# Contents

Welcome .................................................. 03  
Introduction .............................................. 04  
Pre-Arrival Checklist ................................. 06  
Visas and Immigration ............................... 07  
English Language Assistance ....................... 08  
Accommodation ......................................... 09  
Making Travel Plans .................................... 13  
Ten Top Tips for a Smooth Arrival ............... 17  
Money Questions - Preparing to Bring Money to the UK 21  
Opening a Bank Account .......................... 24  
Campus Information .................................. 25  
Arriving on Campus and Orientation ........... 26  
Registration, Enrolment and Faculty Induction 28  
Students’ Union ....................................... 30  
Extra-Curricular Activities ......................... 31  
Support Services ...................................... 32  
Keeping in Touch with Friends and Family ...... 34  
Northern Ireland Climate ........................ 35  
Local Customs ......................................... 36  
Staying Safe ........................................... 37  
Staying Healthy ........................................ 38  
Other Useful Sites ..................................... 39  
Contact Information .................................. 40
Welcome

It is my pleasure to welcome you warmly to Ulster University. We are delighted that you have decided to study with us and we look forward to your arrival. The International Student Experience team will work with you before you arrive and during your studies, to support you in all aspects of your student experience. We are committed to ensuring that you have all of the information and support you need to ensure a happy and productive time while you are an Ulster student.

Please take some time to read this pre-arrival guide that we have created for you. The International Student Experience team have worked with colleagues in the University to provide you with the information you need to know as you prepare to study with us at Ulster. You no doubt have many questions for us and this guide should be able to answer at least some of those questions for you. You are always welcome to email us with any other questions you may have that have not been addressed in this guide.

I look forward to meeting you in person soon. In the meantime, make sure you prepare well for your journey to us and safe travels.

Kind regards

Roisin McEvoy
Head of International Student Experience
Introduction

Ulster University is a modern dynamic institution with an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research.

We welcome international students from all around the world and we are delighted that you have chosen to study at Ulster.

We have a cosmopolitan and diverse community at the University, currently home to students from over 80 countries. Our students enjoy the warm and friendly atmosphere providing the perfect opportunity to make new friends from across the world.

Coming to study in the UK is an exciting experience, with opportunities to broaden your academic, social and cultural horizons.

Moving to a different country and adjusting to a new way of living and studying can be very challenging. In order to settle in and make the most of your experience at Ulster you need the right information and guidance to take advantage of all possible opportunities. The friendly and supportive International Department staff are here to help you with this and to make your stay at Ulster as beneficial and enjoyable as possible.
The University also provides a comprehensive network of student support delivered by friendly professional staff:

- The International Student Experience team is your key contact point.
- Pre-sessional and in-sessional English courses are offered to help those of you with English as an additional language improve your English language skills even further. This service is open to all international students and is provided through the Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT). Further information can be found here: [ulster.ac.uk/international/english-language-support](ulster.ac.uk/international/english-language-support)
- The Student Support Department offers a health service on each campus.
- The Students’ Union run many sports clubs and societies and all students are most welcome to join.

Introduction

We look forward to welcoming you to Ulster University

Why not take a few minutes before you start reading to check out Education UK’s “Adventure of a Lifetime”: [youtube.com/watch?v=mgWaQWUP1Ig](youtube.com/watch?v=mgWaQWUP1Ig)
Have you:

• Checked if you need to apply for a Tier 4 (General Student) visa or entry clearance to the UK? You may be travelling on a Short Term Student Visa (previously the Student Visitor Visa) but if you are a non-EU/EEA/Swiss student who will be studying at Ulster for six months or more then you must apply for a Tier 4 visa. You will find the following links helpful: https://www.gov.uk/eu-eea and https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

• Arranged your accommodation and made the advance payment if necessary?

• Arranged travel insurance and insurance for your property.

• Arranged medical insurance if studying in the UK for less than six months?

• Obtained any relevant medical records, including vaccination certificates?

• Checked restrictions on goods which can be brought into the UK?

• Packed your luggage and checked the weight to make sure that it doesn’t exceed baggage allowance at the airport?

• Packed in your hand luggage your passport, CAS letter or Short Term Student Visa, original documents, accommodation confirmation letter and a small sum of British Pounds Sterling (about £200) for initial purchases.

• Checked whether there are restrictions on the amount of money you can take out of your country?

• Opening a bank account can take some time so please make sure that you have obtained enough money to live on for at least three weeks while you open your account.

Why not check out Third Year Abroad’s Pre-Departure Cheat Sheet at: www.thirdyearabroad.com/before-you-go.html
Visas and Immigration

If you are a non-EU/EEA/Swiss student and you have received your unconditional offer to study at Ulster then by this stage you will already have made all of your arrangements to secure your visa for study in the UK (either a Tier 4 Visa or a Short Term Student Visa). If you still have questions then the International Department can provide you with immigration help and support, together with general advice and guidance.

We can also assist with the renewal of your student visa should you wish to extend your studies. Ulster University is a Home Office Highly Trusted Sponsor (HTS) and is required to monitor the attendance of our international students.

You can find further information at: [ulster.ac.uk/international/visa-immigration](http://ulster.ac.uk/international/visa-immigration)

If you are a non-EU/EEA/Swiss student who will be studying at Ulster for six months or more and you have applied for your Tier 4 Visa outside the UK, you will be issued a 30-day vignette. The vignette is only valid for 30 days from the date you said you would arrive in the UK. You will receive your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) during Orientation. Please note that this must be within 10 days of arriving in the UK.

