



INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HANDBOOK 2020-21

Advice and information on being an international student in the UK at SOAS

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Welcome

This booklet contains some helpful advice and information for international students in the UK.

The [first section](#) is specifically for students sponsored by SOAS with a Tier 4 (General) student or Student visa. The information in this section covers some important points related to your visa and will help you to be aware of the conditions of your visa so you don't have problems with the SOAS or UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) rules and regulations.

The [second section](#) is for all international students with any type of visa or students from the EU/EEA who have obtained confirmation of their status in the UK through the UK's EU Settlement Scheme and will assist you in understanding various elements of living and studying in the UK.

Please read this information carefully. Should you have any questions please contact the Registry – if you have been emailed with your SOAS IT Account, you can do this by submitting an enquiry via our online Student Information Desk (www.soas.ac.uk/sid/) under the “General Registry Enquiries” category. If you don't have your SOAS IT Account yet, please email studenthub@soas.ac.uk

Contact from SOAS

If we need to get in touch with you during your studies, we will use your SOAS email address once you have received the details – the earliest you will receive this is the August before your programme starts.

If you are contacted by any member of SOAS staff, either before or during your studies, regarding your visa or any other matter, it is important to make sure that you respond immediately as any delays could lead to problems. This includes requests sent to you from the online Student Information Desk (SID).

Contact from UKVI

If UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI) should contact you in relation to your visa and you are uncertain of what you should do, please contact the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) or Student Visa Manager as soon as possible for guidance (advice@soas.ac.uk or compliance@soas.ac.uk).

Covid-19 and your Studies at SOAS

This year there are a number of changes to processes detailed in this handbook.

Police registration – Where this is a condition of your visa, UKVI and The Police accept that it will be impossible to register within 7 days so you should make efforts to go through the appointment booking process within 7 days and attend your appointment when possible, proof of a booked appointment means you will not be penalised for not registering in time.

Enrolment – This year we are conducting enrolment completely online. We are able to accept a digital copy of your passport and visa this year, but we may ask you to visit campus when possible so that we can verify your documents in line with UKVI requirements.

Attendance – UKVI have allowed students to engage in their courses by distance learning this academic year. If you are resident in the UK and engaging with your studies remotely, this is acceptable. If you are resident outside the UK and studying from home, this is also acceptable. Students remaining outside the UK for the whole academic year will not require a visa. Students who intend to travel to the UK to study will need to obtain a visa. Students studying remotely or at distance are expected to engage fully with their studies and will be withdrawn if they do not meet the required standard of engagement.

Access to campus – Whilst face-to-face teaching is not always possible in the current climate, access to campus will be maintained as far as possible within Government guidelines. Please check the SOAS website for more information about what services are open, how to book study space and how campus access is being managed.

Contacting SOAS – As staff working arrangements are liable to be flexible and remote, response times to emails may not be as quick as usual and not everyone has access to work phone lines so please bear with us and we will try to respond to your messages as soon as we can.

SECTION 1 – FOR TIER 4 AND STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

Before you start

Applying for your Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS)

In order to apply for a Student visa, your application needs to be supported by a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS). A CAS is issued by your university to confirm that they are willing to sponsor you to study with them. An application submitted without a CAS number will be refused. Once you have accepted your offer of a place at SOAS, you should be issued a CAS to enable you to make a Student visa application. The CAS will be valid for a period of 6 months and you can make your application for a visa up to 6 months before the programme start date on your CAS. Your CAS will be provided to you in the form of a CAS number. This is the number that you need to include on your visa application to confirm to UK Visas & Immigration that SOAS will sponsor your Tier 4 or Student visa.

More useful information can be found on our website www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/international/entry/

How is my CAS issued?

Undergraduate Study – You will have declared the need for a student visa in your UCAS application and the Admissions team (undergradadmissions@soas.ac.uk) will use this information to allocate a CAS to you.

Postgraduate Taught Study – You need to complete and submit a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Request Form, downloadable from www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/mastersofferholders/

Postgraduate Research study – You need to complete and submit a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Request Form, downloadable from www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/research/forms-for-offer-holders/

IFCELS programmes – You must contact IFCELS (www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels/) to obtain a CAS.

Language Centre programmes – You need to complete a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Request Form, downloadable from www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/mastersofferholders/ and submit it to the appropriate course administrator.

