



flywire

**How European higher
ed can improve
payment processes
to attract international
students**

*5 research-based recommendations for
Mainland Europe for meeting payment needs
and preferences of international students*

Introduction

Higher ed is fast becoming a top export for European institutions. As international students optimistically eye mainland Europe over the Big Four (US, Canada, UK, and Australia), the opportunity to attract new students and grow international enrolments to increase revenue is massive.

That is, if those international students can reliably and consistently make their deposit and tuition payments to their institutions of choice.

International students studying in mainland Europe think their institutions are falling short when it comes to providing simple, secure and cost effective ways to make their deposit and tuition payments.

That was clear from the 2nd annual International Payer Research study commissioned by Flywire, a qualitative and quantitative look at the payment desires and behaviours of 576 students from India, China, the Middle East, Latin America and Africa and Europe, studying at seven different business schools across Spain, France, Germany and Italy.

The problem? European institutions still lag behind peers in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Australia in using technology to automate much of the student experience, including the act of paying for it. Families and students looking to enrol in some of the most innovative institutions in the world are often surprised by the analog payment options they meet when conducting financial transactions.

International students want:

- 1 Reliable and secure access to use their payment method of choice, with clear information around currency conversions and total fees.
- 2 Definitive guidance on how the university prefers that they make their payments.
- 3 Digital confirmation that the payment went through.
- 4 Timely and convenient support when they have questions.

“ It was very complicated for me because no one teaches you this stuff, and it’s scary to be moving money between countries.

Here’s the good news: European institutions are actually in a prime spot to innovate. Skipping over the last 10+ years of enterprise software implementations means there is no technical debt that the Big Four have amassed. Instead, institutions can fast-forward past upgrades and migrations to implement the most innovative technology.

What are some of the payment issues and desires international students are looking for your institution to better understand and solve? How can schools improve the tuition payment experience for international students? **Here are 5 recommendations based on the research and findings.** Many students and families expressed that they

1

Give clear guidance on payment processes, and ideally, recommend a payment platform

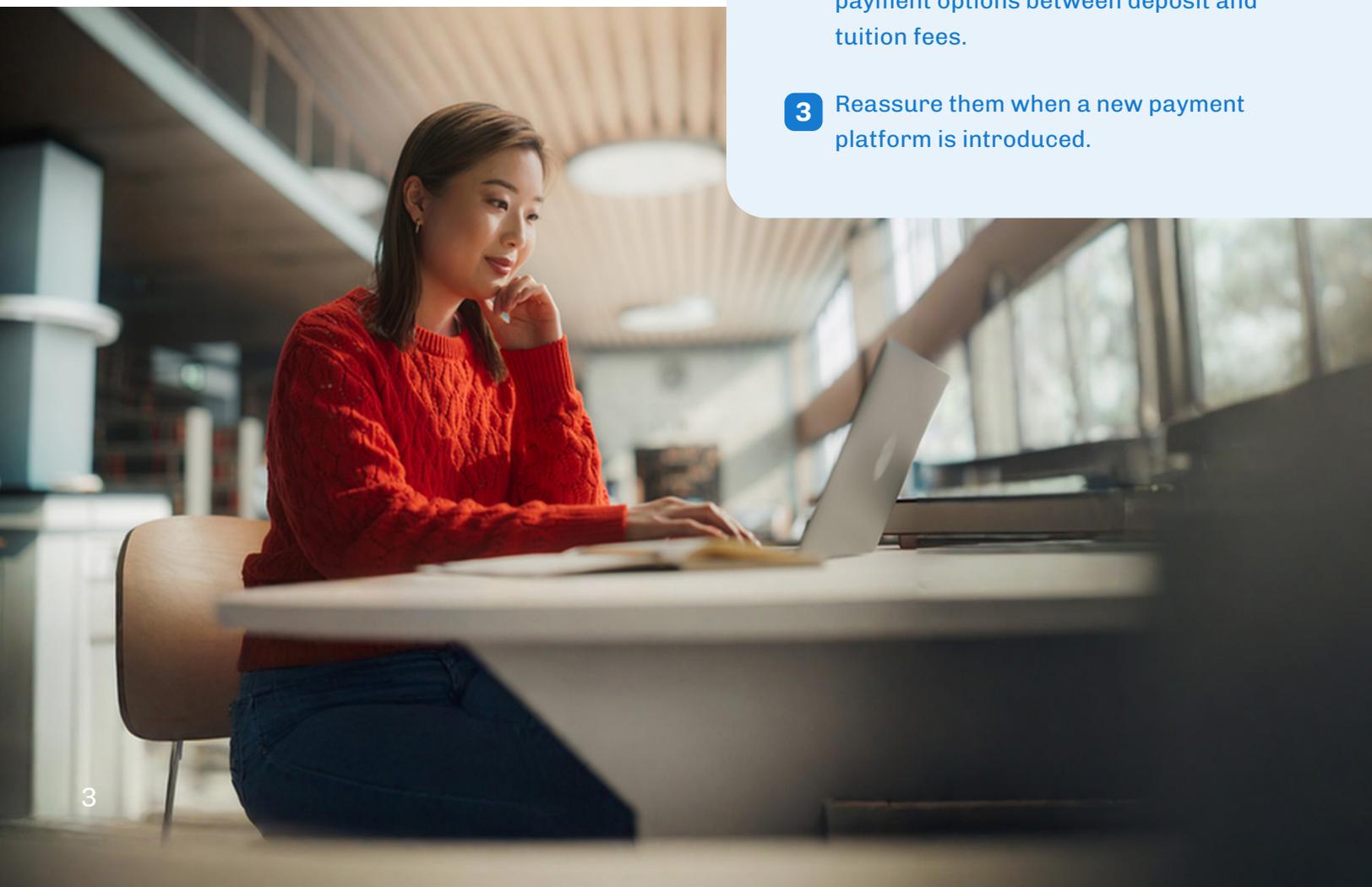
Step-by-step instructions help manage expectations around how and when to make payments, and when to expect confirmation details.

