



**St George's**  
University of London

*Part of  
City St George's,  
University of London*

# Pre-Departure Guide International Students 2024/25



# CONTENTS

## 1. A WARM WELCOME

## 2. CHECKLISTS

## 3. BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

- Paying tuition fees
- Booking flights
- Luggage and shipping items
- Clothing and climate
- Electrical equipment
- Money matters
- Travel insurance
- Health insurance
- Accommodation and Council Tax

## 4. ARRIVAL IN THE UK

- London airports
- Immigration/passport control
- Booking a cab/taxi from the airport
- Public transport from the airport

## 5. SETTLING IN

- Jet lag
- University induction
- Opening a bank account
- Mobile phones
- Registering with a doctor
- Looking after yourself
- Emergency services
- Religious needs
- Public transport in London and safety
- Oyster travel cards and contactless payments
- 18+ Student oyster card
- The underground (tube)
- Buses
- Travel outside of London and safety

## 6. STUDENT SERVICES AT SGUL

- Students Union
- International Student Society
- International Advising Team
- Student Life Centre
- Counselling services
- Personal Tutor support
- Faith
- Students with children

## 7. DAILY LIFE IN THE UK

- Studying
- Making friends
- Staying in touch with home
- Learning to cook
- Money
- British culture
- UK celebrations
- UK public holidays
- Culture shock
- Cost of living in the UK
- Part time employment
- Student Ambassadors
- Student discounts

## 8. ADVICE FROM CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## 9. WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU!

## 10. MORE INFORMATION

# A WARM WELCOME

## Congratulations!

## Welcome to the St George's family

Every year the university is pleased to welcome increasing numbers of students from all over the world; we currently have students from over 60 different countries.

This is a fantastic opportunity for you to experience a first class UK education at one of the oldest medical schools in the country and one of the UK's busiest hospitals, whilst living in one of the most socially and culturally diverse cities in the world.

This pre-departure guide has been designed by the International Advising Team (IAT) to help you get ready for an experience of a lifetime! There is a lot of information to take in, so take your time and read carefully.

We appreciate that leaving home and moving to a different country with an unfamiliar culture can be both exciting and daunting. We hope this guide will provide you with valuable advice to help make your transition as smooth and stress free as possible.

We have included checklists and information about what to do before you leave home, advice about your arrival in the UK, settling in and getting the most out of your time.

Together with colleagues across the university, we're here to support you. If you need some advice or somebody to talk to (before you arrive or during your time here) please do not hesitate to **contact us**.

We look forward to welcoming you very soon!

### The International Advising Team

#### Elizabeth Witter

Head of International Student Advice & Compliance

#### Shanshan Zhang

International Support and Compliance Officer



### CONTACT US

International Applicants  
[student.immigration@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:student.immigration@sgul.ac.uk)



groups/SGULInternational  
StudentSupport/

# PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Before you leave your home country to study as an international student, ensure that you have made the following arrangements:

- ☐ Organise your passport and visa
- ☐ Book travel tickets
- ☐ Check your airline's luggage allowance
- ☐ Finalise your accommodation
- ☐ Notify the International Advising Team  
(student.immigration@sgul.ac.uk) of your arrival details
- ☐ Notify your home bank of your travel plans, if appropriate
- ☐ Organise Health/Travel Insurance, if appropriate
- ☐ Have any relevant travel vaccinations
- ☐ Have medical/optical/dental check-ups
- ☐ Organise travel from the airport to your accommodation in the UK
- ☐ Take copies of your passport and visa and leave them with a family member or friend in case these are misplaced.

# WHAT TO PACK IN YOUR HAND LUGGAGE

The following is a checklist of useful items that we recommend you carry in your hand luggage:

- ☐ Pre-Departure Guide!
- ☐ Passport
- ☐ Valid Visa / Entry Clearance (if applicable)
- ☐ Visa approval letter (if applicable)
- ☐ Travel ticket(s)
- ☐ Details of onward travel arrangements from the airport and the address of where you will be staying in the UK - you may need to provide these details on arrival in the UK
- ☐ Paperwork relating to your research (postgraduate students) including the names of your supervisors
- ☐ Invitation letter (if applicable) if you are coming to the University for short-term study, e.g. medical elective students
- ☐ Documents showing you have enough money to fund your studies and living expenses while studying; (e.g. recent bank statement, proof of sponsorship)
- ☐ Health certificates including vaccination records and x-ray reports (if necessary)
- ☐ Change of clothes (including warm and waterproof clothing) in case your main luggage is misplaced
- ☐ Enough money (cash or credit card) for at least your first month
- ☐ Any prescription drugs that you are taking and a letter from your doctor explaining what these are
- ☐ Insurance documents plus a list of what you are carrying in your luggage in case you have to make an insurance claim





# BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

## Paying tuition fees

International applicants are required to pay a tuition fee deposit of £3,000. Paying this deposit is one of the conditions that you must meet before your application can be progressed any further.

You will not receive your Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) number to support your visa application until this deposit is paid and you have met all other non-academic and academic conditions.

Please note that applicants who can demonstrate that they will be in receipt of a Federal Aid Loan (US students only) or a financial scholarship from their home government are exempt from paying this deposit.

**You can pay the remainder of your tuition fees in full before or at enrolment. Alternatively, you can choose to pay in three instalments:**

- 50% due by 30 October

- 25% due by 30 January

- 25% due by 30 April

Payments can be made by credit or debit card, or by bank draft or bank transfer. When making a payment always ensure you quote your family name and student number as your reference so that the funds are allocated to the correct account.

Please note that we will only provide the University's bank details to a student who holds an unconditional offer. Students with queries about the amount to be paid should email the **Accounts Receivable Team**.

## Booking flights

Please remember to notify us of your arrival details prior to leaving your home country.

You will also need to contact us if your arrival date is delayed for any reason. If you have been issued a visa and you do not arrive during the enrolment period, we are required to report this to the UK Home Office; it is therefore extremely important that you inform us immediately of any changes in your circumstances or travel plans.

Before confirming any return flights, you must check the **university's official term dates** for your programme.

## Luggage and shipping items

When booking your flight, check with your airline what the luggage allowance is as excess luggage charges can be very high. Most airlines allow 20-23kg of checked luggage and have strict size and weight restrictions on hand luggage.

We recommended that you label your bags with your full name and address in the UK to allow easy identification. Advice on importing personal effects and goods into the UK may be obtained from the **GOV.UK website**.

We would recommend that you wait until you arrive in the UK to decide about shipping items from your home country as you may find that you can purchase these items in the UK or can do without them. Prices for shipping can vary greatly and it is important to make sure the company you use is reliable. Make sure to pack carefully and insure your belongings against damages.

## Clothing and climate

In your hand luggage you should pack enough warm clothing for your flight and subsequent journey from the airport. It will generally be cheaper and easier to buy clothing in the UK rather than bring these from home. **There are many shops close to St George's where you can purchase a wide variety of affordable clothing and an umbrella. You will find that warm and waterproof clothing is very important in the UK because of the unpredictability of the British weather. An umbrella is essential!!**

The weather in the UK can be very variable; wet and windy one day, warm and sunny the next. This unpredictability makes it a great topic of conversation for British people!

The warmest time of the year is typically between June and September, the coldest between November and February. There are four seasons in the UK, however, it is not unusual for it to snow during spring or be sunny in winter! Be prepared to experience a full range of weather throughout the year. You can get an idea of the weather before you come from the **BBC website**.

Students typically dress very casually for university in jeans and sweatshirts. However, students will be expected to dress professionally whilst on clinical placements (e.g. shirt and trousers or blouse and skirt). You may want to bring a suit, dress or national clothing with you for more formal occasions.





## Electrical equipment

Just bring the essentials. Any equipment you bring must be compatible with the UK standards: 220-240V, 50Hz AC voltage. The standard plug is a three-pin model. Using foreign appliances in UK sockets is dangerous if the plugs have not been converted for UK use. You will be able to buy an adaptor (if necessary) at the airport or in Tooting; look for a visitor to UK adaptor. Make sure all items are charged before flying as you may need to switch them on as you go through security.

