

**Welcome to your
study abroad
in the UK!**

Welcome!

Congratulations, you made it! You are now ready to explore a new country, new culture and new approach to learning and studying. We hope that you use this opportunity to the fullest, and we are here to help you. We would like to make sure you don't get stuck on small issues that may come with being in a foreign country. Therefore, in the next few pages, we'll try to provide you with the answers to the most common questions and issues that study abroad students face. Please do remember that you are also more than welcome to reach out to us at mhcbritain@gmail.com.

Good luck getting started!



Table of contents

- *Practicals Pre-Arrival*
 - *Travelling to the UK*
 - *Housing*
 - *Transportation Links*
 - *Finances*
 - *Other useful tips*
 - *What to pack*
- *Practicals Post-Arrival*
 - *University Life*
 - *Study*
 - *US vs UK Higher Education Student Support*
 - *Working in the UK*



- *Life In the UK*
 - *Culture shock*
 - *Student life*
 - *Social Life*
 - *Healthcare*
- *Useful Links*
- *Mini Glossary*
- *Contacts*



Practicals Pre-Arrival

Travelling to the UK

Firstly, make sure you have all the necessary documents to travel to the UK with you (not in checked luggage) when arriving to the UK, so you can present them to the customs officer, ie confirmation of your offer, accommodation information etc. As a general rule, you won't need a visa to study in the UK up to 6 months, but please check further information [here](#).



Housing

You will have an option to stay at the student accommodation, rent a flat/house or choose a homestay (with a host family). Your university would have shared the accommodation information with you, but if you plan to rent a flat instead, please consider a few things:

- Proximity to the academic buildings where you have majority of classes (most likely if you take classes from one department it will be one area)
- Transportation links
- Is the flat furnished or unfurnished
- Will a supervisor/landlord live there/nearby



Here are some services you could use to look for a place to rent:

On the Market (student).

Gumtree

SpareRoom

Zoopla

Transportation links

Transportation links in the UK are generally great, including transport in the cities themselves and between them. We recommend the following services for finding best routes and learning the latest updates:

- [Citymapper](#): (available on web and as an app)
- [Cycling](#) around the UK
- [Trains](#) around the UK

For London specifically you can also subscribe to TFL (Transport for London) email [newsletter](#) and/or follow their twitter page and the website to stay up to date.



Finances

UK currency is a whole new language – in the UK you will use pounds and pence.

You might want to consider exchanging and bringing some cash with you for any emergency upon arrival, but you could generally continue using your US debit card. You also have an option of opening a local account. Consider digital banks such as Revolut, Monzo, Wise and Monese, where you could transfer money via international wire transfer from the US

Here are a few other things to keep in mind:

Using your US account

- Check with your home bank if your debit or credit cards can be used abroad
- Make sure that you know the exact costs of transaction fees and currency exchange fees
- You'll be charged currency conversion fees each time you use your debit card or withdraw cash in the UK. Currency exchange rates fluctuate, making it harder to keep to a budget

Opening a UK account

- If you are an international student, you will need to show a valid study visa, a Student ID or a letter of acceptance from your university, and sometimes a bank statement from your home bank
- It might take a long time to open an account



Other useful tricks for being a student in the UK

- Check out the National Student Union (NSU), for student news and lots of fantastic discounts
- Get a student railcard for National Rail and a student oyster if studying in London
- Check out Mount Holyoke Club of Britain directory and find the best way for you to connect with local alums who can provide advice and help where needed.
- Get a UK number. You'll need to 'unlock' your phone to do this, but if you call your cell phone provider, they can temporarily unlock your phone so you can put in a UK sim card. Mobile phone plans are generally much cheaper in the UK and having data will be essential.

1

BREAK OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Try something new each week. Meet new people, eat local cuisine, make unforgettable memories.

2

CONNECT WITH ALUMNI

Speak to past alumni of your study abroad program for recommendations & practical advice.

3

SET UP A BUDGET

Plan out a budget to curb unnecessary spending & be sure to take advantage of student discounts.

4

DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Learn about famous museums, sites, landmarks, and research local laws & customs before you go.

