



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



International Student Guide

Pre-arrival and orientation information

Welcome from the International Student Team

This pre-arrival and orientation guide has been produced for students who are coming to study at Cambridge from outside the UK. It provides practical guidance on coming to live and study in Cambridge from an international student perspective and its intention is to complement other sources of guidance you are likely to receive as part of your induction from, for example, your College and the Cambridge University Students Union (CUSU / iCUSU).

Each year the University of Cambridge welcomes over 800 new undergraduate and 2500 graduate international students from over 130 different countries. Coming to live and study in Cambridge can be both an exciting and daunting prospect but there is a lot of support available to you.

The International Student Team (IST), based in the Academic Division, provides specialist support to international students. Contact us if you have questions about the information provided in this guide or if you have a query related to coming to live and study in the UK that has not been included. IST is also the authorised office at the University to provide student visa advice and has responsibility for ensuring institutional student immigration compliance.

w www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk
e internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk
t [@cam_intlstudent](https://twitter.com/cam_intlstudent), twitter.com/cam_intlstudent

Travelling to Cambridge

By Air

Cambridge is served by five main airports: Stansted (the closest), Heathrow, Gatwick, City and Luton.

From Stansted: take a direct train to Cambridge which takes 35 minutes and costs around £15 one way. For further information visit www.stanstedairport.com/transport-and-directions/trains

From Heathrow: take a National Express coach to Cambridge which stops at Parkside next to Parker's Piece (park). Check journey time and ticket costs at www.nationalexpress.com Alternatively, you can take the train - first take the Piccadilly Line on the London Underground to King's Cross Station and then a train to Cambridge. Check journey time and costs at www.nationalrail.co.uk

From Gatwick: take a National Express coach to Cambridge which stops at Parkside next to Parker's Piece (park). Check journey time and ticket costs at www.nationalexpress.com Alternatively you can take the train to Victoria Station, change to the Victoria Line on the underground to King's Cross Station and then a train to Cambridge. Check journey time and costs at www.nationalrail.co.uk

From London City: Take the DLR (Docklands Light Railway) to Bank Underground Station, change to the Northern Line to King's Cross and then a train to Cambridge. Check journey time and costs at www.nationalrail.co.uk

From Luton: take a National Express coach from Luton to Cambridge. Check journey time and ticket costs at www.nationalexpress.com

Taxis are available from the airports or can be pre-booked but will cost considerably more.

By Train

There are direct trains from central London (King's Cross and Liverpool Street Stations) which take about one hour to Cambridge. For further information visit www.nationalrail.co.uk

By Road

From the south, leave the M11 at Junction 11 and from the north, leave the A1 at the A14.

Accommodation

If you are not taking accommodation in your College, the University's Accommodation Service will be able to help you find a suitable place to live. Register with them via www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk and you will be sent login and password information so that you can search their database. They will be able to assist with two types of properties:

- University-owned or managed accommodation which is located throughout the City. These are usually self-contained flats and houses, not rooms, both furnished and unfurnished. They are available for a minimum period of one year and can be booked prior to arriving in Cambridge.
- Private accommodation which is located throughout the City and the surrounding villages. There are rooms available in houses shared with landlords or with fellow students, along with whole houses and flats. We would strongly advise you to view a property in person, or have a reliable contact view, before agreeing to a contract with a landlord. The Accommodation Service has a large list of temporary accommodation where you can stay whilst looking for a suitable longer-term option.

Although properties are available online, once you have registered you are very welcome to contact the Accommodation Service by email, or book an appointment to visit their office for further advice and guidance.

Temporary accommodation on arrival

You may require temporary accommodation when you first arrive in Cambridge. A list of temporary accommodation is available via 'Visit Cambridge' on the front page of the Accommodation Service website. This type of accommodation is in high demand at the start of the academic year.

Council Tax

Council tax is paid to the local authorities for services they provide and applies to residential properties. Full-time students on courses of one academic year (9 months) or longer are normally exempt from having to pay council tax if they live in University accommodation or private accommodation where everyone who lives in the property is a full time student. If these are your circumstances and you receive a council tax bill, you can apply for an exemption. Your spouse and / or children are also exempt if they are in the UK as your visa dependants. If your spouse and / or children are nationals of a country in the European Economic Area, however, it is likely council tax will need to be paid for adults 18 years old or over and not in full-time education. For further information, visit www.gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students

There is further useful information about council tax exemptions and discounts on the National Union of Students website at www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/money-and-funding/council-tax



Travelling around Cambridge

Cycling

Cambridge is one of the top cycling cities in the UK and cycling is the most popular way for students to travel around. There are a number of places you can buy new or second-hand bikes. You can also look on the noticeboards at your College or check on cycle auction websites.

It is important to remember:

- We drive on the left-hand side of the road in the UK.
- Wear a helmet.
- You need lights on your bike as it is a legal requirement at night – white for the front and red for the back.
- A good lock is advisable as bike theft is common.
- A bell and mudguards can be useful.
- Be respectful to others and do not cycle in pedestrian areas or on pavements, which is illegal unless they are designated cycle paths.

Further rules for cyclist are outlined in the UK Highway Code: www.gov.uk/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82

If you haven't cycled before or haven't been on a bike for a long time, there is useful information to get started at www.camcycle.org.uk/resources/training

Buses

Buses are another way to get around Cambridge. The main bus station is on Drummer Street, where most buses for travel in and around Cambridge can be found. There are also stops along Emmanuel Street and St Andrew's Street. The University part-funds the Uni4 bus service, which runs from Madingley Road Park and Ride to Addenbrooke's Hospital Bus Station, via many University sites, including Homerton College and West Cambridge. Travel on the Uni4 is currently 90 pence to University Card holders.

Taxis

Taxis can be an expensive way to get around Cambridge. There are a number of different taxi companies in Cambridge which can be booked over the telephone. There are also two main taxi ranks in the centre; Drummer Street (near the bus station and Emmanuel College) and on St Andrew's Street (near Lion Yard and Christ's College). There is also a taxi rank at the train station.

