



EC London, EC Cambridge, EC Brighton & EC Bristol

Pre-Departure Guide for UK Students

The following advice comes from information given on the UK Council for International Student Affairs website.

Introduction:

Coming to the UK to study English at EC will be one of the most exciting adventures of your life, so be prepared!

Arriving in a new country can be a strange experience at first. Do not be surprised if you sometimes feel frustrated or homesick after the first feeling of excitement disappears. This is normal and other students will be feeling the same way. Don't worry. These feelings will quickly pass and you will soon make friends and start to enjoy student life.

Before arriving in the UK, there are steps you can take to prepare for any initial feelings of shock you might have. Do your research before you arrive - the more you know about the UK and the city or region you will be living in, the better prepared you will be.

Before You Travel:

Once you have decided to study in the UK, been accepted on to a course at EC and obtained your Visa / Entry Clearance, you must ensure that you have the correct documents and money before leaving.

It is very important that you carry the following items with you on the aeroplane (not in your suitcase):

- your valid passport with Visa or Entry Clearance
- your travel tickets
- money (cash, traveller's cheques, credit card). Keep this safely inside a money belt or a very secure inside pocket
- health and insurance documents (if you have them, which we strongly recommend)
- a letter of acceptance from EC if you are studying for less than 6 months
- full details of your accommodation in the UK
- documentary proof that you have enough money to pay your fees and meet your living costs
- proof of your level of English if you are studying for 6 months or more

Planning Your Journey:

When booking your travel to the UK, make sure you know what time it will be in the UK when you get here. Try to arrive in the morning or early afternoon as this will give you time to reach your final destination and settle in during working hours when public transport is most frequent.

Find out in advance how to travel from the airport to your accommodation in the UK. EC can arrange for a taxi to collect you or you can travel by public transport. If EC has arranged your accommodation for you then you will have a profile showing the address and telephone number of the accommodation, a map and directions from there to school. If you are staying in homestay accommodation, please telephone your host in advance to tell them what time you will arrive.

During Your Journey:

- Keep your important documents and valuables safely with you at all times on the aeroplane or train. Do not leave them packed in your suitcase
- Do not leave any items of luggage unattended in the airport or station
- Security at international airports is now very tight and there will be a number of items that you will not be permitted to carry in your hand luggage such as liquids or scissors. Your airline will be able to provide a list of prohibited items

- At many airports there are new scanning machines so don't be surprised if you have to go through one of these (it's a bit like an X-ray machine).

On Arrival in the UK:

If you arrive at an airport, you will pass through immigration control first (before collecting your luggage). There are usually two main queues: one for European Economic Area and Swiss nationals, and one for everyone else. Make sure you join the correct queue. An Immigration Officer will look at your passport and check your Visa/Entry Clearance. You should also have your documents relating to your studies and finances in your hand baggage. Before leaving Immigration Control, check that the Immigration Officer has put a date stamp (if you had a Visa or Entry Clearance) in your passport; or (if you are a non-Visa national coming for a course of less than six months) check that you have been stamped in as a 'Student Visitor'. Sometimes this simply means that they write "SVV" with a pen above a normal entry stamp on your passport.

Recent changes to the UK Visa system mean that immigration officers may ask you more questions about your intentions than before. Don't worry, just answer honestly and calmly and make sure that you have all of your documents with you so that you can show these easily. The immigration officers must be satisfied that you are a genuine student and that you will not overstay the expiry date on your Visa / Entry Clearance. If you are coming on a General Student Visa (GSV) you will have had a speaking and writing test with EC and you should have our certificate of level with you. This is very important as immigration officers now need to see evidence that you are of at least "B1" level. They will also expect you to be able to answer simple questions so be prepared. The most important thing is that you show them our certificate with your picture, taken from your skype interview with a member of EC staff, proving that you are of a certain level of English.

After immigration control, you will be able to collect your luggage. At most airports baggage is unloaded on to one of a number of moving belts ('carousels') in the baggage collection area. Look for your flight number and the name of the place your flight departed from on the screens or above the carousels and wait for each item of your baggage to appear. If any item does not come through, find a representative of the airline you travelled on and fill in a lost baggage form.

When you have collected all of your luggage you must pass through Customs control. Join the queue for either the Green channel if you have nothing to declare, the Red channel if you have goods to declare, or the blue channel if you have arrived from an airport within the European Economic Area (EEA) where you have already cleared all of your luggage through customs control.

If you are not sure about what you can bring into the UK you should check with the British Embassy or High Commission in your home country before travelling to the UK.

If you experience any problems at the airport you can always call one of our school emergency telephone numbers:

EC London : 0044 (0) 7983 773 121

EC Brighton : 0044 (0) 7714 459 205

EC Cambridge : 0044 (0) 7966 976 513

EC Bristol : 0044 (0) 7738 382 633

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Settling in:

You will probably feel very tired when you first arrive at your accommodation. This is normal and your host will understand as long as you smile and are polite.

If you are staying at one of our student houses in London, please remember to call the number on your accommodation profile when you land to say when you expect to arrive so that somebody can be there to meet you and show you your room.

Many other EC students will be at your student house or residence, so don't be shy to ask about how to get to school on your first Monday at 08:45am.

If you are staying with a homestay host, the host will welcome you and tell you the following:

- where your room is
- what facilities you can and can't use in the house (please remember that this is somebody's home and not a hotel)
- information about the local area
- allow you to make one phonecall home to tell your family you have arrived safely
- how to get to school on your first day

When you are ready, get a map and take some time to explore the local area. Make sure that you know exactly how to travel from your accommodation to school.

On arrival at EC you will receive a welcome pack with lots of helpful information about your new city and life in the UK. You will also have a welcome talk given by a member of school staff and you will meet lots of other new students.

You will then be ready to learn some English, make some new friends, and enjoy your EC destination!

Further Information:

The British Council runs pre-departure briefing programmes for students in many of the countries where it has a local office. These tell you about immigration and passport control procedures, how to get to schools and colleges, financial matters, budgetary planning and cultural differences. Contact your local British Council office for details about when and where the next pre-departure briefing will be held.

Your nearest UK Embassy, High Commission or British Council office will be able to advise you about what documentation you need to enter the UK and how to get to your EC centre.

Additionally, The British Council produces a pre-departure guide for international students coming to study in the UK, which is available to download as an electronic document for viewing and printing:

First steps - A pre-departure guide for international students coming to study in the UK (PDF 442KB)

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) is another very useful organisation for students and has produced a series of fact sheets giving information on many areas of life in the UK from dealing with culture shock to choosing a qualification to advising on visa and immigration issues. See www.ukcisa.org.uk for more.

These publications are also available for reference at most British Council offices.