5

MAKE FRIENDS

Find people with common interests. Join a club, take up a sport, learn the language & attend events.

6

TRAVEL

Check out your home city with your classmates. Plan side trips to nearby cities & countries.

7

GAIN WORK EXPERIENCE

Explore future career options. Look into internships to put classroom theory into practice.

8

VOLUNTEER

Channel your passion as a volunteer at organizations, charities, festivals or events.

9

STAY SAFE

Be smart. Travel safely. Stay a well-informed traveler and stick together with a group or friend.

10

SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

Keep a journal or blog about your travels so that future student travelers can learn from your incredible experience!

What to pack

Ensure you check with your airline about the requirements for your travel (luggage allowance, etc), although remember that you can buy most things in the UK too. Only bring essential things with you – special medication, memorable things, some clothes. If you are on special medication, please bring a sufficient supply and a copy of your prescription(s), so they act as a proof of why you're bringing it through the customs. Do some basic research about the area in the UK you're coming to – average temperature, chances of rain, urban/rural and pack clothes accordingly.

Some parts of the UK are colder than others, so proper winter coat and boots are required. Other parts of the UK generally have milder climate, with subtle differences between the seasons as well as light showers and cloudy skies prevalent throughout the year. It is then up to you if you prefer to pack your favourite rain boots with you or buy a shiny new pair in the UK.

As for the electrical goods and bedding – you might want to leave yours behind and buy new ones upon arrival in the UK, as the power supply is different in the UK (240 volts in the UK vs 110-120 volts in the US) and bedding size is different between the US and UK too.



Practicals Post-Arrival

As an international student you might find it useful to attend a pre-orientation program arranged by your university, including general information sessions, a tour of campus as well as fun peer-based activities to help you meet new friends and integrate into the community.

Study

You will also be given information on how to choose and register for classes as well as information about attendance rules and more.

Please try to register for classes properly and in advance to make sure you get the ones you want and to earn credits towards your degree. Classes at the undergraduate level are taught through lectures, seminars and tutorials, with lectures being the largest, most common and taking place in lecture rooms, a lecture theatre or a lecture hall. Seminars are typically smaller and discussion oriented, with teacher still being present in class. Tutorials are one-on-one sessions that students should book with their lecturer.



UK vs US Education System

- In the UK there is a lot more independent study and a lot less class time, meaning you will need to structure your academic time differently.
- In general, lecturers are not as available as in the US.
- It is more difficult to get an A in the system than in the US system.

Score	USA Letter Grade	USA GPA	UK Letter Grade	UK Honours
90-100%	A	4	A	First
80-89%	B	3	A	First
70-79%	C	2	A	First
60-69%	D	1	B	Upper Second (2.1)
50-59%	F=FAIL	0	C	Lower Second (2.2)
40-49%	F=FAIL	0	D	Third
30-39%	F=FAIL	0	E=FAIL	FAIL
20-29%	F=FAIL	0	F=FAIL	FAIL
10-19%	F=FAIL	0	F=FAIL	FAIL
0-9%	F=FAIL	0	F=FAIL	FAIL

Student Support

As an international student, you have a few resources available to you, which will be pointed to you by the university during the orientation.

Please also feel free to check these few options.