**Credibility interviews**

Please bear in mind that you may need to have a credibility interview with UK Visa and Immigration staff prior to your arrival in the UK. You may find this short clip interesting: [youtube.com/watch?v=tAlZT21-eqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAlZT21-eqw)

**Registering with the Police**

(Police Service of Northern Ireland or PSNI)

Some students, depending on the country they are coming from, will be required to register with the police upon arrival into the UK, providing your student visa is for six months or more and you are aged 16 or over. You will know if this is required as it will be written on your visa or biometric permit card. You will be advised at Orientation about contact information for the police station closest to your campus.
Working in the UK
The new Points Based System, allows students with a Tier 4 student visa to work up to 20 hours per week during term-time. You will know how many hours per week that you are allowed to work during term time as it will say on your visa or biometric permit card.

For up-to-date and further information take a look at:

gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-application-for-uk-visa-as-tier-4-student

Seeking help
The Compliance Team at the International Department can help you while you are studying by providing information about your visa terms and conditions, help with extending your visa, explain the rules about working while you have your student visa and any other queries you may have.

If you need any UK immigration advice, then please contact the Compliance Team via email casstatements@ulster.ac.uk. Please include the following in your email:

your name / your course / your student ID / your contact number

Please Note: The University has been made aware that some students arriving in the UK have been contacted by fraudsters saying there is a problem with the student’s visa and trying to extort money from them. Please be aware that the Home Office or legitimate organisations never contact students to insist that they pay money at very short notice. Please be aware of these tactics. More information can be found at:

http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Frauds-and-scams

English Language Assistance

Pre-sessional and in-sessional English courses are offered to help all non-native English language speakers improve their English language skills even further. This service is open to all international students and provided through the Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT).

Further information can be found at:

ulster.ac.uk/international/english-language-support

Students who take the pre-sessional English course must successfully complete the course before progressing to their main course of study.
Accommodation

We strongly advise that you finalise and confirm your accommodation arrangements before you leave your home country. This helps to prevent any delays and you can get settled into your lodgings quickly once you’ve arrived in Northern Ireland.

There are a number of important things you need to do when you’re sorting out accommodation:

• Be clear what your options are.
• Be clear what you want, what you need, what you can afford and what you would be prepared to compromise on.
• Secure your accommodation in good time and get the deal confirmed.

For more tips about accommodation and what you need to know when choosing your accommodation please visit:

http://ukcisa.org.uk/Information-Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Choosing-your-housing
University accommodation
Ulster University has its own halls of residence on campus (although students studying in Belfast campus will be based at the halls in Jordanstown campus) which creates a “student village” feel. Students from outside the British Isles are guaranteed a place providing their completed application is received by 1 August. Full information about University accommodation can be found at: accommodation.ulster.ac.uk

Why not check out our accommodation YouTube clip: youtube.com/watch?v=r1S6FZWB8hE&feature=youtu.be

You should stay in touch with our Accommodation staff, they will be happy to answer any questions you may have. If you wish to stay in University accommodation you must make sure to arrange and confirm all of your accommodation details with our staff before you travel. Please remember, if you are planning to arrive early to take part in Orientation then speak to our Accommodation staff about your short term contract, you may also want to ask them about things such as bedding packs and kitchen utensils.

Please bear in mind that you will be asked to sign a contract before taking up your University accommodation. This contract is legally binding so please pay attention to the terms – it will be difficult to break the contract if you are not happy once you have signed it.

Check out some Frequently Asked Questions at: accommodation.ulster.ac.uk/faq

Private rented accommodation
This type of accommodation is not owned by the University, it is owned by a landlord. This could be an apartment or a room in a shared house or flat so costs can vary – a room in a shared house can cost anywhere from £50 to £100 per week, depending on what you’re looking for. You will also probably be asked to provide a deposit, usually one month’s rent in advance.
Accommodation

A room in shared private accommodation may seem less expensive than University accommodation but you should consider that while the cost of University accommodation includes your utilities (heat, electric, etc.) your private accommodation may not and so you may want to check on this with the landlord. You are responsible for finding and inspecting the property, ensuring it is clean and safe, signing the contract and paying the rent and bills.

If you are sharing with friends then these are things you might was to discuss before moving in.

As with University accommodation you will be asked to sign a contract or tenancy agreement for private accommodation so you will want to check on this with the landlord. You are responsible for finding and inspecting the property, ensuring it is clean and safe, signing the contract and paying the rent and bills.

Ulster University. Please remember that if you have the use of a television in your private rented accommodation then you must have a television licence. More information on TV licensing is available at: www.tvlicensing.co.uk
You may find this link helpful: youtu.be/i_XC-yZy0sU

The International Department cannot endorse individual private accommodation providers but some useful accommodation websites include:

- nihestudentpad.co.uk/accommodation
- studentpad.co.uk
- nidirect.gov.uk/student-housing-finding-somewhere-to-live
- http://freshstudentliving.co.uk/location/Belfast/john-bell-house/
- housingadviceni.org/housing-options-ni/student-housing
- propertypal.com/
- rent.co.uk
- accommodationforstudents.com/Belfast.asp

You'll also get more information on private accommodation at the University Accommodation website: accommodation.ulster.ac.uk/private-accommodation

The Immigration Act 2014 introduced new legislation on adults renting premises in the UK. Landlords are now required by law to make document checks to establish a tenant's right to rent before making a tenancy agreement.

Students coming from countries within the European Economic Area (EEA) can satisfy the check by showing their passport or other specified documents such as driving licence in combination with a full birth certificate – photocopies are not acceptable. Students who come from countries outside the European Economic Area (EEA) will be asked to provide their Biometric Residence Permit and usually their passport.

Landlords will only usually need to make checks at the beginning of a tenancy but follow-up checks may also be done during a tenancy where travel documents show that there is a time limit on the stay in the UK. If a follow up check indicates that a tenant has passed the date of their stay in the UK the landlord must report that tenant to the Home Office.
Accommodation

You can assist your landlord and speed up the process for yourself, by making sure that your documents are ready for checking when the landlord needs to see them.