## Money matters

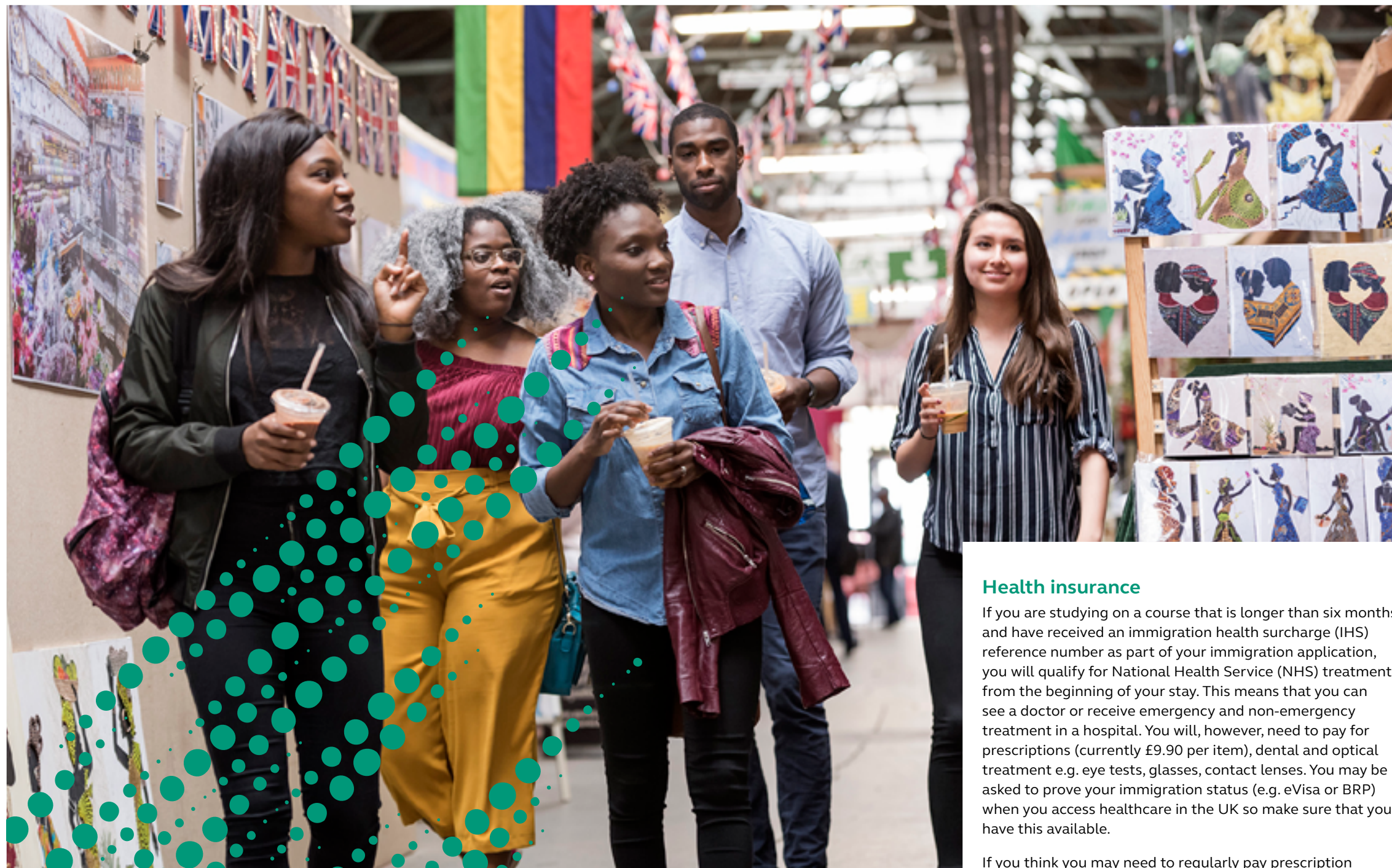
**Opening a bank account** in the UK can take a few weeks (**see page 14**) so you will need to bring enough money to cover your immediate needs including any travelling expenses, accommodation costs and emergency expenses.

Rather than carrying large amounts of cash, we recommend that you order travellers cheques or bring a credit or debit card. Please note that the currency used in the UK is 'Pounds Sterling'. However, this is shortened to just 'Pounds' and the symbol '£' is used to denote this. More information regarding **currency in the UK** can be found on **page 29**.

Travellers' cheques are one of the safest ways to bring money with you, as they are replaced free of charge if they are lost or stolen. Remember to keep a record of the cheques' serial numbers (top right-hand corner) as you will need to provide this information if they need to be replaced. Travellers' cheques are not generally accepted as currency and must be converted into cash at a bank or exchange office to be used. You may purchase travellers' cheques either in your local currency, in which case the exchange rate is set when you cash the cheques; or in British pounds, which means that the exchange rate is set at the time of purchase. In either case, banks and exchange bureaux will charge commission when cashing the cheques.

If you prefer to use a credit card, Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted. Do inform your bank about your upcoming travel plans as this will ensure that your card is not blocked when used abroad. It is also possible to draw cash advances from credit cards but this can attract a high level of interest as it is charged from the day the cash is advanced. Check with your bank whether surcharges are applied for foreign currency transactions.

Using a debit card linked to your bank account at home can be one of the best ways to access money in the UK. Most banks charge fees for cash withdrawals made overseas. As the exchange rate used at Cash dispensers (ATMs) is the commercial rate, it is better than that charged for travellers' cheques and currency exchanges.



## Before leaving home, check with your bank:

- whether your debit card can be used in the UK and Europe
- what fees are charged for each withdrawal
- your daily withdrawal limit
- where your credit and debit card will be accepted

**Please note:** in the UK, cards have a 4 digit pin code. Cards with a 5 digit pin code will not work at most ATMs. We recommend that you keep any information about your travellers' cheques, insurance policy and passport number in a separate and safe place.

## Travel insurance

It is important that you take out a travel insurance policy before leaving your home country to cover you in case anything happens to your belongings whilst travelling to the UK. This should cover delays, medical emergencies and the cost of replacing any belongings if they are lost on your journey.

If you are coming to the UK for less than six months, you should take out both travel and health insurance for the duration of your stay.

If you choose to stay in Horton Halls university accommodation your basic belongings during your stay will be insured. This cost is included in your rent payment.

## Health insurance

If you are studying on a course that is longer than six months and have received an immigration health surcharge (IHS) reference number as part of your immigration application, you will qualify for National Health Service (NHS) treatment from the beginning of your stay. This means that you can see a doctor or receive emergency and non-emergency treatment in a hospital. You will, however, need to pay for prescriptions (currently £9.90 per item), dental and optical treatment e.g. eye tests, glasses, contact lenses. You may be asked to prove your immigration status (e.g. eVisa or BRP) when you access healthcare in the UK so make sure that you have this available.

If you think you may need to regularly pay prescription charges, you can apply online for a **Prescription Prepayment Certificate (PPC)** which lets you get as many NHS prescriptions as you need for a set price. A PPC costs £32.05 for 3 months and £114.50 for 12 months.

Students with families should bring their children's immunisation/health records with them to the UK.

**If you are studying on a course of less than six months, you will not receive an IHS reference number. You are advised to take out private health insurance for the duration of your visit to the UK as treatment for you from the NHS will be limited to emergency hospital treatment in an NHS Accident and Emergency department.** If you are admitted to a hospital or given an outpatient appointment, charges will apply. Please note that private medical treatment is very expensive if you do not have private medical insurance.



European Economic Area (EEA) nationals can receive National Health Service (NHS) care while in the UK and should obtain a **European Health Insurance Card (EHIC)** before travelling to the UK. Further details can be found on **The UK National Health Service (NHS) website**.

## Accommodation

The University has an Accommodation Advisor who can provide advice and guidance about university-owned and private accommodation. It is important that you decide which type of accommodation you want before you arrive in the UK.

If you are planning to live in University accommodation (Horton Halls) you should organise this before you travel to the UK. If you plan to live in private accommodation we would recommend that you stay in temporary accommodation when you first arrive as it is important that you view in-person any property that you want to rent on a more permanent basis.

## Horton Halls

Only a 15-minute walk from campus, Horton Halls is equipped with everything you need and is only a short walk to local supermarkets and shops. All rooms are en-suite single study bedrooms and share a kitchen and dining area. There are on-site laundry facilities, internet access in every room, shared common rooms with comfortable seating and large plasma-screen televisions and a secure reception manned 24 hours a day. For more information on Horton Halls, please visit the **SGUL accommodation webpage**.

Students who have an offer should have been sent further information about booking a place in Horton halls at the beginning of June. An inventory of your room will be taken when you move in. This will help us make sure that you get your full deposit back at the end of the academic year.

If you are staying in Horton Halls, you will usually be able to move in on the Saturday before your course start date.

When booking university accommodation, please note that a bedding pack is not included. Crockery, cutlery, pots and pans are also not provided. You will therefore need to arrange these separately. There are many shops within walking distance to where affordable bedding and kitchenware can be purchased.

We recommend read through the **Halls handbook (PDF)** which has lots of practical information about halls.

## Private accommodation

The University subscribes to the **University of London Housing Services (ULHS)**. This is a fantastic resource which our students are entitled to access. It has a Private Housing Unit which has a database of available accommodation.

**Do not sign any accommodation contract you do not understand, as contracts are legally binding.** If you decide to move in, ask for a tenancy agreement that both you and the owner will sign. Contact our Accommodation Advisor if you require any help checking this agreement. UHLS also offer a contract checking service and you can find out additional information on their **webpage**.

You will probably be asked to pay a deposit before you can move in (usually equivalent to one month's rent). This should be protected by the government-authorised **Deposit Protection Scheme** and should be returned to you when you leave, provided all the bills have been paid and there is no damage to the property or its contents. More information about deposits and relevant advice can be found here: **Contracts and deposits**. You should contact the **Accommodation Advisor** for information about how your landlord should protect and refund your deposit. You may be asked to sign an inventory for all the items listed in the property. Get a copy of this and a receipt for all the rent payments that you make.

## Temporary accommodation

If you arrive in the UK before your University-managed room is available or are planning to find private accommodation, you may need to book temporary accommodation. You can stay in hotels, hostels, and guesthouses, with options to suit most budgets. To find temporary accommodation, please visit **International Student House** or **Visit Britain** Students may also consider a short stay in **The Pelican Hotel** and Residence which is situated in a quiet area next to St George's.