are new to international transactions, and want the school to recommend the platform they should use to pay. The school's recommendation gives the payment option legitimacy, and eases anxiety over making the transaction.

Schools differ in the amount of payment guidance they offer students, leaving almost 30% looking for help. That is especially true for students from the Middle East, where 44% said they needed help completing the transaction.

Students want schools to:

- 1 Remind them when instalments are due.
- 2 Notify them when changes occur to payment options between deposit and tuition fees.
- 3 Reassure them when a new payment platform is introduced.



2

Provide a wide range of payment methods, especially a secure option for credit card

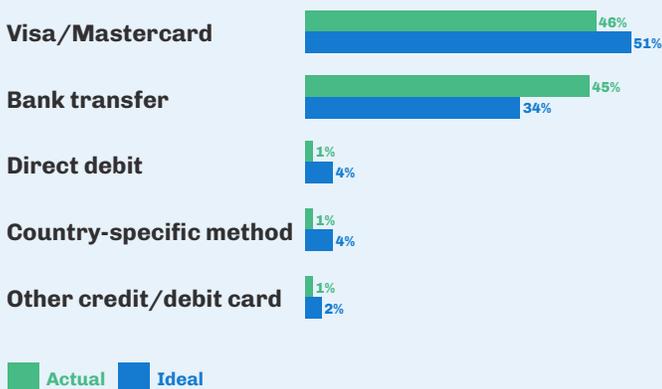
Given the choice, payers would prefer to use Visa/Mastercard for tuition fee payments rather than bank transfers.

The top two drivers of a positive payment experience are having an easy process (43%) from initial payment link through payment confirmation to having a strong sense that the payment is secure (40%).

Ease and speed are major pluses of paying by credit card – and contribute to students favoring them as a payment method.

While most students are paying tuition by bank transfer, there is a notable preference to pay by credit card.

PAYMENT METHODS



“ Paying by credit card in my local currency is the perfect streamline for me. **”**

48% pay by credit card but 51% prefer it

45% pay by bank transfer but only 34% prefer it

There are exceptions to that – with students in both India and Africa preferring to pay by bank transfer, and pointing to the importance of being able to accommodate diverse payment preferences.

| Country / Region | Bank Transfer | Credit Card | Preferred |
|------------------|---------------|-------------|---------------|
| Middle East | 29% | 64% | Credit card |
| LatAm | 31% | 53% | Credit card |
| China | 31% | 65% | Credit card |
| India | 69% | 22% | Bank transfer |
| Africa | 65% | 29% | Bank transfer |

