

Pre-Arrival Guide

A guide for International students to prepare
for your arrival in the UK

Pre-arrival and orientation information



Hello, and a warm welcome to the University of Suffolk! It is time to get ready for your studies and life in the UK. This guide shares important information about travelling to the UK and living here, your first week, and the support available to you as a University of Suffolk student.

By the end of this guide, you will:

1. Get to know the team that supports international students at the University and how to get in touch with us.
2. Understand your arrival dates, immigration requirements and what documents to bring with you.
3. Know more about your accommodation options in Ipswich.
4. Know what to pack and be able to plan your journey, including detailed transport routes from the different London airports to Ipswich.

Meet the team

The International Advice Team will be your first point of contact when you arrive and as you continue with your studies at the University.

Contacting us

If you have any questions about your arrival at the University or about any of the topics mentioned in this guide, please do not hesitate to contact the International Advice Team using the details below:

Email: internationaladvice@uos.ac.uk

Phone: [+44 1473 338 833](tel:+441473338833)

Key dates

Arrival dates

We strongly encourage you to arrive before the first week of term, which starts on 6 January, so that you have time to settle in before activities for new students commence. During this week, you will be invited to join your course induction activities and attend welcome events for our new international students.

Latest date to arrive in the UK

You need to arrive in the UK by the deadline set for your course start date (see below for details of where to find this) and be prepared for face-to-face teaching. It's important to ensure you are in the UK and ready to commence your studies by this specified date.

Course start dates

Please note that course start dates vary by programme.

You can view a **[full list of course start dates](#)** when they are made available on the **[Preparing to start](#)** section of our Applicant Area.

If you are a research student, you will need to speak to your supervisor to arrange your start date and your PhD induction. If you encounter any difficulties that may delay your start, you must contact the International Advice Team to determine the enrolment deadline for your programme. Following the induction activities for your programme is very important, as this is the full introduction to the University and to your course.

Before you travel to the UK



Immigration requirements

If you are a student who requires a student visa, please take some time to read the comprehensive [visa and immigration guidance](#) available on our website.

Length of immigration permission

The length of visa permission granted depends on the length of your course. Please see the table below for details:

Course length	Visa permission length
12 months or more	Duration of the course + four months
Six months to less than 12 months	Duration of the course + two months
Pre-sessional courses less than six months	Duration of the course + one month

Travelling to the UK

If you have applied for your visa from outside the UK (entry clearance), you will need to enter the UK **after** the start date of your student visa to activate your student immigration permission. Depending on your nationality, the start date will either be stated on the vignette issued in your passport or confirmed by checking your online status (EEA and Swiss students only).

Accommodation options



After your place is confirmed, one of your initial priorities should be securing accommodation.

Take some time to review the accommodation information provided below to explore your options thoroughly.

Ipswich offers a variety of accommodation choices, and [our website](#) has valuable insights to assist you in determining your preferences, budget considerations, and the booking process.

We strongly recommend choosing to live on campus, as this has additional benefits such as:

- Utility bills and Wi-Fi included.
- 24/7 support - help is close by if you accidentally lock yourself out of your room in the early hours.
- Easy access to your lectures and campus facilities.

Please visit [our website](#) to find out more about the types of accommodation and the application process.

Family accommodation

The University does not offer accommodation suitable for families. If you plan to bring your family with you, you will need to arrange private accommodation off-campus. If this applies to you, we recommend bringing your family to the UK only **after** you have secured suitable housing arrangements.



Accommodation options



Move-in date

Before booking your flights, please ensure to check with your accommodation provider for the earliest available arrival date. Some providers, such as Athena Hall, may require students to pre-book an arrival slot and confirm it before making flight arrangements. It is crucial to check this requirement with your accommodation provider.

We strongly encourage students to arrive in Ipswich in time for the first week of term, enabling you to seamlessly transition into your course induction.

Fraudulent accommodation offers

Unfortunately, there has been a rise in fraudulent offers (scams) for rental properties circulating on the internet. These scams can appear very convincing, often featuring genuine addresses and realistic photos of rooms or properties. However, the advertised room or property may not be available for rent or does not belong to the advertiser and should never have been offered for rent.

The best advice is to refrain from signing up for accommodation, particularly for a room, via a website unless you can verify with certainty that it is genuine. We strongly recommend opting for University-accredited accommodation to mitigate the risk of falling victim to these scams.

Council tax

Council tax is a fee paid to local authorities in the UK for the services they provide and is applicable to all residential properties. Full-time students enrolled in courses lasting one academic year (nine months) or longer are normally exempt from paying council tax if they reside in university or college accommodation, or in private accommodation where all residents are full-time students. If this applies to your situation, you can apply for an exemption. Additionally, your spouse and/or children should also be exempt if they are in the UK as your visa dependants. This exemption begins on the day you start your course and continues until its completion.