## Accommodation insurance

If you are to be living in Horton Halls, basic personal insurance is included in your rent and is provided by the insurance provider **Endsleigh**. Representatives from Endsleigh might be available at Horton Halls during your moving in period. You will be able to ask them questions and be given the opportunity to upgrade your insurance (e.g. to cover laptops and mobile phones) by paying a small additional fee.

Endsleigh offers a good selection of online materials on its website if you miss them during your moving period.

If you are living in private rented accommodation, you will need to arrange your own accommodation insurance.

## Council Tax

If you live in private accommodation at any time during your studies, you will be required to pay council tax to the local council. This tax pays for local services such as rubbish collection, police services, fire brigade etc.



**Most full-time international students will be exempt from paying council tax provided they submit a council tax exemption letter at the beginning of their stay. You should contact the Student Life Centre for further information about council tax, including requesting a council tax exemption letter. Failure to pay council tax or provide a council tax exemption letter may result in a court order being made against you.**

If you live in Horton Halls, you will not need to pay council tax and you will not require a council tax exemption letter.

“Almost everything can be found here. St George's is in the heart of Tooting, a relatively bustling city section. You can find groceries, home amenities, blankets, pillows, clothes in shops downtown.”





# ARRIVAL IN THE UK



## London airports

There are 5 major airports connecting London: Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, London City and Luton. If your air journey involves a connection, we recommend that you ask the airline staff to check you and your luggage through to your final destination as this will make your transfer through the connection airport much easier.

## Immigration/passport control

You will pass through immigration when you arrive in the UK, so it is important for you to know what to expect. When you arrive at the airport, you pass through immigration control first (before collecting your luggage). There are usually two main queues: one for UK/European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss nationals, and one for everyone else.

EEA and Swiss citizens as well as citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the USA can use the **passport eGates**, if they have a passport with a 'chip'. If you enter via the eGates, you will not have your Entry Clearance visa date stamped. In this situation, we will ask you to provide alternative evidence to prove your date of entry to the UK, e.g. a boarding pass or flight confirmation, when we are carrying out right to study checks at enrolment.

If you are not eligible to use the eGates, an immigration officer will check your passport and may ask questions about your visit to the UK.

The officer needs to be satisfied that you are a genuine student, meet the immigration rules for students, and that you intend to leave the UK at the end of your studies. When satisfied, the immigration officer will put a stamp in your passport to show the date you entered the UK.

For more information on what to expect when you arrive at your point of entry to the UK, please visit the **UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)**.

Please put any documents relevant to your stay in your hand luggage, so they are available if the officer asks for them, e.g. invitation letter. We would advise you to bring hard copies as you may not be able to access these digitally at the airport.

## Examples of questions you may be asked by a Border Force officer

- How long is your course and, what modules will you be studying?
- Are you planning on working in the UK? How many hours? How much are you likely to be paid?
- Where are you planning to live and how much will you pay for rent?

As long as your documents are in order, you should pass through immigration without any problems.

However, if you require assistance, please do not hesitate to **contact us**

## Booking a cab/taxi from the airport

If you would like to book your own taxi, the University recommends **Elite Cab Service** who can be contacted via **email** or **telephone** on **+44(0)208 9447000**. We recommend that you book your taxi at least 3 days in advance and ensure that you receive confirmation of your booking.

Elite Cab Service can collect from London airports and will organise the driver to wait in the arrival lounge with an identifying signboard with your name on it. At the time of booking, you will need to provide your flight details, destination address including postcode and a contact telephone number (so make sure that your phone is fully charged). You should confirm the cost of the journey at the time of booking. **Please ensure that you have the cash available in UK currency to pay for the journey as credit cards may not be accepted.**

Students may prefer to book alternative transportation via **Uber** or **Gett**. To use the services, you will be required to download the relevant mobile app and then create an account in advance. Please note, to request your ride you will need access to the internet. You should check prior to travel whether you can get complimentary Wi-fi at the airport or make sure that you have access to international data.

If you decide to use an alternative taxi service, you will need to check that they are a licensed company – never use an unlicensed company.

If you have pre-booked your taxi and your flight is delayed, we would recommend that you contact the taxi company as soon as possible. There may be additional costs incurred if there are long delays.

## Using public transport from the airport

Cabs in London can be very expensive. If you would prefer

to make your own way from the airport, there are plenty of public transport options available. To plan your route, we recommend that you use **Citymapper** or the Journey Planner on the **Transport for London (TFL)** website and enter the postcode of your final destination. **The postcode for Horton Halls is SW17 0BD**. You will need to enter where in the UK you are travelling from (for example, Heathrow Terminal 3) and where you are travelling to.

If you are travelling to the University you should enter 'Tooting Broadway Station' as this is the nearest tube station to both the University and Horton Halls. Please note, it will take approximately 30 minutes to walk from Tooting Broadway station to Horton Halls, so we would recommend that you take a bus or taxi. There is a taxi station and bus stop outside the tube station.

From outside Tooting Broadway Station you can take bus G1 to Battersea. The bus stops outside Horton Halls and the name of the bus stop (which will be announced on the bus) is St George's Grove. **Please note, cash is not accepted on London buses. You will need an Oyster Card or a contactless card in order to use the bus and tube in London.** You can read further information regarding Oyster Cards on page 20.

Please contact us if you need further advice about using public transport on arrival to the UK.





# SETTLING IN

## Jet lag

You may find that you get jet lag during your first few days in the UK. To overcome this, try to adjust meal and sleep patterns to your new time zone. You will find that jet lag is only temporary and you will soon adjust. For more information, visit the **National Health Service (NHS) website**.

## University Induction

In British universities, first year students are often referred to as ‘Freshers’ and the first week of UK university is called ‘Freshers’ Week’. This is the period when new students are introduced to university life.

During the Freshers’ Week induction, the Student Services Team will be running advice sessions where you can find out more about the range of support the University has to offer. These include seminars on student finance, careers advice and disability support.

The Students’ Union (SU) will also be hosting a Freshers’ Fayre where you can find out more about the clubs and societies on offer and take part in enjoyable social events with the larger student body. The Freshers’ Fayre is the perfect place to meet friends and join university societies. Visit the **St George’s SU website** for more information about the clubs and societies on offer.

In addition, the International Advising Team will be hosting special events for all new international students, which include peer panels, social events and a welcome weekend where you will have the opportunity to meet other international students in an informal setting. Further details about the events for international students will be sent in August 2024.

You will receive an Induction timetable nearer the start of your programme which will include details about the time, date and venue of all activities. You will be expected to complete some of these activities online. Please note, during this period most courses will also start some academic teaching so be sure not to miss out.

“The University’s Induction is fantastic!  
With so many events, it is a great way to  
meet fellow students and start familiarizing  
yourself with your new city.”

**Eric Joyce**

MSc Applied Exercise for Health

### By the end of Induction, you should have:

- Enrolled on your course and received your Student ID card
- Met the International Advising Team, completed the Right to Study checks and attended the International Welcome programme.
- Started to become familiar with the university and Tooting area
- Had the opportunity to meet students on other courses
- Been introduced to the range of services available at the university to support and develop your academic and social life
- Been shown how to access online resources and been given a welcome pack and course handbook
- Taken part in some social events
- Started your academic work

## Opening a bank account

Opening a bank account is a safe way to manage money during your studies in the UK. Most international students choose to open a bank account shortly after enrolling at St George’s as it can be very expensive to use an overseas card in the UK.

It is very important that you put thought into opening a bank account and carefully consider all the options available. Full-time international students can usually choose to open a ‘basic bank account’ with a major UK bank. Alternatively, students may wish to open an account with more flexibility and facilities. You must check all associated costs as you may be required to pay a monthly subscription fee.

Opening a bank account can be a lengthy process and you may need to attend the bank in person more than once. It can also take a few days, or even weeks, for your new bank card to arrive. We therefore recommend that you have access to sufficient funds to cover your first month of expenses in the UK.

**To open a bank account in the UK, you may be required to go to the bank in person and provide documentary evidence including:**

**Passport - as proof of your identity**

**Valid visa - as proof of your immigration status (if applicable)**

**University letter confirming your student status and proof of address**

You can request the university letter from the International Advising Team or the Student Life Centre. When requesting the letter please ensure you confirm the name of the bank you wish to open an account with, as well as your full name and UK and overseas addresses.

There are plenty of major UK banks located within walking distance of St George’s, University of London. Local branches include:

**Barclays** - 14-16 Mitcham Road, London SW17 9NA

**HSBC** - 56 Tooting High Sreet, London SW17 0RN

**Lloyds Bank** - 12 Mitcham Road, London SW17 9ND

**Nationwide** - 18/20 High Street, Tooting, London SW17 0RG

**NatWest** - 30 Tooting High Street, London SW17 0RG

**Santander** - 266-288 Upper Tooting Road, London SW17 0ED

It is important to note that even if you have an account with one of these banks in your home country, you will still need to open a separate UK bank account.

