

ASAN-UK'S
DECLASSIFIED
Student Survival
Guide



ASAN
UK

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to ASAN-UK's Student Survival Guide! Our quick, easy-to-read guide covers all things UK living and studying - we've basically included everything we wished we'd known when moving to the UK, from grocery tips to resume writing to how to vote overseas and much, much more! We hope you get some helpful information out of our guide. Happy reading!

**Sincerely,
Charlotte and Jamie
ASAN-UK Welfare Directors**



PACKING LIST

WHAT TO BRING FROM THE US

Clothing

- Raincoat
- Winter coat
- Lighter jacket
- Sweatshirt/sweaters
- Jeans/trousers
- T-shirts
- Long-sleeve shirts
- Gym clothes
- Pajamas
- Underwear/socks
- 1-2 nicer outfits

Shoes

- Comfortable walking shoes
- Rainboots or waterproof shoes
- One pair of nicer shoes
- Shower shoes

Toiletries (Travel Size)

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Hairbrush
- Deoderant
- Skincare
- Shampoo/conditioner
- Body wash
- Any prescription medication

Documents

- Passport
- Student visa
- University acceptance letter
- Housing contract
- Vaccination records
- Copies of prescriptions
- Debit/credit cards
- Small amount of GBP cash
- Insurance details

Electronics

- Laptop/tablet
- Phone
- Headphones
- Portable charger
- Chargers
- Plug adapter

Other

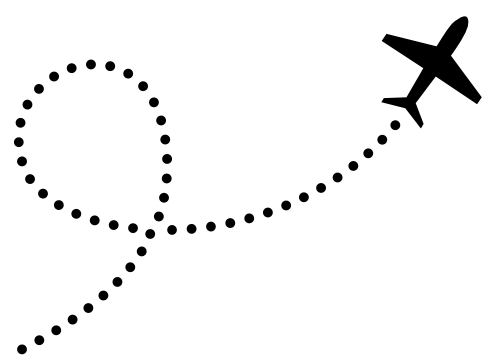
- Gloves/hat/scarf
- Umbrella
- Backpack
- Purse/smaller bag
- Reusable waterbottle
- Basic first aid kit

WHAT TO BUY IN THE UK

- Full-size toiletries
- Bedding (duvet, duvet cover, sheets, pillow, pillow case, etc.)
- Cleaning supplies
- Towels
- Laundry supplies
- Electrical appliances (fans, hair dryer, desk lamp, etc.)
- Kitchenware
- Hangers
- School supplies (notebooks, pens, etc.)
- Non-prescription medication

KEY TIPS

- Only pack what you can carry (2 suitcases and a backpack at most)
- Consider shipping a small box if you want to bring more items; it can be cheaper and easier than extra luggage
- Bring decorations and items that remind you of home to help your space feel like your own
- Limit yourself to having 1-2 weeks' worth of clothes since you will most likely do weekly laundry
- Bring layerable clothing for the unpredictable UK weather
- Remember that UK rooms tend to be smaller than typical US dorms
- Budget for initial setup (around £100-£250)



FIRST WEEK ESSENTIALS

REGISTERING WITH A GP (DOCTOR)

In the UK, your first point of contact for healthcare is a GP (General Practitioner).



WHAT TO DO:

- Find a local GP near your accommodation.
- Register online or in person.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO PROVIDE:

- Passport
- Visa/BRP or eVisa
- UK address
- Student Confirmation Letter



MOBILE PHONE

HAVING A UK NUMBER IS OFTEN REQUIRED FOR:

- Banking verification
- Delivery services
- GP registration
- Job applications



POPULAR UK NETWORKS:

- EE, O2, Vodafone, Three & giffgaff
- Many offer student discounts or flexible monthly plans!