Once you have completed your University enrolment, you can download a council tax exemption certificate from your Gradintelligence account to submit to your local authority.

Money and costs

Scholarships and bursaries

Every year, the University offers a range of scholarships and bursaries to support students. For the latest information on what is available for International and EU students this academic year, **please refer to our website.**

Expected costs for the first few days

Now, let's consider some of the costs you'll encounter while living in the UK. You can use this **online student budget calculator** for a monthly breakdown of approximate expenses.

Estimated cost of living 2024–2025	Per week (£)
Food	40–50
Books, printing, stationery	5–10
Rent and bills	120–200
Total per week	200–300



Money saving tips

Here are some valuable tips shared by international students to help you prepare for your stay in the UK:

- **Bring cash:**
Have some cash on hand to cover initial expenses like bus fares and taxis to Ipswich and your accommodation.
- **Currency exchange:**
Consider exchanging some money to Pounds Sterling (GBP) before your journey or on arrival at the airport.
- **Debit cards:**
Debit cards are convenient for most purchases, but always carry some cash as a backup in case your card isn't accepted.
- **Budgeting:**
Be mindful of exchange rate fluctuations, as they may affect your budget. Keep track of your expenses and try to stick to a budget.
- **Currency cards:**
Some students find pre-loaded currency cards useful, as they can be used like a debit card or to withdraw money from ATMs.
- **Scholarships and Bursaries:**
Explore scholarship and bursary opportunities available at the University, as you may be eligible for financial assistance.

By following these tips, you can better manage your finances and make the most of your experience studying in the UK.

What to pack



Take a look at these packing suggestions that might be useful for your stay in Ipswich:

■ **Warm coat, scarf, hat and umbrella:**

Ipswich experiences a temperate maritime climate with typically warm rather than hot summers and cool to cold winters. It's advisable to bring a warm coat, scarf, hat, and umbrella to stay comfortable, as the weather can be unpredictable.

■ **Clothing:**

Pack warm clothes and plenty of layers. The wind can be quite strong along the coast so it is worth thinking about bringing or buying a windproof coat or jacket.

Suffolk rarely experiences extreme weather, with July being the hottest month and January the coldest. Rainfall on average falls evenly throughout the year, with October being the wettest and February the driest. Consider bringing hooded, warm, waterproof coats and hats to shield against the wind and rain.

The weather can vary widely throughout the day, so it is wise to be prepared for all four seasons. Additionally, be aware that the region may see some snowfall in the winter, although it is relatively rare in this part of the UK.

Ipswich average weather:

Average temperature high: 14.5°C (58.1°F)

Average temperature low: 5.5°C (41.9°F)

Average monthly precipitation: 47.44mm

What to pack

■ Dress code:

There is no formal dress code at the University of Suffolk. Most students dress informally, for example in jeans, trousers, or skirt, paired with a jumper or T-shirt.

■ Laptop:

Bringing a laptop can be advantageous for your studies, staying in touch with friends and family back home, and storing digital photos. Many accommodation providers offer free Wi-Fi. If you don't own a laptop, don't worry—there are numerous computer access points throughout the campus. You can also take advantage of the free laptop hire service available at the library.

■ Power adaptors:

The voltage of mains electricity in the UK is 240v. Electrical equipment rated at 230v or 240v will function normally. UK plugs are distinct, with three substantial, flat prongs and differ from plugs used in the rest of Europe. If your devices are dual voltage, all you need is a simple UK adapter plug. Avoid bringing electrical items that require mains power unless they are dual voltage (for example, a laptop). It's advisable to buy small electrical items in the UK to save on transformer costs. Converters for models used in continental Europe and the Americas are readily available.



■ Bedding and cooking utensils:

On arrival at your accommodation, you may find that a bed is provided without bedding. Similarly, some accommodations may lack cooking utensils such as pots, pans, cutlery, or plates. Check with your accommodation provider to find out what is provided.

■ Bedding packs:

Consider packing sheets, duvet covers, and towels, but plan to purchase larger items such as a pillow, duvet, and kitchen equipment upon arrival. There are many shops in town where you can find these items. Alternatively, you can pre-order bedding and/or kitchen packs through services like [UniKitOut](#). Some online stores, such as [Argos](#), offer delivery directly to your accommodation.

■ Mobile phone:

You can purchase a new non-contract SIM card from various phone shops in Ipswich town centre. Compare different plans to find the best deals. If you're not changing your SIM card, be mindful of data roaming charges if you use your phone in the UK.