Please note, you will need to find a permanent place to stay before opening a bank account. A UK bank will not allow you to open an account if you are staying in a hotel or hostel.

## Opening an bank account via digital app a website

Some banks allow students to open a bank account via a digital app or their website. These banks may still require you to attend the bank in person, for example, to carry out an ID check.

### MOBILE DEVICES

**Barclays UK** via Barclays mobile app instruction

**Monzo bank** – students can download the Monzo app via its website by scanning the QR code to apply an bank account.

### WEBSITE WITH ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

**Halifax UK - Halifax Student Account** - online application

**HSBC UK - International Student Account** - online application

**Lloyds UK - Student Account** - online application

**Santander UK- 1/2/3 Student Current Account** online application

## Mobile phones

**In the UK, there are three options you can choose from:**

**Pay as you go** - You can buy a handset and SIM card and ‘top up’ the credit on your phone so that you pay for your calls and text messages when you use your phone

**Contract** - You sign a contract for a certain time period e.g. 12 months and make a monthly payment through your bank account

**SIM only** – This is a halfway option between pay as you go and contract. You will be provided with a SIM card but no phone. You will only be committed to a rolling 30-day contract.

Generally, calls/texts are less expensive on contract or SIM only, however, this can take some time to arrange after you have arrived.

In order to open a mobile phone contract, you must already have a UK bank account. Your potential service provider will also need to run a bank credit check on you to ensure that you have the funds available to make the monthly payments.

If you’re new to the UK, you won’t have any credit history and therefore even after you pass the clearance, you may need to pay a substantial deposit that will be repaid to you after two to three months of reliably paying your bills on time. For this reason, many students choose to go with a ‘Pay as You go’ initially then after a couple of months carry their phone number over to a contract.

You can purchase ‘Pay as You go’ phones from most supermarkets and mobile phone shops and you can start using it straight away.

It is a good idea to bring your handset with you to the UK. If you want to use your mobile or smart phone in the UK, make sure to have it unlocked by your service provider or manufacturer before leaving your home country.

We recommend that you do not unlock your phone with an unofficial retailer as it will often violate the warranty terms and void it.

To compare deals from all mobile networks in the UK visit **Uswitch.com**



## Registering with a doctor

The International Advising Team will provide you with a list of GP surgeries around the university area. Please also do your research **to find a doctor** (dentist or hospital) before registering as it is difficult to switch.

Please note that NHS services have made changes to make sure it's safe for you to be seen during COVID19. For example, you will only be asked to visit the surgery if absolutely necessary. A phone call or video call with a GP, nurse or other healthcare professional may be booked for you. Patients are urged to contact their GP surgery using online services and apps.

**When registering you may need to provide:**

- **A valid passport**
- **A letter confirming you are a student**
- **Proof of your UK address**

You can choose to register with any local doctor but we strongly recommend that you register within the first few weeks of starting university as you will become busy with your studies very quickly.

Remember, when making an appointment, you can ask that you wish to be seen by a male or female doctor.



## Looking after yourself

Looking after yourself is extremely important in the first few weeks at university as many students suffer from what is commonly known in the UK as 'freshers' flu.' Common symptoms include fever, sore throat, headache, coughing and general discomfort. The illnesses may or may not include actual flu and is often simply a bad cold. The causes are a combination of several things including mingling, lack of sleep and eating junk food.

**Here are 5 top tips to overcome the dreaded freshers' flu:**

- Eat lots of nutritious foods – If you get lots of vitamin C and eat fruit and veg then you will give your body a fighting chance
- Drink lots of water – If you keep hydrated then you will be able to flush out all of those freshers' flu toxins from your weakened body
- Get into bed – Just rest and make sure that you are getting enough sleep and de-stressing
- Make time for relaxation and exercise
- Stay warm and dry by wearing suitable clothes

## EMERGENCY SERVICES

**If you need medical assistance, you should call 999 or 111 depending upon the urgency of the situation:**

- **CALL 111 IF YOU NEED MEDICAL HELP FAST BUT IT'S NOT A 999 EMERGENCY**

You should call 111 if you think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service. You can also call 111 if don't have a GP and need health information or reassurance about what to do next.

- **CALL 999 IF YOU NEED URGENT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE. THE CALL IS FREE**

An operator will ask you which emergency service you need (Fire, Police or Ambulance). For urgent medical assistance ask for the ambulance service. Be ready to tell the emergency services what has happened and exactly where you are, especially the street name.

## Religious needs

Britain is a multi-faith and multi-cultural society and the university welcomes students and staff from all faiths and cultures. Students have the option of joining various Students' Union religious societies such as the Hindu Society, Islamic Society, Jewish Society, Sikh Society and the Christian Union.

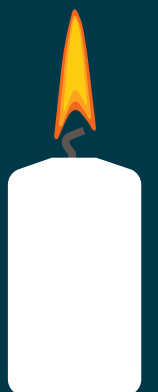
There is a Multi-Faith and Quiet Contemplation Room (MFQCR) at the university which is free of charge to use. All current and potential users of the multifaith and quiet contemplation rooms must familiarise themselves with the protocols.

The **MFQCR protocol** includes information about the standard of conduct expected, the physical set up of the rooms and who is permitted to use the rooms and how to make a booking.

In addition, there is an active chaplaincy service at the university for all faiths. The team are multi-faith, multi-denominational and offer spiritual and religious care to students and staff. You do not have to think of yourself as religious to make use of the service.

### The Chaplaincy Service

**Email:** chaplains@stgeorges.nhs.uk  
**Tel:** 020 8725 3071





## Public transport in London and safety

Travelling around London is easy as there is a good bus, train and underground train (tube) system. It may seem confusing at first, but you will get used to it relatively quickly. The main thing to remember is that you can travel to most places in London using public transport!

We recommend that you use the **Transport for London (TFL) website** when planning travelling in London.

**Citymapper** is also very popular amongst students. You can download the Citymapper app on your mobile device and check the status of the underground, live bus times, see travel times and cost estimates. The app can really help you to find the best way to travel around London.

“The app CityMapper is really good for navigating around London. It gives estimated times of buses, tubes and even taxis!”

**Chantal Liu**  
MBBS5

## Oyster travel cards and contactless payments

An Oyster card is essential when traveling in London. It is a blue, credit-card-sized card which you can add money to (top up) before you travel. An Oyster card costs a one-off fee of £5; you can buy this at any Tube, London Overground or TFL Rail station. Once you have an Oyster card, you then can ‘top up’ your card using machines at the tube/train station, many local shops or online. For more information go to the **TFL website**.

Alternatively, some students prefer to use contactless cards or mobile payments to pay for public transport in London. If your bank card is issued by Visa, Mastercard, Maestro or American Express and shows the contactless payment symbol, you can use it to pay as you go straight away. Many contactless cards issued outside the UK can be used to pay for travel; remember, overseas transaction fees may apply.

Using a mobile payment to pay as you go is the same as using a contactless card. You can make mobile payments with devices such as phones, watches or wristbands. Again, overseas transaction fees may apply and we recommend that you check this with your card issuer.



“If you are intending on traveling a large amount, I would recommend a student discount oyster card. This is designed for people that travel on their commute to school every day. If you are living close by

I wouldn't recommend securing a student oyster card just because the amount of use doesn't justify the length-long payment you make.”

**Eric Newton**  
MSc Global Health

## 18+ Student Oyster Card

The 18+ Student Oyster card is most useful for students using public transport on a daily basis. With the 18+ Student Oyster card, students can purchase travelcards (valid for either 7 days, one month or up to one year) and receive a 30% discount against the price of an adult pass.

Once you have enrolled, you can register for a Student Oyster card. To apply go to the **TFL 18+ Student Oyster photocard webpage**.

You will need a valid debit or credit card to pay the £20 application fee and a recent, digital passport-style photograph to upload. The 18+ Student Oyster card will expire on your course end date.

If you are travelling in London on a daily basis, the 18+ Student Oyster card will make a real difference to the cost of your travel, so it is worth getting as soon as you enrol!

## The Underground (tube)

The tube is a very useful form of transport as it is usually quick and can get you to most areas of London. It can get very busy and hot during 'Rush Hour' (8.00-9.30am and 5.00- 7.00pm) and there can be disruptions for repairs.

When you are travelling on the tube, you need to think about which direction you are going in and where you need to change lines to get to your destination. You can download a PDF version of the tube map from the **TFL website** or download the app to your smartphone. You can also pick up a tube map from most stations or ask the underground staff for advice on how to travel.

Citymapper or Google maps can also be very useful tools to help you plan your route.

## Buses

There is an extensive network of buses that run throughout Greater London. It is a good way to explore as you can look out of the window and see where you are passing through but may take longer than the tube, especially if there is bad traffic. You can find bus maps/ routes on the TFL website.

Cash is not accepted on London buses so you will need an Oyster card or a contactless payment method. For more information on buses go to the **TFL webpage**.





# TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF LONDON

We hope that students not only travel around London, but also around the whole of Great Britain. There is so much culture, countryside and heritage to experience. For great suggestions on places to visit go to **Visit Britain**.

Students can travel to these different UK locations by train at a discounted price by applying for a National Railcard. The **16-25 National Railcard** costs just £30 per year (or £70 for 3 years) and entitles you to 1/3 off most rail fares throughout Great Britain.

