

# **Pre-Arrival Guide**

# Welcome

Hello and congratulations on your offer to study at London Waterloo Academy

This guide aims to help you prepare to leave home and travel to UK. It will answer many of your questions, from what to pack in your suitcase, to who to contact when you arrive. Please read it carefully and carry it with you when you travel to UK.

We look forward to meet you in London.

Best wishes,

## International Student Support

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### Checklist: before you leave home

- Passport, student visa/entry clearance for study in the UK
  - Check information and fees for your course and cost of living in London
  - If you have a disability, contact Academy for special arrangements
  - Buy travel ticket to arrive in UK before the Induction Programme
  - Check your government's restrictions on taking money out of the country
  - Check with your bank about regulations concerning transferring money to the UK
  - Check your luggage weight against your airline's allowances
  - Obtain travellers' cheques and British currency for use during first few days or weeks
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- Obtain a letter of explanation from your doctor for any prescribed drugs you may need to bring with you
  - Visit the dentist/optician as care can be expensive in the UK
  - Photocopy the personal details pages of your passport and visa stamp and keep them in a safe place.

# Immigration Advice

If you are a national of a country which is not in the EEA, and you want to study in the UK you must have permission to come to the UK as a student, **before you travel**. This permission is called 'entry clearance' or a student 'visa'. When you are granted entry clearance the immigration officer in your own country, will put a visa sticker into your passport. If you arrive in the UK and do not have the correct entry clearance or visa, the immigration officer will not allow you to enter the UK, and you will have to return home immediately. To get this entry clearance as a student, contact the British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission in your home country and check exactly what kind of entry clearance you need at the time you want to travel, and how to apply in your country. There are different ways to apply for example on- line, by post or through an agency. You must also check whether there have been any changes to the immigration rules, requirements and procedures for students applying for entry clearance to study in the UK.

## Documents to bring with you

Please bring the following original documents with you when you come to the UK to study at the college.

### Proof of Identity

You will need to show proof of your identity, such as a birth certificate or passport.

### Original certificates for past examinations

You must show the college, original certificates of exams passed and awards gained (official transcripts), or certified copies. If yours are not in English, please get a certified translation. Contact the British Embassy or High Commission in your home country for information on how to do this.

### Any original offer letters from the Academy

Bring any original letters sent to you by the Academy, especially if they have been sent to the address where you live in your home country. This will be important when you enroll with Academy. It may also be useful to prove your address in your home country, when you try and open a bank account in the UK

### Other useful documents

If you have already been working in your home country, and plan to look for part-time work or work experience (Work **is only allowed to students from EEA**) in the UK while you are studying, you may find it helpful to bring written references from any employers you have worked for before. If they are not in English, ask someone to translate them. Bring copies of any medical records for your Doctor in the UK or diagnostic evidence for any specific learning difficulty to show the Dyslexia/ Specific Learning Difficulties Service

## Documents to put in your hand luggage

If you are a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country:

- > Your valid passport (or national identity card)
- > Any letters from the college offering you a place on a course
- > Original certificates of your qualifications, or certified copies
- > Enough money (in pounds sterling – cash and/or travellers' cheques) to pay for your expenses over the first few weeks in the UK
- > If you are eligible, proof that you have applied for a tuition fee loan.
- > The address and telephone number of where you are going to stay
- > This BOOKLET.

If you are a national of a country NOT in the European Economic Area (EEA)

or

Switzerland:

- > Your valid passport
- > The correct entry clearance (if required) in your passport, to allow you to enter the UK
- > Any letters from the Academy offering you a place on a course
- > Original certificates of your qualifications, or certified copies
- > Enough money (in pounds sterling – cash and/or travellers' cheques) to pay for your expenses over the first few weeks in the UK
- > Documents to show that you have enough money to pay for tuition fees and living expenses for you and any family dependants coming to UK with you
- > Certificates of health, vaccination or x-ray reports, if you need them
- > Documents to show insurance for your journey
- > The address and telephone number of where you are going to stay
- > This BOOKLET.

## What to Pack

British weather changes throughout the year. Temperatures can rise up to 28°C in the summer and may go down to -2°C in the winter. The warmest time of the year is between June and August, the coldest between November and February. Clouds and rain can be followed by sunshine and blue skies, sometimes all in the same day.

