



Pre-arrival Information

for

International Students

2020



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Visa Information

If your course is longer than 6 months (English Language courses up to 11 month), you must obtain a Tier 4 student visa (also known as 'entry clearance') before you leave your home country.

It is not possible to come to the UK as a visitor and change your status to student from within the UK. If you come to the UK as a visitor and wish to study, you must return to your home country to obtain a **Tier 4 student visa** or **Student Visitor Visa**.

It is important to get entry clearance as a student; otherwise you cannot extend your stay.

It has become compulsory for students from **all** countries outside the EEA to apply for entry clearance **before** leaving their home country if they are coming to the UK.

HOW TO APPLY FOR ENTRY CLEARANCE IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY:

1. Contact your nearest British Embassy or High Commission or Consulate-General and ask them for details: find out whether you need to attend an interview for your visa, if you need a medical check and what documents you will need. Find out how long the whole process will take.
2. Ask the embassy to give you or send you form VAF9-PBS Migrant for a Tier 4 study visa or VAF1D-Student Visitor. Keep a photocopy of the completed form and all the documents you submit to the embassy.
3. Please contact your nearest visa application centre to find out what the local fees are and how you can pay for your visa.
4. You do not need to prove you have accommodation booked before getting your visa.
5. You must prove that you have been accepted onto a full-time course (the college acceptance letter) and that you have enough money for the tuition fees and all your living costs (approximately £12000 for each year of study).
6. You must satisfy the entry clearance officer that you have good information about the course and the college, your English language ability is sufficient and that you intend to leave the UK at the end of your studies (or possibly progress to university study).

If your application is successful, a sticker will be placed in your passport. Check it **immediately** for the following:

- contains your correct personal details;
- correctly states the purpose for which you want to come to the UK; and
- is valid for the date when you want to travel and study.
- Check whether it says you must register with the police when you arrive in the UK

For more information and guidance on visas, please contact any of the following organisations:
The British Council www.britishcouncil.org.uk
UKCOSA www.ukcosa.org.uk
UK Border Agency (British Immigration)
<https://www.gov.uk/visas-immigration>



Preparing for your Journey

There are several important things to do or to be aware of before you travel to the UK:

INSURANCE

You should arrange insurance for your personal belongings and valuable items. These may be covered by an insurance policy you already have at home, but if they are not, you can arrange insurance in the UK.

If you travel with a **Student Visitor Visa** you should arrange a Health Insurance policy to cover the cost of any treatment. If you travel with a **Tier 4 Student Visa** you will be entitled to NHS (National Health Service) treatment (see the section on 'Life in the UK'). We advise you to have insurance to cover the cost of transporting you home if this becomes necessary.

BANKS AND MONEY

We will give you information about opening a UK bank account at the International Induction in September. After you have opened an account, you can transfer funds from your home country by electronic transfer (you will need to arrange this with your bank at home).

It can take at least 10 days to open a bank account in the UK and access any money you have transferred. We advise you to bring £500 in cash for your first few weeks and if possible, bring a valid credit card as most cards are widely accepted in the UK. This will cover the cost of travelling, accommodation and food.

There is no limit to the amount of money you can bring into the UK, but you should check with your own government whether there are any regulations to follow or whether there is a limit to how much money you can take out of your country.

PACKING

You must check if there is anything you are not allowed to bring into the UK. Contact the British Embassy/High Commission to find out.

You should pack the following items in your hand luggage:

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- Passport
- Travel tickets
- Money, travellers' cheques and credit cards
- Original copy of the college acceptance letter
- Evidence of funds – bank statements or sponsor's letter
- Your UK accommodation address
- Insurance documents

You should keep photocopies of your important documents – passport, college letter, certificates.



Arriving in the UK

We strongly advise you to book a flight to Birmingham International airport. We can arrange airport pick-up for students who arrive at Birmingham airport (see below) but we cannot do this for any other airport.

When you arrive at the airport, your first step is to pass through **Immigration Control**:

- Follow the signs for 'Arrivals'
- At passport control, join the queue for non-EEA passport-holders
- The immigration officer will ask to see your passport (with entry clearance sticker), college acceptance letter and proof of funds
- The immigration officer may ask you some questions about where you will be staying and the length of your course

The next step is to collect your luggage and pass through **Customs Control**:

- Choose the blue channel if you have already cleared your luggage through customs in an EEA airport
- Choose the green channel if you arrived directly from outside the EEA and have nothing to declare
- Choose the red channel if you have goods to declare (if you are carrying more tax-free goods than you are allowed – you should find out what you are allowed to bring before you travel)

Travelling to Birmingham

COACH FARE from Heathrow airport to Birmingham coach station is approximately £34. The journey time is about 2 hours 40 minutes. We have enclosed a coach timetable. For more information, visit www.nationalexpress.com/airport

TAXI FARE from Birmingham coach station or from Birmingham airport is about £15 - £20, depending on the destination address.

MEET AND GREET SERVICE

A Meet and Greet service is available if requested when you arrive in Birmingham or Birmingham airport, to take you to your accommodation address.

We will also collect students on request from other arrival points for payment of a fee. Pick up from other airports will be charged at **£200**.

The Meet and Greet service is available 24 hours every day except on national holidays. There is no charge for the service from Birmingham airport.