To be eligible for this railcard, you must be 16-25, or a mature student, and in full-time education. To apply online you will need a debit or credit card, your passport and a recent, digital passport-style photograph to upload.

You can also take your 16-25 National Railcard to an underground station and ask a member of staff to add the railcard discount to your standard Oyster card. This will enable you to get 1/3 off single off-peak fares on the underground/trains in London!

Although you can buy train tickets at a National Rail station before boarding, it is usually better to buy train tickets online before travelling. This can help you to find cheaper tickets. A popular website for discounted train tickets is The **Trainline**.

A cheaper alternative to the train is travelling by coach. For example, using **National Express** or **Megabus**.

## SAFETY

**London is not considered a dangerous city to live and study in but, like all large cities, you need to be careful. Below are a few tips:**

- Call 999 to report a crime or fire in an emergency, or 101 to talk to the police about a less urgent issue.
- Look after your personal belongings and don't carry large amounts of cash with you
- Keep your bag in sight at all times when you are in public
- Take extra care with your wallet, mobile phone and bag when you are in the Underground or in crowded places, such as markets
- If you want to leave your coat or jacket anywhere, take your money with you
- Be careful when you are out late at night and if possible, do not travel home alone
- Take extra special care of your passport and visa as they are difficult and costly to replace

We recommend that you read the **Safety First by British Council**.

'Making sure that your time in the UK is safe and enjoyable' which was produced with the aim of helping international students have a positive experience in the UK.

# STUDENT SERVICES AT SGUL

There are a number of ways to receive support from the University. We want you to feel confident and comfortable in your new environment. Although courses here are rigorous, we pride ourselves on the personal support we provide students, ensuring they become confident clinicians and scientists.

## Students' Union

The Students' Union (SU) represents all students studying at the University. Almost a whole floor at the university is devoted to the SU which exists to represent your interests, look after your welfare, and enrich your social life.

With over 120 clubs, societies and community projects on offer and a packed programme of events, you will never be short of opportunities to mix with others. As a new student, we would recommend that you get involved and join as many clubs as you like. This is a great way to meet people and make friends. It is important that you learn to balance your studies and social life.

You can also set up a club of your choice if you can get together enough interest. Check out the **SU's website** and the range of societies on offer.

## International Student Society

The University has an International Students' Society (ISS) with students from all over the world. As an international student, you are automatically a member of the ISS. In conjunction with the International Advising Team and the SU, the ISS committee organises various socials throughout the year including international lunches, ice skating, boat parties, Chinese New Year dinner and an end of year barbecue. We recommend that you join the **ISS Facebook & ISS IG page** which will allow you to get to know a bit more the University and the international events taking place whilst you are here.

## International Advising Team

The services offered by the International Advising Team are designed to make the study abroad experience as easy and enjoyable as possible, from application all the way through to graduation. We provide support and guidance on a wide range of non-academic matters including: immigration and visa advice; pre-arrival support; orientation; the international social programme and we offer ongoing support during your studies. The International Advising Team also runs an international 'Buddy' scheme, assigning new international students to a 'Buddy' or mentor from an older year.

We are available on Facebook, by email, or in person to assist international students.

**Email:** student.immigration@sgul.ac.uk

 **groups/SGULInternationalStudentSupport**

## Student Life Centre

Your first port of call for academic and personal matters, our staff at the Student Centre are always on hand to help. Whether you need to speak to a member of staff in private about an issue you're experiencing or ask an urgent question about your studies, we're here for you. Our team of advisers offer support with: student finance; tuition fees; exams and assessment; accommodation; disability; appeals and complaints; admissions; international advice; careers; student life and wellbeing.

**Tel:** 0203 8972033

**Email:** studentlifecentre@sgul.ac.uk

Opening hours: Monday–Friday: 10am–4pm

## Counselling Services

Studying is rewarding, but at times it can be stressful. To help you get through any difficulties that may be affecting your life, we offer a **confidential counselling service**. Here you will find an objective listener who will encourage you to talk about whatever may be troubling you and help you to find your own solutions.

The counsellors are qualified, experienced and friendly. The service is free, entirely confidential and is open to all our university students. Although the service is popular, the counsellors try to see students within two weeks of the booking.

**Student Space** has information and advice about looking after your well-being during the pandemic. They will also continue to offer online, text, email and phone support over this period.

**Togetherall** is available 24/7 and is a monitored peer support community where students and staff are able to share concerns and advice. Posts on TogetherAll are anonymised.

There are several crisis and support lines including:

**Samaritans** on 116 123, or email them at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Hopeline** on 0800 068 4141 or you can text 07860039967

**CALM** on 0800 58 58 58

You can check the NHS website to **find your local crisis support services**

## Personal tutor support

All students have access to a personal tutor to act as an academic point of contact and support. You will be allocated a personal tutor towards the beginning of the academic year. Personal tutors offer regular meetings, provide advice, support and feedback on academic and progress issues, and support students if they experience difficulties with academic or welfare matters.

## Faith

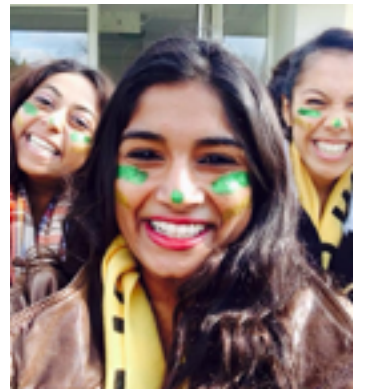
Open to students and staff of all faiths (or non-faith), the St George's Chaplaincy represents the main faith communities on campus. Our Students' Union also has a number of faith societies that provide students with an opportunity to support each other spiritually, discuss and debate faith issues and hold events.

**Tel:** 020 8725 3071

**Email:** chaplains@stgeorges.nhs.uk

## Students with children

Juggling study and parenthood can be difficult, particularly if you're taking a demanding medical or healthcare degree. However, it can be done, and there is support available. Our Student Parents Association meets monthly. If you're a parent, or thinking of having children, going along is a great way of meeting other students in a similar situation. For more information, or if you have any queries about studying at St George's as a parent, you can email the association at [space@su.sgul.ac.uk](mailto:space@su.sgul.ac.uk)



“The International Student's Society organises many events throughout the year. It's a great way to meet international students from different courses and grades and make new friends. I look forward to meeting all the new international students!”

**Sohani Dassanayake**  
MBBS6





# DAILY LIFE IN THE UK

## Studying

As an international student, you may find that studying is very different to studying in your home country. Even students from countries whose education system is similar to the UK will find that there are differences. The majority of teaching will take place onsite. You will be provided your course timetable at induction.

**Classes:** Teaching in British universities may be less formal than you are used to at home. At St George's, teaching centres around lectures and tutorials. In lectures, you are expected to listen and take notes while your tutor presents the lesson. There is usually little or no opportunity to ask questions or discuss topics. Tutorials and seminars are however an opportunity for students to discuss their subject and develop ideas, guided by a tutor. For more information, visit the **UKCISA Study Skills** page.

**Independent Study:** There may be more emphasis on independent learning than you are used to at home. In British universities, you are mainly expected to study on your own and you are encouraged to develop your own ideas rather than merely repeat a textbook. Your tutors will ensure you have the basic information you require and will provide guidance on reading. Your tutors and Course Director are there to assist with any difficulties you may have. Independent study means that you will need to organise your study time well. It is important that you develop an efficient and independent learning strategy at the start of your course. You will also need to prioritise and plan your work so that you meet deadlines and prepare well for examinations. You should check your programme requirements and regulations so that you can target your work. Assessed coursework and exams will usually take priority.

**Learning Development and StudyPlus:** This dedicated team exists to enable students to recognise and address the particular demands of university level study. This dedicated team offer sessions to support students with the transition to new levels of study and preparing for written assessments.

Students can access one-to-one appointments, in person or online, throughout the year. These appointments can cover a range of topics including effective study and revision, academic writing and working with feedback.

Students can also access study resources on a range of topics (e.g. academic writing and referencing) on the Study+ Canvas module Further information about Learning Development and StudyPlus will be provided during induction.

## TOP TIPS FOR STUDYING:

- Visit Prepare for Success
- Get organised for effective study!
- Put the time in before class and be ready to contribute on the day
- Do not be afraid to ask questions if there is anything you do not understand or want to know more about
- In the UK it is customary to approach academic staff if you need advice or wish to discuss something: you should not wait for them to approach you

If you think you will have a problem meeting the deadline for a piece of assessed work, for example because you are ill, you should contact your tutor immediately. Don't wait until the deadline has passed.



“The great thing about St George's is the sheer diversity of it. Here you'll find people from all corners of the world. Everyone knows everyone else and it's extremely easy to make friends.”

**Zelda Ncube**  
MBBS5

**Fahmin Khalque**  
MBBS5

## Making friends

While it's natural to feel more comfortable with people who speak your language and understand your cultural background, you've come a long way to only hang out with people from your own country. Making British friends may be easier than you think, and you're almost certain to get more out of your time in the UK if you get to know your British classmates and roommates.

Try not to worry if you are feeling a bit lost and homesick; many of the British students will be feeling like this too. Some British students may have moved from the opposite side of the country to begin their studies at University and may also feel disorientated.