You will need some warm and waterproof clothes for when you are outside. Pack clothes that you can wear in layers, for example, thermal underwear, t-shirts, sweatshirts and sweaters.

## How much money will you need?

You can bring as much money as you like into the UK, but you will have to tell customs. You may also need to check how much your country will let you take out. British currency is made up of pounds and pence and is known as sterling. 100 pence

make one pound. Pounds are represented by the sign '£' and pence by the sign 'p'.

There are 1p, 2p, 5p, 10p, 20p, 50p, £1 and £2 coins and £5, £10, £20 and £50 notes. In the UK, it is very unusual for large sums of money to be carried in cash. We would advise you either to pay by credit card or to open a bank account and arrange a standing order or direct debit payment for regular bills.

## Opening a Bank Account

Soon after you arrive in UK, you will need to access money to pay for rent, living expenses and tuition fees. Many students bring a credit card which has been issued in their own country and use it to pay for items and get cash from their bank in their home country. Check with your bank before leaving home that you will be able to use your credit card at cash dispensers (ATMs) in the UK.

If you are in the UK for more than a few months, you will probably need to open a bank account. Ask for advice from your own bank before leaving home as they may have a special arrangement with a bank in the UK.

It may take two to three weeks to open an account, so make sure you have access to any money you will need during this period. Bring travellers' cheques or a bank draft with you to avoid carrying large amounts of cash with you. Most international students can open a bank account but the types of accounts vary so please check what each bank account offers before deciding. However, please note that no account will provide you with an 'overdraft' facility (to borrow money from a bank). Students who are in the UK for less than six months may find it difficult to open any type of bank account.

To open a bank account you need to be in the UK, and you will be asked to provide certain proof and documents.

Some of the main banks and building societies have websites which include information about opening accounts:

> NatWest [www.natwest.com/](http://www.natwest.com/)  
Click on 'current accounts/ Step'

> Barclays Bank  
[www.barclays.co.uk/](http://www.barclays.co.uk/)  
Click on 'personal/ current accounts/other current accounts/ Cash card account'

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> HSBC [www.hsbc.co.uk/](http://www.hsbc.co.uk/)  
Click on 'current accounts/ Passport' or 'current accounts/ basic bank accounts'

> Lloyds TSB [www.lloydstsb.com/](http://www.lloydstsb.com/)  
Click on 'current account/ Classic' or 'current accounts/ other accounts/Cash account'

> Nationwide [www.nationwide.co.uk/](http://www.nationwide.co.uk/)  
Click on 'current account'

Make sure when you open an account that you understand whether and when your bank will charge you bank fees. Some bank accounts may make you pay a fee if your account does not always have a certain amount of money kept in it at all times. Other bank accounts charge a standard monthly subscription.

When you arrive in UK, the Student Welfare Officer will give you more information about where you can open an account in London.

## At the airport - after landing

On leaving the aircraft, follow the signs for arrivals to go through passport control (international passengers only), baggage reclaim and Customs.

## Passport control

Note that there is likely to be a queuing system in place so check that you join the right one! The Immigration Officer will want to see that your documents are in order, that your passport is up-to-date, check your landing card and visa/entry clearance. Also have evidence of financial support, your admission letter and your accommodation confirmation, ready for inspection. Part of the immigration process may, if required, include evidence of a recent medical examination or international vaccination certificate.

## Airport security:

As part of the immigration process it is possible that you may be stopped and asked some additional security questions. If there are any problems, or if you have any concerns on arrival regarding your passage through immigration/passport control, ask the Immigration Officer to contact the Student Support Team on 02079288995 within office hours (0900 - 2030hrs). Outside these hours you can call 07883273387 or 07769336006. Have a pen ready just in case you have to take down details.

## Collecting your luggage (baggage)

Once you have cleared passport control follow the signs to the baggage collection point which will show your flight number and departure point. You may then proceed through Customs; follow the green light if you have nothing to declare but Customs Officers may ask you to open your luggage, so keep your keys accessible. If in doubt ask one of the Customs Officers for advice before proceeding.

