



International Students Guide

ST HUGH'S COLLEGE

Meet your International Rep

Hello everyone and a warm welcome to St Hugh's! My name is Edward and I will be your international student rep for the coming term. I've just finished my first year of Human Sciences here at Oxford and am very excited to start the second. 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 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,

Edward de Bono (he/him)
jcr.international@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk

Meet your Fresher's Rep

I know this is like the third welcome letter I've written, but please bear with me once again. I'm Ernesto, a 2nd-year Psychology and Linguistics student. I'm from Costa Rica, so trust me, I totally get how coming to Oxford can feel both exciting and a bit overwhelming. It's a huge change, and it's perfectly normal to feel a mix of emotions right now—nervousness, excitement, maybe even a bit of doubt.

They will all go away when you set foot in College. You're about to join a group of awesome people who are not just here to study, but to support each other, share experiences, and make some unforgettable memories together. You'll have lots of chances to meet fellow international students, and also learn about English Culture, which is a lot more endearing than eating beans on breakfast.



I'm insanely happy to be helping you transition as your, rare, non-british Freshers' Rep. I'm happy to call Ed one of my best mates, so it has been awesome to craft this for you and welcome you to the amazing place that is Hugh's.

Can't wait to meet you,
Ernesto Castro Meléndez (he/him)
jcr.freshers@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk



Getting 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 recommend taking the Oxford Bus Company's Airline coaches, which offer a direct journey to Oxford's city centre (Gloucester Green Bus Station). The drivers are friendly and help with luggage, and it's cheaper and takes about the same time as the train. You can reserve tickets online, but if you're worried about flight delays, tickets are valid 24 hours before and after your scheduled journey. For updates, visit their website (theairlineoxford.co.uk)

Trains generally offer a more comfortable ride, but there's no direct line from the airport to Oxford, so you'll need to change trains, which can be tricky with lots of luggage. While I don't personally recommend this option, it's viable if you prefer trains or have a railcard.

Once you reach Oxford's centre, the easiest way to get to St Hugh's is by taxi or bus. While the distance from both the train station and central bus stop is manageable, it can be tiring after a long journey, especially with luggage. Taxis are available in front of the train station and at Gloucester Green, the final stop for coaches. If you're elsewhere, you can use the 001 Taxi app, Free Now, or similar services.

Buses from George Street or Magdalen Street will also get you to St Hugh's. Hop off at St Margaret's Road East or Canterbury Road, and it's just a short walk to college.

For a less conventional option, you can hire a private car to and from Oxford and the airports, though this is far more expensive than the bus or train.

Documentation & Visas

Depending on your citizenship or settlement status, you might need a Student Visa for your studies. If that's the case, start the visa process ASAP to avoid any headaches. Processing times can vary a lot depending on where you're applying from, so don't leave it to the last minute. Sometimes, you might even have to go to another country for your visa appointment (your Freshers' Rep had to, and it took ages). Being proactive will save you a lot of hassle! For detailed information, check the university's [Visa & Immigration](#) page and the [UK government](#) websites.

Make sure your passport and ID are up to date, and you might also need proof of English language ability and financial documents like bank statements. You'll need a CAS Number for the visa application, which the College and University will issue once you accept your offer and complete all the steps. Understand that August and September are super busy for the College Admissions Office, so they might take a bit to send your certificate, but they know the deadlines and work accordingly. If your application takes ages or has any weird quirks, don't hesitate to get in touch.

When entering the UK for the first time, it's a good idea to keep all the documents you used to apply for your visa in a folder at hand, as the immigration officer might ask to see them. Also, if you're asked about your living address or anything similar, always write down the College's address: St Hugh's College, St Margaret's Road, Oxford, OX2 6LE.

This is the first year that the UK Government will no longer issue a physical Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). Instead, everyone will get an electronic visa that you can access through any device. However, it's smart to bring an alternative form of ID, like a driver's license, since you probably won't want to carry your passport around when heading to a pub or club.

If you have any more questions about your specific situation, please feel free to contact me (Ernesto, Freshers' Rep) at jcr.freshers@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk. College Office can also provide you with all kinds of documents that the UK or your government may require. Don't hesitate to email them—I pestered them for weeks, and everyone was absolutely the kindest.