■ Personal belongings:

Pack personal items like photographs to help make your accommodation feel more familiar and homely.

■ Uniforms:

If you're enrolled in health programmes involving hospital placements, you'll likely be required to wear a uniform during these placements. Specific details regarding uniform requirements will be provided by your course team.

■ Copies of your certificates and transcripts:

Ensure you bring copies of your certificates and transcripts with you if you haven't already provided them. These documents may be necessary during your induction process.

Documents you will need to bring with you

International students are typically advised to bring along the below:

- Passport with valid visa.
- TB scan certificate.
- Proof of your original qualifications.
- Printed prescriptions for any medications you need (if applicable).
- Printed proof of accommodation booking.

Visit [this web page](#) for further information.

On arrival

Arriving at the airport

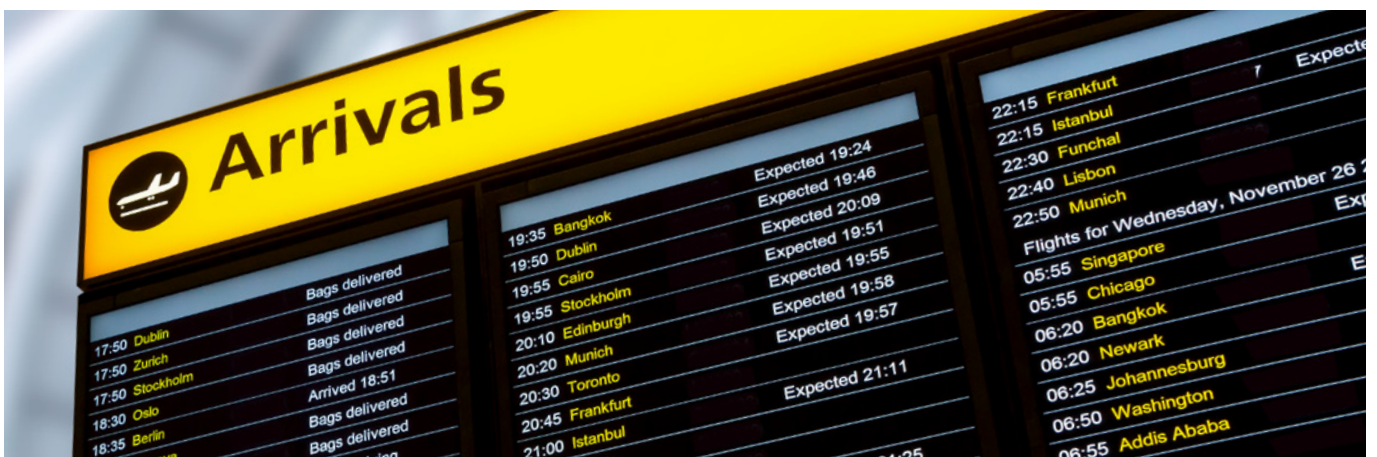
Most non-EEA nationals are required to join the queue to speak to a Border Force officer at the passport desk.

However, students who are nationals of the following countries and hold a biometric passport can use the eGates if they are open:

- European Economic Area
- Australia
- Canada
- Japan
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Switzerland
- USA

You must be entering the UK during the validity of your student immigration permission.

If you are eligible to use the eGates, retain evidence of your flight (e.g. boarding pass) to confirm you have entered the UK during the validity of your vignette.



Let us know your plans

Arrival details and your first address in the UK

To ensure that we are well-informed about your travel arrangements, we kindly request that you confirm your flight details in CAS shield. By doing so, we can provide you with information regarding the support available during your first few days and weeks in the UK. It is crucial for us to understand your plans and know your initial accommodation arrangements. Therefore, we also ask you to update CAS shield with the address where you will be staying on arrival in the UK.

Travel options

Now that you've considered your accommodation options and what to pack, let's turn our attention to traveling to Ipswich from your UK arrival point.

Situated in the picturesque county of Suffolk on the east coast of England, the county town of Ipswich hosts our University.

London Stansted Airport serves as the closest airport to Ipswich. However, you may also arrive at other London airports including London Heathrow, Gatwick, or Luton.

Think about your journey

For international students arriving at London Heathrow, London Gatwick, or London Luton airports, navigating through various forms of public transportation in London, such as overground trains and the London Underground, may be necessary to reach Ipswich. Therefore, it is recommended to pack lightly and consider purchasing items you cannot easily carry with you once you arrive in Ipswich.

To bypass travelling through central London, we recommend opting for travel by coach, as this will take you directly to Ipswich. However, please review the baggage allowance for the coach service beforehand.