Study Abroad/Exchange Programme Students – You need to complete and submit a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Request Form, downloadable from www.soas.ac.uk/studyabroad/stepsfornewstudents/

Once you receive your CAS, you can make your application for a Student visa. Please ensure that you apply in good time before your programme starts. If your application is incorrect, if you fail to provide relevant documentation or do not meet the published requirements for the type of visa you have applied for, your visa will be refused. See our website for help

www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/immigration/extending-visa/

Your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP Card)

UKVI issues Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) to non-EEA nationals for stays of 6 months or longer, whether the visa application was made within the UK or from overseas. Visas for less than 6 months will be issued as a visa sticker (vignette) in your passport valid for the full visa duration. EU/EEA nationals applying for a Student visa will be provided with digital evidence of their Student visa status with the potential for consideration for a BRP in the future, but this is not guaranteed.

If you apply for your visa outside the UK, you will receive a temporary vignette in your passport enabling you to travel to the UK. This temporary visa will be valid for a short duration during which you must arrive in the UK. Once you arrive in the UK, you have 10 days to collect your BRP from the Post Office listed on the letter you received from UKVI confirming your visa was granted.

Although you can enrol on your temporary visa, we must see your BRP before your temporary visa expires. You must ensure that you bring your BRP to the Student Hub as soon as you have collected it. Please be aware that you may not be able to finalise accommodation or open a UK bank account until you have your BRP. For more information on this process, UKVI's policy on non-collection of BRPs, and further guidance see our website: www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/immigration/extending-visa/

Whilst social distancing and other Covid-19 related measures are in place, you can provide digital evidence by email to records@soas.ac.uk and compliance@soas.ac.uk we will then ask you to bring your documents to the student hub when it is practical to do so for final verification.

If you apply for your visa from inside the UK, your new BRP will be sent to you at the UK correspondence address you provide in your visa application. It is important that you provide an address that you have access to and will safely receive anything sent to that address.

The Immigration Health Surcharge

All those applying for a Student visa to come to the UK for more than 6 months are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS) as part of their visa application. The surcharge covers National Health Service (NHS) treatment (but does not cover prescriptions, dental treatment, eye tests or assisted conception) and is calculated for your full visa length. For more information about the IHS please see our website: www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/immigration/extending-visa/

Police Registration – is it a requirement for you?

Please check the Gov.UK website to see if this applies to you (www.gov.uk/register-with-the-police).

If you need to register with the police, you will either see a remark on your temporary vignette telling you that police registration is required or it will be mentioned on the letter you receive that tells you your visa has been approved. You should register within 7 days of arriving in the UK (or receipt of your BRP if you applied in the UK).

Registration takes place in person at the Overseas Visitors Records Office (OVRO). You will need to book a registration appointment directly through the OVRO website where more information about the process can also be found (www.met.police.uk/advice/advice-and-information/ov/registering-overseas-visitor/).

What to do if your Visa is refused

If your Student visa application is refused, you must notify us immediately and send a copy of your visa refusal notice to whoever sent your CAS as well as to the general student visa mailbox (compliance@soas.ac.uk). We strongly recommend that you discuss your refusal with our Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk) to find out what options you have and how to avoid a subsequent refusal.

Once we have reviewed your visa refusal letter, we may be able to issue a new CAS for you to make another application. This will depend on the reasons for your refusal and is assessed on a case-by-case basis. A second CAS is not guaranteed after a refusal so it is important to provide us with as much information as possible.

During your studies

Sponsorship Compliance Checks

As your Student visa sponsor, SOAS has certain obligations to ensure that we maintain this sponsorship according to UKVI's rules and regulations. As part of this duty, we will carry out regular checks of student files and you can expect to receive contact from the Registry during each academic year associated with these checks.

Things we are required to check include that:

- We hold a UK term time address and valid UK telephone number for all visa holding students
- Students temporarily enrolled with pending visa applications keep us updated about their application
- Students attend as expected and are engaged with their studies
- Students apply for a new CAS and visa before the expiry of a current visa

Most of these checks will take place without you noticing, but if any required data is missing from your record, or your visa is running out, we may contact you for more information.

Contact Details Checks

As an international student holding a Tier 4 or Student visa, you are required to keep SOAS updated with your term-time contact details including your address, mobile phone number and email address. You can update your contact details using SOAS Online Services. During the year you will be contacted via your SOAS email address to check the details we currently hold about you are correct. Students who fail to fully adhere to visa regulations put their Student visa status at risk and continued failure can result in curtailment of your visa.

