



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE



International Student Guide

Pre-arrival and orientation information

Welcome

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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Accommodation

If you are not taking accommodation in your College, the University's Accommodation Service may be able to help you find a suitable place to live. Register with them via their website <https://www.accommodation.cam.ac.uk> and you will be sent login and password information so that you can search their database. They will offer the following options:

- University-owned self-contained properties are available at different locations throughout the City. These are usually self-contained apartments and houses, both furnished and unfurnished. The University does not offer single rooms. Properties are generally available for a minimum period of one year and can be arranged prior to arriving in Cambridge. Priority is given to those who are new to Cambridge.
- Private Sector accommodation is located throughout the City and the surrounding villages. There are rooms available in houses shared with resident landlords or with other students, along with whole houses and apartments. We would strongly advise you to view a property or a room in person, or have a reliable person view on your behalf, before agreeing to a tenancy agreement with a landlord. The Accommodation Service has a list of temporary accommodation where you can stay whilst looking for a suitable longer-term option.

Although properties are offered via the Accommodation Service website, 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 information 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. Please do note that this type of accommodation is in high demand at the start of the academic year and can be expensive.

Fraudulent Accommodation Offers

Regrettably there are an increasing number of fraudulent offers (scams) of rental property appearing on the internet. These can look highly credible – some have genuine addresses with realistic photos of a room – but the room or property in question is not actually available to rent, does not belong to the advertiser and should never have been offered. Best advice is not to sign up for accommodation, especially for a room, via a website, unless you can verify for certain that it is genuine. You are welcome to contact the Accommodation 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 or college 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](#). Your spouse and / or children should also be exempt if they are in the UK as your visa dependants. The exemption applies from the day you start your course and until your course ends.



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](#).

If you haven't cycled before or haven't been on a bike for a long time, there is useful information to get started on the [Cambridge Cycling Campaign website](#).

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.

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 [University Motor Licence](#).

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. Check requirements on the [government website](#).

Walking

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

Maps

The [interactive map](#) of Cambridge, showing University Colleges, Departments and Faculties.

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](#).

If you are aged [16-25](#), or aged [26-30](#), 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.

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.

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. 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.

Visit the Student Support website's [Physical Health section](#) for further information.

Student visa

If you are coming to the UK for 6 months or longer and have a student visa, you will have paid an immigration health surcharge as part of your visa application fees. 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 £9.90 per item. If you need to have continued medication, you may find it cheaper to get a [Prescription Pre-Payment Certificate](#).

EEA students

If you have a student visa and hold a valid EHIC issued in the EU or Switzerland, you may be eligible for a full or partial reimbursement of the immigration health surcharge paid with your visa application under certain conditions. Students are advised to check the criteria carefully in deciding whether to apply for a refund. Information is provided on the [government website](#).

EEA and Swiss students who have a status under the EU Settlement Scheme are entitled to use NHS healthcare if ordinarily resident in the UK. In this context, 'ordinarily resident' means living in the UK on a lawful, voluntary and properly settled basis.

Courses less than six months

If your course is for less than six months and you are from a non-EU 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.

If you are from an EU country, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein or Switzerland, read the information on the government website about [healthcare for visitors to the UK from the EU](#).

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.

NHS 111

If you are ill or injured and need help fast but it is not an emergency, or you are not sure what to do, use [NHS 111](#). You can either call free on 111 or use the online service.

Dental Care

The NHS covers clinically necessary treatment at the dentist although you will have to pay a contribution towards the cost. Information on [how to find a dentist](#) is on the NHS website, including in a dental emergency. It can be difficult to find a dentist that registers new NHS patients. In these circumstances, you may have to register with a dentist as a private patient, in which case the cost of treatment will be higher.

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.

Living in the UK

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. Check the [dates of bank holidays online](#). Lectures and examinations still may be given on the Bank Holidays that take place during Full Term.

Safety

Cambridge is generally a safe place to study and socialise but the following is advisable:

- keep your passport (and visa) in a safe place;
- be aware and vigilant of your surroundings when you are travelling around;
- keep your belongings close to you;
- don't carry around large amounts of cash - you can use your bank card to pay for things;
- be aware of phone, email or text scams which may appear genuine and convincing as they seem to be from legitimate organisations such as the Home Office, HM Revenues and Customs or the Post Office. Criminals use all kinds of ways to trick you into paying them money, or giving them valuable information about yourself. Do not give any personal information or make any payments if contacted in this way. You can check with the International Student Office or your College if you are unsure about the authenticity of any communication you receive;
- 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](#) but it is advisable to research into a range of offers and ensure you fully understand what is covered by the policy.