Further information on the documents required by landlords can be found at:


ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Choosing-your-housing#layer-3182

Temporary accommodation

If you are not moving into university accommodation you must book temporary accommodation before you leave home unless you are sure that you can move directly into long-term accommodation on the day you arrive in Northern Ireland. International Department staff can help you get information on where to find temporary accommodation or you might want to check out discovernorthernireland.com/accomfinder or hostelworld.com/accommodation/Northern-Ireland for information on bed & breakfast, hotels, self-catering apartments.

We encourage new international students to confirm their accommodation plans prior to their arrival rather than waiting until Orientation to source housing.

We advise students to consider buying possessions insurance to cover personal belongings such as your phone, laptop, etc. You should speak to an insurance provider before you leave home. Further information can also be found at: ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Choosing-your-housing/Rent-and-other-costs
Making Travel Plans

Preparation is everything. Take time to find out what you need before you travel and it will make your journey and stay at university much less stressful.

When can you arrive in the UK?
The “valid from” date on your visa is the date from which you can legally arrive in the UK (generally one month before your course starts if you are coming for six months or longer, or one week if you are studying for less than six months). This is so that you can familiarise yourself with the University, your local surroundings, arrange permanent accommodation if you have not already done so and settle in before your academic journey begins.

When should you arrive on campus?
At least one month before the “International Student Orientation Programme” the International Student Experience team will be in touch with you about your arrival in Northern Ireland. You will be sent information about our Meet and Greet service at the two Belfast airports (Belfast City Airport and Belfast International Airport) and about transport options to your campus. Please note that the Meet and Greet service will only be available on specified days. The University does not arrange a Meet and Greet service at any of the other airports or ports of entry to Northern Ireland.

Further information on our Meet and Greet service and how to book your seat on the bus to your campus can be found at: ulster.ac.uk/international/preparation-and-arrival

Flights/airports
Although Northern Ireland is located on the island of Ireland, it is part of the United Kingdom and subject to UK immigration regulations. The Republic of Ireland is a separate country for immigration purposes. We advise that you do not enter Northern Ireland through the Republic of Ireland as you will not be able to get your passport checked or stamped for the UK and so won’t have permission to enter the UK. You should enter Northern Ireland through a UK airport where your visa can be stamped at Immigration Control. Getting to Belfast is easy if travelling via other cities in the UK. Regular flights operate between London, and other UK regional airports, to the two Belfast airports.
Making Travel Plans

Most students coming to Ulster University fly into London (Heathrow or Gatwick airports) and take connecting flights to Belfast. Some students may choose to fly to Belfast from London Luton or London Stanstead airports. Flights from London to Belfast take about an hour and there are regular flights throughout the day depending on the airline and the airport. The cost of flights from London to Belfast varies greatly and it is worth contacting the main airlines before making a booking.

Belfast has two airports: Belfast City (also known as George Best Airport) and Belfast International. Belfast City Airport (belfastcityairport.com) is a 10 minute drive from the city centre, while Belfast International Airport (belfastairport.com) is approx. 24 kilometres north-west of Belfast city. Both airports have convenient public transport links into Belfast from where you can get connections to Coleraine, Derry~Londonderry and Jordanstown.

Arriving at UK airports

When you arrive into a UK airport please ensure that you have your PASSPORT, VISA, LETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY (YOUR SHORT TERM STUDENT VISA) AND A COPY OF YOUR CAS (IF YOU ARE A TIER 4 STUDENT) available in your hand luggage, as you will need to produce these when you arrive. You may also be asked for your invitation letter/ letter of offer from Ulster and for evidence of financial support. You could also be asked for medical evidence such as chest x-rays if these were recommended when you applied for entry clearance. Under UK Home Office rules you may be interviewed upon arrival, so don't be alarmed if you are. You may be asked about your immigration and education history, what you are going to study, your post study plans and financial circumstances. If you experience any difficulties at the airport regarding your visa you should contact a member of the International Student Experience team on the helpline number that you will be given the week before you arrive.

Most students coming to Ulster University usually fly into London (Heathrow or Gatwick airports) and take connecting flights to Belfast.

London Heathrow (heathrowairport.com) is a large international airport and can be daunting for new arrivals into the UK. You may want to take a look at these links so that you have information about your journey through the airport. You will also get information here about each of Heathrow’s terminals, how to transfer to Terminal 1 to make your Belfast connection and information on what to do at Border Control: heathrowairport.com/heathrow-airport-guide/arriving-passengers.

London Gatwick (gatwickairport.com) is also a large international airport so it would be useful to check out this link for information on arrivals, border control and making you connections to your Belfast flight: gatwickairport.com/at-the-airport/flying-in
Making Travel Plans

Coming through Customs

At any airport, after you pass through Immigration you should collect your luggage and proceed to the customs hall. If your luggage has been lost or delayed, don’t panic, speak to the staff at the airport information desk.

As a student you are allowed to bring in items for your own personal use, such as your laptop or tablet without having to pay tax but you will have to take these with you when you leave the country again.

Regulations on bringing food into the country are very strict and there are many things that you are not allowed to bring in. For a full list of banned foodstuffs you should check out the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development web page: dartni.gov.uk/articles/summary-personal-food-import-restrictions. You may also want to speak to the staff at your nearest British Consulate for further information on Customs Regulations.

If you arrive at your destination airport in Belfast, on a designated Meet and Greet day, you will be met by University staff and directed to your transport for your onward journey to your campus. Don’t worry about finding us at the Belfast airports, both airports are small, you’ll see us in the arrivals hall.

If you are taking part in our Meet and Greet service and have any problems when you arrive at your Belfast airport then please go along to the airport information desk and ask to have the Ulster University staff paged.

How much can I bring/what should I bring?