**Offer friendship:** Don't be afraid to offer friendship as this can help make both of you feel at ease. Why not start a conversation with the person next to you before your next lecture begins? Or perhaps in your student accommodation kitchen? If you're stuck for conversation topics, talk about your degree programme, sport, news, London or even the weather.

**Join a club or society:** Joining a club or society is a great way to meet people who have the same interests as you and gives you something else to focus on apart from your studies. The University hosts over 120 clubs, societies and community projects; joining one or some of these will help you to make friends and meet like-minded students.

**Travel:** There is a lot more to Britain than what you will see on the journey between your accommodation and the classroom. So long as you are sensible, travel is safe here. If you stay in hostels, you will meet friendly people more easily than you would in a hotel.

## Staying in touch with home

As an international student, you may be far from home, but with modern technology staying in touch with family and friends abroad has never been easier or cheaper.

Many students will use the internet to communicate with family and friends abroad. Skype is a very popular application which enables students to make free video and voice calls, send instant messages and share files with other users. Similar services used by students include Facetime on Apple devices, Facebook and WhatsApp. Viber enables free calls from your phone if the person you are calling also has the programme.

If you're feeling homesick, go online to contact friends and family abroad. Arrange a video call at a time that suits both sides, exchange photos and send instant messages to connect with those at home!

Remember though, the quicker you integrate into your new surroundings, the sooner the homesickness will pass.

# Learning to cook

Having a good diet can greatly improve your university experience. It is important to cook fresh, nutritious dishes that will provide optimal fuel for student life. If you are new to the kitchen, we recommend mastering four techniques which will help you get started.

## Frying

Try a stir fry. You can buy stir fry packs from the supermarket that come with the vegetables, meat, noodles and a sauce. Follow the instructions on the pack and within 10 minutes you will have a delicious meal.

## Boiling

Rice, pasta and packaged vegetables all need to be boiled. Always follow the instructions on the pack and remember to have the water boiled first before adding the ingredients and starting the timer. Use a colander when draining and be careful not to burn yourself.

## Baking

Baking usually takes a long time, but the results can be delicious. Baking is particularly good for pies, pizzas and potatoes.

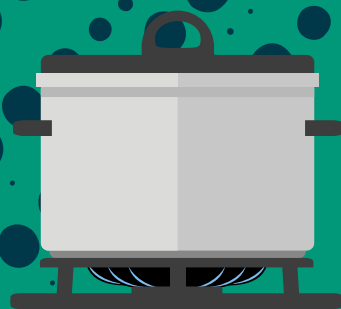
## Microwaving

This is often the quickest way to heat up food. Make sure to always use plastic containers when heating up food. Never use metal containers or containers that contain metal in a microwave as this is extremely dangerous.

## Useful cooking webpages

Try out some of the student recipes on the **BBC Good Food site**. Alternatively, check out student recipes by popular British chef, **Jamie Oliver**.

Home cooking is one of the things that you can miss when living away from home. To get a taste of home, why not try cooking your favourite dish? It is a wonderful way to save money and also make friends, as you can invite your classmates to sample the great food that you enjoy!



# Money

The unit of currency in the UK is the pound sterling (£). It is divided into one hundred pence (p). Coins are in values of 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1, and £2. The notes are in denominations of £5, £10, £20, and £50. For more information about the currency used in the UK, check out the **Tripsavvy webpage**.

**Making your money last is one of the hardest things to do as a student. Having a budget and knowing where you can save money is crucial. Follow our tips below to make sure you've got enough money to enjoy yourself:**

- Set yourself a weekly, monthly, and yearly budget. There are a number of online tools available to help you plan your budget including **The Student Budget Calculator**
- When you go to a shop or restaurant always ask if they offer a student discount. You can also sign up for a **National Union of Students (NUS) TOTUM STUDENT & Pass ID** which offers discounts for a variety of companies, free tastecard & Coffee club, 12 months International Student Identity Card (ISIC) member and an official PASS Proof of Age ID! The Pass ID only costs £24.99 for three years (£8.33 per year).
- Take advantage of all the free activities that London has to offer. Check out magazines such as **Time Out** and **GB Mag** for inspiration
- Cook for yourself and avoid ordering takeaways
- Travel cheaply and get a Student Oyster Card
- Buy supermarket-branded goods as they are often cheaper than brand names and there is no difference in the quality
- Opt to shop at budget supermarkets like **Aldi** or **Lidl** rather than more expensive stores like **Sainsbury's** or **Waitrose**





# British culture

As an international student, you will not only have to adjust to life at the University, but also life in the UK. In order to prepare, we have put together some information to help you understand cultural norms and feel comfortable in your new environment.

**Greetings:** People shake hands when introduced for the first time or at formal occasions. Handshakes are not aggressive and either the left or right hand can be used. British people tend not to greet with a kiss or hug except with relatives or very close friends.

**Titles:** British people tend to call young people and friends by their first names, otherwise 'Mr', 'Mrs', or other titles such as 'Dr' followed by the person's family name (until you are told to use their first name). To address a University professor, listen to how they introduce themselves and then call them by this. If you are unsure, it is best to first use a formal title first.

**Small talk:** British people are often stereotyped as being reserved, however, British people can be very warm and friendly. If you start a conversation you will usually find that people are happy to speak to you. When you first meet somebody it can be hard to know what to talk about, especially if English is not your first language. As a general rule you should ask about people's interests and avoid asking any personal questions. In Britain, it is considered impolite to ask people about their age, religion, who they vote for and how much money they earn, so these subjects should all be avoided when making small talk. Talking about the weather is always a safe topic!

**Alcohol and pubs:** If you do not drink alcohol, you may be alarmed if invited to a 'pub' (public houses or bar). Pubs are convenient and popular meeting places that sell soft drinks and fruit juices as well as alcohol so you should feel no pressure to drink. There is usually no waiter/waitress service and you should pay for drinks when you order them at the bar. The legal age for buying alcohol in the UK is 18. Some bars and nightclubs may restrict entry to those over 21. If you look under 25, you will probably be asked to provide proof of your age (for example your passport or driver's license) if you want to buy alcohol.

**Tipping:** In London, it is customary to leave 10-15% of the bill when eating out. However, restaurants often add a service charge (usually 12.5%), especially if you're in a large group, so it's worth checking your bill as you don't want to tip twice. It is not customary to pay a tip for drinks at the pub, fast food, self-service or takeaway meals. It is polite to tip 10-15% of the taxi fare for black cabs and licensed minicabs in London. However, most people simply round up the fare to the nearest £1 and tell the driver to "keep the change." If you've had a longer journey and the driver has assisted you with luggage, you may wish to tip a little more, up to £5.

**Manners:** British people are renowned for their manners and basic politeness is always expected. Any requests should be followed with please and you should say thank you each time somebody does something for you. In the UK, please and thank you are sometimes called "Ps and Qs". The word sorry is also a polite term and you'll find many British people apologise after everything, even if they are not in the wrong! Maintaining some personal space is also important for British people as being too close can make Brits feel uncomfortable; they may step back to keep personal space.

**Punctuality:** British people place considerable value on punctuality. Time keeping is valued a lot higher here than in some other countries. In Britain being late for a class or a meeting of any kind with another person is seen as bad manners. If you are going to be late for an appointment with someone, let them know and make sure to apologise. Always aim to arrive 5 minutes early for any lectures or seminars to give yourself a chance to get seated before the lecture begins.

**Queues:** British people queue or 'get in line' for everything! Whether you are in a shop, a restaurant, or waiting for a bus, an orderly line will form if people are waiting. Queuing is seen as being polite and respectful of others, and failure to do so may result in people becoming annoyed with you. If someone was there before you, let him/her be seen first. If you jump in front of a queue this is considered ill-mannered and you are likely to upset everyone in the queue.

**Dress: British dress code** is varied and liberal. The UK is a multicultural society and any type of religious dress is accepted. There is not a dress code at University and students wear a broad range of outfits, depending on personal taste. However, students will be expected to dress professionally whilst on clinical placement (e.g. shirt and trousers, or blouse and skirt). If you are going to a party or a special event, you may find there are certain dress codes required, and it is expected that all in attendance observe these rules.

You should never feel pressured into drinking alcohol and be aware that drinking to excess can be dangerous or upsetting.

If you are not used to drinking alcohol, be very careful about the amount you consume.



# British slang

Here is a mini-list of some slang words and phrases you might hear in the UK. Remember, slang is informal language and most commonly used when speaking to someone you know very well!

