

YOUR GUIDE: LIVING IN THE UK

Welcome to QA Higher Education, we are excited for you to start your journey with us.

We are proud to celebrate a diverse student community and are delighted that you have chosen to study with us in the UK. We understand that moving to a new country to study (or even deciding to study once you have been in the country for a few years) can be exciting, but that you may also face some challenges. We have put together this document containing helpful information to support with your transition, as well as giving you some handy hints and tips for once you start your studies with us.

We have put together a checklist of things you need to arrange before arriving in the UK and some useful items to pack:

- Organise your visa
- Open a UK bank account
- Check your fees with [Student Finance England \(SFE\)](#)
- Arrange your accommodation
- Check what items you can bring with you into the UK
- Clothing for different weather conditions. Our weather changes a lot, bring an umbrella – you will need it!
- Travel adapter
- Sentimental items and reminders from home
- Check your baggage allowance – you may be charged at the airport if you go over your weight and size limit
- Photocopies of important documents i.e. ID and passport
- UK currency (pound sterling), you may need this when you first arrive here

It is important you check how much things cost in the UK We have also put together a list of websites that will help as a guide to prices:

- [Living in the UK](#)
- [Living in London](#)
- [International Student Calculator](#)

Living in the UK

Health

Your health is important, and we often don't think about our health until we get sick. Please read [this advice](#) regarding healthcare in the UK for international students:

Driving

Whilst you may be able to drive in your own country, you need to make sure that you can legally drive in the UK, understand the rules of the road and what

insurance you need. For example, did you know - we drive on the left-hand side of the road?

Information can be found [here](#).

Smoking

There are restrictions on where you can smoke in the UK, so if you do smoke, check before you light a cigarette/cigar. It is illegal to smoke inside restaurants and bars and many bars and restaurants do not allow vaping.

Keeping in touch with home

If you want a mobile from a UK provider, there are many deals available and some come with cheap international calling plans. You can either get a Pay as You Go (PAYG) plan or a monthly contract. Make sure you read and understand your contract before signing up and check against other mobile phone providers to see if there is a better deal for you. More information can be found [here](#).

You may decide you want to set up internet access in your accommodation (if not already provided), it is best to check out the best deals and understand the contracts before taking out a contract. You can do this via a [comparison website](#).

You also have the option to use video and chat messaging services such as Skype, Hangouts and Facetime, to help you keep in touch with family and friends that is free as long as you have internet access. Please note we do not provide these services on campus, but you can set them up on your own personal mobile and technological devices.

Personal safety

It is important to be mindful of your personal safety regardless of where you are, but especially in a large and unfamiliar city. Be vigilant of your surroundings. Most thefts are performed by opportunist criminals.

Don't use unmarked taxis to travel to and from destinations and use familiar, well-lit and popularised routes when walking at night.

- Police/ambulance/fire service emergency number – 999
- For fast medical help, but it is not an emergency – 111

Cultural expectations

The UK is a very multicultural environment which is something that we celebrate. Some cultural expectations to observe are:

- Punctuality – we do like to be on time and consider lateness as rudeness so always leave plenty of time when a time has been given
- Politeness – sorry, excuse me, pardon – you may find that we apologise a lot, it is just our way
- Personal space – us British tend to not like people standing or getting too close to us (unless invited to)

- Religious practices – the UK is a multicultural environment and there are many different religious practices observed with many people also not observing any religious practice

Whilst we may like to be polite with our language, not everyone will be so polite – don't set your expectations by films and TV – real life can be different.

Culture shock

Losing that familiarity with your surroundings can be disorientating and can cause a lot of anxiety and stress, but it is important to understand that this is normal, and you won't be the only one who feels like that.

Think about your first day at school or work, but over time you felt better and that you belonged.

Give yourself time to get used to your new surroundings and friends. Make sure you get involved with student activities and look after yourself. If you find things tough speak to the [Welfare Service](#) at the campus.

Homesickness

Homesickness has similar symptoms to depression. Try and remain active, eat healthily and get a good night's sleep, there are some other things you can do to make yourself feel more at home:

- Modern technology can help to minimise the effects of being homesick. Skype your absent friends and chat to them for free on Whatsapp.
- Bring your culture to your new home. Eat your favourite foods and watch your beloved TV shows on the web.
- Hold onto the sentimental things that remind you of home. No matter how insignificant or silly they may appear to others.
- Try not to think about how long you are away from home but see your holidays as a time to look forward to and reward yourself for reaching.
- Most of the people around you are in the same boat. Speak to them about their unique experiences and coping mechanisms.
- Explore your surroundings. You may find something new which you love or something similar which reminds you of home.

Socialising

[Meetup](#) is an online tool to meet, likeminded individuals in your area and attend events, play sport, learn something new etc. Please be mindful of personal safety and make sure meet up locations are in public space.

Drinking water

Public water in the UK is amongst some of the best in the world. Severn Trent, the main water supplier in the UK, carry out 500,000 tests on their supply per year.

However, if in doubt, drink bottled water. Most supermarkets will sell a 2 litre, non-branded bottle of water for less than twenty pence.

Some useful apps

Here are some useful apps that may help you with living and studying the UK:

[Citymapper](#) - this is a good website to help you with directions and routes when travelling in major cities in the UK.

[Alarmy](#) - do you have trouble getting up in the mornings? This app can help as it makes you do different activities before the alarm switches off.

[Fudget](#) – an app to help you with budgeting and financial tracking.

[Trello](#) – useful to help you with writing to do lists and time management.

[Big Oven](#) -if you are struggling with British food or not sure how to use some ingredients, this app will allow you to enter the ingredients and provide some suggestions for recipes.

[Yell](#) - if you are looking for contact details (for example, a hairdresser or a plumber), then this app can help you find some.

(Please note QA Higher Education cannot recommend, approve or support any of these apps).