Changes to Enrolment Status

Non-Enrolment

Your CAS states the last date that you will be permitted to commence your course. If you cannot enrol by this date, you should request permission to enrol late. If you are approved for late enrolment, we will inform UKVI of your new latest enrolment date. You are expected to enrol by the new date. Failure to complete enrolment by the latest approved date means we will notify UKVI about your non-enrolment which will trigger the cancellation and withdrawal of your visa. If your visa is withdrawn after you arrive in the UK, you will need to leave the UK. If you have not travelled yet, your visa will become invalid and you will be unable to enter the UK using that visa. Maybe add some Covid temporary guidance in case this causes panic?

Leave of Absence/Suspending your Studies

If you wish to take a Leave of Absence you must submit a request through SID after discussing your plans with your academic advisor, the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk) and your department office.

On taking a Leave of Absence, SOAS will cancel sponsorship of your Tier 4 or Student Visa and you will be required to apply for a new visa before you are able to re-join your programme. You should leave the UK within 60 days of your sponsorship being cancelled. SOAS will notify UKVI of this change in your circumstances and although your current visa will still look valid, UKVI will curtail your visa and will refuse entry back into the UK unless you have a new visa. Staying in the UK after your visa has expired is considered a crime and can result in serious penalties, including being banned from returning to the UK for up to 10 years.

Repeating a Year of Study

Should you be ineligible to progress to a subsequent year of your degree, or you need to repeat your year of study, your visa will expire before the end of your programme. It is your responsibility to ensure that you apply to extend your visa before your current visa expires.

Repeating Individual Modules/Repeating part of your Year of Study

If you are ineligible to progress to a subsequent year of your degree but only need to repeat part of your previous year, we may be able to continue to sponsor your visa.

If you are going to be repeating modules equal to less than a full year, it is essential that you contact the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk) to discuss the implications to your visa sponsorship. The application form can be downloaded from our website (www.soas.ac.uk/registry/). Once you have downloaded the form, complete it and submit it via SID. After you have submitted the form, you may be contacted by Registry to discuss your request further before it is processed.

Transferring to a different Degree Programme

If you wish to transfer from your current programme of study, you will need to apply using the relevant category on SID. If your request receives academic and a regulatory approval, you will be notified by the Registry. Please note that changes of degree programme still need to be considered against UKVI's rules for academic

progression and the visa study conditions to which you are subject. You will not be able to transfer to a course at a lower level than the one you were sponsored to study. Transferring to a different course at the same level will only be allowed if you can complete the new course before the end date of your SOAS sponsored visa. We will inform UKVI of the change and any effect that has on the end date of your studies.

You will not be able to study a part-time undergraduate programme unless you have an alternative visa providing you with leave to remain in the UK. Postgraduate students may be able to study on a part-time basis, but switching from full-time to part-time during your course is not possible from inside the UK so you would have to leave the UK to make a new application as a part-time student. Please note that there are a number of restrictions to studying as a part-time student. If you are thinking about part-time postgraduate study you should discuss this with the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk).

Withdrawing from your Programme of Study

If you wish to withdraw from your studies, you can notify us of this by submitting a request through SID. You should discuss this with your academic advisor, your department and the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk). Once the Withdrawal has been processed, you will be notified by the Registry.

We are required to notify UKVI of your withdrawal and cancel the sponsorship of your visa. When your withdrawal is confirmed, you should make arrangements to leave the UK or apply for a different category of visa within 60 days of being notified. Staying in the UK after your visa has expired is considered a crime and can result in serious penalties, including being banned from returning to the UK for up to 10 years.

If you change your mind about starting your studies

Should you decide to cancel or defer your place, SOAS will withdraw its sponsorship of any application you may make or may have made for a visa to enter the country to study. We will also notify UK Visas and Immigration. Your CAS reference number will become null and void. It is essential that you notify us of this as soon as possible, by emailing the appropriate Admissions team for your course of study.

Resitting Examinations

Students are normally expected to take their examinations at SOAS. Where a student resides overseas and their visa has been cancelled or has expired, they would be expected to apply for the Short Term Study visa to attend SOAS for their re-sit examinations.

Please see our website (www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/immigration/short-term-study-visa/) for guidance about the Short Term Study visa. It is not possible to sponsor students for a Student visa to undertake re-sit examinations.

Should you be unable to obtain a Short-term Study Visa, you must contact the Exams team to discuss alternative arrangements by submitting an Enquiry using SID under the category "Examinations and Assessments".