Working in the UK

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 £169.50 a year. For further information is on the [TV Licence website](#).

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.

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

Undergraduate students are expected not to work during [term-time](#).

Masters students are expected not to work during term-time. Students should consult their Faculty or Department for further details regarding official vacation dates as these can vary between Masters courses. In addition, for many courses, term-time extends beyond Full Easter Term.

Postgraduate 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. Students who receive funding should also check that the terms and conditions of their funding permits them to undertake work. The academic year for postgraduate 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 student 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 on the [International Students website](#).

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](#).

You can apply for an NI number online via the [government website](#). The issuance of an NI number is free of charge. The website advises that if you have a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) you may have a NI number already but please note this is not applicable to a student visa.

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.

Supermarkets

There are a small number of supermarkets in the City Centre, in particular [Sainsbury's](#) on Sidney Street opposite Sidney Sussex College and [Marks and Spencer](#) in Market Square. However much larger supermarkets with a greater range of products as well as household items are located further out. [Tesco](#) and [Asda](#) are both on Newmarket Road. There is an [Aldi](#) supermarket near to Fitzwilliam, Churchill and St Edmund's Colleges, located on Histon road. A larger [Sainsbury's](#) is located in Eddington near to the West Cambridge site.

Markets

There is a [market every day](#) on Market Square from 10am-4pm selling a range of items such as food, baked goods, coffee, homewares, vegetables, sweets, clothes, books, and music.

On Trinity Street in All Saints Garden, there is an arts and crafts market every Saturday where everything is handmade.

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.
- [The Grafton](#) a short distance from Christ's Pieces.
- [Lion Yard](#) shopping centre comprises two floors full of shops. The centre can be reached from Petty Cury, St Andrews Street or Market Square.

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, livestreams 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 and Botanic Gardens

Cambridge has many museums, most of which are free to enter. Visit the [Fitzwilliam Museum](#) or one of the other [museums](#). Students at the University also have free entry to the [Botanic Gardens](#) but tickets must be booked in advance.

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/>



Support for Students

The decision to study at Cambridge brings the opportunity to make new friends, to expand your academic knowledge, and to gain new experiences and insights. But it's also normal for such big changes to bring challenges and you may find it takes time to adjust. Your College, the Cambridge Students' Union and the University all are here to support you and help with this transition, but it's important to know that support is available throughout your studies:

College wellbeing support

Students who are members of a College can access health, wellbeing and pastoral (tutorial) support locally at their College. Each student has a named College Tutor, who provides information, advice and guidance on academic and personal matters. Your Tutor and other staff in your College can refer you to your College Health and Wellbeing Team, which may include a College Nurse, a Wellbeing professional and a Chaplain/ Dean. Colleges are also connected to University and NHS services and can offer support direct you to specialist or medical services.

Cambridge SU Student Advice Service

The Students' Union Advice Service offers free, confidential and impartial advice to all Cambridge University students from any College or course. You can contact the Student Advice Service with any issues or problems including:

- making friends
- working relationships
- exams
- taking time out of your studies (intermission)
- welfare concerns
- finance

Peer Support: Nightline

[Cambridge Nightline](#) is an anonymous, confidential, non-judgemental listening and information service for students at the University of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin University. Run by students for students, Nightline is open during term time from 19:00 - 07:00. You can contact Nightline via their instant messaging service, telephone or email.

University Support

Wellbeing

The [Postgraduate Wellbeing Service](#) supports taught and research postgraduates. The service offers online and in-person appointments and is available through the academic year, including the summer months. Your adviser can work with you to develop strategies to maintain and improve your mental health and wellbeing.

Together, you can look at a range of topics including:

- managing low mood
- stress and anxiety
- overcoming perfectionism or procrastination

University Counselling Service (UCS)

The University Counselling Service (UCS) supports students who are experiencing personal, relational or academic concerns. If you are a member of a College, you can access:

- [Individual counselling](#)
- [One-off workshops](#)
- [Groups](#)

All services are free and founded on the principles of trust, respect and confidentiality.

Mental Health Advice Service (MHAS)

The [Mental Health Advice Service](#) supports students with mental health issues. The Service is for students who are experiencing a significant impact on their ability to participate in their everyday lives or academic work. To access this service, you need to be a member of a College and referred by a member of staff, such as:

- Your College Tutor
- Your College Health and Wellbeing Team (Nurse, Wellbeing adviser)
- A USC Counsellor
- A Postgraduate Wellbeing Service Adviser
- A Harassment and Violence Support Service Adviser

Support for survivors of harassment and violence

The University's Harassment and Violence Support Service (HVSS) offers emotional and practical support to students who have experienced any form of:

- sexual harassment or violence and/or intimate partner abuse
- religious or racial discrimination or violence

This service is available to students who are members of a College. It doesn't matter when the incident/incidents happened, The Service will support anyone who has faced these challenges at any point in their lives.

