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 information on some of the University’s central support services. Its intention is to complement other sources of guidance you are likely to receive as part of your induction from your College and other bodies such as the Cambridge University Students’ Union.

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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 generally 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. We can offer advice on tenancy related issues and other guidance about living in Cambridge.

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.

Accommodation Scams

An increasing number of accommodation to rent scams appear on the internet. These look highly credible – some have genuine addresses with realistic photos of a room – but regrettably the room or property is not actually available to rent, does not belong to the advertiser and should never have been listed. The advice is not to sign up for accommodation, especially for a room, via a website that is not the University’s Accommodation Service, unless you are very certain that it is genuine. You are welcome to contact the Service to check and to seek advice before you hand over any money.
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, you can apply for an exemption. If you are living within the boundaries of Cambridge City Council, you can do this online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/discounts-for-students-and-school-leavers

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.cambridge.gov.uk/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.
• You cannot cycle on the pavement unless it is specifically marked for dual use.
• 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 University subsidises the Universal bus service which provides a service to many University sites, including connections between Addenbrooke’s and the city centre, Cambridge Railway Station, West Cambridge and Eddington. Further information is outlined at www.environment.admin.cam.ac.uk/travel/catch-bus

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.proctors.cam.ac.uk/motor-proctor

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 or you can book direct from National Rail: www.nationalrail.co.uk

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, or a contactless bank card. https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/

Coaches are a cheaper alternative to trains but usually take longer. Coaches leave from Parkside next to Parker’s Piece. Tickets should be booked in advance. National Express coaches run from Cambridge to all different parts of Britain: www.nationalexpress.com If you’re a full-time student, the Young Persons Coachcard allows you to save 1/3 on standard fares.
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 Doctor’s surgery (known as General Practitioner or GP). 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 are advised to obtain a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) before coming to the UK. For further information visit [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/arriving/healthcare-uk](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/arriving/healthcare-uk)

Also see the additional information on the EU Settlement Scheme on page 28.

**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. 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 £9 per item. 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](http://www.gov.uk/get-a-ppc)
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. If you are taking medication prescribed for ADHD you must bring evidence of your diagnosis from a specialist psychiatrist – without this GPs in the UK will not be able to issue you with a prescription if you run out.

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 some useful guides and webpages with advice and support for international students: https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/support-guidance

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’s a legal requirement to obtain a TV licence to watch or record programmes as they are being shown on TV or live on an online TV service, and to download or watch BBC programmes on BBC iPlayer. A TV licence can be purchased online, by telephone, or at a ‘PayPoint Outlet’ and costs £154.50 a year. For further information and FAQs, visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Mobile Phones

You may wish to purchase 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 when you need it.
• 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.

There are many network providers to choose from so it is advisable to undertake some research online or visit a mobile phone shop to discuss your options.

You may be able to use your current mobile phone in the UK. Check with your mobile phone provider before arriving if the phone will work in the UK and whether there are any additional costs. Alternatively if your phone is ‘unlocked’ and compatible, you could buy an international or UK SIM card to use your existing phone.

Working in the UK

The University places restrictions on full-time students working during their studies:

Undergraduate students are expected not to work during term-time. Term dates for undergraduate students are outlined at www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/term-dates-and-calendars

Masters students are expected not to work during term-time. Students should consult their Faculty and Department for further details regarding official vacation dates.

Graduate research students undertaking a course of more than 12 months may work up to a maximum of ten hours per week with the approval of both their Supervisor and College Tutor. The work undertaken should be academic-related, related to professional or career development, or outreach work on behalf of the University. Students who receive funding should also check that the terms and conditions of their funding permits them to undertake work. The academic year for
graduate research students is continuous throughout the year (1st October - 30th September). Students may take breaks for holidays, up to a maximum of eight weeks a year, at times agreed with their Supervisor but such periods are not to be used to undertake work.