Driving

Students are normally not allowed to have a car or other motor vehicle whilst at the University due to the traffic regulations of the city. If it is necessary for you to have a vehicle, you must have a licence issued by the Motor Proctor. Further information is available at www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/proctors/motor/index.html

Driving in Cambridge can be difficult with its high traffic volume, narrow streets and expensive parking. You must have a valid licence and adequate insurance. If you are from within the European Economic Area, you can drive as long as your licence remains valid.

If you are from outside the European Economic Area, you can drive for 12 months on your current driving licence or international driving permit. You can take a test and obtain a British licence once you have been here 6 months and must have done so within the 12 months to ensure you can continue to drive legally. There are some exceptions to this depending on where your licence was issued and full information is available at www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence

Walking

This is, of course, the cheapest option and as Cambridge is relatively small many students choose to walk around the city.

Maps

An interactive map of Cambridge, showing University Colleges, Departments and Faculties, is available at <https://map.cam.ac.uk>

Travelling in the UK

Trains are usually the most convenient way to travel to other parts of Britain. Tickets should be booked in advance and as early as possible to save money. Tickets are generally available 12 weeks before the date of travel. There are various online train booking sites that offer discounted tickets.

If you are aged 16-25, or a full-time student aged 26 or older, you can apply for a discount railcard which costs £30 for one year and can save you 1/3 off most rail fares across Britain: www.16-25railcard.co.uk/

Trains from Cambridge to London's King's Cross run frequently. Direct trains can take 50 minutes to 1 hour 25 minutes depending on the route. The last train back to Cambridge from Kings Cross is around midnight. The tube is the fastest way to travel in London and the cheapest way is with an Oyster card, a plastic smartcard which holds pay as you go credit. Contactless bank cards can be used in place of an Oyster card. <https://tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/>

Coaches are a cheaper alternative to trains but usually take longer. Coaches leave from Parkside next to Parker's Piece (park). Tickets should be booked in advance. National Express coaches run from Cambridge to all different parts of Britain: www.nationalexpress.com If you're aged 16 - 26 or a full-time student, then our Young Persons Coachcard allows you to save 1/3 on standard fares.

International Student Identity Card (ISIC Card)

You may wish to consider purchasing an ISIC card which entitles you to discounted international travel, amongst other discounts. You can obtain one in person from STA Travel in Cambridge or via the [ISIC website](#) The card costs £12.00.

Opening a UK bank account

All the major UK banks have branches in Cambridge. Different banks offer different benefits and services to international students so it is advisable to check your options before making a choice. Most students open a current account which provides a visa debit card, which can be used to make payment in shops and online as well as take money from cash points (ATMs) up to a daily maximum limit, and is usually combined with an online banking service.

The banks advise students to visit one of their branches to discuss opening an account. You may need to book an appointment to make your application depending on how busy the bank is at the time you visit. This is particularly likely at the beginning of the academic year. The process to open an account takes approximately one hour and will be activated on the same day. You will subsequently be sent the bank card, normally within a week, with the PIN for the card sent separately.

In order to open an account you will need to take your passport, UK visa if applicable, and a letter from your College.

Whilst the vast majority of students do not have any issues opening bank accounts in the UK, each prospective account holder is assessed by the individual bank on their application and being able to open an account is not guaranteed.

It may also be useful to seek advice from your bank in your home country before coming to the UK.

It is advisable to ensure you have funds you can use for the first few weeks in the UK as it may take some time to make all the arrangements for your new bank account.

The following list of banks is provided as a guide only. You will need to check with individual banks for advice on different bank accounts and related services. Banks are listed in Alphabetical order.

Bank	Branch Address	Website	Course length requirement	Accounts for international students
Barclays	9/11 St Andrew's Street Or 3 Sidney Street	www.barclays.com	At least one year	Student account which provides visa debit card and is free.
HSBC	63 – 64 St Andrew's Street	www.hsbc.co.uk	At least one year	Student account which provides visa debit card and is free.
Lloyds	3 Sidney Street Or 95 – 97 Regent Street	www.lloydsbank.com	At least 6 months	Basic account which provides visa debit card and is free. Silver account which provides a visa debit card and additional benefits for a monthly fee of £9.95.
Natwest	56 St Andrew's Street Or 23 Market Street	www.natwest.com	At least one year	Basic account which provides visa debit card and is free. Silver account which provides a visa debit card and additional benefits for a monthly fee of £10.
Santander	60 St Andrew's Street Or 49 Sidney Street	www.santander.co.uk	No course length requirement	Basic account is free but only provides an ATM card which cannot be used for purchases in shops or online. International Student Current Account which provides a visa debit card and has additional benefits, including no fees for international or other transactions, for a £5 monthly charge.
TSB	6 St Andrew's Street	www.tsb.co.uk	No course length requirement	Classic or Classic Plus account. Both are free and provide a visa debit card.

Healthcare

The National Health Service (NHS) is the UK's state healthcare system providing a wide range of health care services including appointments with a doctor, hospital treatment and dental care.

You should register with a doctor as soon as possible after your arrival in Cambridge. Your College will give advice on this and may recommend a GP practice. You will need your passport and a letter from your College as proof you are a student.

The GP will be your first point of contact for your health needs and you must be referred to a specialist by your GP. If you are feeling unwell whilst in College, let your College know. Most Colleges have a nurse who will be able to give you advice and may arrange for a doctor to visit you.

EEA nationals

Non-UK European Economic Area (EEA) nationals and their family should obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before coming to the UK to access NHS services for free in the UK.

Tier 4 students

Students on a Tier 4 student visa and coming to the UK for 6 months or longer will have paid an immigration health surcharge as part of their visa application fee. This entitles students to access NHS care free of charge in the same way as a permanent UK resident. This includes at the Doctor's surgery (known as General Practitioner or GP), a Healthcare Centre or in a hospital. You may need to pay for dental and optical treatment as well as for any medicine prescribed by the doctor and collected from a Pharmacy for which there is normally a standard charge of £8.20. If you need to have continued medication, you may find it cheaper to get a Prescription Pre-payment Certificate: www.gov.uk/get-a-ppc

Tier 4 students from Australia and New Zealand are exempt from the immigration health surcharge, as reciprocal agreements exist between the UK and these countries, and will be able to access NHS services, as outlined above, for free during their studies in the UK.