If you are travelling to Northern Ireland on a connecting flight from an airport in England then your baggage allowance should be the same on each flight but you should check this beforehand as some domestic airlines may charge you excess fees.
Making Travel Plans

How much luggage can I bring?

- Check the ‘size and weight’ restrictions for luggage with your airline
- You will have to carry your luggage, therefore only pack as much as you can carry
- Many items can be bought economically in the UK from shops such as Poundland, Poundstretchers and B&M so you may not need to bring them from home, for example:
  - toiletries e.g. toothpaste, shower gel, soap, deodorant
  - bedding
  - kitchen utensils
  - Adapter for electrical equipment
  - AA/AAA batteries
- If you need to bring more luggage to the UK, arrange for your family in your home country to send your remaining possessions to the UK once you have settled and moved into your permanent accommodation.

There are several student shipping, storage and removals companies that could help you with your luggage delivery, why not check out:

- sendmybag.com
- unibaggage.com
- eurosender.com

Are there things which I cannot bring in my luggage?

For goods which are restricted or prohibited see the following: hmrc.gov.uk/customs/banned-restricted.htm

For goods which are restricted or prohibited on planes, see the following: caa.co.uk/passengers/Before-you-fly/Baggage/Banned-items/

Please ensure that you DO NOT pack any sharp items (e.g. scissors, tweezers, nail clippers) or liquids which exceed 100ml in your HAND LUGGAGE. Make sure you check the safety rules and luggage regulations of your airline that you are travelling with. We advise that you do not bring electrical equipment with you. British electrical voltage is 240 volt and electrical equipment has a three-pin plug. The voltage and plugs will be different in your country. If you do bring electrical equipment you will need to purchase an adapter.

Why not check out: hotcoursesabroad.com/study-abroad-info/before-you-leave/8-mistakes-students-make-when-packing-to-move-abroad/
Ten Top Tips for a Smooth Arrival

1. If you’re from a non-European Economic Area (EEA) country, complete the landing card given to you during your flight before you arrive at border control.

2. Have your passport ready along with other visa documents. Remove it from any cover, and remember to remove sunglasses and hats.

3. Keep information about the course you’re studying in your hand luggage. This must be in paper copy (not an electronic copy on tablet or phone). This will include your university Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) or your Short Term Student Visa.

4. Keep any recent bank statements and details of where you are staying in your hand luggage. UK Visa and Immigration officers may ask to see this information.

5. Expect UK Visa and Immigration officers to ask simple questions about your stay in the UK when you arrive at passport control.

6. Do not bring in any meat or dairy products from outside the European Union (EU). There are restrictions on traditional medicines, food products such as fish, eggs and honey, and some fruit, vegetables and plans (including bulbs, seeds, cut flowers and tree bark).

7. There are also restriction on the amount of tobacco, alcohol and gifts you can bring to the UK. If you exceed your duty-free allowance and do not declare them, all of your items could be taken away from you.

8. Never bring in counterfeit goods, illegal drugs, offensive weapons or indecent or obscene material. Some items are restricted and will require a licence or permit.

9. If you are travelling from outside the EU and have brought with you cash, cheques or bank-drafts totalling more than 10,000 euros (or the equivalent in another currency) then you must declare it by completing a cash declaration form at the airport.

10. Never give false or misleading information (including forged or counterfeit documents).
In Northern Ireland people can choose to wear traditional clothes from their particular culture if they wish. On campus, students generally wear jeans, t-shirts, casual tops and sweaters.

To keep warm in the winter months we advise you to have a:
- Warm hat and scarf
- Pair of gloves
- Socks
- Warm coat
- Strong waterproof shoes/boots
- Several t-shirts and sweaters/jumpers (a few thin layers will keep you warmer than one thick item of clothing)

During the summer months lightweight clothes such as shorts, t-shirts, dresses and sandals are suitable.

You should carry all your important documents in your hand luggage:
- Passport
- Student Visitor Visa Letter
- Travel/flight tickets
- British currency/travellers cheques/bank information plus copies
- CAS Statement - Tier 4 students only
- ATAS Certificate (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) Certificate (if required)
- Proof that you have money to pay your fees and support yourself – if you are an EEA national or ISEP student you will probably not need to prove this. Evidence of your finances (bank statement, sponsor’s letter)
- Original academic qualification certificates
- Letter of Offer and letter confirming accepted offer of place at Ulster.
- Documents that may be needed if you are travelling with family – birth/marriage certificates
- Accommodation confirmation letter
- Contact details for your accommodation
- Insurance documents (travel and health)
- Record of travellers cheques or bank information
- Mobile phone
- Medication – If you are bringing prescribed medication with you to the UK, carry a letter from your doctor in your hand luggage explaining what the medication is. Please ensure the letter is translated into English.
- Tissues
**Label your luggage**

Make sure you have labelled your luggage clearly. The label should have your full name, your UK term time address and your contact number.

**Top Tip:** You may also want to put a label inside your luggage – this will assist in getting your luggage returned to you if the external label has been lost or torn off.

**Top Tip:** Tie a multi-coloured scarf or ribbon to your luggage so that you can distinguish it on the baggage carousel at the airport.

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**Lost/delayed luggage**

When you arrive at your destination airport and if you think your luggage has been lost or delayed then you should speak to staff at the information desk at the airport. The member of staff may ask you to produce your flight ticket and provide a description of your luggage, e.g. size, colour and any labels. The member of staff will note down all of your details and issue you with a reference number for your luggage and contact details – keep these details safe. You should give details of your term-time address, either for your student residence or private accommodation and your luggage can then be forwarded to you at that address. Then, leave the baggage hall and continue your journey through to customs control.

You should let the staff at the University Accommodation Office know or someone at your private accommodation know about any lost/delayed luggage and advise them about a time to expect delivery.