BANKING

A UK BANK ACCOUNT MAKES IT EASIER TO:

Pay rent, receive part-time job wages, & avoid foreign transaction fees

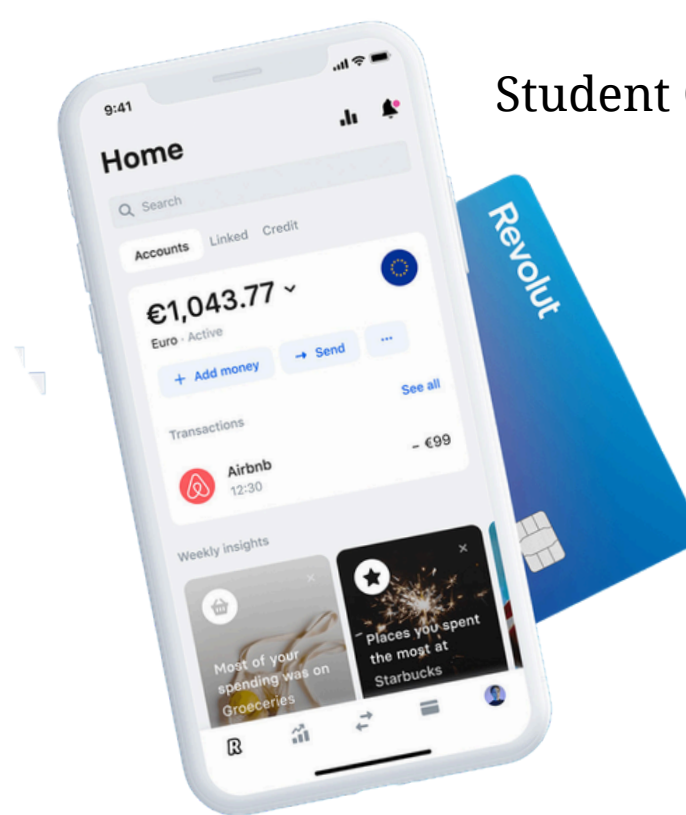
POPULAR BANKS FOR STUDENTS:

High Street banks: Barclays, Santander, HSBC, NatWest
App-based banks: Monzo, Revolut, Starling

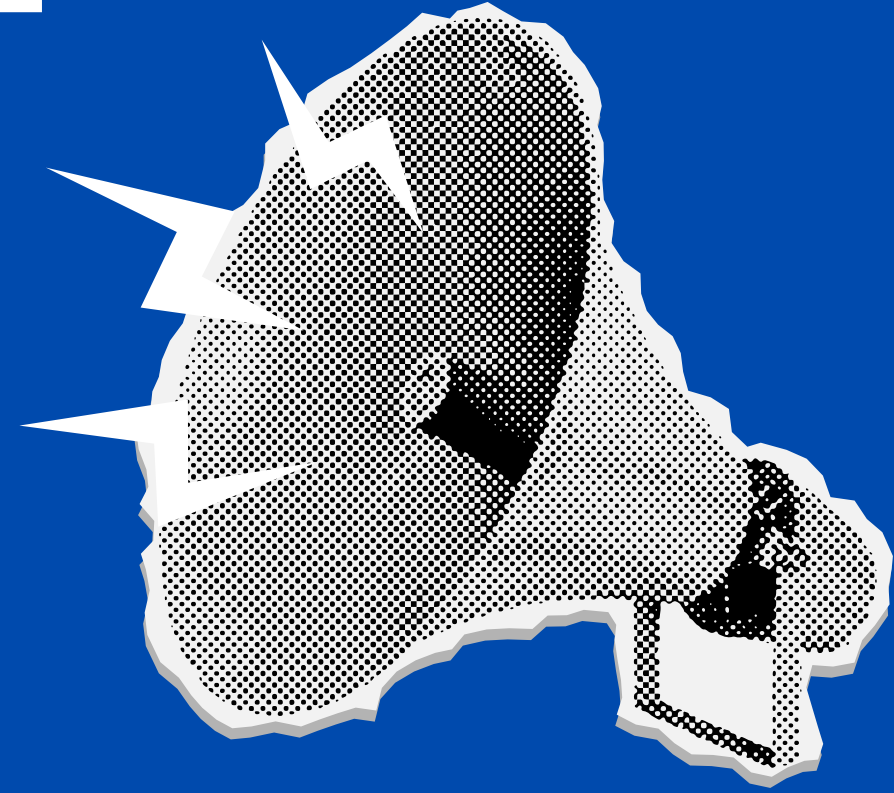
TIP: MANY STUDENTS START WITH A DIGITAL BANK (MONZO/REVOLUT) BECAUSE APPROVAL IS FAST AND THEN OPEN A TRADITIONAL BANK ACCOUNT LATER.

TYPICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR OPENING AN ACCOUNT:

Passport
Student Confirmation Letter
UK address
Phone number



HOW UK TRANSPORT WORKS, STUDENT DISCOUNTS, OYSTER CARDS, 16-25 RAILCARD



HOW UK TRANSPORT WORKS: COMMON TYPES:

- BUSES
- TRAINS
- UNDERGROUND (LONDON)
- TRAMS (MANCHESTER, NOTTINGHAM, SHEFFIELD, ETC.)

APPS LIKE CITYMAPPER OR GOOGLE MAPS HELP NAVIGATE ROUTES!



OYSTER CARD (LONDON ONLY) USED FOR:

- TUBE
- BUS
- OVERGROUND



STUDENTS CAN CONNECT THEIR RAILCARD FOR EXTRA DISCOUNTS ON FARES.

GENERAL TRANSPORT TIPS

CONTACTLESS BANK CARDS WORK ON MOST BUSES AND TRAINS

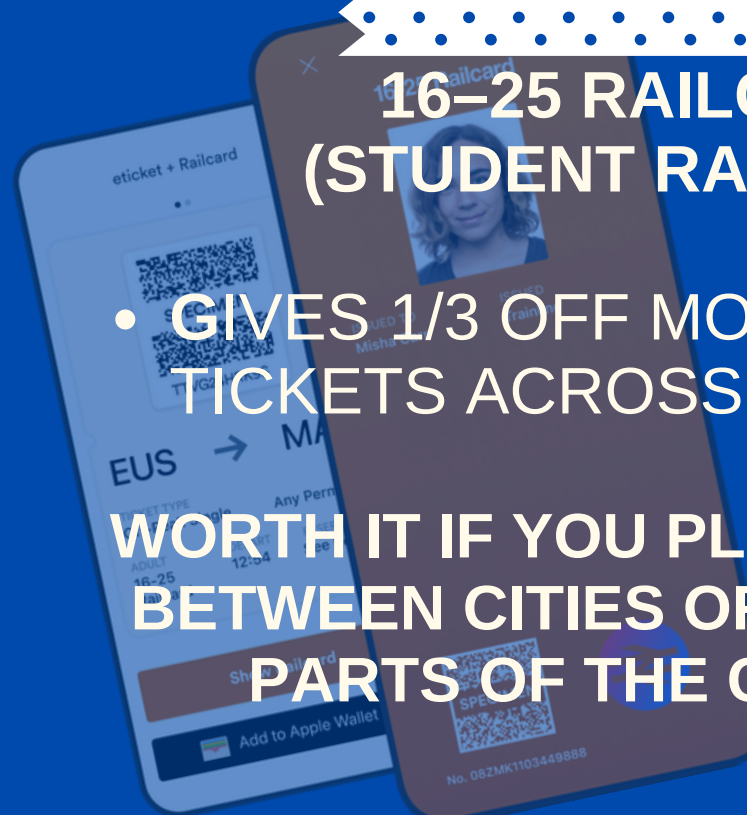
PEAK FARES ARE MORE EXPENSIVE (RUSH HOUR)

TRAINS ARE USUALLY FASTER BUT MORE EXPENSIVE THAN BUSES

16-25 RAILCARD (STUDENT RAILCARD)

- GIVES 1/3 OFF MOST TRAIN TICKETS ACROSS THE UK.

WORTH IT IF YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL BETWEEN CITIES OR VISIT OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY.



trainline



GROCERY SHOPPING

WHAT ARE TYPICAL UK SUPERMARKETS LIKE?



ALDI

- Similar to the US Aldi
- Very low prices (often the cheapest in the UK)
- Good quality
- Has other goods besides groceries
- Few city center locations, tends to be in suburban areas or on the edge of town

LIDL

- Mix of Trader Joe's & Walmart
- Very low prices
- Good quality
- Has other goods besides groceries
- Few city center locations, tends to be in suburban areas or on the edge of town

ASDA



- Most similar to Walmart
- Mid-range prices (cheaper than Tesco)
- Good quality
- Has many other goods besides groceries
- Large stores
- More suburban locations, tends not to be in city center



TESCO

- Similar to Kroger or Target but only groceries
- Mid-range prices
- Discounts with a Clubcard
- Good quality
- Smaller convenience store version: Tesco Express (open late)
- Best value meal deal

SAINSBURY'S

- Similar to Kroger/Publix
- Mid-range prices (slightly higher than Tesco)
- Discounts with a Nectar card
- Very good quality
- Smaller convenience store version: Sainsbury's Local (open late)