Visa Applications and Extensions

If your visa expires before you complete your programme of study (this normally happens after a Repeat Year of Study or the need for further study after your expected completion date), you must obtain a new CAS and apply for a new Student visa before your current visa expires. An application to extend your visa based on repeated study or the need for repeat study is permissible under the academic progression considerations and your application can generally be made from inside the UK.

If you have taken a Leave of Absence, you must apply for a new CAS and Student visa before you re-join the programme. Typically, a new application following a leave of absence will need to be made from your home country or country of legal residence otherwise you may be refused on academic progression grounds. You must apply for a CAS using the CAS Request Form which is available to download from the Registry page of the SOAS website (www.soas.ac.uk/registry/). This form should be submitted with copies of your passport and

current visa. You should apply for the CAS at least 3 months before your visa expires (if extending your visa), or before you need to re-join your studies (if returning from a leave of absence or period away from SOAS). If you wish to have your visa application checked before submitting it, please contact the Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance) (advice@soas.ac.uk).

Change of Personal Circumstances - Telling SOAS

If any of your circumstances change whilst we are sponsoring your visa, you must notify us as soon as possible. Changes in circumstances can include; a change to your immigration status, a new BRP number or any other changes in details relating to you and your visa. You can notify the Registry by raising an enquiry in SID, ensuring that you select the “International and EU Issues” category. Please ensure that you provide us with your Student Reference number and give full details of the change.

It is also very important that you inform SOAS if you change your address. As your sponsor, we are required to keep a record of your up-to-date contact details during your studies and we will conduct regular checks to verify contact information held on file. You can change your address via the Online Student Services system (<https://studentsonline.soas.ac.uk/WebSite/OnlineServices/adlogin.aspx>).

Change of Personal Circumstances – Reporting to the Home Office

Students sponsored for a Student visa are responsible for ensuring that the Home Office is informed of the following changes to your details:

- Change of Personal Details (Name, Gender, Nationality, etc.)
- Criminal convictions
- Change to your contact details
- Change to your Representative’s details
- Change to your Dependent’s details

If you have a biometric residence permit (BRP) and change your address, you can do this using the Change of Circumstances Form. However, any other changes, will mean you have to apply for a new BRP. Full details on reporting a change are available from the Home Office website (www.gov.uk/change-circumstances-visa-brp).

If you are required to register with the police, you will need to update your police registration certificate within 7 days of changing address, passport or visa.

Employment while you study

International students at SOAS on Student visas at undergraduate degree level and above are permitted to work up to 20 hours a week (a week is Monday-Sunday). Students studying programmes other than degrees should check the working conditions stated on their visa carefully and abide by them accordingly. You are eligible to work full-time during official University holidays as long as your visa does not state that work is prohibited. The dissertation period is considered term time for students on taught postgraduate courses.

To be eligible to work you should have one of the following (or something similar) printed on your student visa:

- a) “No recourse to public funds. Work 20 hrs max in term time”;
- b) “No recourse to public funds. Work 10 hrs max in term time”;
- c) “No recourse to public funds. Work/Business as in Tier 4 rules”
- d) “No recourse to public funds. Work/Business as in Student Rules”

You should not exceed the stated limit during term time under any circumstances as your and SOAS registration visa could be cancelled. As your visa sponsor, we are required to inform UKVI if we become aware that you are breaching your visa conditions.

In addition to a limit on working hours, UKVI does not allow Student visa holders to do certain jobs or work activities. For more information about what you can and can't do, please check the UKCISA website (www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Working/What-kind-of-work-can-you-do).

SECTION 2 – FOR ALL INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Before you start

Visa

You must ensure that you have valid permission to study in the UK before you attend SOAS. If you need a Student Visa, please read section 1 of this document for details of how to arrange this. If you do not need a Student visa, you must be sure that you have a valid right to enter the UK and study, this could be a different category of visa or evidence of your UK immigration status.

Online Registration

From the middle of August onwards after you have accepted your place with us, you will start receiving communication from the Registry about online registration and enrolment during Welcome Week. During Online Registration you will be required to verify and update various pieces of information to do with you, your programme of study and your fees. When verifying your details, it is essential that you note the following:

- The name you register with MUST be your official name as stated in your Passport
- You must ensure you have the correct nationality showing (as shown in your Passport)

As part of pre-enrolment, you will need to pay your fees (or provide evidence of funding) and upload a photograph to enable us to produce your SOAS ID card.

