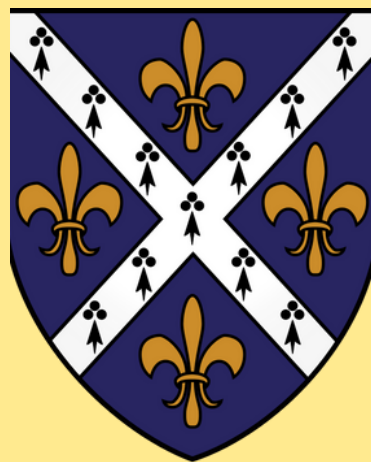


*St Hugh's College*

**INTERNATIONAL  
FRESHERS'  
GUIDE  
2023**





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# Meet your International Rep

**Isabel Seibert  
Cácares  
(she/her)**



Hello everyone and a warm welcome to St Hugh's! My name is Isa and I will be your international student rep for the coming term. After 3 years of studying European and Middle Eastern Languages, I am now approaching my 4th and final year at Oxford. Please feel free to contact me with any doubts or worries.

St Hugh's is one of the larger colleges meaning that we have a fairly big group of international students, making it a super fun and dynamic environment. I am here to help you with any kind of logistical, storage, or moving issues and I also organise events to share and celebrate the many cultures in our community. If you have any event ideas or concerns get in touch with me and we'll figure it out.

There will be plenty of opportunities to meet fellow international students during fresher's week so stay tuned for event details! Everyone is welcome, regardless of international/domestic student status.

See you soon,  
Isa

# Fresher's 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 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 be quite confusing at first, so do not feel that you have to dive constantly 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 or Jericho and take a moment to relax. At the same time, you can also explore the centre, which is where 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 Zariel 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!






# Transport to & 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 Oxford's city centre (Gloucester Green Bus Station). The drivers are really friendly and will help you store your suitcases (up to two) in a luggage compartment. It's also cheaper than the train, and takes about the same amount of time to get to Oxford (if you do decide to take the train though, make sure to frequently check on status/closure updates of the Oxford Rail Station online!). For the bus, you can either reserve bus tickets online beforehand. If you're worried about your flight being cancelled or delayed, you can always buy your ticket from the driver but the tickets from Heathrow/Gatwick to Oxford are also valid 24h before and after. Updates can be found on their website ([www.theairlineoxford.co.uk](http://www.theairlineoxford.co.uk)).

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 can 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 or bus. Although the distance from both the train station and the central bus stop are manageable, it can be quite tiring after a long journey, especially with a bunch of luggage. 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. As for the bus, there are some leaving from George Street and from Magdalen Street. You will want to hop off at St Margaret's Road East or at Canterbury Road. From there it's just a minutes walk to St Hugh's.

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, this could be an option for you.



# Oxford Bicycles



In your day-to-day life at Oxford, some of you will have heard 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. 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 walking or cycling isn't your thing, 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 are just having a *challenging* 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



# 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. (check [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) for more information)

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). Alternatively, online banks such as Starling are quick to set up.





**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) 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 for your appointment to last a while – it may even take an hour!

– Jean Bourgeoise





# 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! 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>) and the UK government website ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)).







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 are from outside the EU/EEA you will need to collect a BRP (biometric residence permit) card valid for the length of your course plus some extra time after you arrive in the UK. You can collect this from the Oxford Post Office, and should do so as soon as you can (and within 10 days of arrival). EU/EEA nationals will have an online visa only and will not receive a BRP.



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.

– 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 and Wellbeing Coordinator 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 Welfare Reps which will support you with all the sanitary and contraceptive items you need.

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/>.

The GP holds a surgery for St Hugh's students 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>





## **NHS (National Health Service)**

The NHS is Britain's health care system. If you are coming here on a student visa then you will pay a charge each year to access the NHS (you don't have to pay extra after that).  
(Again, please check on: <https://www.gov.uk/healthcare-immigration-application/who-needs-pay> for more information if this applies to you)

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:**

[www.campusdoctor.co.uk/oxford](http://www.campusdoctor.co.uk/oxford)





## Travel Vaccinations

Students who may need travel vaccinations should make an appointment at Summertown Health Centre. Please remember that some travel vaccinations are chargeable and must therefore be arranged through a Pharmacy. It is best to book as early as possible before you travel. For more information, please visit [www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home](http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home)






# Mobile Phones

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).

Obtaining a new number 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. 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.

-Pattori Tejaswi Rawal





# 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 at 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 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. 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





# 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 to read the Lodge's end of term letter with storage instructions. International students are allowed to store up to 5 items. 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).

# 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 we have to do is fill it out. As international students we get one night of free vac res each term; 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.

*Both articles jointly written by Maya and Alex.*





# More Resources

## **Orientation Booklet for International Students:**

<https://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Orientation-booklet-for-International-Students.pdf>

## **Podcast Series - Know Your Oxford**

**(guided audio tour for new and prospective students):**

<https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/knowyouroxford>