CO-OP



- Similar to a 7-11 but with real groceries
- Convenience store
- High prices
- Membership gives small cash back
- Good quality
- Small selection
- Open late



M&S FOOD

- Mix of Whole Foods & Trader Joe's
- High prices
- Excellent quality
- Especially good for ready meals and bakery items
- Found in city center and some train stations

WAITROSE

- Most similar to Whole Foods
- High prices
- MyWaitrose card gives small perks
- Excellent quality
- Fewer city center locations, tends to be in suburban areas

FINAL TIPS



- Get a Tesco Clubcard and/or Sainsbury's Nectar card: both are free and save you money
- Take advantage of the meal deals at many stores - can get a main, a side, and a drink for cheap
- Use Aldi/Lidl if near one

DISCOUNT CARDS

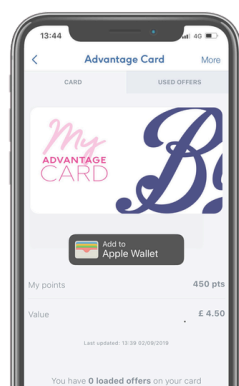
STUDENT DISCOUNTS ARE WIDELY AVAILABLE IN THE UK – OFTEN MORE THAN IN THE U.S.

Supermarket Loyalty Cards:

- **Tesco Clubcard** – points, vouchers, and lower Clubcard prices
- **Nectar** – points across multiple brands like Sainsbury's and Argos
- **Lidl Plus** – app discounts and free items
- **Asda Rewards** – cash back-style “cashpot” rewards
- **Morrisons More** – points and personalised offers

HEALTH & BEAUTY

- **Boots Advantage Card** – points on spending + exclusive deals
- **Superdrug Health & Beautycard** – points and student-friendly offers



Discount Apps

TOO GOOD TO GO – CHEAP SURPLUS FOOD FROM LOCAL SHOPS

OLIO – FREE FOOD AND ITEMS FROM PEOPLE NEARBY

VOUCHERCODES – EXTRA PROMO CODES AND CASH BACK DEALS

Food & Coffee

- **Costa Club** – collect points for free drinks
- **Greggs Rewards** – free food rewards over time
- **McDonald's Rewards** – points for free menu items



A TRUE UK STUDENT RITE OF PASSAGE: A MEAL DEAL

THE UK MEAL DEAL IS A FIXED-PRICE LUNCH (MAIN + SNACK + DRINK) AND ONE OF THE CHEAPEST, EASIEST WAYS TO EAT ON A BUDGET.

FOUND IN PLACES LIKE TESCO, SAINSBURY'S, MORRISONS, CO-OP, ASDA, WHSMITH, & MARKS & SPENCER

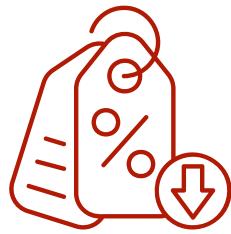
TYPICALLY £3–£4 WITH A LOYALTY CARD (MORE WITHOUT)

INCLUDES SANDWICHES, WRAPS, PASTA POTS, SNACKS, AND DRINKS

MUCH CHEAPER THAN BUYING ITEMS SEPARATELY

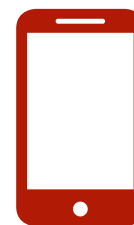
STUDENT DISCOUNTS

UNIDAYS



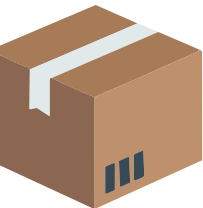
- App-based discounts
- Free to use
- Popular
- Easy to verify student status
- Discounts with many brands including ASOS, Nike, Adidas, H&M, PureGym, Apple, Samsung, Uber Eats

STUDENT BEANS



- Similar to UNiDAYS but with different brand partners
- App-based discounts
- Free to use
- Discounts with brands like Pizza Hut, HP/Lenovo, Amazon, Gymshark, sometimes Trainline

AMAZON PRIME



- Amazon Prime Student
- 6 months free, and then half priced
- Includes Prime Video, delivery, and everything else typically included with Amazon Prime
- Also includes Amazon Music