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 guiding and supporting you throughout the process. Here's a checklist of things to keep in mind regarding bank accounts:

Before You Leave Home

1- Prepare the following documents:

- Passport
- Unconditional Offer Letter
- Visa

2- Look at several banks before choosing.

- Convenience: How close is the branch of the bank to Hugh's? Major banks like Barclays, Santander, HSBC, and Lloyds have branches in the centre. Online banks are quick to set up and have no branches.
- International transfers: Different banks have varying rates and fees for international transfers. You can use services like TransferWise or Revolut for easier transfers.
- Other benefits: Contactless cards (some college services, like laundry, only these), student insurance, instant access savings account.

3- Book an appointment to set up your bank account before coming to Oxford.

- Some banks have 3 week-long waiting times on Fresher's Week.

Once You Arrive in Oxford

1- Get a stamped Enrolment Certificate from the College Office.

- This is essential for setting up your bank account.

2- If you bring cash in a foreign currency, wait to exchange it at the bank.

- Banks usually offer better exchange rates than airport currency exchange services.

3- Prepare all necessary documents for your bank appointment.

- Ensure you have your passport, Unconditional Offer Letter, and any other required documents ready. If you haven't booked an appointment yet, do so as soon as possible.

4- Attend the Freshers' Fair if you haven't chosen a bank yet.

- Many banks will have representatives at the fair, offering information and advice. It's a great chance to gather details and make an informed decision.



Phone and Internet

It's much better to have a UK phone number, even if your local provider can set you up with data for internet browsing. A lot of online forms will request a UK number, and it makes booking medical appointments and calling your friends much easier.

Obtaining a new number is easy and can be done at any phone provider store without needing an appointment. Major UK providers like Vodafone, EE, O2, and Three all have stores in central Oxford (on Cornmarket Street) or Cowley (which isn't too far by bike). You'll find a variety of deals available, and some providers even offer student discounts.

When choosing a SIM plan, consider the amount of data you'll need, as well as any perks each plan offers. Some providers include free access to apps or subscriptions, like Spotify, which can be a great bonus. If you're a non-EU student, I'd recommend looking for a plan that includes roaming, as this can be very helpful when you're on holiday abroad.

There are two types of phone plans you can choose from: a fixed-length contract or a temporary, rechargeable SIM. Keep in mind that a fixed contract requires a UK bank account to set up, so you won't be able to get one until you've sorted that out, see the previous page for advice.

The main difference between the two options lies in the amount of data and perks provided, which are usually better with fixed contracts. These contracts also tend to be cheaper in the long run. However, do remember that contracts will continue to charge your UK bank account over the holidays, so it's an extra cost you'll need to consider before making a choice.

Personally, I prefer the convenience of automatic payments and better internet quality, so I'm willing to firm the cost. But if you're smart about using the University's WiFi for calls and internet, a temporary SIM that you can keep recharging might be a better fit.



Health and Welfare

Living at St Hugh's means you're well taken care of. Our College Nurse and Wellbeing Coordinator, Sarah Dragonetti, is available via nurse@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk or Microsoft Teams. You'll also have support from our College welfare team, peer supporters, and Welfare Reps, who provide essential items like sanitary products and contraceptives.

Before arriving, the College will ask you to register with the Summertown Health Centre at Banbury Road OX2 7BS. You can contact them online or by phone at 01865 515552, and arrange consultations with a GP either online, by phone, or in person. The GP holds a weekly surgery specifically for St Hugh's students. You can register at: www.campusdoctor.co.uk/oxford

National Health Service (NHS)

The NHS (National Health Service) is Britain's publicly funded healthcare system. If you're coming to the UK on a student visa, you'll need to pay an annual charge to access NHS services. This fee is part of the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) that you pay when applying for your visa, and it gives you access to most NHS services without any additional costs. For more details, you can check [this link](#).

When you register with a GP in the UK, you'll be assigned an NHS number. This unique identifier helps healthcare providers access your medical records and ensure you get the right care. If you're not sure what your NHS number is or want to learn more, you can visit [this link](#).