## Airport Pick up Service

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When you arrive to UK for the first time and if you don't have anyone to pick you up from the airport then a meeting with the college representative can be arranged. This requires the students to give prior information to the college. The following information need to be provided before the arrival

- Name of the student
- Name of the airport
  - Airline & flight number
  - Date & time of arrival
  - Contact details including email and mobile numbers

If the student arrives on a week day he may be taken to the college or to their lodging address in London which can be arranged by the college if it is booked well in advance. A non-refundable pick-up fee from £50 is collected from the arriving student.

## Onward travelling to Academy

We have provided below details of how you can make your own way to the Academy. For advice on travelling to the Academy you can contact [info@waterlooacademy.co.uk](mailto:info@waterlooacademy.co.uk)

In the event of any difficulty when you arrive in the UK, you can contact the Academy on the following numbers:

Monday to Friday 09:00 – 20:30 Tel: 020 7928 8995

Saturday 09:30 – 12:30

See <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tube> for underground (tube) journeys from Heathrow Airport

Alternatively, take a taxi.

### **Taxi**

If you wish to take a taxi from the airport, you can always find an official airport taxi or 'black cab' from the taxi rank outside the arrival terminal. Do NOT accept rides from anyone who approaches you in the airport. You should agree the price with the taxi driver before you begin your journey. This can cost between £50-70 but try and negotiate. You should make sure you have the correct money in UK currency. You should also make sure you have the address of where you are going written out clearly to show to the taxi driver.

## Council Tax

The Council Tax is set by local authorities to help pay for certain services they provide. It is based on the value of the house, flat or other dwelling in which you live. Full time students on an award bearing course, studying here for at least 24 weeks in the academic year, are normally exempt from this tax. If you are living in Academy accommodation or a flat which is shared by other students (as described above) you will be exempt from paying this tax. If you are married and your wife/husband is with you in London they will be given exemption if they are not a British citizen and are prevented by the terms of their leave to enter and remain in the UK from taking paid employment or from claiming benefits. All students (married or single) who will be living in rented flats in the private sector should seek more information about payment of this tax when you are negotiating contracts for renting your room or flat. Ask the Information Team for further clarification when you arrive in London.

## Married Students and Students with Children

International students coming to the UK to study a postgraduate course lasting 12 months or more; or a new Government Exchange student studying for 6 months or more can bring their spouse and children under the age of 18 with them as their dependants. However, if you plan to bring your spouse/family with you, please bear in mind that the cost of living will increase accordingly. You should think carefully whether bringing your family with you to the UK is the best option, or whether they should remain at home. It will not be possible for two or more people to live on a budget for only one.

In order to get visas for your dependants, you will have to show that you have sufficient funds for yourself (£1020 per month) and each dependant (£460 per month) to live on and that you have either a) arranged suitable accommodation or b) have sufficient money to pay the rent of appropriate accommodation which you will arrange for you and your family once you get to the UK. We would not advise you to enter into a contract with a private sector landlord without first having seen the accommodation he/she is offering you.

Finding accommodation for you and your family may take some time therefore you should be prepared to have to search for suitable accommodation once you arrive in London. It is strongly recommended that you come to the UK on your own in the first instance to find accommodation which most suits your needs then bring your family over. The Academy has only very limited accommodation which is suitable for families and demand is very high. Information on private accommodation is available from the Accommodation Office.

As well as the cost of suitable family accommodation, you should give careful consideration to other factors such as very limited and expensive childcare facilities when deciding whether or not to bring your family to London.

Average student rents are approximately £150 per week but you can find cheaper. Use **the London rents map website** at <http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing-land/renting-home/rents-map?source=vanityurl> to look at average house rent costs in the city.

The government estimates that, in addition to your rent, you will need approximately £104 per week for living costs, but this will vary depending on how much you socialise.

Calculate your costs using the **student budget calculator** at (<http://international.studentcalculator.org/>)

NOTE: If you have a Tier 4 (General) Student Visa, your dependant partner will be permitted to work full time whilst you study in the UK. However, finding suitable employment may be difficult. Your partner may also have to consider their language skills when looking for employment. You and your family cannot rely on earnings from employment here in the UK to finance your stay in the UK. You are not entitled to claim any state benefits.