SPOTIFY &



APPLE MUSIC

- Spotify student: £5.99/month up to 4 years
- Apple Music: £5.99/month up to 4 years (verify your student status through UNiDAYS)
- Apple music includes Apple TV+



CINEMAS

- Odeon: student discounts (Student Beans) and cheaper screenings on Mondays
- Vue: student discounts (Student Beans) and cheaper morning screenings
- Cineworld and Picturehouse also offer student discounts



ATTRACTIONS

- Many attractions and exhibits offer student discounts including: Tower of London, Thorpe Park (theme park), and most likely local attractions in your city
- Museums are mostly free already

TECH DISCOUNTS



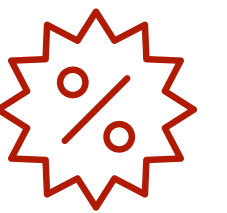
- Apple Education Store: reduced prices on Macbooks/iPads
- Microsoft Student Discount: reduced prices on Surface devices
- Samsung Student Store: 10-25% off phones/tablets/laptops

FOOD



- Domino's: BOGO (Student Beans)
- Pizza Hut: 50% off (Student Beans)
- Deliveroo: free delivery with free Deliveroo Plus Silver
- KFC: occasional app-based deals for students

FINAL TIPS



- Download the UNiDAYS and Student Beans apps
- Take a look at Save the Student <https://www.savethestudent.org/> for more info and deals
- Doesn't hurt to ask if a shop/restaurant has a student discount

These accounts help international students understand cultural differences and discover affordable places to eat.



USEFUL SOCIAL MEDIA PAGES

Following UK-based accounts helps students understand culture, find deals, and discover affordable food.



STUDENT-LED UK COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT

ASAN_UK – COMMUNITY-FOCUSED CONTENT FOR STUDENTS

FINANCE

JAMIESFINANCE – SMART MONEY TIPS AND STUDENT DEALS



FOOD & CULTURE CREATORS

KALANI GHOST HUNTER – TIKTOKER EXPLORING BRITISH FOOD CULTURE
BBC NEWS – USEFUL FOR STAYING AWARE OF UK CURRENT EVENTS
YAN.WRITINGS.ABROAD – REAL TALK ON LIVING ABROAD AND PERSONAL GROWTH INSIGHTS

UK SPORTING EVENTS

WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR SPORTS TO WATCH IN THE UK?

- **Premier League Football (Soccer):** Most-watched sport in the UK
- **Rugby:** Especially the Six Nations Rugby Championship
- **Tennis:** Wimbledon tennis tournament
- **Horse Racing:** Especially the Grand National in Liverpool
- **Running:** London Marathon
- **Rowing:** Oxford-Cambridge Boat Race
- **Formula 1 Racing:** British Grand Prix at Silverstone
- **Cricket:** Especially the Ashes rivalry game between England and Australia



There are many watch parties at pubs and friends' flats for these events. There are also tickets to attend in person, though they tend to be a bit pricey.

WHAT ARE THE MOST POPULAR SPORTING EVENTS TO ATTEND IN THE UK FOR STUDENTS?



HOW TO FIND SPORTING EVENT TICKETS

Chosen for affordability, ease of travel, and student-friendly atmosphere:

- **Local Football (Lower-League Matches):** tickets are around £10 - £20, student discounts are common, and most likely there is a team nearby
 - Premier League Football is cool to watch, but tickets are around £30 - £70, and travel logistics can be more complex
- **Women's Super League Football:** tickets are around £6 - £12, often play in Premier League stadiums
- **University Football:** free or extremely cheap to attend
- **Premiership Rugby:** regular season match tickets as low as £20 for students
- **Local Rugby (Amateur, Semi-pro):** tickets are around £3 - £15, most likely there is a team nearby
- **University Rugby:** free or extremely cheap to attend
- **Local Horse Racing:** can get student tickets for around £10
- **Local Cricket (County):** tickets are around £20

- Buy tickets through the event's official seller (such as Ticketmaster, sports club websites, and venue box offices) to ensure genuine tickets
- If tickets are sold out, only use trusted resale sites like StubHub or SeatPick
- Compare prices of tickets using the FanSeats platform before purchasing
- For Premier League Football: some clubs only offer tickets to members, but nonmembers can still purchase tickets through resale sites and official club exchange sites



Homesickness and Culture Shock

Moving to a new country can feel exciting - but also overwhelming. Feeling homesick or out of place is completely normal, especially in the first few months.