Disabled students

The [Accessibility and Disability Resource Centre](#) (ADRC) provides a confidential advice, guidance and support to all students. You can contact the service for support with:

- Funding
- Academic-related disability support
- Exam access arrangements
- Mentoring
- Screening assessments

Ways to connect at Cambridge

There are lots of ways to take time out from work, connect with others and relax. You might feel like just meeting up informally with friends, seeing a film or having a meal, or if more organised activities would suit you, some possibilities are suggested in a video and on the Student Support website.



Further Student Services

In addition to the support outlined in the previous section, the University provides a range of further central 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 international.students@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. 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 or via our online platforms.

The Careers Service uses the Handshake platform to surface thousands of graduate level vacancies and internships each year, across all employment sectors. Handshake also provide opportunities to connect directly with employers and alumni. We offer resources helping you to identify employers and opportunities globally via our website and Handshake. We can also support you in making the best of LinkedIn to connect with alumni all over the world via the University's comprehensive LinkedIn Alumni Network.

The 'International Students' section of our website provides a round up of resources which may be especially relevant to international students but we hope that you will explore all that the Service has to offer.

To keep track of our events and other news, follow the Careers Service on social media via Facebook, Twitter/X, LinkedIn and Instagram – just search 'unicamcareers'.

The Language Centre

The Language Centre provides language learning opportunities to students throughout the University. We offer CULP courses in some 17 languages in addition to the ADTIS provision of discipline-specific academic literacy support in English for international students.

The John Trim Centre houses self-study resources in over 180 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.

Academic Development and Training for International Students (ADTIS)

Based in the Language Centre, the Academic Development and Training for International Students section 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 is the supervisions where you work one on one with a member 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](#).

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

Childcare and support for families

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

The University has nurseries located across Cambridge that are available to students, offering places for children from three months to school age.

The Childcare Office also provides a Holiday Playscheme, which operates during the state school holiday periods (excluding Christmas and Bank Holidays) for school-age children. 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](#).

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

Pre-arrival events for new students

Some overseas Alumni Groups will be hosting online and in-person [Freshers' Events](#) in August and September, enabling new undergraduate and postgraduate 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.

Support from alumni

Throughout your studies you can access advice, information and support from the University's global network of alumni. Use [Alumni Careers Connect](#), [LinkedIn](#) and the [Alumni Groups search facility](#) to approach alumni and Alumni Groups for mentoring, subject specific advice, help to find internships and more.

Social and networking opportunities

For social and networking opportunities with alumni, visit the [alumni events](#) web page, or [contact an Alumni Group](#) to become a student member. You can also invite alumni to attend or speak at your own 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, or 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 using the search facility 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 contact@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

If you have applied for your visa from outside the UK (entry clearance), you will need to enter the UK after the start date of your student visa to activate your student immigration permission. Depending on your nationality, the start date will either be stated on the vignette issued in your passport or confirmed by checking your online status (EEA and Swiss students only). The government website provides information about travelling to and entering the UK.

Arriving at the airport

Most non-EEA nationals are required to 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: [European Economic Area](#), Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland and USA. You must be entering the UK during the validity of your student immigration permission. 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

If you have received a vignette in your passport you will need to [collect your Biometric Residence Permit \(BRP\)](#) after arrival in the UK. The BRP is evidence of your student immigration permission 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. EEA and Swiss nationals who used the ID Check app for their visa application will receive a digital status only and do not need to collect a BRP after arriving in the UK.

The UK is in the process of transitioning to a fully digital immigration system and this is being rolled-out throughout 2024. This means that students who hold a BRP will also be given an eVisa, an online record of their immigration status. After arrival in the UK, and once you have collected your BRP, further instructions will be provided on how to register to access your eVisa.

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 sponsor duties. You should ensure you have read the University's ['Your responsibilities on a student visa'](#).

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 for the UK location of the relevant country's Visa Application Centre. (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.

Pre-arrival checklist

Health

- 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

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, or digital visa status if you are an EEA or Swiss student.
- Ensure you enter the UK within the validity of your student immigration permission.
- Collect your BRP promptly after arrival in the UK if applicable (and following any period of quarantine as 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 the 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". [pronounced 'nat-ski']

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.

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

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 an 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

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>

The latest version of this guide is available on the [International Students section](#) of the University's website.

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.