3

Make sure students get a payment confirmation automatically

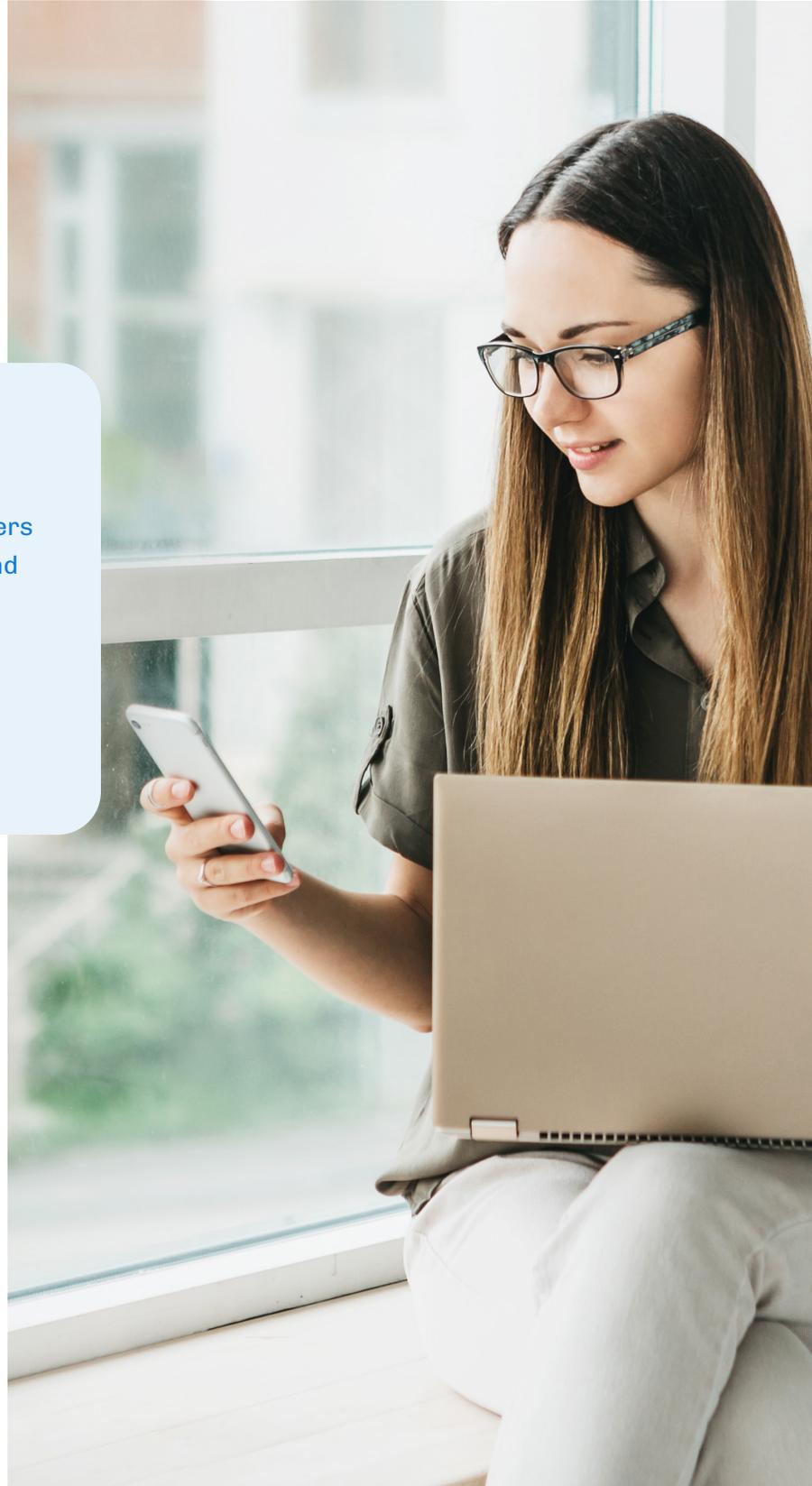
Only 55% of students said they received a payment confirmation.

A full **45% of the students** surveyed said they **did not receive a payment confirmation** or did not know if they did. It is a significant source of anxiety for students.

Students reported that they were:

- 1** Anxious about making manual bank transfers due to fear of inputting incorrect details and lack of instant confirmation.
- 2** Confidence drops in the absence of timely emails or official confirmation when transferring large amounts.

“ It’s cumbersome because you have to go and check the student portal every time. I would prefer an email or direct communication.



4

Provide globally accessible support channels to ease administrative burden on staff and prevent misinformation

Students are most likely to reach out online when they have difficulty with tuition fee payments – either through email or the school website. A substantial number consult friends or student peers for help.

Students and families often need payment support. Their top two avenues for getting support are emailing the school (45%) or visiting the website (32%). But a substantial number – 28% – say they consult family and friends, other websites (7%) or social media (4%).

