEFL/IELTS) for growing English-taught options.

Work & after

Student work needs INM authorisation under strict conditions (internships are the real route); the nearshoring boom drives demand for engineers and tech — confirm the post-study work pathway.

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