



St Hugh's College
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

INTERNATIONAL FRESHERS' GUIDE



October 2021

Contents

	#
Meet Your International Rep	1
Freshers' Week	2
Transport to and From Oxford	2-3
Banks	4
Passports & Documents	5
Medical Services & Welfare	6
Mobile Phone Plans	7
Cultural Differences	8
Vac Res	9
Storage	9
Credits Page	10



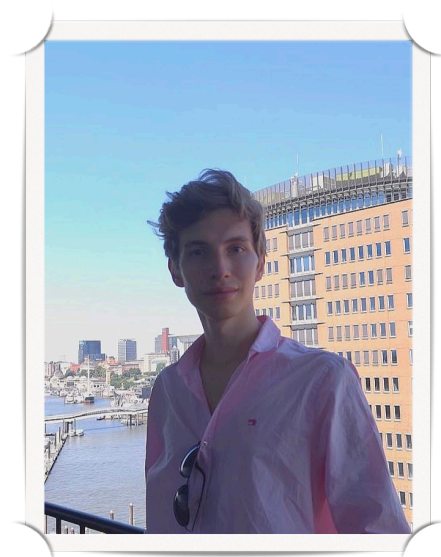
Meet Your International Rep

Hi everyone! My name is Mika-Erik Möser, your International Rep. When I came to Hugh's from Germany, I was entering a different world which then quickly became my new home. I know moving away can be a daunting thing to do. St Hugh's, however, is a super-friendly place and I felt really welcome here as an international. It is a place you can call home for the next three or four years.

Before the start of Freshers' week, I'm going to be holding a virtual get-together for international students. Please do look out for the link so we can all meet and get to know each other before arriving at Hugh's. It will be a great opportunity to meet some of the other international students and for me to share experiences of what it is like to live and study in Oxford.

Of course, there are many questions you might have which aren't answered by this guide. So please, when in doubt (or just looking for a chat), feel free to ask me anything! If you ever have any questions or just want to have a chat, please email me at mikaerik.moeser@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk or message me on Facebook or Instagram (my name should be easy to find there lol)

Lots of international Hughsie love!!!



Mika-Erik Möser

(he/him)

Freshers' Week

Freshers' Week, also known as '0th week' or 'noughth week', is a beautiful chaotic mix of activities, socialising, workshops, exploring Oxford, all crammed into the tight space of only 7(!) days. It's really a lot of fun, a lot of learning (make sure you attend the workshops, please) and a great introduction to life at Hugh's and all the people who make it the great place it is!

For the most part, this week will comprise of:

- **Socialising**, participating in activities organised by the Freshers committee, hanging out in the (refurbished and very exciting) JCR and spending time with your household and getting to know your college parents and siblings.
- Talks and interactive **workshops**, which should give you an idea of what life in Oxford is like, as well as draw attention to important topics (such as the LGBTQ+ and sexual consent workshops and the anti-discrimination workshops).
- **Trying out activities** during taster sessions, either to try something new or to continue pursuing a hobby! The range of activities Hugh's (and the University) offer are nearly endless!

Now, Freshers' week is great but exhausting. You will meet a lot of people and see a lot of faces. Don't worry about not remembering everyone's name at first, this will all come eventually. It will quite be confusing at first, so do not feel that you have to constantly dive into new activities but that you can also take a step back. North Oxford, luckily, is by far the prettiest part of this city (of course this is also because of Hugh's). You can walk around, go to Port Meadow, Summertown and take a moment to relax. At the same time, you can also explore the centre either, which is where probably your faculty, library and of course Tesco is located.

Freshers' Week can also be a source of worry for some, especially concerning alcohol. You absolutely don't have to drink or go out if you don't feel comfortable doing so, and many people don't!

Please, please get in touch with **me**, **your college parents**, or your **Freshers' Rep** Molayo if you have any questions, or are worried about anything at all.

Have lots of fun but also try to get some sleep! I'm looking forward to seeing you all soon!

Mika-Erik Möser (he/him)

Transport to and from Oxford

There are two main ways to get to Oxford: by coach or by train. If you're coming from Heathrow or Gatwick, I would recommend taking the Oxford Bus Company's **Airline coaches**, which offer a direct journey from either airport to the city centre. The drivers are really friendly and will help you store your (up to two) suitcases in a luggage compartment. It's also cheaper than the train, and takes about the same amount of time to get to Oxford. You can either reserve bus tickets online beforehand, but if you're worried about your flight being cancelled or delayed, you can always buy your ticket from the driver. Personally, I would recommend the latter option, since I've never seen the bus full. Do check out their COVID-19 travel guidance which can be found on their website (www.oxfordbus.co.uk). Also, note that at the time, face coverings are not mandatory on public transport in the UK, though I'd advise you wear one for your own safety when travelling.