You should keep an eye out for these emails and respond as quickly as possible. If you have any queries during the online registration process, please raise a Request using SID (online Student Information Desk) by selecting the “Online Registration Query”. If you have a query about enrolment, raise a request of “Enrolment Query”.

Finding Accommodation

It is very important that you find somewhere to live whilst you are in London. We have some essential information on our website, which we hope will assist you (www.soas.ac.uk/accommodation/).

In addition to private accommodation, you might want to consider Halls of Residence. There is limited availability in halls so be prepared to have to look elsewhere just in case. Dinwiddy House is for Undergraduate students and Paul Robeson House is for Postgraduate students. This accommodation is managed by Sanctuary Management Services (www.sanctuary-students.com/student-accommodation/london) and you will need to contact them to apply for a place in one of these halls. You can contact our Residential Operations Manager & Student Housing Advisor (accommodation@soas.ac.uk) for more information.

Dual Nationality

If you hold dual nationality, it is important that you register with the correct details, as this will affect the need for a visa to study with us. If you hold nationality from a Non-EEA country and also from an EU/EEA Country (e.g. Canada and France) – please enter your EU/EEA nationality and ensure that you provide your EU/EEA passport as evidence during your enrolment period. If you are a dual national with an EU/EEA passport, you may not need to obtain a Student visa to study if you are resident in the UK before 11pm on 31 December 2020 and are able to obtain either EU Settled or Pre-Settled Status. If you are not in the UK before the end of 2020 you will need to obtain a Student visa.

What you need to bring with you

When you are preparing to travel to the UK, you need to think carefully about what you need to bring with you. There are some obvious requirements that you are unlikely to forget:

- Passport/ Travel documents
- Visa (and Visa Acceptance Letter (provided by UK Visas and Immigration where you have been given a temporary sticker in your passport and you are required to collect your BRP on arrival in the UK))
- Qualification documents
- Offer letter

However, there are some other things that you may not think about:

- Details of how to get from the airport to your accommodation and from your accommodation to SOAS - the Transport for London website is a useful site to plan your journey (<https://tfl.gov.uk/>)
- Sufficient funds to enable you to survive financially for the initial period in London – check what limits there are on the amount of money you can bring out of your country; there is no limit on how much you can bring into the UK, but you need to declare it at entry (www.gov.uk/bringing-cash-into-uk). You should also verify with your current bank whether your ATM card will operate in the UK
- The evidence you used in your visa application to show that you have enough money for your studies
- A printed copy of your CAS (or visa letter for Short-term-study visa holders).

You will also find some useful information on the kind of things to pack on our website (www.soas.ac.uk/international/ukliving/living-in-the-uk-what-to-pack.html).

Getting through UK border security

There is a useful list of top tips for you if you are a first time student arriving to commence studies in the UK. The tips are designed to ensure you are not unduly delayed when entering the UK by being more prepared for what you may need to present at border control.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/353155/top_ten_tips_pp_11_09_14.pdf

During your studies

Formal Enrolment onto your Programme

One of the first things you will need to do when you arrive at SOAS is to complete your formal enrolment.

If your programme starts in the early part of September, you will complete this process within the first few days. For the majority of our students, the first week of term (at the end of September) is Welcome Week. During this week you will undertake the formal enrolment process in addition to attending various Department meetings and events.

The formal enrolment process is fairly straightforward. You will be emailed in advance and given a specific enrolment period and you must come to the enrolment event during the times given. You must ensure that you bring the following documents with you:

- Passport (original)
- Entry visa (in your passport if you applied for a visa outside the UK)
- BRP (original)
- Visa Acceptance Letter (provided by UKVI where you have been given a temporary sticker in your passport and are required to collect your BRP on arrival in the UK)
- Copy of your offer letter (this may be required by your department)
- Proof of payment of fees or funding

When you arrive at the enrolment event, you will see a member of staff who will verify various pieces of information, including that you have a UK address (this is a mandatory requirement of UKVI and must be provided as soon as you have secured a place to stay). A copy of your passport and visa/BRP will be retained by us as proof that we have verified your identity and that you have appropriate leave to study in the UK. Staff may also need to verify that your fees have been paid, or you have secured appropriate funding.

Once this has been completed, you will be able to obtain your SOAS ID card, which will give you access to the University buildings and the Library. Your ID card also enables you to print and copy documents on SOAS printers.