In addition to the University’s restrictions, students on a Tier 4 visa must ensure they fully understand and comply with the working conditions of their immigration permission, including restrictions on the type of work permitted. Detailed information is outlined at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/tier-4-responsibilities/working-tier-4-visa

**National Insurance number**

Anybody who works in the UK needs a National Insurance (NI) number which is a unique personal reference number which will be required for tax and employment purposes. Depending on how much you earn per week, you may be required to pay NI contributions and Income Tax. Information is outlined at www.gov.uk/student-jobs-paying-tax

To apply for an NI number, you need to telephone the application line on 0800 141 2075, Monday – Friday, 8am – 6pm. During the telephone call you can expect to be asked for your personal details, such as name, date of birth, nationality and UK residential address, as well as the date you arrived in the UK. If you have a UK visa, have this with you when you call as you may be asked for details. For call charges and additional information, visit www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number

Following your telephone conversation, you may be asked to attend an interview or complete a postal application. For an interview, you will be sent a letter confirming the date, time and location and what documentation you need to bring to confirm your identity. If asked to make a postal application, you will be sent an application form with information on what documents you will need to send. You can usually send photocopies but ensure you follow the instructions you are sent with the form.

The issuance of an NI number is free of charge.
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 gives a great overview of local events, experiences, and initiatives in the city.

Other sites such as ‘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 is a supermarket in Cambridge City Centre located on Sidney Street (across from Sidney Sussex College)
Markets

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

There is a general market from Monday to Saturday (10am-4pm) which 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.

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.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: e.g. 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 or feeling withdrawn and not wanting to engage with the current environment
- 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, family reunion or important event 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.
• **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](http://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk)
The University has a range of central support services for students.

**International Student Office**

The International Student Office provides specialist support to international students at Cambridge. If you have any questions about the information provided in this guide or you have a query related to coming to live and study in the UK that has not been included, email internationalstudents@admin.cam.ac.uk. This office also provides a visa advice service and has responsibility for ensuring institutional student immigration compliance.

**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.

The Careers Service’s website at [www.careers.cam.ac.uk](http://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 a country or its main cities. Linked from the website is GoinGlobal which allows you to source more opportunities across the globe by country and city. We suggest you register early on the Careers Service’s website 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 our website provides information on UK post-graduation options, including visa information: [http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/students/international/index.asp](http://www.careers.cam.ac.uk/students/international/index.asp)

To keep track of our events and other news, it’s important that you follow the Careers Service on social media via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram – just search ‘unicamcareers’. 
Counselling and Support

All international students are welcome to contact the University Counselling Service, which offers confidential help and support to over 2000 students each year. The Service is staffed by a team of professionally qualified counsellors, University Sexual Assault and Harassment Advisors (SAHA), and Mental Health Advisors (MHA) 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.

Many of our workshops can help you adjust to the Cambridge environment and make the most of your time here: [https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups](https://www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/studentcouns/studentgroups)

The Service is available throughout the year except for the Christmas closure period. To request an appointment, please see the website [www.counselling.cam.ac.uk](http://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, CDROMs, live satellite TV in 12 languages, recorded international news, a suite of online 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 members of the University, 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, Swahili, Modern Greek, Hebrew and Turkish.

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 literacy 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 the teaching team to receive focused support and tailored training to make you a more efficient and effective academic 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. Everyone on the In-Sessional can also sign up for 1.5 hours of individual vocal training as well as individual Coaching sessions on such areas as Active Listening, Communication Skills, and Study Block & Procrastination.

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, Approaches to Editing and Discipline-specific Argumentation. 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](http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk).

For more information on all the Language Centre resources and courses, check out our website: [www.langcen.cam.ac.uk](http://www.langcen.cam.ac.uk)
Academic related disability support

There are hundreds of international disabled students at Cambridge. The Disability Resource Centre (DRC) supports students with specific learning difficulties (such as dyslexia), mental health conditions, physical and sensory impairments, Autism spectrum conditions and long-term health conditions. It is important that you let us know if you have a disability before you start at Cambridge, as this allows us to assess and plan any support you may require.