Trains generally offer a more comfortable journey, but there is no direct line from the airport to Oxford, so you will have to make at least one change. This might be difficult depending on how much luggage you have with you. I would personally not recommend this option, but if you love trains, train stations or have some other reason for wanting to take it, this is a very viable option! In this case you might also want to think about getting a railcard (if you like taking trains in general).

Once you get into Oxford's centre, the easiest way to get to St Hugh's is by taking a **taxi**. Although the distance from both the train station and the central bus stop are manageable, it can be quite tiring after a long journey, and when you have to drag a bunch of luggage with you. There is a taxi stop in front of the train station, which you should be able to spot easily, and there are also plenty of taxis at Gloucester Green square, which is the last stop for the coaches. And if you're stranded elsewhere for some reason, you can download the **001 Taxi app/Free Now or any other app** and use that to order a taxi wherever

There is also the less conventional option of hiring a private car to and from Oxford and the various airports. Although far more expensive than either the bus or the train, if you're especially worried about the possibility of catching COVID-19, this could be an option for you.

In your day-to-day life at Oxford, some of you might be worried about the reputation that Hugh's is 'far out.' While it is definitely farther away from the city centre compared to other colleges, let me assure you that **you can absolutely get by just on foot**. I walked everywhere in my first year and never had any problems. That being said, **getting a bike does make things a lot easier**. A 20-minute walk turns into a 5-minute cycle, and you can squeeze out a few extra minutes in bed each day. A bike also gives you more freedom to explore the city during your spare time, so I would definitely recommend getting one if you can.

If having to actually move to get places isn't for you, **there are also bus lines running through the city**, with stops just outside of Hugh's. You can pay for these either with cash or contactless cards. It can get expensive to use buses all the time, but it's a useful option to have, especially if you're traveling to the far ends of town, to the hospital, or if you have are just having a bad day. You can, of course, also use taxis to get around town as well!

All in all, Oxford is a pretty small place, and you'll know the city well in no time. Although having to travel from Hugh's to the town centre might feel tedious after a while, Oxford is a really beautiful place to be, and I like to think of my little extra travel time as an opportunity to see all of the wonderful sites the city has to offer. Especially the beautiful north of Oxford is a part of the city students from Hugh's can explore a lot more easily than most other students.



Morgane Bascle
(she/her)



Banks

For many of you, going to university may be the first time you have to manage your money independently and open an international bank account. Don't worry, though – the banks in Oxford are excellent at informing and supporting you throughout the process.

Here's a handy checklist of things to keep in mind in relation to your bank account:

Before You Leave Home

Prepare the following documents.

- ✓ **Passport**
- ✓ **Unconditional Offer Letter**
- ✓ **Biometric Residence Permit (BRP):** if you require this, start researching the application process now. You will only get your BRP once you get to the UK.

You can also **start researching different banks** before committing to one. Here's some factors to consider before choosing a bank.

Convenience: how close is the nearest branch of the bank you're interested in? Most major banks such as Barclays, Santander, HSBC, Lloyds etc. have branches in the city centre, many are also in Summertown (closer to and north of Hugh's).

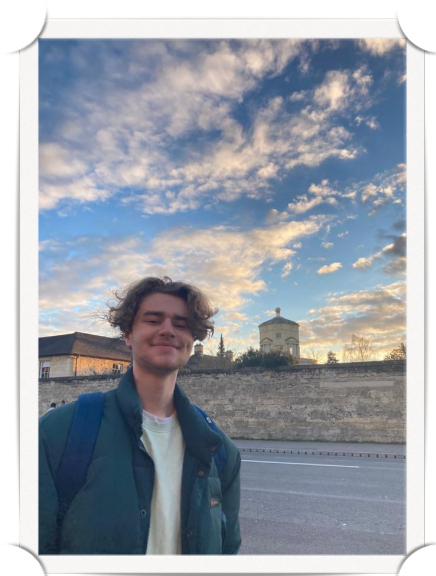
International transfers: when transferring money internationally, you will have to pay an international transfer fee as well as a decreased (worse) exchange rate. Different banks will have different rates and fees, making international transfers more or less expensive. I'll take a quick moment here to quickly plug *TransferWise*, which many Hughsies have endorsed, due to better exchange rates which makes transfers cheaper. The downside is transfers take a bit longer to reach so you should rather plan them in advance.