**Top Tip:** It is a good idea to have a list of the items in your luggage as this will help should you need to make an insurance claim.

**Top Tip:** Take photographs of your luggage so that if it’s lost you can give these to staff at the airport – it should make it easier for them to trace you bags.

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**Travel insurance**

It is very important that you purchase travel insurance before your journey to the UK. Travel insurance can cover many areas including medical expenses, delayed or cancelled flights, lost and damaged luggage, lost or stolen money, and much more. Travel insurance can be purchased through your travel agent or an insurance company in your home country.

Endsleigh is an insurance company endorsed by UKCISA (the UK Council for International Student Affairs) and the National Union of Students (NUS). Endsleigh offer comprehensive insurance tailored to international students; for further information see: endsleigh.co.uk/personal/travel-insurance

**Top Tip:** You may also want to put a label inside your luggage – this will assist in getting your luggage returned to you if the external label has been lost or torn off.

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Before leaving home you must check with your doctor if you require any vaccinations. Depending on the country you are travelling from the following vaccinations may be required:

- Tuberculosis – if you are a national of any of the following countries you must be screened for tuberculosis:
  - Bangladesh
  - Cambodia
  - Ghana
  - Kenya (including residents of Eritrea and Somalia)
  - Laos
  - Pakistan
  - Sudan
  - Tanzania
  - Thailand

Applicants without a certificate are normally refused a visa.

Further information on TB testing is available at:


- Meningitis C
- Polio
- Tetanus
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis (Whooping cough)
- Measles, Mumps and Rubella
- Haemophilus influenza type B

If you are not immunised against the above diseases, please speak to your doctor and arrange to receive any necessary vaccinations before arriving in the UK. You must bring documentary evidence with English translation to present to an immigration officer on arrival in the UK.

If you are bringing any prescribed medication with you to the UK, carry a letter from your doctor in your hand luggage explaining what the medication is. Please ensure the letter is translated into English.
Money Questions
Preparing to Bring Money to the UK

British currency is made up of pounds (£) and pence (p) and is known as Sterling. One pound equals one hundred pence – £1 = 100p.

You might want to check out this video for more information about UK currency: video. about.com/golondon/Basic-Overview-of-Currency-in-London.htm

In the link above you’ll have seen information about the four different types of banknote used in the UK – £5, £10, £20 and £50 – but as well as Bank of England banknotes, every major bank in Northern Ireland (there are five) is entitled to issue its own bank notes. We also use banknotes issued by Scottish banks so it may take some time to get used to our money. Coins in everyday use include £2, £1, 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p, 1p.

For current exchange rates see: exchangerates.org.uk

If you are bringing money with a value of more than 10,000 Euros (includes money in any currency, bankers’ drafts or traveller’s cheques) into the UK from outside the EU, you will have to declare this to Customs when you arrive in the UK.

We recommend that you carry no more than £300 in cash or traveller’s cheques when you travel to the UK, for safety reasons.
The cost of living in Northern Ireland

According to Mercer.com’s 2014 Cost of Living Survey, Northern Ireland is among the best value regions in the UK to live with Belfast beating other cities such as Aberdeen, Birmingham and Glasgow. The 2015 Student Living Index, conducted by Nat West, revealed that Belfast is the UK’s most affordable student city.

We estimate that a single student will need approximately £9,000 for living expenses in an academic year. This would cover food, accommodation, books, laundry, and other basic day to day requirements but excludes tuition fees and travel costs. This amount is only a guide, and your individual costs will vary depending on your accommodation and lifestyle.

A rough guide to what you might expect to spend per week would be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation in halls of residence</td>
<td>£70-£140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilities (included in accommodation fee)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General expenses</td>
<td>£30-£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel (depending on campus)</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check out the following link to get an idea of living costs in the UK: [http://ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Cost-of-living](http://ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Cost-of-living)

Budgeting with the help of the International Student Calculator

It is very important to plan and budget your money so that you do not have any financial difficulties during your studies in the UK.

The International Student Calculator ([http://international.studentcalculator.org/](http://international.studentcalculator.org/)) will help you to:

- Understand the cost of living and studying in the UK
- Build a budget
- Get money saving tips from other international students
- Find out more about banking, accommodation and finding a job

The British Council Education UK website also has advice on budgeting to include tips on how to budget when you first arrive in the UK, how to map a budget, eating on a budget, etc. Check out: [www.educationuk.org/global/articles/budgeting](http://www.educationuk.org/global/articles/budgeting)
Cost guide

As a rough guide we have calculated what it could cost you for the major items you will need when you are in the UK:

1. **Food** – if you buy your own food, try and budget approximately £50 per week to purchase food supplies. You can of course shop around to find the best bargains. Some examples of food prices: milk 80p/litre, bread £1/loaf, eggs £1/half-dozen, rice £1.50/500g, coffee (instant) £3/100g, potatoes £2/2.5kg, shampoo from £2/100ml.

2. **Telephone (landline)** – BT has a base rate of £10/month for just line rental so calls are charged on top of this so that would be £3.50 per week.

3. **Telephone (mobile)** – the cost of mobiles varies depending on the provider and tariff you are on. Prepaid is generally cheaper to control costs, but if you make a lot of calls a contract will start at £5/week.

4. **DSL/Internet** – most companies charge a base of £5/week for standard DSL in the UK.

5. **Bills** – if you live in a house or apartment you will need to calculate heating and electricity into your budget - this can be anything from £15/week for all bills depending on the time of year.

6. **Travel** – if you live away from university you will need to include travel expenses in your budget. This can be approximately £10-£20/week depending on campus.

7. **Study Materials** – books, notepads, paper, printer cartridges are all things you will need and you should budget about £10/week for this.