Courses less than six months

If your course is for less than six months and you are from a non-EEA country, you are advised to take out medical insurance as you will be liable for NHS charges for the treatment you receive in the UK except in a medical emergency and this is limited. Some countries have a reciprocal agreement with the UK which may entitle you to some free healthcare on the NHS even if your course is less than six months but you should seek advice from the health authorities in your home country about what treatment will be covered

Long term health conditions

If you have a long term health condition, bring documentary evidence from the doctor in your home country (in English) and provide this when you register with a doctor in the UK. You may wish to ask for an appointment to discuss your needs.

If you are receiving on-going medical treatment or taking medication, bring with you a Doctor's certificate (in English) confirming the treatment and / or any medication you are receiving. If you need ongoing medication in the UK, the GP reception will explain how they arrange repeat prescriptions for when you are anticipating your first supply of medication to run out. It can take up to 48 hours to obtain a repeat prescription. Prior to travelling to the UK, it is advisable to check with your transport provider what medications you are allowed to carry with you and what you can take through customs.

GPs reserve the right not to prescribe certain medication and not all medication from outside the UK is available on the NHS. Your GP will sometimes be unable to prescribe the medication you are taking, because it is not used in the UK or because of NHS prescribing restrictions. If you have specialised medication or you are in any doubt, you are advised to bring a supply with you.

Private Medical Insurance

It is your decision whether you also have private healthcare insurance. You may wish to consider this to cover the following potential health-related costs:

- Loss of fees if you are unable to complete your course;
- Costs incurred returning to your home country for treatment;
- Private medical treatment which may offer provision over and above the NHS healthcare treatment.

If you already have medical insurance in your home country, you may wish to check whether this can be extended to cover your stay in the UK.

Emergency Medical Care

If you require urgent emergency medical assistance and are unable to travel to the hospital, either contact your College Porters' Lodge if you are living in College accommodation or dial 999 free from any phone and ask for the ambulance service. The nearest Accident and Emergency department is at Addenbrooke's hospital. If you need urgent treatment, but you are well enough to travel, you can also make your own way to the hospital's Accident and Emergency (A&E) department, or ask a friend to take you.

Dental Care

Once you have registered with a GP you can also register with an NHS dentist. You can ask your College for further advice on where to register. You will have to pay for some dental services.

Optical Care

Eye care is provided by high street opticians, of which there are many in Cambridge. To purchase spectacles or contact lenses you will need a British eye prescription, which you get from the optician following a sight test. Sight tests can be arranged by contacting the optician directly. The cost of frames, lenses and contact lenses varies.

Family and friends

Please note that family or friends visiting from abroad should take adequate health care insurance.



National holidays

There are eight public holidays in the UK known as 'Bank Holidays' when offices, banks, and many shops will be closed and public transport will be more limited. However, lectures and examinations still may be given on the Bank Holidays that take place during Full Term. A full list of the UK's national holidays is available at www.gov.uk/bank-holidays

Safety

The British Council has produced a useful information guide for international students on personal safety in the UK: www.educationuk.org/global/articles/safety/

It is advisable:

- to keep your passport (and visa) in a safe place.
- not to carry around large amounts of cash. You can use your bank card to pay for things.
- in an emergency call 999 free from any phone. This connects to the police, fire brigade or ambulance service. To report a non-emergency minor crime call 101.

Contents Insurance

If you are living in College, find out if the College has an insurance policy which covers personal possessions. Most do not in which case, along with those in private accommodation, you should consider taking out insurance to cover loss of personal property. It may be cheaper to take out insurance in your home country before travelling to the UK. Alternatively there are a number of companies in the UK that offer specialist insurance for international students. The most well-known for students is Endsleigh Insurance (www.endsleigh.co.uk) but it is advisable to research into a range of offers and ensure you fully understand what is covered by the policy.

Electricity

The voltage of mains electricity in the UK is 240v. Electrical equipment rated at 230v or 240v will function normally. Equipment rated at 220v may function, but it is advisable to check with the manufacturer before using it in the UK. The standard plug in the UK is a three-pin model. Do not bring any electrical items that need mains power unless they are dual voltage 110-120/220-240v (for example, a laptop computer). It may be advisable to buy small electrical items in the UK as this will save you the cost of a transformer. Converters for other models used in continental Europe and the Americas are widely available.

Television

It is illegal to own and use a television if you do not have a television licence. This can be purchased online, by telephone or at a 'PayPoint Outlet' and costs £145.50 a year: www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Telephone Calls

To make international calls, it is advisable to buy pre-paid telephone cards which can be purchased in almost all newsagents, post offices and supermarkets. This is normally significantly cheaper than making calls directly on your phone. There are hundreds of different cards available; ask in the shop for the best deal to the country you intend to call.

You may be able to use your current mobile phone in the UK although, if this is possible, calls are likely to be costly. You may wish to check this with your mobile phone provider before arriving in the UK. Alternatively, if your phone is 'unlocked' and compatible, you could buy an international or UK SIM card for cheaper calls in the UK and internationally.

If you want to buy a mobile phone in the UK, there are two main options:

- 'pay-as-you-go' where you buy the phone and separately purchase 'top-up' credit, from £5, to make calls.
- A contract where the phone is often free or considerably discounted and you pay a monthly fee for an allocated amount of calls, texts and mobile data usage. Most contracts are for at least 12 months.

Within these two options, there is a wide-range of deals from mobile phone providers so it is advisable to consider different options before deciding which is best for you.

Free internet access is available in most University Faculties and Departments and Colleges so you may prefer to use a video chat system.

Working in the UK

The University places restrictions on working during your studies.