## Schools

It is compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 16 years to attend school. Your child will be accepted into a local state school at no charge. The best way for caring for children under the age of 5 is for you and your spouse to organise your study and free time to ensure that you personally meet the needs of your children. Childcare for children under 5 is extremely expensive and places are very limited. Expect to pay upwards of £600 per month for full time childcare for pre-school aged children.

## Personal Finances

You should think about how you are going to get your money to the UK – having a member of your family transfer your funds to your UK bank account once it is opened is probably the safest method.

Remember, you will need to bring sufficient funds to pay your initial accommodation rent (e.g. temporary accommodation), buy food and general expenses until your UK bank

account is set up (this may take 2 to 3 weeks). It is not advisable to bring large sums of cash. Instead bring traveller's cheques and only a small amount of cash. You should be able to use your credit/debit card from home.

## Do You Need a Visa under the UK's points-based system of immigration control?

If you are a national of a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland, you do not need Entry Clearance (a visa) to travel to the UK. You can travel freely through EEA states using your passport or national identity card.

If you are a national of any non-EEA country, it is likely you will need Entry Clearance (a visa) to come to the UK to study. You will fall into one of two categories:

1. Visa nationals. If you are a visa-national (check the list of visa-national countries at [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/306590/Immigration\\_Rules\\_-\\_Appendix\\_1.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/306590/Immigration_Rules_-_Appendix_1.pdf) you must obtain Entry Clearance as either a Tier 4 (General) Student – or Student Visitor, if applicable - before departure.
2. Non-visa nationals. At the moment, students from non-visa-national countries can come to the UK for up to six months without a Tier 4 (General) Student visa. You will be granted leave as a 'Student Visitor' at the UK border, which means you will have to leave within six months of arriving in the UK, you will not be able to work or extend your visa and as it is not a multiple entry visa, you cannot use it to visit another country and then re-enter the UK. If you do travel you would have to get a new Student Visitor visa every time you enter the UK.

### Tier 4 (General) Student Visa

In order to apply for a Tier 4 (General) Student visa, you should contact the nearest British Embassy or High Commission with a visa section to find out what the procedure is in your country. You may be able to apply online or you may have to attend an interview at the Embassy.

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You should complete application form VAF9 PBS migrant and PBS Appendix 8 General Student self-assessment form and submit it to the Embassy along with evidence you can claim 40 points under the points-based system. The application fee for a Tier 4 (General) Student visa is £310.

Make sure you apply for your Tier 4 (General) Student visa in plenty of time. Bear in mind that thousands of students apply for visas to begin studies in the UK in September / October each year, so allow plenty of time for your visa to be processed. You must start your course on the date stated on your CAS. The Academy must now report any non-arrivals to the Home Office. Failure to arrive on time could result in your visa being cancelled. You are likely to be invited to undergo a Skype interview as part of the application process, this should not last longer than 10-15 minutes.

If you have been successful in your application, your passport will be returned with an Entry Clearance sticker (visa) inside showing you have been given permission to study at LWA. Check all the details on the sticker (visa) carefully and report any errors to the Embassy immediately. Pay particular attention to the start and end dates on your visa. You

should be granted leave as per paragraph 102 of the Tier 4 Policy Guidance.

## Remaining compliant with your Tier 4 visa conditions

In order to protect the immigration status of Tier 4 students, and comply with the requirements of our Tier 4 sponsor license, the Academy will collect data electronically and manually that relates to a student's engagement with their studies and use of Academy facilities including library, computing and some online services and, in some cases, attendance at classes, tutorials and examinations.

You may receive an email from time to time inviting you to report in person to confirm your continued engagement. You should check your Academy emails regularly and you must respond to emails inviting you to report every time you receive them. You must also inform your department if you are ill or need to miss classes for any other reason, or if you intend to leave the Academy for any reason (for example if you decide to visit home during your studies).

## Insurance

You should arrange suitable travel insurance to cover your luggage when travelling, and you should arrange insurance for your possessions (particularly expensive items such as laptops or cameras) once you arrive in London.

## Electricity

Electrical current in the UK is 240 volts. Adaptors for any electrical appliances you may bring with you are available to buy in airport shops and in many shops in London city centre for approximately £5.