Keeping in touch: does the bank have a 24/7 helpline in case of a problem? Is the mobile app easy to use and compatible with your phone?

Other benefits: most banks offer benefits such as contactless cards (they make life substantially easier, but if you think you'd lose your card often, maybe not a good idea), student insurance, instant access savings accounts, among others. However, as an international student, you will in most cases sadly not be eligible for a student account with perks such as a railcard or shopping gift cards, etc. offered by some banks.

Once you Arrive in Oxford

- ✓ Get your Enrolment Certificate stamped by the **College Office**.
- ✓ I highly recommend attending the **Undergraduate Orientation Event** (time and place given closer to the date, most likely virtual this year) to ask banks' representatives any questions you may have.
- ✓ After choosing a bank, **call as soon as possible** and book an appointment to set up your account. Some banks such as Barclays can have waiting times as long as 3 weeks (!) and Freshers' Week is an incredibly busy period as you are not the only student wanting to set up a new account. You also don't want to waste too much money on exchange rates by the time you set up your account. Be prepared your appointment to last a while – it may even take an hour!



Jean Bourgeoise

(he/him)

Passports & Documents

First of all, congratulations! We're so excited to have you join our Hughsie family this coming October. But before you get too excited about all the fantastic things in store, you must ensure that you've sorted out the most important thing. By that, I don't mean your massive collection of kitchenware that you've inevitably binge-bought already. Rest assured, this part of the guide will help you figure out all the boring bits of documentation that you'll need so that you don't risk deportation! Woop Woop!

Visas

Depending on your EU Settlement Scheme status, as a **EU national you may or may not require a student visa**.

If you are outside of the EU or you are a EU national who came to the UK on or after 1 January 2021, you will most likely need an updated student visa under the Student Route, which replaced the previous Tier 4 Student.

Please try to start the visa process as early as possible to avoid acquiring approval too late. Visa processing times can vary significantly depending on where you're applying from, so keep this in mind. For more thorough (and qualified) information and advice, please visit the university's 'visa & immigration' page (<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/visa/before>).

For both EU nationals and non-EU international students, please ensure that your passports and other identification documents are up to date. If required, other critical documents would be your results determining your English language ability and if you're going to be studying a STEM subject, possibly an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate.

For the Airport

To clear immigration, keep your passport (with your snazzy new visa), relevant acceptance letters from the university, and other key documents on you for easy access.

These miscellaneous documents include:

A completed **landing card**, with all details written out correctly and legibly. You must write down your accommodation address as **St Hugh's College, St Margaret's Road, Oxford, OX2 6LE**.

Hard copies of bank statements and any other relevant **proof of your finances**.

Your **unconditional offer letter** from Oxford, as seen on UCAS or the one that College should have sent out.

Relevant medical documents e.g. **proof of vaccination**.

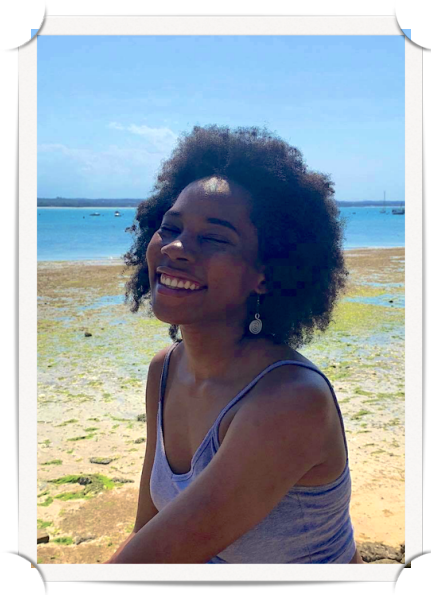
A photocopy of your visa and ID.

BRP collection

If you require a visa to enter the UK, you must **collect your biometric residence permit**, or BRP, by a certain date from either the Post Office (if you're early and have requested it be sent there) or the College at a stated time. Don't worry too much about this, College should (if they haven't already) be sending out a very detailed, step-by- step guide on all of this!

Your BRP can be used as an ID, but please **keep this safe!** I can't count how many times I've dropped mine on the grimy floors of Bridge - trust me - you don't want this to be you! Your BRP can be costly to replace, and you will need this every time you enter and leave the UK.

We're all super excited to meet you soon, see you in October :)



Kanengo Diallo

(she/her)

Medical Services & Welfare

Living at St Hugh's means that you are taken care of. Whether that be by our lovely **College Nurse Sarah Dragonetti** (who you can either contact under nurse@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk or via Microsoft Teams) or our amazing **College welfare team and peer supporters**. On top of that we have the **St Hugh's Cookie fairy** (on either Facebook or Instagram) which will support you with cookies and all the sanitary and contraceptive items you need (in addition to great social media content!!!).