DRC Disability Advisers can provide advice and guidance regarding such support requirements. This support may include non-medical help such as mentoring, lab assistance, or specialist study skills, as well as assistive technology and software.

There is a fund for support for international students, available through the DRC https://www.disability.admin.cam.ac.uk/funding-students/eu-and-international-students.

The DRC service is confidential and free of charge. For more information go to www.disability.admin.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.

The University has three nurseries. Two of the nurseries are open to students offering places for children from three months to school age. West Cambridge Nursery has 20 FTE student places and Eddington Nursery has 8 FTE student places.

The Childcare Office also provides Holiday Playscheme facilities at St Mary’s Junior School and Chesterton Community College, which operate 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 a 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 provision 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 can apply to the Central Childcare Bursary Scheme, which awards grants to help with OFSTED-registered childcare costs (income, expenditure and childcare costs are assessed).
Newcomers and Visiting Scholars (NVS)

Newcomers and Visiting Scholars is a group attached to the University to help partners and families settle into Cambridge. Information about the group’s programme of events and activities outlined on their website at www.nvs.admin.cam.ac.uk

Development and Alumni Relations

Support from alumni
Throughout your studies, you can access advice, information and support from the University’s global network of alumni. Use GradLink, LinkedIn and the Alumni Groups search facility to approach alumni and Alumni Groups for mentoring, subject specific advice, help to find internships and more.

Pre-arrival events for freshers
Some overseas Alumni Groups will host virtual Freshers’ Events in September, enabling new students to hear from alumni as well as current students in their country of residence about their experiences of Cambridge. These optional events are a great opportunity to meet other new students before the start of term.

Social and networking opportunities
For social and networking opportunities with alumni, visit the alumni events web page or contact Alumni Groups for their events schedules. You can also invite alumni to attend or speak at your events.

Travel and hospitality
Alumni Groups offer a wide range of hospitality and assistance to travelling students, such as finding places to stay, giving a personal tour and meeting for coffee. If you plan to travel as part of your course, with a student club or society, or just for fun, find out if there is a Group in that area and contact them directly.

Contact us
To find out more about the support available to students from the alumni network, please contact the Development and Alumni Relations office by emailing networks@alumni.cam.ac.uk
Immigration Requirements

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

Travelling to the UK

After making a successful visa application overseas, you will be issued a time limited 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. Information about travelling to and entering the UK is provided at [http://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control](http://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control).

Arriving at the airport


Most non-EEA nationals are required to complete a landing card on arrival and join the queue to speak to a Border Force officer at the passport desk. Students who are nationals of the following countries and hold a biometric passport, however, are able to use the eGates if they are open: Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore South Korea and USA. You will not need to complete a landing card or speak to Border Force. You must be entering the UK during the validity of your Tier 4 entry vignette and on the passport used in your visa application. If you are eligible to use the eGates you should retain evidence of your flight (e.g. boarding pass) to confirm you have entered the UK during the validity of your vignette.

Collecting your BRP in the UK

The Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) is evidence of your immigration permission in the UK. You are required to collect your BRP after arriving in the UK. The decision letter notifying you of your successful visa application will confirm where you should collect your BRP. This will either be at a designated Post Office or at the University, depending on which you selected on the visa application form. Further information on collecting your BRP is outlined at [www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-brp](http://www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/collecting-your-brp).
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 its Tier 4 duties. You should ensure you have read the University’s ‘Your responsibilities under Tier 4’ guide at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/tier-4-responsibilities

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).

You must book an appointment in advance and information on the how to do this is outlined at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/police-registration

To register with the police, you will need your passport, two passport photographs, your BRP, the decision letter notifying you of your successful visa application. There is a charge of £34 which can be paid in cash. 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.