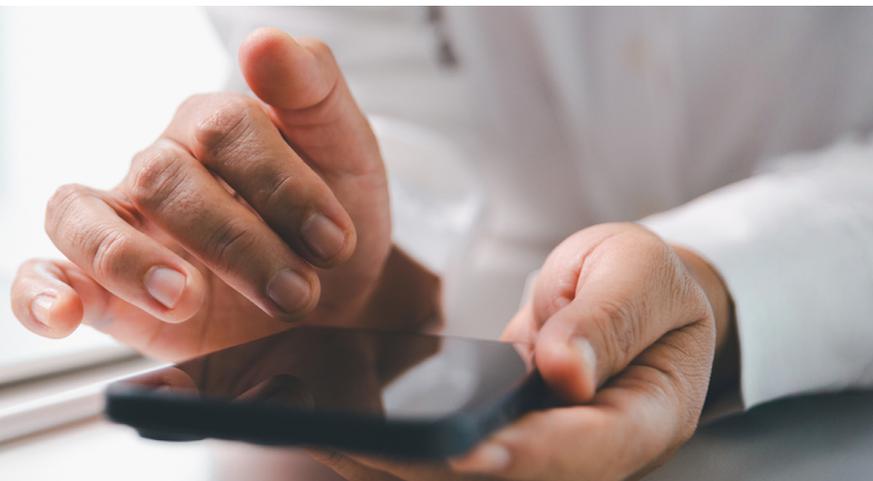
Unclear support structures open the institution to inefficiency and risk. Staff spend time answering questions that may be self-serviceable with the right partner, or worse, families and students get bad information that may lead them to make risky choices with tuition payments.

“ It is challenging to find a person to speak to. You have to submit a ticket online. It’s been difficult to get an adequate response in a timely manner.

TOP SUPPORT METHODS

- 45%** email the school
- 32%** visit the website
- 28%** consult with family & friends
- 07%** use other websites
- 04%** use social media

The good news is that **families and students prefer to go to the school** for their source of information – a full 92% pick the student portal or student website as the ideal sources to access for guidance.



5

Take note of key differences by region and cohort

Across all cohorts, payment timing is concentrated in August (54%) and September (18%), with the remainder paying in July or before. In addition to payment method preferences, the research highlights key differences in payment timing and behavior across nationalities and cohorts that, if addressed, can help enhance the payment experience.

In the first year, most students pay before leaving their home country (65%), but are more likely to pay just before the payment deadline in subsequent years (33% vs. 15%).

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

- ✓ Prefer access to pay in instalments
- ✓ Parents more likely to pay

GRADUATE STUDENTS

- ✓ More likely to pay upfront
- ✓ More likely to pay themselves

DIFFERENCES BY COUNTRY

Students from Latin America and Asia (outside of China and India) are more likely to make the tuition fee payment themselves.

70% of students from Latin America

63% of students from Asia

Students from China and India are more likely to pay upfront compared to 23% of all students paying upfront.

54% of students from China

39% of students from India



Why Flywire

Students, and parents, that used Flywire to pay their tuition were more likely to say their experience was 'excellent' than if they paid their school directly.

Flywire helps Europe's leading business schools, universities and K-12s:

| | |
|---|--|
|  <p>Provide payment flexibility to all</p> | Accept payment in 140+ currencies across 240+ countries and jurisdictions, including bank transfer, card, digital wallet or alternative payment methods, all powered by Flywire's proprietary global payment network . |
|  <p>Provide world-class payment security</p> | Flywire's best-in-class security credentials and processes ensure student payments are secure, and add a layer of protection against fraud for institutions. |
|  <p>Ease and automate internal accounts receivable processes</p> | Collect and reconcile payments for different parts of the student journey on a single platform. Short payments are eliminated because the total cost is clear to the student up front, and chargeback and refund processes are simplified. Robust integration into leading software services and ERP companies improves operational efficiencies, optimizing payments and the overall student experience and removing payment as a roadblock to enrolment and retention. |
|  <p>Offer students and families unparalleled global support</p> | Flywire provides around-the-clock multilingual payer support via live chat, email and phone in more than 30 languages for payment-related inquiries. |



I know Flywire is official and a formal collaboration between the school and the company.

It's a **reliable choice**. In the future, I will use Flywire because it's **rapid** to do the transfer.



Security felt good because I don't want to leak my card details. It's very **intuitive** with Flywire. They give you 24 hours to secure the current rates. I think that's a good thing.

About the survey

This research is based on quantitative and qualitative research conducted in September and October 2025, and the results were analysed by Edified.

Quantitative research: Online survey with 576 international students across seven business schools in France, Italy, Germany and Spain. The survey was distributed by each school in September 2025.

Qualitative research: In October 2025, we held six online focus groups and two in-depth interviews with international students representing six business schools. Participants were recruited from the online survey to represent a broad range of student demographics including study level, nationality and payment method.

A photograph of two young women walking outdoors, smiling and looking at each other. They are both holding folders or books. The image is overlaid with a blue tint. The Flywire logo is centered over the bottom half of the image.

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