What to remember:

- It takes time to feel settled (weeks to months)
- Everyone adjusts at a different pace
- The feeling *does* pass as you build your life here

What it can feel like:

- Missing home, family, or familiar routines
- Feeling lonely even when around people
- Struggling with small differences
- Wanting to go home, especially at the start

Things that actually help:

- Stay in touch with family, but don't isolate yourself
- Build small routines (same coffee spot, study time, walks)
- Join societies or student groups early
- Explore your local area bit by bit
- Cook or eat food that reminds you of home
- Talk to other international students; they get it

Find your people:

- Go to welcome events (even if it feels awkward)
- Say yes to small plans early on
- Don't wait to feel "ready" - connection comes from showing up

It's okay to miss home and still enjoy your new life at the same time!

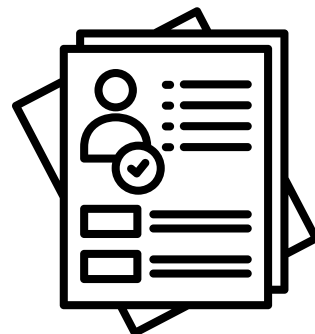
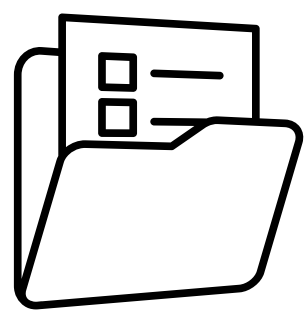
RESUME & CV WRITING

GENERAL RESUME AND CV WRITING ADVICE

Definition: A resume and a CV (Curriculum Vitae) are documents that provide a summary of your professional and academic skills, achievements, and interests and are typically needed to apply for jobs

Advice:

- Have a consistent, readable format (many university career services centers provide templates)
- Include at least the required sections of a resume or CV (see below)
- Use action verbs when describing work and/or volunteer roles to demonstrate skills developed
- Do not have any half pages or large white spaces
- Include a LinkedIn URL and make sure your profile is up to date
- Convert your resume/CV to a PDF before sending it to ensure the formatting stays correct
- Take advantage of your university's career services center resources
- Choose the document that suits the location of the job/position you are applying for: an American resume for openings in the USA, a British CV for openings in the UK
- Here is a helpful link for further CV help from the University of Exeter:
<https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/careers/research/act/applications/>



DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AN AMERICAN RESUME AND A BRITISH CV

American Resume

- **General:** more concise, US spelling, called a resume
- **Tone:** less formal with bullet points
- **Structure:** 1 full page for university students and recent graduates, US letter page size
- **Content:** a “snapshot”, highlights information relevant to the position being applied to
- **Specific Sections:** Name and Contact Details, Summary (optional), Education, Relevant Work Experience, Skills, Volunteer Experience (optional), Leadership (optional), Awards and Achievements (optional)

British CV

- **General:** more detailed and comprehensive, UK spelling, called a CV (Curriculum Vitae)
- **Tone:** more formal with complete sentences
- **Structure:** 1-2 full pages, A4 page size
- **Content:** tends to give a full professional history and more personal details
- **Specific Sections:** Name and Contact Details, Profile (optional), Education, Work Experience/Industry Experience, Volunteer Experience (optional), Leadership (optional), Awards and Achievements (optional), Interests

UK GRADUATE VISA

WHAT IS IT?

A UK Graduate Visa is a visa route for students after their studies that allows them to look for work without being sponsored by their employer or university. The Graduate Visa lasts for 2 years for undergraduate and master's degree recipients and 3 years for PhD degree recipients.

STEPS TO FOLLOW TO GET A GRADUATE VISA

1. **Finish your course.** Your university needs to confirm to UK Visas and Immigration that you have successfully completed your degree before you can apply for the Graduate Visa.
2. **Prepare basic documents** that you will need for the application like:
 - a. Your passport
 - b. CAS number from your Student Visa
 - c. Proof that your university has reported your course as complete (usually an email)
3. **Complete and submit the Graduate Visa application.** This step needs to be completed before your Student Visa expires.
4. **Verify your identity.** Most applicants do this through the UK Immigration: ID Check app or by attending a biometrics appointment.
5. **Pay fees.** As of May 2026, the costs are:
 - a. Application Fee: about £937
 - b. Immigration Health Surcharge: about £1,035 per year of visa
6. **Wait for a decision.** (normally arrives within 8 weeks)
7. **Work while waiting.** You can usually work under Student Visa conditions while the Graduate Visa is pending, as long as your Student Visa does not expire.