If you uploaded your photo during the online registration process before the deadline, your card should be ready for you to collect. If you were unable to upload a photo, you will visit the Library staff who will take your photo and produce your card whilst you wait.

During Welcome Week, there will also be some orientation events and opportunities for you to meet with SOAS staff and your fellow students.

Full details of enrolment can be found on the SOAS website, under “Enrolment of New Students” (www.soas.ac.uk/enrolment/).

If you have a query about your formal enrolment during Welcome week, raise a Request in SID (online Student Information Desk) with the category of “Enrolment Query”.

Certification of Enrolment

SOAS will provide you with a letter certifying your status as a student. This letter can be produced for you on request in person during Welcome Week – you must be able to present your SOAS ID card to enable our staff to produce the letter. If you need a letter to open a bank account, you should let us know the name and branch of the bank where you wish to open a Student Bank Account, so that your letter can be correctly produced.

If you are unable to obtain the letter during Welcome Week, you can request letters online, from SID by selecting the Request of “Official Student Letter”.

Other useful information

Banking

You will probably need to open a bank account in the UK when you arrive and we know that International students may have difficulty opening a student account quickly. Please request a letter through SID clearly stating that this is for opening a bank account. You will need to provide the name and branch address of the bank you are intending to use.

At the start of the academic year, the number of requests means that it could take up to 10 working days to obtain this letter. Given the time it takes to provide you with this letter, please ensure that you have access to an appropriate amount of funds when you arrive in the UK to see you through the first month of your time here.

Council Tax

This is a tax charged to tenants of rented property or privately owned residences in the UK. Full-time students including international students studying a minimum of 16 hours per week are eligible for exemption from paying council tax.

The Certification of Enrolment letter which is produced and posted to you automatically within 10 working days of your completion of enrolment should be used to provide evidence to your local Borough council that you should be exempt from paying council tax.

Registration with a Doctor or Dentist

International students in the UK on a student visa for more than six months, or those entitled to reciprocal healthcare provision through Government agreements are entitled to free medical care. In order to access the NHS you must register with a local General Practitioner (GP) Surgery where you live. When you are registered as a patient, you can ask to see the Doctor if you need medicine or feel ill. You will only need to pay for the medicine prescribed for you by your Doctor. You will need to take a Certification of Enrolment letter with you to prove that you are a student and should ask to be registered as an NHS patient.

There are further details on our website (www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/health/)

Dentists’ charges depend on the treatment you need to have. An international student living in the UK for longer than 6 months may be entitled to free, or reduced cost dental care on the NHS. Details can be found at www.nhs.uk

National Insurance Numbers

Everyone who works in the UK pays income tax and national insurance. The rate at which you will pay income tax and national insurance contributions is determined by your legal status. In order to avoid paying too much tax, you should register for a National Insurance Number as soon as possible. You can do this independently or your employer may be able to help you to obtain a National Insurance Number.

You do not need a National Insurance Number to start work, however, if you do start work before you have completed the registration process it is likely you will be taxed more than you expected. It is therefore in your interest to complete the registration process as soon as possible (www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number).

For further information visit:

- UK Department of Work and Pensions
www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions
- The UK Council for International Student Affairs www.ukcisa.org.uk

Insurance

International students should have insurance whilst in the UK. This should cover your personal property, such as your computer, mobile phone, clothes etc. and insure against any loss of luggage during your trip to the UK. Some students prefer to also have medical and travel insurance. There are lots of insurance companies and the level of cover they provide can vary so it is important to make sure that you get insurance which provides everything you need and that you are happy with.

For independent insurance advice see The British Insurance Brokers Association website at www.biba.org.uk/

Emergencies (Police, Ambulance, Fire Brigade)

In the event of an emergency, phone 999 (or 112 from a mobile) for immediate assistance. The call is free, so you can use your mobile or any telephone box. Only use the number if you need an immediate response. When the call is answered you will need to say which service you require; the Police, Ambulance or Fire Brigade. You will also need to provide your personal details and the details of the emergency including the exact location.

If you need to contact the police and it is not an emergency, you can call 101. There is a flat charge of 15p per call to this number.

If you need urgent medical help and it is not a life-threatening situation, you can call NHS 111 using the phone number 111. This service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is free to use.

Compliance with the UK Laws

Drinking in Public

Most of the laws about alcohol are contained in the *Licensing Act 2003*.