Before you come to Oxford, the College will ask you to register with the **Summertown Health Centre** located at Banbury Road OX2 7BS. If you want to contact them you can either do so online or through their phone number 01865 515552. You can arrange a consultation with a General Practitioner (GP) online, by phone or in person. For more information, visit: <https://www.summertownhealthcentre.co.uk/>.

A GP normally visits College once a week. If any medicine is prescribed, you can collect it from one of many local pharmacies. If you are looking for free and confidential sexual health services, you can find them through this link: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare/health/sexual-health>

Role	Name	Contact
Counsellor	Elizabeth Treasure	counsellor@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk
College Chaplain	The Reverend Dr Shaun Henson	shaun.henson@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk Phone: 01865 274955
Senior Tutor	Professor Robert Vilain	robert.vilain@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk
Dean	Dr Damian Jenkins	damian.jenkins@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk

NHS

The NHS is Britain's health care system. If you are coming here on a Tier 4 student visa then you will pay a charge each year to access the NHS (you don't have to pay extra after that). If you are coming from the EU, Switzerland or the EEA you should get or have already gotten a European Health Insurance Card.

For general, non-emergency medical advice, you can call **111**. For an emergency, call **999**.

Getting medical care as a student: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/getting-medical-care-as-a-student/>

What is an NHS number?: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/what-is-an-nhs-number/>

Register with the Summertown Health Centre at <https://www.summertownhealthcentre.co.uk/st-hughs-registration-form>

Vaccines and COVID-19

Check whether your **COVID-19 vaccine** is accepted in the UK and check current advice by the UK government. Additionally if you did not have the chance to get the vaccine until now, you will have a chance to get vaccinated in the UK. More up to date information will be available here: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/students/returning-and-offer-holders>

The same applies for testing where the university offers both **rapid Lateral Flow Tests** as well as **PCR tests** (although sadly they could not be used for travelling so far). For more information on this (as it is constantly updating) please check the link above.



Mika Erik Möser

(he/him)

Mobile Phone

When coming to Oxford, as international students **you will have to get a UK phone number**. Vodafone, EE, O2, or Three are some of the main UK phone providers and all have stores in either central Oxford (on Cornmarket Street) or Cowley (not too far with a bicycle).

For EU students, it's still possible to keep one's old EU number and still be able to use 4G without incurring extra fees, however this might change as the UK has now left the Brexit transition period and fully departed from the European Union. Additionally, even if you do keep your old number, UK phone numbers will have to pay extra to call EU numbers. It therefore makes sense for all internationals, coming from the EU or the rest of the world, to get a UK phone number.

This can easily be done at any phone provider store without booking an appointment, and you'll be able to find a variety of deals, with some providers doing student discounts...



Antonio Pattori

(he/him)



Tejaswi Rawal

(she/her)

... I actually bought my SIM card the first time I entered the UK **at the airport** itself—this might help you in case you need mobile data to call a taxi or check a train or bus schedule while en route to Oxford, or even call someone to let them know you've arrived!

Most people tell you to buy a phone plan that allows unlimited or cheap calling to your own home country (in my case, India), but in my experience this ends up being an unnecessary extra charge in your phone bill. I find that **most international calls are convenient to make over the university's WiFi** (Eduroam) through Zoom, WhatsApp, Facebook, or other online services. This WiFi is available across the university. My advice is that unless your country blocks these services for calling, you are likely to fare pretty well by calling home using the free WiFi.

Where WiFi isn't available, and to make normal voice calls within the country, you will need some kind of plan on your SIM card. Long-term contracts make sense if you plan to spend vacations in the UK. If you don't, monthly subscriptions are flexible and allow you to cancel and reopen as you come and go from the country. You could also simply top up your SIM with some money and use it as you go, adding more money to the account when you need it. I personally use Vodafone bundles because I can roll over unused mobile data to the next month with that plan.

Cultural Differences

If you are an international student, culture shock is something you are bound to experience. It does not have to be unpleasant, though, and it can be a fun part of your first year in university.

Culture

From what I have seen, people generally do not pressure non-drinkers into consuming alcohol. As such, **feel free to declare your dietary needs and preferences**. The culture is generally open and friendly, so do not shy from **striking up a conversation** with someone new. There are opportunities to make friends as long as you make the effort to speak to new people. Do not be afraid to be yourself around people and keep in mind that even for students from the UK it can be a completely different experience!