Working

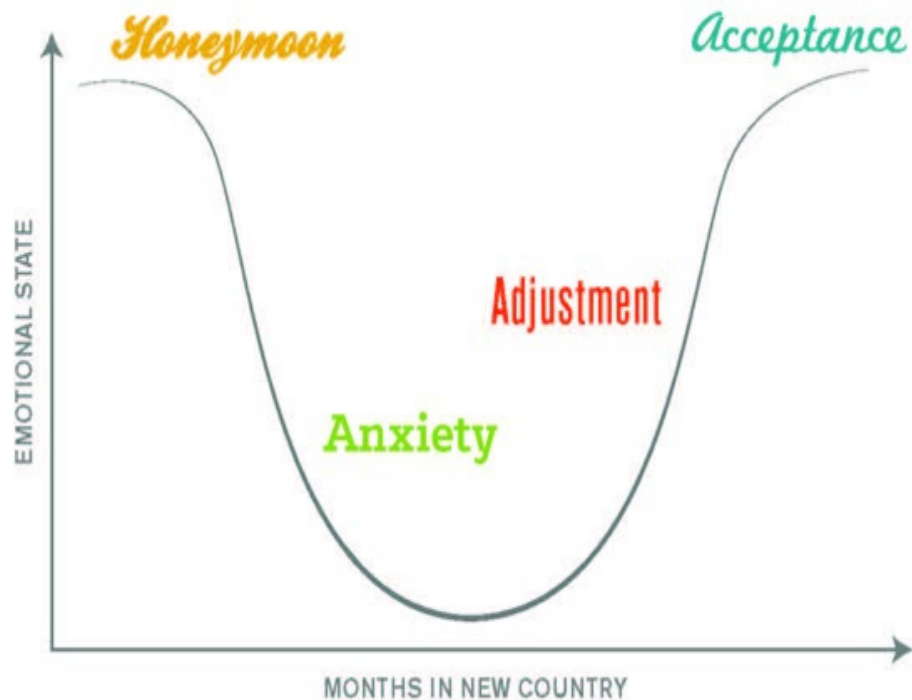
Please check with your university, however, as a general rule, students who are in the UK on a student visa for longer than 6 months should be able to work for 10 hours a week during term time and unlimited amount during non-term time.



Life in the UK

Culture shock

STAGES of CULTURE SHOCK



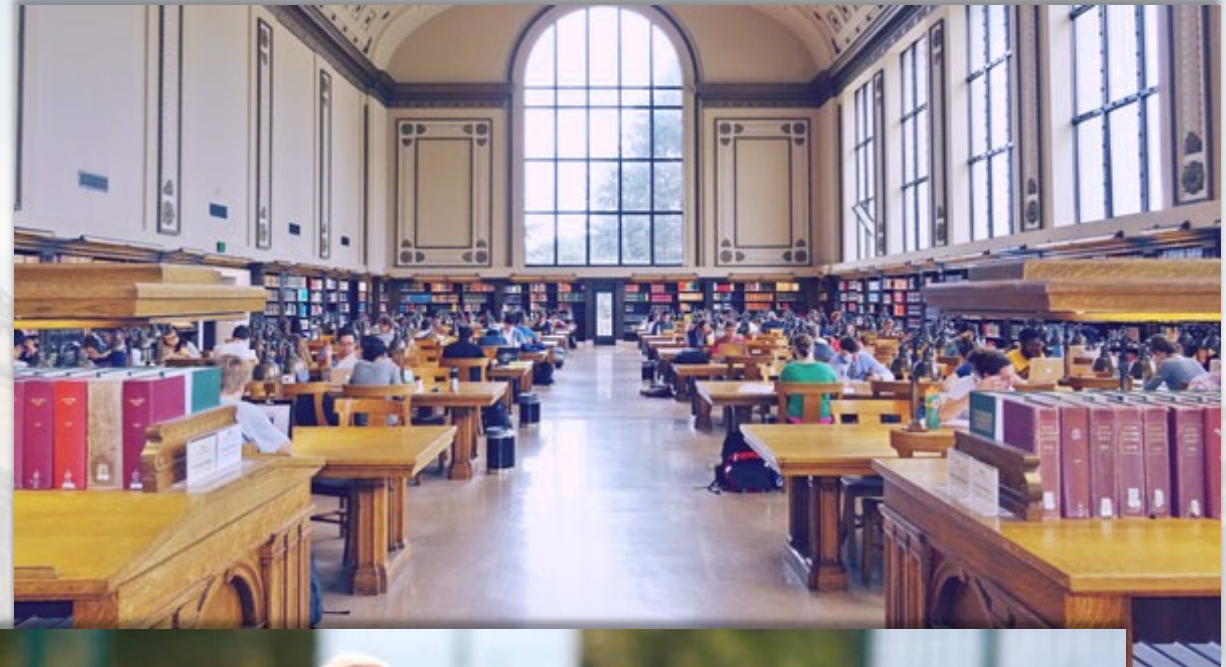
Certainly, one of the reasons you chose to study abroad is to learn about the new culture, but you should keep in mind that it is unlike travelling somewhere and will require a period of adjustment. It is absolutely fine to feel homesick and lonely from time to time.