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

Vaccines and Medicine

If you need travel vaccinations, you should make an appointment at the Summertown Health Centre. Keep in mind that some travel vaccinations are chargeable and may need to be arranged through a pharmacy instead. It's best to book your appointment as early as possible before you travel to ensure you're fully protected. For more information on travel health and vaccinations, you can visit [Fit for Travel](#).

When it comes to getting medicine or private vaccines, my favorite place is Woodstock Road Chemists. They're reliable and offer a wide range of services, including dispensing prescribed medicines and providing private vaccinations. I also recommend keeping some basic medicines like antihistamines and painkillers on hand for common issues like allergies or minor aches and pains.



Storage & Vac-Res

Living at Oxford comes with its own set of challenges, especially with our short terms and frequent move-outs. But don't worry—Hugh's has everything you need to make the process smoother. International students also benefit from additional perks that eliminate some of the complexities that come from living abroad. I'll dive into the details so you can plan ahead.

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.

My biggest advice is: don't bring too much stuff in the first place. It's much easier to figure out what you're missing and then buy it, rather than dealing with unnecessary items that just clog up your space. As the year goes on, you'll get a better idea of what you actually need, and packing will become easier.

Thankfully, Hugh's has its own storage facility—a shed behind the smoking area—that all undergraduates can use to store items over the vacations. International students get five boxes, which is very useful for leaving items that are a burden to take home, like kitchen appliances.

Vacation Residence

Vac res, or vacation residence, is an option that allows you to stay in college during the holidays if you can't get enough of Hugh's or if it's tough for you to get home. It's also a great option for revision if you think home might be too distracting. The form to apply is made easily available each term, and all you have to do is fill it out.

As international students, we get one night of free vac res each term; after that, it's around £27 per extra night. Keep in mind that while you'll likely get your room, it's not guaranteed—especially if you live in maplethorpe (MTB). If you have any questions about this, just check in with College, they will sort you out!



UK & Oxford Quirks

Whether it's your first time in the UK or you've only read about Oxford, it's natural to feel a bit uncertain about what to expect. While Oxford life is unique, it's also easy to get the hang of once you're here. To help you settle in, it can be reassuring to know a bit about the culture and environment you'll be stepping into.

Culture & Diversity

Oxford has a wonderful culture that embraces everyone's values and preferences. No matter what you've heard about the UK, people here generally respect non-drinkers and won't pressure you into consuming alcohol. Also, feel free to declare your dietary needs and preferences without hesitation.

The culture is open and friendly, so don't shy away from striking up a conversation with someone new. There are plenty of opportunities to make friends, as long as you make the effort and are yourself.

British people might ask an insane amount of questions about your home country, but it's always from a place of genuine interest. Oxford is a melting pot of cultures, and you'll meet people from all over the world. At St Hugh's, we'll have talks on gender, race, and sexuality during Freshers' Week, giving you a chance to learn more and contribute to the community.

Education

Oxford is unique, even within the UK, because of its emphasis on tutorials (along with a host of other old and sometimes quirky traditions). Lectures, at least for some subjects, aren't technically compulsory but are highly recommended. If you're not used to small-group teaching, it might take some time to feel comfortable speaking up in class and sharing your ideas. It can seem intimidating, but it's a huge opportunity for both intellectual and personal growth.

Oxford also places a strong emphasis on essay writing, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. Depending on where you're from, this style of assessment may be new to you. Be prepared for professors who may have different marking styles or rubrics than what you're used to. When in doubt, it's always a good idea to clarify your tutors' expectations regarding essays and your performance in tutorials.

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Other resources

Please consult the Freshers Guide for all other information we did not include here, there is a comprehensive guide to transportation, groceries, shopping, libraries and many other things. Beyond this visit the [university's guidance for international students](#) and the know your [Oxford Guided Audio Tour Podcast Series](#)

Most importantly, ask all the questions you may have. We are all so happy to welcome some fresh faces into Hugh's and will provide a helping hand whenever possible. Whether it is a life or death matter, or a simple curiosity thing, drop us an email and we'll get back to you.