## Medical

As a student you are entitled to register under the NHS, so will be entitled to free medical treatment in the UK. Bring a record of your medical history with you for your London doctor.

If you are coming to the UK from a country with a high incidence of tuberculosis you will be required to take a TB check, the current list of high risk countries can be found on the Home Office website – you should check this before applying for your student visa. You may also be checked for TB on arrival at the airport in the UK.

## What to Bring

The UK may be much colder / wetter / milder than your home country; therefore you will need suitable clothing, particularly good waterproof shoes and a warm winter coat. These may be cheaper to buy here, but if you have them, bring them with you.

Check what is included in your accommodation, most things will either be provided or will be easy to purchase when you are here, but if you can't live without your favourite pillow,

bring it with you.

You will be able to buy books and supplies for your studies here; however you might want to bring your laptop with you. If you do, be sure to arrange insurance (either from home or when you get here).

Don't forget to bring some photographs of your friends and family and other mementos from home. However, do not attempt to bring any plants or foodstuffs into the UK.

## Office Hours and Services

Our office is open from 9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday and from 9:30 to 2:30pm on Saturday.

## Social attitudes

Life in Britain will almost certainly be different from what you are used to. It is difficult to define exactly what the 'British' way of life is as attitudes and outlooks vary considerably according to where you are in the country. As a home to residents from many different parts of the world and a variety of ethnic backgrounds, Britain has a vibrant, cosmopolitan feel. It won't take you long before you are accustomed to your new life here and are able to adapt to a whole variety of situations; everything from understanding British etiquette and mannerisms to cooking your own food and running your own bank account.

## Drinking

Alcohol is available to anyone aged over 18. It's perfectly acceptable for adults to drink alcohol in moderate amounts. For many British people, drinking is an established part of social life – 'going out for a drink' is how they relax or spend time with friends. This doesn't mean that you have to drink alcohol. If you don't want to you can always ask for a non-alcoholic drink instead.

## Smoking

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Many people in Britain smoke. However, in some ways smoking is less acceptable than drinking, and smoking is banned in all pubs, clubs and restaurants in England, as well as other public places including buses and the London Underground. If you smoke in these places, you have to pay a fine. Some non-smokers find smoke unpleasant and uncomfortable. If you are eating or drinking with friends – especially at someone else's house – it is polite to ask before you light your cigarette.

## Social Activities

We also organise a range of social activities throughout the year for international students including day tours, concerts, weekend trips and an occasional pub night. An email will be sent to your email address, informing you of what is on. Alternatively, you can find us on Facebook or twitter.

## Students' Union and The National Union of Students

Despite being in a class, each student has their own individual needs. The reason why we have created the London Waterloo Academy Students' Union is because students are our main concern in the Academy. Not only we want to hear your questions and answer them, but we also want to make your experience at the Academy the best possible. Our mission is to ensure that both the high educational standards and all the health and safety policies are being met by the teachers and the remaining staff. We also want to promote many extra-curricular activities that will help student integration in the college and also the community. For that we need your help. We would like to have meetings at least twice every week on Wednesdays at 5pm. We will keep you posted on this. The reason why we are having these meetings is to create a common place here at the academy, where every student can feel comfortable to share their learning experience and how we, the Students' Union, can help to make your thoughts and ideas reach the people in charge, get feedback on them to meet your needs and expectations and to put words into actions. Minutes of each meeting will be kept so we won't miss anything. Enriching activities are going to be created, so that students can feel they play an important role within the college and they are part of our local community in this amazing city. As we are an open group, we are happy to hear from you at any time through the e-mail [studentunion@waterlooacademy.co.uk](mailto:studentunion@waterlooacademy.co.uk)

We are currently registered with the National Students' Union and so should you, in order to get lots of discounts and benefits in books & stationery, department stores & gifts, fashion & accessories, food & restaurants, going out, hair, beauty & chemist, leisure & entertainment, money & insurance, motoring, mytown Manchester, sports gear & fitness, study essentials, subscriptions, tech, music & gadgets, telecoms & broadband, travel & holiday. To access these and many more, go to <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-extra/> . You can benefit from registering here <http://www.nus.org.uk/> . All you have to do to get amazing discounts and benefits is to enter your details.

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