As a general advice, before you travel to the UK try to spend some time learning about the culture – watch TV shows, read books, newspapers and journals. Once you get here – get involved! You will have an opportunity to meet a lot of your peers from the US at the international orientation, but you might also want to befriend your British flatmates and classmates.

Student life

Some universities in the UK have campuses, but generally, they are not centralized. You might find that some buildings are grouped according to the field of study. But don't worry, as you get to socialise with students from different departments if you are staying at the student accommodation.

Like in the US, unis in the UK offer clubs and activities, although you might find you need to put more effort to find them and take part due to the uncentralized campus. Clubs in the UK unis are called "societies". You can sign up for them during the orientation or Fresher's Week. They often have an additional small fee.



Social Life



You have definitely heard a lot of stereotypes about the UK, its traditions and people. It can be scary at first to experience some things (separate taps!) and some traditions. You might even find it difficult to understand certain accents and mannerisms.

However, we encourage you to keep yourself open to the new experiences and new culture, and it will open up for you in the best way in return.

It might be tempting to befriend your fellow study abroad Americans during the orientation and keep hanging out with them, but please consider getting to know your British peers – you will get a chance to learn from them and get acquainted with the culture through them. Spending time with your international friends as well as locals should provide you with the best study abroad experience, helping all the parties involved to learn from each other.

Healthcare

In the UK, the NHS is the system that residents use to access both physical and mental healthcare services. You can register for the NHS on their website – it is especially important if you are staying in the UK for longer than 6 months.

As we said earlier, it's a good idea to take your prescribed medicine together with prescriptions for the duration of stay. Whilst NHS is free for residents and has some free treatments for the overseas visitors, some other treatments are not covered.

Please see more information on [NHS](#) and [NHS Scotland](#).



England



More useful links

- [International Student House \(ISH\) Charity](#) – “a safe community in London that fosters international friendship and positive change”
- [TimeOut London](#) – up-to-date information about events and places in London
- [TimeOut Edinburgh](#) – up-to-date information about events and places in Edinburgh
- [Secret London](#) – interesting and unusual places to visit and things to do in London and around
- [VisitBritain](#)
- [Focus](#) – moving to and living in the UK
- [InterNations](#) – meeting expats from all over the world in London



Mini Glossary

(Are) You ok? – How are you

Aubergine – eggplant

Bafoon, wazzock – idiot

Bangers – sausages

Bender – drinking session

Blimey – wow

Bonkers – insane

Bollocks – nonsense

Brolly – umbrella

Busker – street musician

Car park – parking lot

Chap, lad – guy

Chuffed – very pleased

Chips – fries

Cider – hard cider

Clingfilm – saran wrap

Cotton buds – Q-tips

Course – major

Crisps – chips

Cuppa – cup of tea

Dodgy – shady

to Fancy – to like

Fancy dress – costume

Fish fingers – fish sticks

Fortnight – 2 weeks

Handbag – purse

Hoover – vacuum cleaner

Jiffy – hurry

Knackered – tired

Loo, toilet, WC – restroom

Mate – friend

Motorway – highway

Nutter – insane person

Oi! – hey!

Pad – flat, place

Pants – underwear

Parcel – package

Pavement – sidewalk

Peckish – hungry

Petrol – gas

Pissed, hammered – drunk

Porridge – oatmeal

Postbox – mailbox

Queue – line

Quid – pound (£)

Return ticket – round trip ticket

Rubbish – trash; something that is worthless or nonsensical

Smashing – very good

Supper – dinner

Ta – thank you (esp in the North)

Take away – take out

Taking the piss – making fun

Telly – TV

Tube – subway

Wellies – rainboot



*For any other questions you may have please
feel free to visit
[Mount Holyoke Club of Britain website](#)
and don't hesitate to contact mhcbritain@gmail.com and
our lovely study abroad coordinator will be in touch!*