Telephone Scams

Whilst not common, you should be aware of telephone scams in the UK that target individuals with a visa pretending to be from a legitimate organisation such as the UK Home Office or HM Revenue and Customs. During the telephone call the fraudster demands a payment, usually calling it a fine for a non-existent problem with, for example, an immigration issue. The caller may appear genuine and convincing because they have some limited information about you. If you receive such a call, do not give any personal information and do not make any payments. Report the incident to the University’s International Student Office.
Travelling in Europe

Depending on your nationality, you may need to apply for a visa prior to travelling to mainland Europe. For guidance on the visa process and requirements, visit the website of the Visa Application Centre in the UK of the relevant country (e.g. French Visa Application Centre in the UK). The Visa Application Centre website usually provides an email address if you have any queries. Be cautious of obtaining information online about the visa application requirements from an unofficial source.

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.

If you plan to visit one country, you should apply to the Embassy or Consulate in the UK for that particular country. If you are planning to visit several countries, you should apply to the Embassy or Consulate for the country in which you plan to spend the most time. If you will be spending equal time in multiple countries, you should apply to the Embassy or Consulate for the country that will be your port of entry.

The visa application requirements vary depending on the embassy where you apply for the Schengen visa. 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. The earliest you can apply for a Schengen visa is 3 months before you travel, but you should make your application in good time.
Apply for an EHIC

A European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) gives you the right to access state-provided healthcare during a temporary stay in another country in the European Economic Area or Switzerland. As a Tier 4 student you are eligible to apply for an EHIC. To apply for an EHIC as a non-EEA national, you need to complete an application form: www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/EHIC/Documents/EHIC-application-form.pdf

Send the completed application to NHS Business Services Authority, European Health Insurance Card EHIC applications, Bridge House, 152 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6SN.

Please note that as a non-EEA national, it is not possible to apply for an EHIC online.

Information about what is and isn’t covered by an EHIC is available at www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/healthcareabroad/ehic/pages/about-the-ehic.aspx

EU Settlement Scheme

The information in this section is for students who have EU, EEA or Swiss citizenship and are moving to the UK to start their studies prior to 31 December 2020.

The UK left the European Union at the end of January 2020 and entered a transition period until 31 December 2020. The UK Government has confirmed its commitment to protect the rights of EEA and Swiss citizens, and their family members, residing in the UK prior to this date. During this transition period, free movement continues. The EU Settlement Scheme will enable EEA and Swiss nationals to continue living in the UK longer-term with the same access to work, study, benefits and public services including the NHS.

Further information and guidance on how to apply for the EU Settlement Scheme is outlined at www.internationalstudents.cam.ac.uk/eu-settlement-scheme. New students should apply after arriving in the UK. The deadline to make an application under the scheme is 30 June 2021.
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.

☐ Check current requirements for entering the UK:

  https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control
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, your 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.

**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.

What is Formal Hall?
Answered by a current international student:

Formal Hall is one of the most enjoyable and unique aspects of being a student at Cambridge. It is basically a formal dinner with members of your college community. It is usually a three course meal, and some colleges provide cheese and wine. Each college runs their formal halls slightly differently, so you should check with someone from your College in advance about the dress code (some colleges require you to wear a suit/dress and a gown), arrival time, how to book a ticket and whether you need to bring drinks.

The dinner usually starts when the Fellows of the College enter and sit at the high table. Usually you will stand as the Fellows enter and while someone says a Latin grace. Many colleges have rules of etiquette that prohibit leaving your seat while the Fellows are seated and using your mobile phone. Ordinarily, at the end of the meal a gong will sound, another grace is said and the Fellows leave the hall. You can usually register to bring some guests with you if you have visitors or would like to take friends from other colleges. As each College’s formal hall is different, some students try to attend formal halls at many different colleges while they are in Cambridge.
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](http://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: [https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/living](https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/living)

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this guide at the time of going to print. However, this information is subject to change and the University accepts no responsibility for any errors or omissions. Students are advised to refer to the various web-links provided throughout the guide for the most up-to-date information.