8. **Social** – it’s not all study when you come to Northern Ireland, there will be time for some fun so you need to think about the cost of this. A cinema ticket in the UK costs around £8, a pint of beer £3, a DVD rental around £3, nightclub entrance £5. These are all costs you will need to budget so set aside what you’ll need for fun!
Opening a Bank Account

Since 12 December 2014, banks and building societies have to make a status check on all new applicants for a current account. Banks and building societies must not open a current account for a person who requires immigration permission to be in the UK and does not have it, so students will be expected to prove that they have valid immigration permission.

We suggest you research what is on offer by the UK banks and how they differ from your bank at home – you will get more information about opening a bank account in the UK by visiting the following website: ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/When-you-arrive/Opening-a-bank-account

Please bear in mind that:

- You cannot open a bank account until you are in the UK and have enrolled on your course at Ulster University.
- It can take two weeks or more to open a bank account so please ensure that you have sufficient finances to cover your expenses in those first few weeks. You might consider bringing a travel card or credit card with you. Please do not carry large amounts of cash with you or keep large amounts of cash in your room.
- The bank will ask you for a proof of identity (signed passport), proof of your address in your home country and proof of your new address in the UK.
- After registering onto your course, Ulster University will be able to give you a letter that will assist you in opening a bank account (i.e. the letter confirms that you are a full time student with us).
- You should be able to withdraw cash using your bank card at a cash point (ATM), but check with your bank about any possible fees. If you have a UK bank account then withdrawing cash from an ATM is free.
- We recommend that you open a Pay Pal account before you leave home. This will make it easier to pay for online purchases during your studies.
Ulster University is one university located on four campuses across Northern Ireland: Belfast city centre, Coleraine on the north coast, Jordanstown to the north of Belfast, and Magee in Derry-Londonderry.

Each campus is different in size and atmosphere, while delivering the same high-quality learning experience and retaining the unique character of Ulster University.

Belfast
Belfast’s Cathedral Quarter is the artistic and cultural centre of the city and home to our Belfast campus.
Read more...

Coleraine
The feeling of community at our Coleraine campus makes for a warm and welcoming student experience.
Read more...

Jordanstown
Our bustling Jordanstown campus is the largest of Ulster’s campuses and is just seven miles north of the city.
Read more...

Magee
The friendly, village atmosphere of the Magee campus offers an intimate learning environment.
Read more...
Arriving on Campus and Orientation

If you are making alternative travel arrangements for your journey to campus and are not taking part in our Meet and Greet service then please let your campus Accommodation staff or the landlord of your private rented accommodation know when you plan to arrive so that your room is ready for you.

Orientation

You are strongly advised to arrive at your campus in time to take part in our Orientation for international students. Orientation programmes at Ulster University are designed to introduce you to other new students and to the systems and cultural life of the University. We think it is very important for you to have a good understanding of how the University works to ensure that you have a successful start to your time studying with us. We therefore strongly encourage you and all other new international students to attend and participate in the Orientation programme being offered on your campus. If you are unable to arrive in time for Orientation we would be grateful if you could let us know.

If you are arriving in time to take part in our Meet and Greet service then when you arrive on campus you will be taken to the halls of residence where you will meet the Accommodation staff and be issued with your room key, bedding pack (if pre-purchased) and welcome pack.
Orientation

Take a few minutes to look at your campus Orientation programme – [ulster.ac.uk/international/preparation-and-arrival](ulster.ac.uk/international/preparation-and-arrival) – you’ll get all the information you need about plans for your first few days.

Importantly, on the evening of our Meet and Greet service there will be a reception to welcome our new students to campus (your campus Orientation programme will have details of the location). On the first morning of Orientation you’ll have the opportunity to meet all of the new international students during a welcome meal. Activities during Orientation include:

- Campus tour
- Tour of the surrounding area
- Library and IT facilities tour
- Introduction to the Student Support team
- Introduction to Academic Life at Ulster
- Introduction to the Compliance team
- Introduction to our Students’ Union

You will be issued with an international students’ information pack which contains detailed information about the University and the surrounding area, this information will help you to settle in and get the most out of your student experience.

At Orientation you will be advised of arrangements for your registration, enrolment and Faculty induction.
Registration, Enrolment & Faculty Induction

Registration/enrolment
This is when you officially sign on to your course with Ulster University. You will be advised about details of registration during Orientation, you will have the opportunity to meet your Studies Advisors and our Registry staff who tell you what documents you need to bring with you to registration and how to get your student card. Once you have been registered and receive your card you will have access to all of your online facilities.

Induction
In the week after Orientation you will have the opportunity to take part in your faculty induction sessions. Faculty induction is designed to welcome you to the faculty, introduce you to the staff and provide you with all of the academic information that you need to start your course. At faculty induction you will have the opportunity to:

- Meet with your course director
- Meet your personal tutor
- Meet other students on the same course
- Attend academic workshops
- Discuss the semester timetable
Other important information

The importance of good attendance

- Ulster University has an attendance policy which has been developed to allow students to reach their full potential.

- As an international student on your student visa, it is your responsibility to take attendance seriously.

University monitors attendance twice weekly. We use this attendance percentage on your course as a requirement for the UK Visa and Immigration Service.

- Attendance is a key component for student progression achievement and future employability.

- Regular attendance and academic achievements are closely linked. In other words, the more you come to class, the better your grades will be! Students who attend classes regularly are more likely to:
  - Enjoy a rewarding experience in which their knowledge, skills and abilities are developed
  - Successfully complete their course
  - Achieve better results
  - Improve their employability skills and progress into the working world

If the module of study selected includes assessment by examination, students must sit and pass the examination in order to pass the module. Where special arrangements are sought by the student to sit the examination in their home institution a fee of £30 per examination will be charged, payable by the student.