“SU”	Students’ Union
“24/7 - All the time”	24 hours a day, 7 days a week
“Rip off”	Not worth the price/too expensive
“Cracking/Smashing”	Really good
“What are you on about?”	What are you talking about?
“Fresher”	First year student, new to university
“Brolly”	Umbrella
“Fiver”	Five pounds (money)
“Cheers”	Thanks
“Chill-out”	To relax
“See you later”	Goodbye, said even if you will not see them later
“Get together”	Party or gathering
“Call it a day”	Finish what you’re doing
“Jab”	A vaccination
“All right? / You alright?”	Hello, how are you?
“Mate/Pal”	Friend
“Dodgy”	Suspicious, something to avoid
“Chuffed”	Very pleased
“Wicked”	Excellent
“Uni”	University

“Waffle”	To talk on and on about nothing
“I’m easy”	I don’t mind or it’s all the same to me
“Ta”	Thanks
“Gobsmacked”	Really shocked/amazed
“Miffed”	Slightly annoyed, feeling of irritation
“Taking the mick / taking the mickey”	Joking / teassing
“Ring me”	Call me (phone)
“Grab a bite”	Have some food
“Not my cup of tea”	Means something is not to my liking
“Take it easy”	1. Goodbye, a parting salutation 2. Relax, don’t stress
“Freshers’ Flu”	A cold or similar illness contracted by new students at university
“Gutted”	Really upset
“Give us a bell”	Call me (phone)
“Jammy”	If you describe someone as jammy, you mean that they are very lucky
“Quid”	One pound (money)
“Shambles”	Disorganised, a state of total disorder
“Knackered”	Tired, worn out, exhausted
“Piece of cake”	Something that can be achieved easily with little effort
“Out of order”	Unfair, unacceptable or wrong
“Tenner”	Ten pounds (money)



# UK celebrations

Enjoy the world-famous events, local celebrations, traditions and public holidays that take place throughout the year in the UK. We have listed some key events below:

## NEW YEAR'S DAY, 1 JANUARY

On New Year's Eve (31 December) it's traditional to celebrate at midnight and there are many parties across the country. New Year's Day is a public holiday in the UK and celebrations last until late into the night. The Annual New Year's Day Parade in London begins outside the Ritz Hotel and finishes on Parliament Street. Thousands of performers from all over the world take part in this parade, including marching bands, dancers and puppeteers.



## VALENTINE'S DAY, 14 FEBRUARY

Valentine's Day is a celebration of romance and romantic love. Many people send Valentine's Day cards, gifts or text messages to their partner or somebody whom they have romantic feelings for. Cards and gifts are traditionally sent anonymously in the UK so that you have to guess who loves you.

**Popular Valentine's Day gifts include:**

- Chocolate and other sweets
- Red roses or bunches of flowers
- A surprise meal in a restaurant



## PANCAKE DAY/SHROVE TUESDAY

Pancake Day, or Shrove Tuesday, is the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent. Lent a traditional time for fasting or giving something up. Shrove Tuesday/Pancake Day falls 47 days before Easter Sunday and therefore the date varies from year to year. Traditionally, Shrove Tuesday was the last opportunity for Christian believers to use up eggs and fats before embarking on the Lent fast. Pancakes are the perfect way of using up these ingredients! Despite being a religious tradition, many non-believers in the UK will celebrate Pancake Day.



## EASTER

Easter Sunday, also called Resurrection Sunday, is traditionally a Christian holiday. Easter Day is always on a Sunday, but the date varies from year to year. Eggs are very symbolic at Easter and traditionally symbolised the empty tomb of Jesus. Long ago, people gave gifts of eggs carved from wood or precious stones. Since then, chocolate eggs have become popular and these are given on Easter Sunday. Sometimes, chocolate eggs are hidden in the garden and children partake in an "Easter egg hunt". Despite originally being a religious tradition, many non-believers in the UK celebrate Easter.



## MAY DAY, 1 MAY

**May Day is a traditional British celebration which dates back to the fourth century. It celebrates the end of the cold months and the beginning of summer. Different festivals are organised around the UK on and around May 1st to celebrate.**



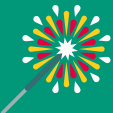
## HALLOWEEN, 31 OCTOBER

Halloween originated from an ancient Celtic festival where people would light bonfires and wear costumes to ward off ghosts. Halloween is celebrated the night of 31 October and children in the UK sometimes dress up in a costume and go "trick or treat"-ing. This involves dressing up, knocking on the doors of houses in a neighbourhood and asking the question 'trick or treat?' Many people will decorate their front gardens with pumpkins and other festive items and will have a 'treat' such as chocolate, fruit or money to give to the children. Adults may also dress up and organise costume parties. Many pubs or clubs will hold special Halloween night events. Ghost tours, bonfires, and watching horror films are also popular on this night.



## BONFIRE NIGHT, 5 NOVEMBER

Bonfire night commemorates the failed plot to assassinate King James the 1st of England on 5 November 1605. The plan was foiled when a member of the plot, Guy Fawkes, was found guarding the explosives beneath the Houses of Parliament and was immediately arrested. Today, there are bonfires and fireworks, including many public displays in towns and cities around the country. Effigies of Guy Fawkes are often burnt on the bonfire. The tradition allegedly began in the very same year as the failed plot to celebrate the safety of the King and has continued for over 400 years to this day.



## CHRISTMAS DAY, 25 DECEMBER

Christmas is an annual festival commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ observed primarily on December 25 as a religious and cultural celebration. Despite being a religious tradition, many non-believers in the UK celebrate Christmas. The Christmas spirit can be seen all over Britain with most public places such as department stores, gift shops, town halls and restaurants decorated extravagantly with lights and decorations sometimes as early as September or October.

Churches and Cathedrals all over the country hold mass, with many people attending the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve (24 December) or a service on Christmas morning.

Christmas trees are an essential part of Christmas. In England, the decorating of Christmas trees has been widely popular since around the 1850s when Prince Albert had a Christmas tree set up in Windsor Castle for his wife Queen Victoria and their children.

The traditional Christmas dinner in England is a main dish of roasted turkey with stuffing, roast potatoes, vegetables and sauces. The dessert is usually a Christmas pudding with brandy sauce and cream. Children receive gifts from Father Christmas who leaves presents for them in their stockings (or pillowcases that they hang at the end of their bed) on Christmas Eve. The gifts are usually opened on Christmas Day.



## BOXING DAY, 26 DECEMBER

Boxing Day is celebrated after Christmas Day and it is traditionally the day that marks giving Christmas gift boxes to service workers. The shops are usually open longer hours on Boxing Day and so it is sometimes known as a shopping holiday with shopping sales in many stores.



## UK Public holidays

Each year in the UK, there are 8 fixed public holidays. Public holidays are commonly referred to as "bank holidays". Students like to use bank holidays to catch up on work, revise, sleep in or take a trip away. Remember, the university is closed on bank holidays and some shops and attractions in the UK may also be shut or have reduced opening hours. We recommend that you plan ahead if you're organising activities on a UK public holiday.

### 2024 Holidays

1 January - New Year's Day

29 March - Good Friday

1 April - Easter Monday

6 May - Early May Bank Holiday

27 May - Spring Bank Holiday

26 August - Summer Bank Holiday

25 December - Christmas Day

26 December - Boxing Day

### 2025 Holidays

1 January - New Year's Day

18 April - Good Friday

21 April - Easter Monday

5 May - Early May Bank Holiday

26 May - Spring Bank Holiday

25 August - Summer Bank Holiday

25 December - Christmas Day

26 December - Boxing Day

# CULTURE SHOCK

When a person moves to a new country, the experience can feel overwhelming. Even if this is something you have planned and prepared for, the extent of the changes and the effects it has on you may take you by surprise. Please realise that this experience is normal and can apply regardless of your home country.

“Culture shock” describes the impact of moving from a familiar culture to an entirely different cultural or social environment. Familiar sights, sounds and smells are no longer around and you are separated from the important people in your life.

## Typical Symptoms

- Difficulty sleeping
- Sadness
- Unexplained crying
- Homesickness
- Exhaustion
- Increased worry
- A desire to withdraw
- Overeating

### The 4 stages of culture shock

**Most people experience culture shock in stages. Many people go through different phases of this process a number of times. Some stages may only apply partially to you.**

**1. The Honeymoon Stage:** This is usually during the first few days or weeks. People experience emotions like excitement, euphoria, anticipation and eagerness. Everything and everyone is new and exciting.

**2. The Frustration Stage:** Culture differences will no longer be celebrated but be viewed as a source of conflict. People may feel confused, isolated and depressed while missing familiar supports.

**3. The Adjustment Stage:** People become more familiar and comfortable with the culture, people, food and language of the host country. Students will generally feel less homesick and have made friends that they can rely on for support. They will better handle the situations that they previously found frustrating.

**4. The Acceptance Stage:** Students will be able to compare the good and bad of their host countries with the good and bad of their home countries. They should feel less like a foreigner and view their host country as more of a second home. Students will have the satisfaction of knowing that they can live successfully in two cultures.

**If you find that you are in the midst of culture shock, help is at hand:**

- Speak to the International Advising Team for assistance in your transition. We have lived abroad and have experienced the same issues!
- Keep in touch with home
- Have familiar things around you that have personal meaning, such as photographs or ornaments
- Eat well. Pack your diet with lots of fruit and veg, so you're energised to face the day
- Get out of your room and experience what life in the UK is like
- Make friends from the UK and ask about their culture
- Exercise. Tooting Leisure Centre is next to the University,

and by finding an activity that you enjoy, you will be able to reduce your feelings of stress

- Attend events held by the International Advising Team, Student Union and the International Student Society (ISS) Committee
- Be patient. Give yourself time to get over culture shock. It will pass. Honest!





