Fraudsters Target International Students!

Fraud prevention

The international student community are significantly targeted by fraudsters. This leaflet outlines the main types of fraud affecting international students. It includes methods to protect yourself and advice on what to do if you are a victim of fraud.

Accommodation fraud

Accommodation fraud happens when criminals trick you into paying for a property that doesn't exist or doesn't belong to them. Fraudsters advertise on various websites and social media, often using attractive prices, desirable locations, and professional-looking photos, reviews, and contact details. Due to high demand, they create pressure and may ask for upfront fees before any viewing to "secure" the property.

- **Always view accommodation in person.**
- **Check website contact details and geographical addresses.**
- **Check Companies House: www.gov.uk/get-information-about-a-company**
- **Look out for clone or copycat sites.**
- **Reverse-image search accommodation photos.**

Purchasing online essay writing / exam papers

Students may be tempted to buy essays or exam papers due to study pressure, but criminals exploit this. You may pay and receive nothing, or they may threaten to report you to your university unless you send more money.

- **Do not use essay writing services or try to purchase exam papers.**
- **Not only is this unethical, but these services are often advertised by fraudsters.**

Investment fraud

Fraudsters offer "quick profit" investment opportunities in exchange for money or cryptocurrency. These are often advertised on social media, via messages, or phone calls, and are usually presented as time sensitive.

- **Seek independent financial advice before investing.**
- **There are no get-rich-quick schemes.**
- **Check the FCA Investment checker: www.fca.org.uk/scamsmart**

Romance fraud

Romance fraud occurs when a criminal contacts you online through social media, chat rooms, or dating apps and builds a false relationship.

They manipulate you into believing you're friends or romantically involved, then ask for money, usually supported by a sympathetic but fictional story — such as a medical emergency, delayed wages, or travel costs.

Sexually motivated extortion

Criminals use dating apps, social media, text, or email to manipulate victims into sharing sexual images or videos, then demand payment or threaten to expose them to friends, family, or the public.

- **Cut contact immediately and block the user.**
- **Do not pay any money and do not send any further images or videos.**
- **Save any messages to help trace the criminals.**
- **Report it to the police.**

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Financial exploitation

Criminals may ask you to receive money into your bank account and then transfer it to another account, allowing you to keep a percentage of the funds. The money they are asking you to transfer will often come from other crimes. Although it's presented as "risk-free" income, this is money laundering—a serious crime that can lead to arrest, frozen accounts, or even removal from the UK.

- **Never transfer money on behalf of someone else.**
- **Question unsolicited job offers.**
- **Keep your bank account details secure and private.**

Cyber kidnaps

Fraudsters use online accounts such as WeChat and other messaging or social media platforms to contact your friends and family, claiming to be holding you hostage and demanding a ransom. In other cases, they pose as officials and tell you you're in trouble with the authorities and ask for payment. They may also compromise your accounts to steal your identity or hold your photos, files and information for ransom.

- **Contact the Police in the UK if threats like this are made.**
- **Avoid sharing personal information publicly online - review your privacy settings to ensure you're only sharing to people you know.**
- **Ask questions only known to the real person to verify legitimacy.**
- **Secure your online accounts using strong passwords and two step verification.**

What to do if you are a victim of fraud

Report Fraud

If you are a victim of fraud or cybercrime, report this to Report Fraud

- **Phone: 0300 123 2040**
- **Online: www.reportfraud.police.uk**

Or follow the link below to report in your preferred language
www.reportfraud.police.uk/reporting-in-local-language

Police

If the crime is in progress or the suspect is identified call police

- **Emergency: 999**
- **Non-emergency: 101**
- **Or online at www.met.police.uk**

Getting your money back

If you think your bank account information has been compromised or you've lost money, contact your bank immediately. To obtain assistance with recovering money from an overseas bank account, contact your Embassy for advice.

Further support

Victim support

This is an independent charity dedicated to supporting victims of crime in England and Wales.

- **Phone: 0808 168 9111**
- **Online: www.victimsupport.org.uk**

University support

Your university can offer advice, support and referrals. The Chinese International Students Wellbeing Centre provide support to members of the Chinese community by providing services and signposting.
Online: www.ciscic.org.uk

The Indian National Students Association (INSA) supports Indian students in the UK.
Online: www.insauk.org

The UK Council for International Student Affairs supports all international students in the UK.
Online: www.ukcisa.org.uk/student-advice/life-in-the-uk

More information about preventing fraud and cybercrime can be found on the Metropolitan Police website; **www.met.police.uk/littlemedia**