Undergraduate students are not allowed to take employment during Full Term but should receive further guidance from their College.

Graduate students are not allowed to undertake paid work outside the University or a College while they are studying full-time. Academic work - especially teaching undergraduates - can provide postgraduate students with valuable transferrable skills and a limited amount of this type of work is encouraged, provided it does not interfere with studies. Research students, with the approval of both their supervisor and College Tutor, may be able to undertake a small amount of academic work such as supervising undergraduates, invigilating examinations, working in a University / College library or demonstrating in a laboratory. However, students should not rely on such work to generate essential income for their studies. The University stipulates that normally no more than ten hours a week may be spent in such activities; please note that some grant-awarding bodies allow only a maximum of six hours per week.

The vacation dates used by undergraduates do not apply to graduate research students who study throughout the academic year, commencing on 1st October and finishing on 30th September, with appropriate short breaks for holidays. Master's students should consult their Faculty or Department for further details regarding breaks.

Anybody who works in the UK needs a National Insurance (NI) number. To apply, you need to telephone the Jobcentre Plus application line on 0345 600 0643, Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm. For call charges and additional information, visit www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number Jobcentre Plus will arrange either an 'Evidence of Identity' interview for you or send you a postal application. If relevant, they will confirm the date, time and location of your interview and what information/documentation you need to support your application.

Living in Cambridge

There are various websites that can help you navigate your way around Cambridge and provide information on shopping, eating out and local events.

www.cambridgebid.co.uk - this website lists shops by logo so you can find what you are searching for more easily.

www.visitcambridge.org is the city's tourist information website, giving an overview of official tours (play the tourist!), things to do around Cambridge, events that are happening in the city and lots of other useful information.

Other sites such as '[Local Secrets](#)' and '[Cambridge Edition](#)' provide information on places to eat, visit and stay, as well as special offers and reviews.

Religious Organisations

Most Colleges have a chapel in which Church of England (Anglican) services are held during term. All members of the College can participate, whatever their religious beliefs or denomination. The College Chaplain organises the religious life of the College and should be able to help and give advice to all members of College (regardless of their religious beliefs) if required. Great St Mary's is the University Church, but Cambridge has a wide variety of churches and other places of worship including: Catholic Church (Corner of Lensfield Rd and Hills Rd), Eden Baptist Church (Eden Street, near the Grafton Centre), Presbyterian Church (near Wolfson College), and Cambridge Mosque (on Mawson Road). There are two synagogues in Cambridge: The Orthodox Synagogue (Thompson's Lane) and The Reform Synagogue, Beth Shalom.

In addition, there are a large number of religious societies amongst the many student societies at the University: www.cam.ac.uk/societies

Supermarkets

There are two supermarkets in Cambridge city centre. One is located on Sidney Street (across from Sidney Sussex College) and the other one is located at Market Square.

Markets

There is a market every day on Market Square selling items from food, baked goods, coffee, homewares, vegetables, sweets, clothes, books and music: www.cambridge.gov.uk/markets

This is a general market from Monday to Saturday (10am-4pm) and offers products from fruit and cheese to books and bike repairs. On Sunday, also 10am – 4pm, the same area becomes an Arts & Crafts and Local Produce Market. The traders on a Sunday make or produce their own goods.

Shopping centres and places to eat

Cambridge has three major central shopping areas:

- Grand Arcade; is located at the heart of the city at St Andrew's Street. For more information see www.grandarcade.co.uk
- The Grafton; a short distance from Christ's Pieces. This shopping centre contains over 60 stores as well as food and drink outlets and a multiplex cinema. www.graftoncentre.co.uk
- Lion Yard shopping centre comprises two floors full of shops. The centre can be reached from Petty Cury, St Andrews Street or Market Square www.thelionyard.co.uk

There are many more [shopping and eating areas](#) with something to suit everyone. In particular:

- Mill Road is very popular for its cosmopolitan feel and international food shops. Visit the [community website](#) for a virtual tour of the street and find more information about the shops, restaurants and services.
- Newmarket Road has more supermarkets, clothes shops and a selection of homeware stores at the Cambridge Retail Park and the [Beehive Centre](#).
- Regent Street has a number of restaurants offering a range of international cuisine.

Cinemas, theatres and music

Cambridge has two multiplex cinemas: “[Vue](#)”, located in The Grafton, and “[The Light Cinema](#)” which forms part of the [Cambridge Leisure centre](#), south of the city centre. For foreign language films, livestream of theatre as well as general releases you can go to the [Arts Picturehouse](#), near Emmanuel College.

Cambridge's main theatres are the [ADC Theatre](#) (the University's theatre),

[Cambridge Arts Theatre](#) and [Mumford Theatre](#). Concerts and other performances take place in [Cambridge Junction](#) (located next to the Leisure Centre) and the [Corn Exchange](#), while many pubs hold regular live music events. Yet more events can be found at the [West Road Concert Hall](#), housed within the University's Faculty of Music, and the [Cambridge Concert Calendar](#).

Museums

Cambridge has many museums, most of which are free to enter. Pay a visit to the Fitzwilliam Museum or any other site listed at www.visitcambridge.org/things-to-do/museums-galleries-and-attractions/museums and www.cam.ac.uk/museums-and-collections.

Punting

A famous pastime for students is punting: propelling a small flat bottomed boat down the river Cam using a pole. It's an excellent way to see the backs of the Colleges and much of the town itself. Many of the river Colleges own punts but all students can get discounted deals either from one of the punting companies or the Colleges themselves.

Colleges

Your college will be your home away from home. As a Cambridge student you will also have free access to all the colleges, some of which have been around for hundreds of years. For more information on opening hours you can visit the website of the college you are interested in: <http://map.cam.ac.uk/colleges/>



Homesickness

The decision to study at Cambridge brings the opportunity to make new friends, to expand your academic knowledge, and to change your existing view of the world. But in common with any major transition, it also brings challenges. Feeling homesick can be one of them, even if you've already lived abroad. It is one of the emotional states that can be a part of what is known as culture shock.