Punctuality

Students are required to arrive at classes on time and to stay for the whole of the teaching session. Late arrivals and early departures from your classes are disruptive, disrespectful and unfair to other class members and tutor.
Students’ Union

The Students’ Union is an integral part of university life. You can get involved in societies, sport and social events.

You can get together with other international students through our International Student Society. We are here to help you throughout your university life and ensure that you have fun along the way! The Union aims to enhance your student experience.

You can also become a student representative (rep), representing your course and other areas of student life. Becoming a student rep provides you with a fantastic opportunity to have a real impact on university life for you and your peers.

To get some idea of what goes on in Ulster University’s Students Union then check out: uusu.org
Extra-Curricular Activities

There’s more to life than study at Ulster University. Life at Ulster is about more than your academic experience. Sports and a variety of extra-curricular activities make up an important part of student life.

Ulster offers its students an array of sport activities which take place throughout the year and are open to all students – but please keep in mind that not all sports are offered on each of our four campuses. Check out what’s happening in Sports Services at: ulster.ac.uk/sport.

Regular events occur both on and off campus throughout the year and are organised by the Students Union, International Department and International Student Society. These include day trips to the coast, cultural events, Students Union Ball, theme nights, etc.

Of course one of the reasons you’re coming to Northern Ireland is to enjoy the craic – our word for a good fun, good food, good music and good company – for more information on the kinds of things to do in Northern Ireland then check out:

- discovernorthernireland.com
- visitderry.com
- visitbelfast.com
- visitcausewaycoastandglens.com
Support Services

During your time at Ulster you may need help with a problem or advice on a particular issue. In this section you can find out about the network of support services available on campus.

Student Support & Chaplaincy

Through the Student Support Department on each campus you will have access to a local medical practice as well as counselling staff, disability advisors and our Chaplaincy. You can drop into Student Support at any time to make an appointment to see the relevant member of staff.

You’ll find lots of information on the services provided on each campus as well as contact details at: studentsupport.ulster.ac.uk
Support Services

Registering with a doctor and the National Health Service (NHS)

Before you travel to the UK you should read:
http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/information-Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Health-and-healthcare


You may have incurred an NHS charge when you were applying for your visa, depending on your visa status and your programme of study. Medical treatment is currently provided free-of-charge at the point of need by the National Health Service. However, you will be charged for non-essential medical treatment, dental and optical treatment. We advise that you take out private medical insurance which will cover you for situations which may not be covered by the NHS or any reciprocal agreement that your country has with the UK for medical treatment.

If you are staying in Northern Ireland for six months or more then you are eligible to register with a local GP. Once you have registered with a GP you will be sent an NHS card. This is proof that you are registered for treatment with the NHS. You should bring it with you if you need treatment with a doctor or at the hospital.

Your campus Student Support team will be able to help you get registered with a local medical practice - for more information on Student Support health service have a look at: http://studentsupport.ulster.ac.uk/Health/health.php

Multi faith

The UK is a multicultural society. Ulster University welcomes all faiths and beliefs. We encourage students to practise their own faith and have respect for others.

We have a multi faith prayer room on each campus. In addition to the facilities for worship on campus, there are many places of worship for all throughout Northern Ireland. If you have a specific query then please ask a member of the International Student Experience team.

Student buddies

Our international student Buddy programme will be available to those students arriving in September or January. Having a buddy is a good way of getting to know someone locally before you arrive and another resource to help you find out about Ulster. Further information on the Buddy programme will be sent to students prior to their arrival.

Volunteering

Students often volunteer as a way of broadening their skills and adding to their CV. Please bear in mind that volunteering is treated as work and so you must comply with the terms of your visa. As a Tier 4 student, volunteering counts towards your 20 hours per week. If you hold a Short Term Student Visa you will not be allowed to volunteer during your studies at Ulster.
Keeping in Touch with Friends and Family

Keeping in touch with friends and family is very important, especially if you are a long way from home.

Internet – email & social networks

All of our campuses have IT suites for students to access the internet and are equipped with wi-fi. You can access your email and use social networking sites such as Facebook to stay in touch with friends and family.

All University accommodation has access to the internet on an unlimited basis with the charge included within the rent. Please note that the internet service is for educational use and not all of the facilities and services available at home may be available from this service.

Phone

Many international students choose to purchase a mobile phone whilst in the UK.

There are two forms of mobile use in the UK:

- Contract (usually 12, 18 or 24 months) – provide a certain number of free minutes, SMS and a mobile phone for a fixed monthly fee. A contract can be purchased from many providers. See moneysupermarket.com for further information.

- Pay as you go – you would need to purchase a sim card from a mobile phone provider, supermarket or newsagent and put money on your phone account that can be used for both SMS and calls. You would need to purchase a mobile phone first.

You can also purchase pre-paid phone cards from local shops or Post Offices. And remember to speak to your service provider before you leave home as they will be able to give you advice about options available to you.

Postal service

This is available at the Post Office. Post offices are usually open from 9am - 5.30pm Monday to Friday and between 9am - 1pm on Saturdays. Letters can be posted at the post office or red post boxes located in residential areas/town centres. Postage stamps can be purchased at the post office, supermarkets or newsagents and the shops on campus. You can also send parcels from the post office.

To find your nearest post office and for additional post office services see the post office website: postoffice.co.uk

You may find this website helpful: www.cable.co.uk
Northern Ireland Climate

The weather in Northern Ireland tends to be mild; summer temperatures are not particularly high, while winter is not particularly cold. While we don’t often have snow, it does rain frequently. To compare the climate in Northern Ireland to your climate at home, why not check out: http://www.belfast.climatemps.com/ There are four seasons in the year:

Autumn (September to November)
- Weather can be both cold and warm
- Temperatures vary between 7°C to 18°C
- You will need a warm jacket and an umbrella

Winter (December to Early March)
- Cold weather and short days
- Temperatures vary between -2°C to 10°C
- Snow falls occasionally

Spring (March to May)
- Weather can be warm
- Evenings tend to be cool
- Temperatures average between 6°C to 17°C

Summer (June to August)
- Most days are warm and sometimes hot
- Temperatures average between 19°C to 25°C but can reach up to 30°C

Further information and weather forecasts can be found online at: metoffice.gov.uk
Local Customs

Northern Ireland is a very friendly place, and you will find that people are generally pleasant and welcoming. Students who are unfamiliar with the Western way of life may find some traditions very strange!