Social customs and laws on drinking in public vary significantly around the world. Currently it isn't illegal to drink in public. However many areas have alcohol-free zones that target town centers and/or residential areas where there is a particular issue with drinking in public. It is also worth noting that there is a ban on drinking alcohol or carrying open containers of alcohol on public transport in London, this includes buses, trams, tubes and the Docklands Light Railway (DLR). Most national trains in the UK allow the drinking of alcohol on board but train operators can decide to run alcohol free trains and signs will let you know if this is the case.

Being drunk and disorderly in a public place is illegal and you should always try and remain safe and in control when drinking alcohol. If you are drunk and disorderly, providing you don't do any damage or give the police verbal abuse, the most they'll usually do is take you back to a cell at the police station so you can sleep it off.

Drugs

The law on drugs is complex; but if you're caught with an illegal substance, ignorance is not a defence.

Maximum penalties if you are caught:

Class A 7 years in prison and/or a fine for possession.

Life imprisonment and/or a fine for possession with intent to supply.

Class B 5 years in prison and/or a fine for possession.

14 years in prison and/or a fine for possession with intent to supply.

Class C 2 years in prison and/or a fine for possession.

5 years prison and/or a fine for possession with intent to supply.

For more information please go to www.themix.org.uk/drink-and-drugs/drugs-and-the-law

“Talk to FRANK” is the national drugs helpline offering free, confidential information and advice 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call FRANK on 0800 77 66 00 or text a question on 82111. The cost of sending a text to FRANK is the same as a standard text message, which will depend on your network tariff. Information and advice is also available via the website www.talktofrank.com/

If you are arrested for any reason

When a police officer makes an arrest, he or she is taking you under the care and control of the law. This means that for the time being you lose certain freedoms, such as being able to go and do as you please but in return you are given certain rights which protect you against unreasonable treatment.

If you are arrested, you have the right to know why you have been arrested. At the police station you will be entitled to:

1. See a solicitor - Whether you are arrested or go to a police station voluntarily, you are entitled to free legal advice from a solicitor who will advise you while you are being questioned
2. Read a copy of the Codes of Practice, which explains the procedures the police should follow in such circumstances.

You can be detained by the police *only* if they do not have enough evidence to charge you and they have good reason to believe that they can obtain further evidence. You cannot normally be held for more than 24 hours without being charged or released.

Motoring in the UK – will your licence cover you?

Not many of you will be driving whilst staying in the UK but if you do one of the most important things to notice is that we drive on the left.

You must hold a licence which is valid in the UK if you want to drive during your time in the country. Please follow the following link to find out more information: www.gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence

If you're convicted of a motoring offence, the courts can fine you and endorse your driving licence with penalty points. If you reach a certain number of points, depending on your licence type and how long you have had your licence, you can be banned from driving and your licence can be taken away.

Each endorsement has a unique offence code and is allocated “penalty points” on a scale from one to eleven, depending on the severity of the offence. Endorsements must stay on your driving licence for four or eleven years depending on the offence. You'll need to produce your driving licence to the police, fixed penalty office (FPO) or when you appear at court.

USEFUL SOAS CONTACTS

Student Advisor (Immigration and Finance)

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/studentadviceandwellbeing/students/immigration/>

Tel: +44 (0)20 7074 5014

Email: advice@soas.ac.uk

Registry:

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/registry>

General Enquiries: Tel: +44 (0)20 7074 5105

Email: Log into [SID](#) and Submit an Enquiry (selecting the category of “General Registry Enquiries”)

Fees & Funding: Email: Log into [SID](#) and Submit an Enquiry (selecting the category of “Fees and Scholarships”)

Admissions

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/>

Undergraduate Email: undergradadmissions@soas.ac.uk

Postgraduate Taught Email: mastersadmissions@soas.ac.uk

Postgraduate Research Email: Log into [SID](#) and Submit an Enquiry (selecting the category of “Doctoral School”)

IFCELS

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/ifcels/>

Tel: +44 (0)20 7898 4800

Email: ifcels@soas.ac.uk

Language Centre

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/languagecentre/>

Please contact the relevant department as shown on the website

Study Abroad / Exchange Programme Students

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/studyabroad>

Tel: +44 (0) 207 898 4125

Email: studyabroad@soas.ac.uk

Associate Students

<http://www.soas.ac.uk/admissions/pg/associate-students/>

Tel: +44 (0)20 7898 4322

Email: associatestudent@soas.ac.uk