Homesickness is a common experience for international students- and for many British students who have left home for the first time. It can affect people in different forms: eg coming in waves, or slowly building up over time. Sometimes it seems more like a physical illness, e.g. feeling tired, unwell, or lacking in energy. It can appear when you're not expecting it- for example, when things have gone well. The trigger in this case can be having no one really close or special with whom to share the experience.

Symptoms of homesickness can include:

- Feeling down-hearted, tearful or anxious
- Feeling lost or lonely
- Longing and grief for your former life
- Being unable to stop contacting people at home
- Being absent-minded, or finding it difficult to concentrate
- Feeling unwell
- Brooding on the past

Common triggers may include:

- When the 'honeymoon period' has worn off, i.e. Cambridge no longer seems wonderful or exciting
- When you have doubts about your decision to study here
- When the demands of your course have become more real, and your self-confidence is affected
- If the local culture feels confusing, unwelcoming, or just too different
- If you miss a major celebration, holiday or important event that is happening at home
- When a crisis occurs and your parents, friends or partner aren't there to provide help and support
- If friends leave Cambridge, or if you spend long periods of time here when others have gone back home

There may be other causes, depending on your particular circumstances. But the most important thing to remember is that homesickness is normal. Be patient with yourself as you adjust. Try to accept that feeling comfortable in Cambridge will take some time. It helps if you can encourage yourself, and if you can remember that you are not alone in feeling this way.

Things you can do to cope with homesickness:

• **Leave your room**

It can be tempting to seek the security of your own space, but don't hide in your room for too long. Reach out to others. Invite people for a cup of tea or coffee, or for a meal. Go into town, for a walk by the river, or see a film. Don't be afraid to talk about your experience of homesickness, but try to stay positive.

• **Consider how much time you spend in contact with the people back home:**

If you keep in touch infrequently, you'll miss the support that you crave from the people who are important to you. But if you rely on them too much, you may risk becoming overly-dependent. Try to strike a reasonable balance to get the best of both worlds, with the aim of developing a new sense of your own independence.

• **Do something**

Meeting up with others from your own culture can be an antidote to loneliness, and an essential source of comfort. But it's equally important to leave your comfort zone from time to time. The opportunities in Cambridge are many and varied- get involved, and get busy! Join a student society, play a sport, volunteer, try a new type of food. Attend one of the many performances, lectures, and events that regularly take place across the University and Colleges.

• **Find a way to process your experiences**

Many international students post blogs, keep journals, take photographs, or find other mediums to help them get through times of homesickness and culture shock. A photo journal or blog can become a way of documenting your life at Cambridge, sharing with others what you experienced, what you've learned, and how you faced up to any obstacles along the journey.

University Services

• Get out of Cambridge

Cambridge has many riches, but it's still a place that can feel small at times. Escape the 'Cambridge Bubble' to take in some of the glorious sights within the UK. London is less than an hour away by train, and the cities of Europe aren't very far, either. Plan trips to break up the time, and to reward yourself when you've accomplished a goal, or met an important academic deadline.

• If it doesn't get any easier

If you continue to feel very upset and lonely, or nothing seems to make a difference, consider talking things over in confidence with one of the counsellors at the University Counselling Service. For more information about how to request an appointment, go to: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

Careers Service

The Careers Service welcomes the chance to support students from all parts of the globe as you research and plan your career in your home, or another, country. Careers services in the UK operate differently to the ones you may be used to; our Careers Service does not pre-select students for specific jobs, nor forward CVs to employers, for example. The Service's focus is on providing careers related information and guidance - helping you identify your career interests; target employers or postgraduate courses; make effective applications and perform well at interviews and other selection events; and develop career planning skills which you can continue to use after leaving Cambridge. You will have access to employers via several major annual recruitment events, numerous employer presentations and skills sessions all hosted in Cambridge. For students looking for graduate-level opportunities in Hong Kong, mainland China and the Asia-Pacific region, the Service runs three major Careers fairs in these countries during late August.

The Careers Service website www.careers.cam.ac.uk lists over 5,500 graduate-level vacancies and internships each year, across all employment sectors, many of them outside the UK. You can search these using the name of your Country or its main cities. Linked from the Careers website is [Going Global](#) and [Ten Minutes With](#) which both allow you to source more opportunities across the globe. We suggest you register on the Careers website early during your time at Cambridge: many employment opportunities and events are only offered at the beginning of the academic year.

The 'International Students' section of the website provides information on UK post-graduation visa options: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/visas-after-studying

Counselling

All international students are welcome to contact the University Counselling Service, which offers confidential help and support to over 1500 students each year. The Service is staffed by a team of professionally qualified counsellors who are familiar with the difficulties that can be encountered by international students, coming from a wide range of backgrounds, religions, and cultures.

Counselling can help with homesickness and adjusting to a new culture, as well as other common student difficulties including anxiety, stress, low mood, and academic concerns. Many personal, relationship or identity problems can be helped through counselling, e.g. family difficulties, bereavement, issues with self-esteem



and confidence, or dealing with difficult dilemmas and decisions.

The Service is available throughout the year except for periods at Christmas and Easter. Opening hours are 9.00am - 5.30pm Monday and Thursday, Friday 9.00-5.00pm, and 9.00 - 7.00pm Tuesdays and Thursdays. To request an appointment, please see the website www.counselling.cam.ac.uk

The Language Centre

The Language Centre provides language learning opportunities to students throughout the University. With a resource bank encompassing books, CDs, CD-ROMs, live satellite TV in 12 languages, recorded international news, a suite of on-line programmes and a collection of over 1,000 films from around the world, the Language Centre is a 'must-see' for all language enthusiasts at Cambridge.

The John Trim Centre houses self-study resources in over 170 languages (including English, of course) and a dedicated Advising Team who offer one-to-one appointments and workshops to support you in planning your studies and developing your language learning strategies to sustain your progress. They also offer help with selecting learning materials and run a range of workshops and study groups to encourage collaborative learning.