Here are some of our customs to familiarise yourself with:

- **Politeness** – ‘please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’ are some of the most commonly used words in Northern Ireland. It is advisable to use these, especially when in the company of strangers.

- **Punctuality** – It is very important to be on time. Being late is generally considered to be rude. If you are going to be late you should inform the person you have arranged to meet beforehand.

- If you are invited to someone’s house for a meal it is polite to bring a small gift (flowers or chocolates) to say thank you.

- **Equal rights** are extremely important to us. All people have equal rights in Northern Ireland no matter what race, gender, religion, class, disability or sexual orientation. It is illegal to discriminate against anyone on these bases.

- Our **sense of humour** is based on sarcasm and irony. Therefore, you may find it difficult to understand when someone is joking and it may take you time to get used to this.

- **Queuing** or standing in line is of great importance, for example, waiting for the bus, waiting to pay for a product in a shop. Cutting into a queue is viewed as unacceptable behaviour.
Staying Safe

According to a 2011 British crime survey Northern Ireland was noted as the safest region in the UK, but like anywhere else you should ensure that you take responsibility for your own safety and security.

During Orientation you will be given information and tips on how to stay safe but if you have any concerns you should speak to staff in the International Department, Student Support or to a member of the campus security team who are available 24 hours a day.

For further information on staying safe you may want to check out: [https://www.britishcouncil.org/new/PageFiles/8166/living-daily-life-safety.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.org/new/PageFiles/8166/living-daily-life-safety.pdf)

Staying safe on the road

While you’re in Northern Ireland you may want to hire or buy a car – before doing so you will need to check that you meet all the legal requirements so check out: [http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Driving](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Living-in-the-UK/Driving)

Please remember that by law you must wear a seatbelt when travelling by car in Northern Ireland. It is illegal to drink and drive in Northern Ireland.
Alcohol

Please be aware that alcohol is served at most social occasions and is part of student social life. However, bars and clubs will serve non-alcoholic drinks and cocktails and there are lots of venues where alcohol is not served at all. The legal age to buy alcohol in the UK is 18. You should never drink and drive, if you are over the legal limit and stopped by the police you could be fined or prosecuted and the University could take disciplinary action against you. If you have concerns about alcohol speak to one of the Student Support team.

Drugs

You must not bring drugs in to Great Britain or Northern Ireland. All controlled drugs such as cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy are illegal and if you are caught with a controlled substance you are liable to be arrested and prosecuted. This will result in the University taking disciplinary action and you may be expelled.

If you would like to find out more about the risks associated with taking drugs then check out talktofrank.com, studenthealth.co.uk or speak to a member of the Student Support team.

Food

You may be missing all of those dishes from home and find our local food different but it’s really important that you eat healthily while you’re here. Try new foods and share a meal with friends, it’s all part of the cultural experience and there are lots of places to eat in Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry. There are a wide range of good quality restaurants catering to all budgets and tastes. The quality of locally produced food is of a high standard and is available at most large supermarkets and/or farmers’ markets. There are a number of Asian and European food shops in Belfast and Derry~Londonderry. There are several Halal butchers in Belfast – for further information on Halal outlets you may want to check out: zabihah.com/reg/United-Kingdom/Northern-Ireland/rJosGZGvQQ

To help get you started why not have a look at The Student Room website where you’ll find information on equipment and shopping (thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Student_Food) and loads of recipes for snacks, main courses and desserts. There are also recipes for dishes from home: thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/TSR_Recipe_Book. Another good site on food budgeting, recipes and helpful hints and tips on saving money is: http://www.lovefoodhatewaste.com/
Other Useful Sites

There is lots of other useful information in our Student Guide: ulster.ac.uk/guide

Other useful sites for follow up information:

UK Council for International Student Affairs
ukcisa.org.uk

British Council
britishcouncil.org

Education UK
www.educationuk.org

Home Office / Visa and Immigration Service
gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
gov.uk/government/organisations/foreign-commonwealth-office

Healthcare information
foreignstudents.com/health/nhs

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
psni.police.uk

Citizens Advice Bureaux Northern Ireland
citizensadvice.co.uk

NI Direct
nidirect.gov.uk

Discover Northern Ireland
discovernorthernireland.com

Discover Ireland
discoverireland.ie

Additional Resources

- foreignstudents.com
- hub.endsleigh.co.uk
- thirdyearabroad.com
- herpackinglist.com
- http://www.collins.co.uk/page/International+Student’s+Survival+Guide
- www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk
- www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Preparation-and-Arrival/Study-skills-for-success
- https://he.palgrave.com/studentstudyskills/page/index/?countryChanged=true
- www.hotcoursesabroad.com/study-abroad-info/essentials
- www.hotcoursesabroad.com/study-in-the-uk
- www.need2know.co.uk
- www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en
- www.cityvisitor.co.uk/belfast/studenttravel.html
- http://studenttravel.about.com/
Contact Information

International Student Experience Team

Belfast campus
Ms Vivienne O’Brien
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Coleraine campus
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Jordanstown campus
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Magee campus
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Compliance Team

casstatements@ulster.ac.uk

Office opening hours

Monday - Thursday 10am - 4pm
Friday 10am - 3pm