When planning your journey to Ipswich, here are some factors to think about:

■ **Arrival time:**

It is advisable to plan your arrival in the UK for the morning if possible. This allows ample time for your onward journey and helps avoid arriving in Ipswich late at night when University services, shops, and accommodation offices may be closed. Additionally, consider the amount of luggage you'll be bringing and plan your route accordingly for convenience.

■ **Best route:**

We'll now guide you through the routes to Ipswich from the nearest international airports.

Travelling from the airport to our campus



Travelling from London Stansted Airport

London Stansted is the nearest international airport to Ipswich and is the easiest to travel onwards to Ipswich.

The most direct route is to take a National Express bus direct to Ipswich.

Route information and weblinks to the travel providers are given in the table below:

Airport: London Stansted

Travel by bus	Travel by train
Coach company: National Express	Train company: Abellio Greater Anglia
Frequency: every two hours approximately	Frequency: at least one every hour
Journey time: 90 minutes+	Journey time: up to two-and-a-half hours
Cost: £15–£20	Cost: £30–£50 (prices go up nearer the date of travel)
Changes: none	Changes: at Cambridge or London
Pre-booking: yes, online	Pre-booking: advance booking recommended

Travelling from the airport to our campus



Travelling from London Heathrow Airport

The most direct route to Ipswich from London Heathrow is to travel by bus, please see the route and weblinks to travel operators in the table below:

Airport: London Heathrow

Travel by bus	Travel by train
Coach company: <u>National Express</u>	Train company: <u>Heathrow Express,</u> <u>London Underground</u> and <u>Abellio Greater Anglia</u>
Frequency: every two hours	Frequency: every half hour
Journey time: three hours	Journey time: two-and-a-half hours
Cost: £15–£35	Cost: £38+
Changes: none	Changes: two — take the Elizabeth line to London Liverpool Street Station then take a train to Ipswich
Pre-booking: yes, online	Pre-booking: advance booking recommended for trains; you can pay with any contactless card on the London Underground, although beware of foreign currency charges

Travelling from the airport to our campus



Travelling from London Gatwick Airport

The most direct route from London Gatwick would be to travel by bus, although you will need to change bus at Heathrow Airport.

The quickest route, however, would be by train, although you would need to negotiate travelling across London on the London Underground and, depending on the amount of luggage you will be bringing with you, the bus option might be easier.

Details of the route and weblinks to the travel operators are given in the table below:

Airport: London Gatwick

Travel by bus	Travel by train
Coach company: <u>National Express</u>	Train company: <u>Thameslink</u> , <u>London Underground</u> and <u>Abellio Greater Anglia</u>
Frequency: every two hours	Frequency: every half an hour (from South Terminal)
Journey time: five hours+	Journey time: two-and-a-half hours
Cost: £34–£50	Cost: £18–£60 (prices go up nearer the date of travel)
Changes: change bus at Heathrow Airport	Changes: take the Thameslink to Farringdon Station, then take the London Underground (Circle, Hammersmith and City or Metropolitan lines) to London Liverpool Street station where you will need to change for the train to Ipswich
Pre-booking: yes, online	Pre-booking: advance booking recommended for trains; you can pay with any contactless card on the London Underground, although beware of foreign currency charges

Arriving at your accommodation

It is crucial for international students to communicate with their accommodation provider in advance. This will help you understand the procedure for accessing your room and to inquire about the availability and timing of this service, as arrival times may be limited.

Take a taxi

Upon arriving in Ipswich, a free complimentary taxi service will be provided to transport you to your accommodation. For additional information on accessing this free taxi service, please [email us](#).

Arriving by rail

If you arrive by train, you can easily take a taxi from the front of the train station to your accommodation.



Temporary accommodation

Here is a list of local hotels/ temporary accommodation near to the University in case you need temporary overnight accommodation:

Accommodation	Contact details	Price
EasyHotel Ipswich town centre (13 min walk)	<u>easyHotel</u> T. +44 1473 553990	From £41
Premier Inn Ipswich town centre Quayside (five min walk)	<u>Premier Inn</u> T. +44 333 321 9285	From £55
Travelodge Ipswich (two min walk)	<u>Travelodge</u> T. +44 8719 846329	From £46
Airbnb	<u>Airbnb</u>	From £35

Next steps

We hope that you have found this pre-arrival guide helpful, and you now feel prepared to take the next steps to commence your new life as a student at the University of Suffolk.

We look forward to meeting you at our international welcome events. This will give you the opportunity to meet members of our International Advice Team who will be supporting you during your time at the University. You will also get to meet other international students starting at the same time.

If you have any questions about any of the topics covered in this induction module, please do get in touch via [email](#).

We look forward to welcoming you soon.

International Advice Team