We also run a very popular Conversation Exchange Scheme, which encourages students to pair up with a native speaker of the language they are interested in so that they can arrange to meet up to actively practise their language skills - in both languages.

In addition to our static resources, the Language Centre is constantly extending its online resources, including the development by the Language Centre's Technical Section of high quality, interactive learning materials which are available to all registered users, via LC Online.

If you are looking to brush up, start or further your abilities in a foreign (i.e. non-English) language, then check out what's on offer by the CULP (Cambridge University Language Programmes) team. They offer taught language courses at various levels and for various purposes in French, German, Spanish, Italian, Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Arabic, Japanese, Portuguese, Greek, Urdu, Persian and Swahili.

The Language Centre also runs Advanced Discussion Groups in a range of languages allowing advanced students to maintain their spoken ability. Check out our website for details of which groups are running this term.

Academic Development and Training for International Students

Based in the Language Centre, the Academic Development and Training Section for International Students supports all international students at the University in all aspects of academic English skills. Whether you are looking to strengthen your discipline-specific writing skills, further train and fine tune your presentation skills, or whether you just want to develop your academic communication skills more generally, then you will find what you are looking for on the In-Sessional Support Programme.

The mainstay of this programme are the supervisions where you work one on one with one of teaching team to receive focused support and tailored training to make you a more efficient and effective communicator. In addition to this, we run 2-3 workshops per week during term on a range of different aspects of academic literacy which you can sign up for. From October 2014, everyone registering on the In-Sessional will also receive 1.5 hours of individual vocal training.

If it's just relaxed but guided social English you are looking for, then the English Conversation Hours may be what you are looking for. Meeting once a week during term, the aim of these sessions is to take a different social or current affairs topic each week and explore it in terms of language, and where appropriate, consider the cultural connotations.

We are also continually expanding our range of online courseware, covering such topics as What is Academic English? Achieving Clarity in English and Approaches to Editing. These are freely available for all registered members of the University. Three of our Pre-Arrival online modules aimed at preparing you to hit the ground running when you get to Cambridge are also available via the [International Students website](#).

For more information on all the Language Centre resources and courses, check out our website: www.langcen.cam.ac.uk

Childcare and support for families

The University's Childcare Office oversees the facilities and assistance offered to University staff and students with children.

West Cambridge Nursery, one of the University's workplace nurseries, offers 20 FTE student places for children from three months to school age. The Childcare Office also runs a Holiday Playscheme which operates during the state school holiday periods (excluding Christmas and Bank Holidays) for school-age children. Our venue at St Mary's Junior School is also open for some additional holiday periods. There is discounted rate for students.

The Childcare Information Service aims to support families of the University community. The service offers information on family related issues including childcare, schooling, health care, financial support and local community resources. There is also information for student parents on college provisions for families and possible financial support available.

More information can be found here: www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk.

Each College has a designated Childcare Contact – a list of these can be found at: www.childcare.admin.cam.ac.uk/college-support-student-parents/designated-college-childcare-contacts

Eligible EU and overseas students may be able to apply to the Central Childcare Bursary Scheme, which awards means-tested grants to help with childcare costs

Development and Alumni Relations

As a Cambridge student you now have a lifetime's access to a truly remarkable global alumni network. The cornerstone of this network are the 440 volunteer-led Alumni Groups in over 100 countries. There are also Alumni Groups based around key sectors and interests ranging from Energy to Education. Alumni Groups range from individual contacts to well established organisations with connections to highly influential local networks. Some Groups even have student bursaries and mentoring programmes, but most importantly all are keen to meet, host and help current students.

You may already have met your local Group in your home town at one of the Welcome to Cambridge events they run for upcoming students.

The Development and Alumni Relations office provide full information about the Groups and their activities on their web pages at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/get-involved/find-a-group

The Alumni Relations team also offer a Student Travel Award which provides two undergraduate students with up to £1000 each to travel separately throughout Europe during the summer, visiting Cambridge's Alumni Groups and promoting their activities to other students. Full details can be found at www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/get-involved/student-travel-award-2015

You can also meet the Alumni Relations team, to hear more about how they can help you as a student, at their stand at Freshers' Festival .

Student Unions

CUSU

Every Cambridge student is automatically a member of Cambridge University Students' Union. CUSU exists to represent Cambridge students' interests at a University level and provides central support for students, organises campaigns and students events and runs a programme of entertainments. Along with the Graduate Union (GU), it runs the Student Advice Service (SAS) which offers free, impartial advice on any issues including health, welfare and academic matters. The SAS is open every day of the week, and based both at CUSU and the GU. You can turn up for a chat or book an appointment on the website: www.studentadvice.cam.ac.uk

CUSU International (iCUSU) is a special branch within CUSU and is the umbrella body for all international societies and students at the University of Cambridge. They aim to serve as a hub for all things international happening in Cambridge, whilst looking out for the needs of international students. This year their flagship events will include International Freshers' Week, International Food Festival, iCUSU World Cup and the International Talent Show. You can find out more at: www.international.cusu.cam.ac.uk/about/

Graduate Union

The Graduate Union (GU) is the University-wide representative body for graduate students at the University of Cambridge. The GU is run by a Committee of elected officers who organise international, welfare, families, academic and other social events, such as movie nights, talks, parent toddler coffee mornings, and exercise classes. The events are open to all graduate students. The GU is located in the centre of Cambridge and provides a central social venue for the University's graduate students. Graduates can also book this versatile space for a variety of events, including committee meetings and presentations.

The GU also promotes graduate issues through representation on University committees, and provides academic advice and welfare support.

The GU Service Point and Shop is open Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9.30am - 1pm and 2 - 5pm, and offers a range of affordable services including printing and faxing, gown hire and thesis binding.

Membership of the GU is automatic and free to all registered graduates, clinical medical students, undergraduates in their fourth or higher year of residence, affiliated students and undergraduate mature students. Associate members include spouses of full members and graduate research workers (i.e., postdocs and research assistants).