Education

Oxford is unique even within the UK because of its emphasis on **tutorials** (as well as a host of other old and sometimes weird traditions). **Lectures**, at least for some subjects, are not technically compulsory, but highly recommended. If you have not had much experience with small-group teaching, it may take a while to grow used to being vocal in class and volunteering ideas. It may seem scary to some, but rest assured that it presents a huge opportunity for intellectual and personal growth. Oxford is also very heavy on **essay-writing** in the humanities and social sciences. Depending on where you are from, this style of assessment may be unfamiliar to you. Be prepared to accept that professors may have a different marking style or rubrics as compared to what you may be used to. When in doubt, it is always a good idea to clarify with your tutors their expectations of an essay and your tutorial performance.

Extracurricular activities

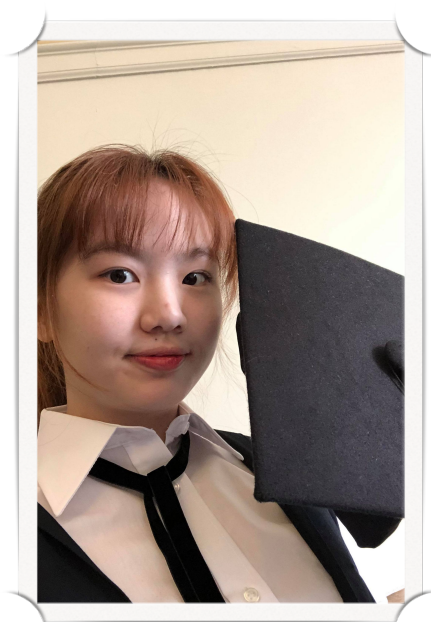
Here, the culture (and employers) value extracurriculars. It is a good idea to sign up with the mailing lists of as many clubs and societies as possible during the online **Fresher's Fair** both at the university as well as Hugh's. You can always drop out if you realise that it is not to your liking. Look for meaningful ways to spend your time outside of your degree. It is a great way to make new friends and enhance your CV at the same time. There is also the option to set up a new society or group initiative; the possibilities are pretty much endless.

Languages

Oxford has a great **Language Centre**. It has courses to improve written and spoken (academic) English, as well as courses for other languages - St Hugh's offers an academic English course free of charge as well! You can pick up new languages or improve on the ones you already know. The lessons are weekly or twice a week if you sign up for the intensive courses. Moreover, the courses are subsidised for Oxford students and can even be free if your course has certain language requirements.

Diversity

Oxford is a place where you will come across people from everywhere come together. St Hugh's will have **talks** on gender, race, and sexuality during Fresher's Week. The culture here is quite open, so there will be opportunities to learn more about diversity and to make contributions to important discussions. Oxford is a great place to be authentically you.



Jieun Lee

(she/her)

Storage

As you all know by now, Oxford has THE shortest terms of any uni in the UK. This comes with both benefits and drawbacks, one of which is that we have to move out three times a year. Truth be told, no matter how hard you try to mimic the neatness of the parent-packed suitcases you move in with, your stuff WILL end up in bin bags. No shade. If this is something you want to avoid, and/or you live far away from Hugh's, storage is available (yay!). All you need to do is mosey over to the Porter's Lodge and ask for the key to **the storage shed**. Simple! Particularly useful if you can't face packing up all of your kitchen kit when you know that you won't be cooking again until you are fending for yourself once the next term begins. Also, if you're worried about how to store your belongings, local supermarkets like Tesco always have empty cardboard boxes outside which are ripe for the taking :)) (and free, you won't get stopped don't worry).



Maya Thapa
(she/her)

*Both articles jointly
written by Maya and Alex.*



Alex Rowlands
(she/her)

Vac Res

As for vac res, if you cannot get enough of Hugh's (don't blame you, the JCR is what dreams are made of) or if it is hard for you to get home, apply for vac res! It is also a great option for revision if you reckon that home will hold too many distractions... The **form** is made easily available each term and all all have to do is fill it out. We all get **21 nights of free vac res** over the duration of a three year degree; after that, it is around £20 per extra night. If you have any questions about this, just check in with the Porter's Lodge and they will help you out! In summary, if you can't bear to leave Ox, you don't have to! And I don't judge you whatsoever. The college bar speaks for itself- Hugh's is the best place on earth.



The front door of St Hugh's College.
Credit: Sbogde at the Romanian language Wikimedia. Shared under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license.

More Great Resources by the University:

Orientation Booklet for International Students: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/sites/files/oxford/Orientation%20booklet.pdf>

Podcast Series - Know Your Oxford: guided audio tour for new and prospective students: <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/knowyouroxford>

Credits Page

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