We only offer the Meet and Greet service if you request it at least 7 days before your arrival date.

If you would like us to meet you at Birmingham airport, please contact us by email or fax at least 7 days before your arrival date. Please tell us your arrival date and time, flight number and airline.



UK Life

Many aspects of life and study in the UK will be different to your home country. We have included some basic information to help you prepare for your stay here.

The United Kingdom consists of Great Britain (England, Scotland, Wales) and Northern Ireland. England is the largest country, with a population of 50 million. The main cities are London, Birmingham and Manchester.

Scotland has a much smaller population (5 million) – the country has large areas of open spaces, lakes and mountains. Wales also has many mountains and lakes, plus lovely coastal areas. The population is about 3 million.

Approximately 8% of the UK population is made up of ethnic minority groups. Many of the cities are multi-cultural and multi-ethnic.

Over 70% of the population follow the Christian religion: Anglican, Catholic, Methodist or Baptist. The other large religious communities are Muslim, Hindu, Sikh and Jewish.

CURRENCY

The basic unit of currency is the pound (£)

One pound is made up of 100 pence (p)

The most common bank notes are £20, £10 and £5

Coins are £2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p, 1p

COST OF LIVING

We estimate the cost of living to be £7,200 per academic year (10 months). This includes accommodation, food, travel, entertainment, leisure and sports, clothing and books. Here are some typical prices:

Food (if not included in accommodation cost) – £30- £40 per week

Personal hygiene items/cosmetics etc - £15 per month

Haircut - £10 - £30

T-shirts - £10 or more

Jeans/skirts/sweaters - £40 and under

Footwear – approximately £30

CDs - £8 - £15

Cinema ticket - £6 - £7

Restaurant meal – approximately £10 per person

WEATHER

Generally, the climate in the UK is mild – summers are warm and winters are cold, but temperatures are not extreme. The highest summer temperature is about 27 celsius and the lowest winter temperature is about –2 celsius. The warmest time of year is June to August and the coldest is November to March.

The weather can change quickly, especially in the Spring, when you may get rain, sunshine, thunder or even snow within a few days!



STUDY METHODS

Education in the UK (at college and at university level) may be less formal than you are used to. You will be expected to ask questions, join in discussions and find out information for yourself. The teachers do not provide all the information you need – they will show you how to do your own research; how to prepare for assignments, project work and exams; and encourage you to manage your own work. This is particularly important if you intend to study at university in the UK, because you will need to manage your workload and motivate yourself to study.

The International English course – the teaching style on the English Language course is mainly practical. You will be encouraged to communicate straightaway, whatever your level of English. You will work in pairs and groups, play games and have discussions as part of the learning process. This is a good way to learn the language. Your teacher will assess your progress regularly, and you can take exams to gain internationally-recognised qualifications.

AS/A-levels or International Foundation to University course – some subjects will have exams, but others may not. You may be expected to do a lot of assignments (coursework), which make up your final grade. AS/A-level students often have exams twice a year – in January and in June.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

You may notice many differences in the UK, including the following:

- The way people dress – students in particular tend to dress informally
- Behaviour towards the opposite sex, and roles of men and women in society
- Attitudes to animals (especially pets – many people share their homes with dogs, cats and other pets)
- The importance of being on time – you should always be on time for classes, and you are expected to be on time for appointments and meetings with friends
- Food and eating habits – in Birmingham you will find many shops to buy foods from around the world. Food from different countries is becoming more and more popular in Britain!
- Drinking alcohol – a lot of student's social events (particularly at university) involves alcohol, or are based around meeting friends in a pub. However, it is acceptable to join in with such events without drinking alcohol
- Religious practice

You may find that people in the UK are not familiar with your culture and will not understand your needs unless you explain them. Do not be afraid to tell teachers, your host family or new friends if you have particular needs. If you tell people the reasons, they will understand much better, and many people will enjoy finding out about the differences between cultures.



HEALTH

If you are on a **Tier 4 Study visa**, you are entitled to free or subsidised health treatment under the National Health Service (NHS). You will need to register with a doctor (also known as a GP) to access NHS treatment. You will receive information about how to register with a doctor at the International Induction when you start college.

Most treatment (including emergency treatment at hospital) is free on the NHS. You will have to pay for medicines.

We advise you to arrange a Health Insurance policy to cover the cost of transporting you back to your home country if it becomes necessary. If are on a **Student Visitor Visa**, it is very important that you have Health Insurance, because you will not be entitled to any NHS treatment.

PERSONAL SAFETY

The UK is generally a safe place to live. However, there can be problems in certain areas, so you should follow some sensible guidelines:

- Never carry large amounts of cash. Be careful of your bag or wallet if you are in a crowded place
- Avoid dark and lonely streets and subways. Avoid walking anywhere on your own at night
- Be careful when using your mobile phone in public, as theft of mobile phones is increasing
- Take care when crossing busy roads in the city – drivers can be impatient!
- Please Note: In Britain we have **LEFT HAND TRAFFIC**. Always use a pedestrian crossing if there is one nearby
- Drugs are illegal in the UK – avoid getting involved in any way
- If you need to call the police, ambulance or fire brigade in an emergency, dial 999. The call is free from any phone

We hope the information in this pack is useful to you.
If you have any questions before you travel, please do not hesitate to contact us.
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We look forward to meeting you!!