Immigration Requirements

The information in this section is for students who are being sponsored by the University for a Tier 4 student visa.

Travelling to the UK

After making a successful visa application overseas, you will be issued an entry vignette in your passport to enable you to travel to the UK. You will need to travel to the UK within the validity of the vignette or apply for a new vignette to extend the date at an extra cost.

Arriving at the airport

When you arrive in the UK, you will see two different signs for immigration control at the airport. One queue is for nationals from the European Economic Area and the other is for all other passport holders.

You will need show your passport and entry vignette to immigration control. It is advisable to carry a print-out of your CAS email in your hand-luggage along with other documentation you used to apply for your visa application. You will receive a stamp in your passport for the day you entered the UK.

Once you have collected your luggage, you will pass through Customs control. You cannot bring any meat or dairy products from outside the EU and there are also restrictions on other food products such as fish, eggs and honey as well as some fruit, vegetables and plants.

Collecting your visa in the UK

You will be required to collect your visa within 10 days of arriving in the UK. The visa will be in the form of a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) which looks like an ID card. Up-to-date information on where to go to collect your visa is available on the 'International Students' webpages: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-visa-brp

Once you have collected your BRP, if you believe the details are incorrect urgently email the International Student Team at international.students@admin.cam.ac.uk

Police Registration

Nationals from the following countries are required to register with the police and update their details as required:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Bolivia, Brazil, China, Colombia, Cuba, Egypt, Georgia, Hong Kong, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, North Korea, Oman, Palestine, Peru, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Yemen, Stateless or travelling on a non-national document (i.e. Travel Document).

The police will be at the University to facilitate [Police Registration](#) at the start of Michaelmas Term. If you are unable to attend at this time, you will need to register directly at Parkside Police Station. You must book an appointment in advance by emailing OVRD@cambs.pnn.police.uk

To register with the police, you will need your passport, two passport photographs and a print-out of your CAS email. There is a charge of £34 which can be paid in cash or by card. You will also need to complete a form.

If you have previously studied in the UK but are new to Cambridge you will need to update the police with your new details at Parkside Police Station. You do not need to make an appointment. You need to take your passport, Certificate of Registration and BRP (if received).

Once you have registered you will need to inform the police of the following changes in your circumstances within 7 days: change of address, change place of study, if you renew your passport, extend your Tier 4 visa, get married or if any other details on your Police Registration Certificate change.

Compliance responsibilities

It is important you fully understand and comply with the responsibilities of your student visa and co-operate with the University in fulfilling our Tier 4 duties. You should ensure you have read our '[Your responsibilities under Tier 4](#)' information guide.

Travelling in Europe

Depending on your nationality, you may need to apply for a visa prior to travelling to Europe. Check with the Embassy or Consulate of the country you wish to travel to. If you are unable to find this information on their website, you can try contacting by emailing or phone. A list of embassies is available at www.gov.uk/government/publications/foreign-embassies-in-the-uk

If you do require a visa and wish to travel to more than one European country, you should consider applying for a Schengen visa which allows you to visit the following countries on one visa: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland.

You apply for the Schengen visa at the embassy you plan to spend the most time during your trip or, if there is no main destination, where you are first entering.

The visa application requirements vary depending on the embassy where you apply for the Schengen visa. Check the website of the relevant embassy for specific requirements. Most applications will require you to submit your passport, recent photograph(s), your UK visa, evidence of funds, a letter from your College confirming your student status, evidence of travel insurance, travel plans and application fee. Please note that some countries will require you to have between three to six months remaining on your UK student visa.

Pre-arrival checklist

Health

- EEA nationals: Obtain a European Health Insurance Card
- If you receive on-going medical treatment and / or medication, obtain a letter from the doctor in your home country (in English) with the details as it may be useful for your new doctor. Check whether you can take your medication on your flight and through customs.

Finances

- Consider how much money to bring to the UK (and whether your home country restricts the amount of cash that can be taken out of the country) and / or whether to use Travelers Cheques. You should request money in £5, £10 and £20 notes as £50 may not be accepted for smaller payments.
- Ensure you have sufficient money in cash / credit card to cover your expenses until you have opened a bank account.
- Establish whether your current bankcard, if applicable, can be used in the UK and whether your bank can provide any advice about transferring money to the UK.

Transportation

- Plan your onward journey to Cambridge.
- Consider baggage restrictions on your flight
- Check any restrictions on goods that can be brought into the UK: www.gov.uk/duty-free-goods/banned-and-restricted-goods
- Consider travel insurance.

Preparing to study

- Review course handbooks
- Review College information packs
- Look at the online orientation and induction information: www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/arriving/pre-arrival-information

Living in the UK

- Consider whether you need an adaptor for any electrical equipment you intend on bringing to the UK.
- Consider the UK Climate: www.metoffice.gov.uk/climate
- Bring passport photos – you'll need them for various things in the first weeks.

Immigration

- Check the details of your entry vignette and decision letter.
- Ensure you enter the UK within the validity of your entry vignette.
- Make photocopies of your passport and visa.
- Carry a print out of your CAS email in your hand-luggage as well as any other documents you used for your visa application.
- Collect your BRP promptly on arrival in the UK.
- Register with the police if required.

Cambridge terminology

It's likely you will hear words at Cambridge you are unfamiliar with. You will soon become accustomed to this terminology and start using it yourself. Here we have explained some of the more frequently used words.

Bedder – bedmaker. Role varies by College but this is the person who may empty your wastepaper bin every few days. At some Colleges, you bedder will vacuum, change your sheets and clean your bathroom every week.

Black tie – a dress code of formal wear such as a dinner jacket (tuxedo) with trousers, white shirt and black bow-tie or an evening formal dress / cocktail dress.

Bop – a disco at College, normally organised by your student association (see JCR / MCR).

Bumps – rowing races between College boat clubs that take place in June along the River Cam.

Buttery – a cafeteria or canteen in College or on University premises

Colleges – There are thirty-one Colleges and these are an integral part of student life at Cambridge. Many students live in their Colleges and undergraduates will receive much of their teaching outside of lectures at College. Your College is also responsible for your pastoral care.