## Cost of living in the UK

It is difficult to accurately estimate your living costs in the UK because this will depend on individual lifestyle and the programme you are studying.

The **Which? University website** has a 'student budget calculator' which can help you to check that you will be able to manage your finances whilst living in the UK. It gives guidance on costs including transport, insurance, utilities as well as information on average shopping prices and other expenses.

## Part-time employment

If you wish to undertake paid employment while at the University, you must ensure that the work does not affect your studies or contradict the conditions of your visa. To make sure that you are eligible to work, check that your visa does not list any work restrictions e.g. 'no work' or 'work prohibited'.

If you are a graduate student on a visa, you are not considered to be on vacation during any period when you are expected to study or be working on your dissertation / thesis, even if this is outside term time. You can speak to the **International Advising Team** for specialist immigration advice.

## National Insurance Number

You must apply online for a National Insurance Number (NI) if you plan to work in the UK. This is an individual account number used for recording National Insurance and tax contributions from your pay. If you are thinking about starting work, you can apply for a NI number before you get a job. For more information, please visit the **Gov.uk website**.

## Student Ambassadors

At the University, we run a competitive Student Ambassador Scheme where students get the opportunity to undertake paid work and support and represent the university. The scheme offers students the opportunity to work with young people across London and mix with fellow students in each year and course. The application process for the scheme usually opens in October of each academic year.

If you are interested in applying or want more information, please contact our **Student Ambassador Team** or look out for the Student Ambassador Scheme stall at the Freshers' Fayre.

## Student discounts

Using your student card whilst in the UK can give you access to hundreds of student discounts on things such as clothes, food and technology. If you're in a restaurant or shopping on the high street, it's worth asking whether student discounts are offered.

**TOTUM discount card** – The TOTUM membership is invaluable to most students as it offers hundreds of discounts on shopping, travel, fashion and going out. Now, it's FREE to sign up! The TOTUM offers other packages with a physical card from just £14.99 per year, and you can choose the best package that suits your lifestyle. To apply online for the card, you will need a valid debit or credit card and a recent, digital passport-style photograph to upload. When applying, you need to provide the name of the university and your course start and end dates.

**UNiDAYS** – Free to join and easy to use, UNiDAYS gives you access to the best discounts online and in-store with leading brands and merchants. Once you have access to your university email account, sign up using your student email address and verify that you are a current student. Students can also download the UNiDAYS app and if you show your profile on the app whilst at a checkout, you can receive 10% - 50% discount depending on the store.

**18+ Student Oyster** – See page 18

**16-25 Railcard** – See page 20

**Student Beans** – With brilliant discounts and no charges to be a member, Student Beans gives you instant access to student discount wherever you. Use their map on the **app** to check out the places near you that offer a student discount, and find the quickest way to get there. When you're applying, you need to provide the name of your university and graduation year. They require your university email account to verify your student status as part of the application process. Student Beans makes having fun a little easier!!

**Idealo** (Android, IOS, free) – You'll Always get the best deal if you check this **app/website** first before making a purchase because it compares prices of the products and identifies if you need to shop elsewhere.

**Vouchercloud** (Android, IOS, free) – One of the best **voucher apps** for finding discount and coupon codes quickly and easily – it even adds up how much you've saved!

“You may feel a little homesick when you arrive, so it may help to bring some mementos and things from home that are special to you to help you adjust to your new home”

**Megan Fernandes**  
BMS



## ADVICE FROM OUR CURRENT INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

# “WHAT I WISH I’D KNOWN”

Charge your phone, laptop and basic necessities fully before you arrive. This will buy you some time to purchase an international conversion adapter for your chargers.

It’s perfectly normal to feel homesick for the first few weeks but rest assured the tight knit community at university are amazing! Especially the ISS

Make sure you bring lots of proof of ID and obtain a proof of address from the university ASAP; it’s very important for sorting out phones and bank accounts.

Go through the international guides to understand how life is in the UK. Watch YouTube videos on British culture.

**There’s a lovely group on Facebook for either the International Students Society (ISS) or Freshers**, everyone is so friendly and will answer just about any question you have. You don’t have to figure it all out on your own.

Apply for a TOTUM student discount card before arriving in the UK and a 18 + Student Oyster card once you have enrolled. They can take a few weeks to arrive but become an invaluable money-saving resource.

Use the books from the library first, before purchasing them. Only purchase books that you really need.

“Online food shopping from Sainsbury’s can be your friend if you want to avoid the long walk back to halls in the rain in the winter.”

There are many clubs and societies where you get to meet other people who are passionate about the same things.”

“Go through your course modules on the University’s website. Have an idea of the academic work you are about to venture on.”

“The amount of independent study is the biggest academic step up for all Year 1 students. A lot of work and a mature, efficient approach to learning is required.”

“The Uni shop does Oyster top-ups! Nice to remember especially if you plan to catch the bus.”

“Don’t forget to include travelling costs into your budget. I was quite surprised to see how expensive the public transport in London can be compared to back home.”

“Go to as many events as possible and get involved with the sports teams; it’s a great way to meet new people.”

“Once you arrive, go with flow and don’t be afraid to talk to people. Try lots of different things because the SU and ISS makes it easy for you to be able to do this by providing lots of events.”

“If living in halls make sure you buy a warm duvet for the winters and a small fan for the summer!”

“Find a routine that works for you. Having daily goals or tasks helps keep your mind focused and organized, something that we need in this profession.”

“The weather in London can be a bit funny so I would recommend bringing quite a lot of autumn clothes as I brought a lot of summer clothes.”

“Sign up for a National Insurance number sooner rather than later as you’ll need it for any paid work you do, including things at the university.”

“Seek help! Reach out to anyone that you can and use their expertise to help you out.”

“I packed a lot of clothes that I didn’t need...you can get anything here so it’s not necessary to bring so many clothes.”

“Work hard, play hard. Make friends and get a good support network. Enjoy med school!!”

“Take vitamin C tablets during Freshers’ week! Freshers’ flu is real and it can hit you regardless of how well you ate or warmly you dressed. A heavy bout of the flu can make you miserable and homesick. These vitamin tablets can do wonders for your immune system.”

“Medicine is an exciting and dynamic degree, it is challenging and sometimes overwhelming, but it is important to enjoy the journey and for now especially enjoy the earlier years when you have more time to do what you enjoy!”

“My first tip is to be on top of lectures! Make lecture notes and then revise the content on a weekly basis which will help you so much for your exams. Also asking questions as a group of people over Zoom calls or teams has been very helpful for me. So do the lecture then make questions out of it for yourself and test your knowledge. I have found Anki flashcards quite useful so if you download the app, you can make different sets of flashcards for yourself! Attend any revision sessions that societies put up!”

I think the main thing I wish someone had told me is that opportunities to meet people and integrate have to be sought, they don’t just come to you. Nobody will go out of their way necessarily to include you, even if they’re really friendly. Join as many societies, clubs and activities as you can in your first few weeks and don’t be afraid to try completely new things - you can always stop them later, but it’s much harder to start when the welcoming rush of freshers is over.



# WE LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU!

We hope that you have found this pre-departure guide useful and that your preparations for coming to London are going well.

As an international student you'll be joining the healthcare professionals of the future from all around the world. We're proud to be members of this close community in the great city of London and we are excited that you'll be joining us. We hope you are too!

One of the great strengths of the University is its friendliness and inclusivity. Please keep asking questions before you come to London, when you arrive and throughout your time with us. Our extensive network of staff and students are here to support you and will make your time with us as rewarding as possible.

The International Advising Team look forward to giving you a warm welcome when you arrive and we hope to provide you with all the advice and support you need before coming to London.

See you soon!

Best wishes,

**The International Advising Team**

**Elizabeth & Shanshan**

## Contact us

student.immigration@sgul.ac.uk

 [groups/SGULInternationalStudentSupport](#)

## MORE INFORMATION

**UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)**

UKCISA is the UK's national advisory body serving the interests of international students and those who work with them. See their website for a wealth of information specific to International Students, from immigration to driving in the UK. If you have any questions about living in the UK as an international student, this would be the place to start.

**British Council**

British Council specialises in international cultural and educational opportunities and promotes a wider knowledge of the UK and the English language; encouraging cultural, scientific, technological and educational co-operation.

**TimeOut London**

Find out what's on in London with Time Out. The website provides your ultimate guide to restaurants, films, theatre, art, gigs, clubs, shops and much more.

**Prepare for Success**

An interactive online resource to help students prepare for academic study in the UK. This webpage is aimed at international students who are getting ready to come to the UK for study in higher education. It contains learning resources which are activity-based to help you find out about different aspects of academic life in the UK and the skills needed for effective study.

**Transport for London (TFL)**

The TFL website provides information on all forms of transport in London including cycle hire, routes, maps, tickets sales, real time traffic and travel updates.

**National Rail**

The gateway to Britain's National Rail network. A website for UK rail travel including company information, promotions, train times, fares enquiries and more.

**UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI)**

UK Visas and Immigration is a division of the Home Office responsible for the United Kingdom's visa system.

**National Health Service (NHS)**

The NHS provides a comprehensive range of health services in the UK.

*Disclaimer: The University is not responsible for the content on any of the above websites.*



112469JUN24