USEFUL INFORMATION

- Students who have studied and completed an undergraduate or postgraduate degree in the UK are eligible.
- **You do not need a job offer** to apply for the Graduate Visa.
- After January 1, 2027 the Graduate Visa will be reduced from 2 years to 1.5 years for undergraduate and master's degree recipients.
- The University of Exeter has a **guide for completing the applicaiton** on their website: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/international-students/visas/graduate/>
- The **official website for UK visa guidance** for the Graduate Visa is: <https://www.gov.uk/graduate-visa>

HOW TO VOTE OVERSEAS

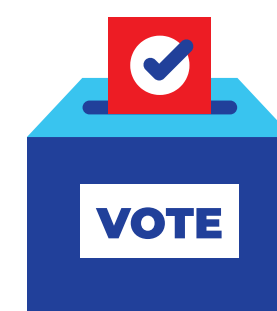
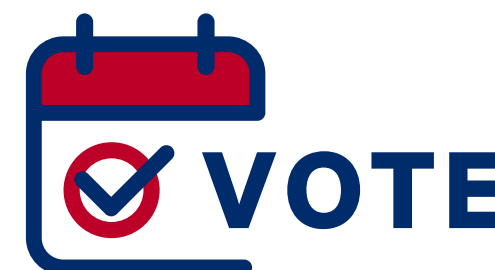


THE BASICS

Americans abroad who are aged 18 and older have the right to vote in all U.S. federal elections. American students living in the UK can vote by registering as an overseas absentee voter in their U.S. state.

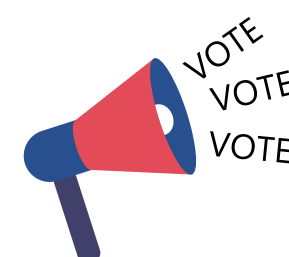
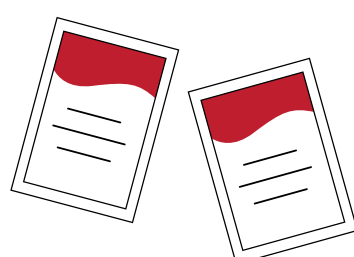
STEP BY STEP PROCESS

1. **Complete the *Federal Post Card Application (FPCA)*.** This application allows you to register as an absentee voter and request your ballot. The form only takes around 10 minutes to complete.
2. **Submit the FPCA.** Depending on your state, you can typically submit it through:
 - Your state's online portal
 - Email or fax
 - International mail
3. **Receive your ballot.** States will offer at least one electronic delivery method:
 - Your state's online portal
 - Email or fax
4. **Print, complete, and sign your ballot.** Make sure to closely follow instructions for completing the ballot.
5. **Submit your ballot.** Depending on your state, you can typically submit it through:
 - Email or fax
 - International Mail
 - By dropping it off at a US Embassy or Consulate

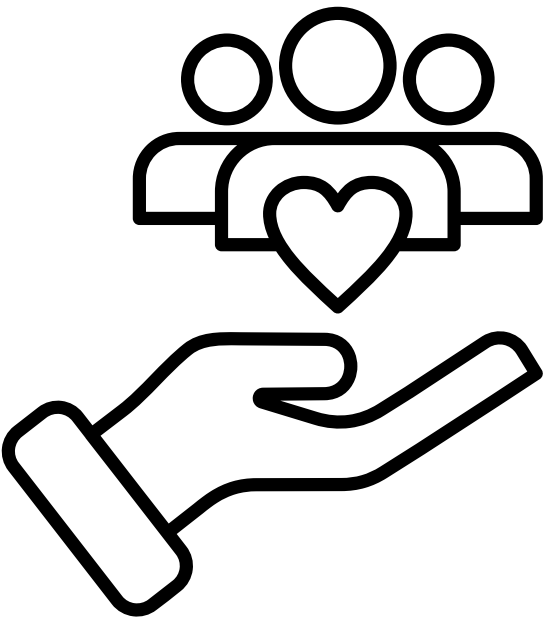
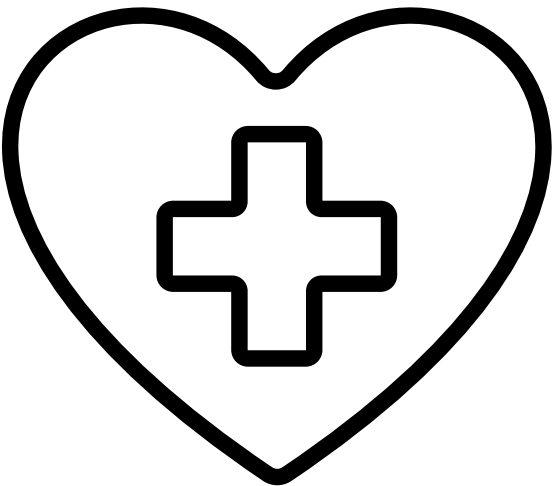