DoS – As an undergraduate, your Director of Studies co-ordinates your individual/group teaching at Cambridge, supporting and monitoring your academic progress throughout your course. Your DoS is your first port of call for general advice about your studies.

Formal (Hall) – a College meal with waiter service, normally three courses with formal attire (and gown) worn. Regularity and price varies by College but often a cheap way to try good food.

Gyp room – small kitchen in College which typically contains basic kitchen facilities, e.g. a kettle

Gown – academical dress which is worn on formal occasions, and with a hood at graduation.

JCR – Junior Combination Room. Adopted in many Colleges as the term for the group of undergraduate student representatives – like a student union for College matters.

Leave to work away – the approval required for research students who intend to spend a period of time carrying out their studies away from Cambridge.

May Ball – held in Colleges, these are all night parties, normally starting at 9pm and continuing to 5 or 6am. Tickets are bought in advance with food, drink and entertainment included. Formal evening dress is worn.

May Week – Confusingly in June, this is the week at the end of the undergraduate academic year, starting as Tripos exams finish. To celebrate, many events are organised across the University, including rowing races, garden parties and May Balls.

Matriculation - matriculation marks the formal admission of a student to membership of the University. This involves signing a formal declaration agreeing to abide by the Statutes and Ordinances of the University and College.

MCR – Middle Combination Room. Adopted in many Colleges as the term for the group of graduate student representatives – like a student union for College matters.

NatSci – short for Natural Sciences. Most commonly used to refer to those studying Natural Sciences at undergraduate level, “I’m a NatSci”.

Paper – an individual undergraduate module or unit.

Pigeon hole – a mailbox. Also known as ‘pidge’.

Porters – precise role varies by College but they tend to be able to answer most questions, or point you in the direction of someone who can. They will often be your first port of call for College-related help. Normally found in the Plodge (see below).

Plodge – the Porters’ Lodge

Senior Tutor – the College officer who has overall responsibility for academic, welfare and disciplinary matters. Oversees the work of College Tutors.

Society – a club or organisation for a particular purpose or activity.

Squash – a welcome event introducing students to a club, society or organisation. Registered University of Cambridge Clubs and Societies are listed at www.societies.cam.ac.uk/

Swap – when groups of students from one College, or society, attend a meal with a group from another College or society. Often take place at Formal Hall as an opportunity to sample the experience at another College.

Terms - there are three Cambridge terms: Michaelmas Term (October-December), Lent Term (January-March/April), Easter Term (April-June for undergraduates, April-September for graduates).

Tutor – every student has a tutor at their College. Tutors look after student welfare and are available for confidential advice.

Tripos – the course and examinations taken by undergraduate students e.g. the Historical Tripos.

Undergraduate Supervision – for undergraduates this is more personal tuition, organised by your College (DoS). These are small group or individual teaching sessions for which you’ll normally need to do some preparatory work which is submitted in advance. No formal assessment takes place in supervisions, although regular reports are given to you by your supervisors.

Viva – an oral examination, most common for graduate research students but sometimes taken by undergraduates after written exams.



Photograph by Sir Cam

Speaking from experience

We asked some current international students what practical advice they would give to new international students to help settle into life at Cambridge.

"Come here with an open mind and be ready to appreciate differences and traditions."

"I think the main thing that most of us newbies here in Cambridge have to get over is that we belong here, it's not some mistake that we were admitted, and that our experience in Cambridge shouldn't be purely academic, that it's also a place for personal growth and exploration."

"If freshers must learn one new word before coming, it's 'squash': I missed a few of the societies' welcome events because I thought I needed a squash racket!"

"Be prepared for the weather and British food! It took me a few months to adjust to them. Apart from that, the College system at Cambridge ensures that you make friends quickly and the societies fair allows you to assimilate fast by joining societies of your interest."

"Get involved in student societies. Cambridge has a very wide range of societies focusing on different activities from sports to music to wine tasting, whatever your interests, there is a society for you. The freshers' fair is a good place to start, it has societies offering free taster events and other goodies as well. Societies can be a lot of fun, connecting people with shared interests but also a great way of exploring new interests too!"

"Make sure you get a bike as soon as possible! Cambridge becomes much smaller and easier to get around once you have a bicycle but learn the rules of the road in the UK before trying to cycle."

"Try something new. It doesn't matter what, but there are so many societies at Cambridge that one is bound to stumble across something fun."

"Do the formal dining halls at your College, even if only once or twice, and try to go to other colleges as well, it's a great way to see other parts of the university and is a unique Cambridge experience."

"Get more electrical adaptors, you'll end up needing more than you think (laptop, phone, stereo, ereaders, etc.) - you don't want to constantly be unplugging and moving things around."

"I would definitely recommend that international students try to take advantage of both the academic resources available (like joining the Cambridge Union Society) as well as enjoying the charm of English tradition - go punting, try rowing, go on swaps, head down to Grantchester for a creamed tea, take the train to Ely to see the cathedral..."

"The hardest thing to adjust to was the weather, especially the fact that it gets dark so early in the winter. Learn to layer!"

"The first few weeks can be quite overwhelming - starting at a new university, settling in a new city and making new friends! But there is plenty of information and guidance available at College/ Department student inductions."

"It's going to rain a lot or be damp so you will need some rain gear."

"As an international student, it is easy to end up being friends with people from your country as it is so much easier to have fun in your own language. In my experience, the College provided the perfect environment to have friends from other places. Besides getting their friendship, I also learned a lot from their experience and my language and confidence to speak in English significantly improved."

Other Sources of Information

UKCISA

The UK Council for International Student Affairs, known as UKCISA, provides advice and information to international students studying in the UK: www.ukcisa.org.uk

British Council

The British Council is an organisation specialising in international education and cultural opportunities. They have some useful information on their website about living and studying in the UK as an international student: <http://m.educationuk.org/global/main/living-and-studying>

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