TIPS AND ADVICE

- Each state has their own rules that may vary from those of other states. Make sure to **look closely at your own state's instructions** on how to vote from overseas.
- If your state allows submission by **email, fax, or an online portal**, do this as it is easier and more efficient than postal mail.
- If your state only allows postal mail submission, make sure to **mail your ballot early** (at least 2-3 weeks before the deadline).
- **Track your ballot** to ensure it was sent, received, and accepted.
- **Only use official websites** to get voting information, such as:
 - FVAP.gov (has the FPCA application, instructions on how to complete the FPCA, state-specific rules, and ballot deadlines)
 - USA.gov Voting Abroad
 - Your state's election office
 - U.S. Embassy London Voting Assistance



HOW TO ACCESS STUDENT SUPPORT



SUPPORT AT UK UNIVERSITIES

Universities in the UK have similar support resources in comparison to U.S. universities.

Typical topics include:

- Mental Health & Counseling
- Academic Support
- International Student Support
- Financial Support
- Disability/Accessibility Support
- Career Services/Advice
- Housing Support
- Student Health Center
- Campus Security

HOW TO FIND SUPPORT

- Check your university's student portal for keywords like:
 - Student Support
 - Wellbeing
 - Student Services
 - International Student Office
 - Academic Resources
- Check your university email for an email assigning you to an academic advisor and/or a personal tutor. They will typically send you a welcome email with an invitation to make an appointment with them as well.

PEOPLE TO CONTACT

- Students' Union or Guild Staff/Advisors
- Personal Tutor
- Academic Advisor
- Wellbeing Advisor
- Graduate/Research Mentor
- Peer Mentor/Buddy Schemes
- Career Advisors
- Lecturers
- Pastoral Mentor
- International Student Staff

OPTIONS FOR RECEIVING SUPPORT

- Universities typically offer access to support resources through:
 - Self-book online or in-person appointments with support staff
 - Office hours
 - A live chat feature
 - Email
 - Attending drop-in sessions
 - Group workshops

WHERE TO GET HELP

BESIDES UNIVERSITY BASED SUPPORT, THERE ARE ALSO EXTERNAL SUPPORT SERVICES WHERE STUDENTS CAN GET HELP.



IMPORTANT ASSISTANCE AND CORRESPONDING PHONE NUMBERS

- **Emergencies:**
 - Call 999 to connect to emergency services (equivalent to 911 in the U.S.)
 - Use for: medical emergencies, fires, crimes in progress, immediate danger
 - Can ask for: ambulance, police, fire department, coastguard
 - Calling 112 also works in the UK to connect to emergency services
- **NHS A&E (National Health Service Accident & Emergency):**
 - Equivalent to the U.S. ER (Emergency Room), it is useful to know where the nearest A&E is to your accommodation/university in case of emergencies
- **Non-Emergency Medical Advice:**
 - Call 111
 - Connects you to the NHS for urgent medical questions, advice, out-of-hours help, and mental health crisis guidance
- **General Medical Assistance:**
 - Register with an NHS GP (National Health Service General Practitioner) when you arrive in the UK. Save their number in your phone in case you need to schedule an appointment for routine care, prescriptions, referrals, or mental health support.
- **Emotional Support:**
 - Call 116 123 or visit the Samaritans website: <https://www.samaritans.org/>
- **Non-Emergency Police:**
 - Call 101
 - Use for: reporting theft, harassment, suspicious activity, etc.