

**BEFORE
YOU
ARRIVE!**

What International Students need to know
before they arrive to study in the UK **2012 | 2013**

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WELCOME TO HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

International Student Advisors' Office (ISAO), Student Support and Accommodation

Hello and welcome to Heriot-Watt University!

The International Student Advisors' Office (ISAO) is delighted that you have chosen to come to study at Heriot-Watt University, and we hope this guide will help you with your preparations for coming to study and live in the UK. Please note this guide is also available on our website: www.hw.ac.uk/newstudents

We are based at the Edinburgh campus (Hugh Nisbet Building, across from the Bank) and provide **information, advice and guidance** to international students including immigration advice, tuition fee status enquiries or general advice (council tax, opening a bank account etc). We also organise the Orientation Programme for our new international students in September. This Orientation Programme is designed to help you settle into your new life. You can check it out on www.hw.ac.uk/newstudents

We hope you find this guide helpful. If you need more information and assistance before or after you arrive you can either contact us by email isao@hw.ac.uk or telephone +44(0)131 451 3028

We look forward to meeting you during our Orientation Programme!

The ISAO team (Peter Reinbold, Louise Bingham, Hazel Wheldon & Gillian Mitchell) www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao

Follow the ISAO team on Twitter  @HeriotWatt_ISAO

BEFORE YOU LEAVE HOME

Getting ready to come to study in the UK for a short or long period of time can feel daunting; that is why our website www.hw.ac.uk/your-country provides you with detailed information and advice regarding what you should do, pack and check before leaving your home country.

IMMIGRATION AND VISAS FAQ

Q Will I need a visa before coming to the UK?

A **No:** If you are a European Economic Area (EEA) or Swiss National you will not need to obtain a visa to come to study in the UK. You will still have to provide a valid passport or National Identity Card in order to enter the UK. **You can now go to page 8 and check our information about "What to pack"**

Yes: If you are a NON EEA national you will need to obtain a visa to come to study in the UK. Some NON EEA nationals coming to study for less than 6 months may not need to obtain a student visa before entering the UK (Non Visa Nationals). For more information on whether or not you will need a visa before entering the UK, please check our website www.hw.ac.uk/your-country

More information is also available on the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/immigration.php and on the Home Office "UK Visas" website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/do-you-need-a-visa/

Q How can I apply for my Tier 4 student visa from my home country?

A You will have to fill the **VAF9** application form and **VAF9Appendix 8: Tier 4 (General)** form and provide the requested supporting documents as specified in the Tier 4 guidance. You will also have to provide a Confirmation of Acceptance for Study (CAS) number from your Tier 4 sponsor (Heriot-Watt University is your Tier 4 sponsor) and your biometric features (10-digit finger scans and a digital photograph) in person as part of the application process.

For Tier 4 guidance and application forms, please check: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/studying/adult-students/apply-outside-uk/

Q Will I need an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate?

A If you are a Postgraduate student and require a visa to study in the UK then you may need to apply for an ATAS certificate. Only certain programmes are affected by the scheme and the Academic School will send you more information about this with your unconditional offer. Once granted, this certificate should be printed and submitted with your visa application.

For more information and to check the list of programmes that request the ATAS certificate, please check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website: www.fco.gov.uk/atas

Q Will I be able to bring my dependants (wife, husband, and children) with me?

A You will only be able to bring your dependants to the UK if you are coming to study a Postgraduate course of at least 12 months, or if you are a government-sponsored student following a course which lasts longer than 6 months.

Please note, we strongly advise you to travel to the UK on your own in order to arrange accommodation for you and your dependants before they arrive.

Q How can my dependants apply for their visa?

A Your dependants will have to fill the VAF10 application form and provide the supporting documents requested on the VAF10 guidance. The application form and guidance are available on the UKBA website www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/visas-immigration/partners-families/migrant-workers-students/

Further information is also available on the UKCISA website www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/your_family.php and on the British Council website www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-immigration.htm

Q What documents should I have available when going through immigration control at the airport?

A You should ensure you are carrying a telephone number for the University and that you have it readily available; the main telephone number for Heriot-Watt University is 0131 449 5111, and for the International Student Advisors' Office is 0131 451 3028.

You should also ensure you have documents relating to your studies, accommodation arrangements and finances.

For more information on documents to have readily available for immigration control at the airport please check: www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/arriving_in_uk.php



WHAT TO PACK

Clothes/Weather

The weather in Scotland can be very cold and wet so it is important that you bring waterproof clothing and shoes and also warm clothes such as a pull-over, scarf, hat, coat, gloves etc. Always carry an umbrella in your bag! During winter time the days are short as it gets dark early (around 16.00). In the summer we enjoy long days as it usually gets dark around 22.00.

Electrical Equipment

British electrical voltage is 240 volts/50 Hertz. If you bring any electrical goods from home you must be able to use them safely on this voltage or use an adapter. The voltage and plugs (three-pin plug) will be different in your country. We advise you to buy British electrical equipment (e.g. hair dryer, alarm clock) after you arrive in the UK.

Luggage

Make sure you label all your items of luggage. It is also a good idea to include a note of your name, flight number and destination inside your luggage should labels be damaged in transit.

If travelling by air, please note UK airlines are strictly enforcing hand baggage policies so check in advance with your airline the weight and maximum dimensions allowed.

MONEY MATTERS

Money

The currency in Scotland (UK) is the Pound Sterling (£).

In the UK, people usually pay large sums of money by debit/credit card. It is not recommended to carry a large amount of cash with you. We advise that you open a bank account shortly after you arrive in the UK. For information about opening a Bank Account please check page 19 of this guide

Cost of living

All international students must ensure that they have adequate resources to finance their studies before coming to the UK. For information on how to manage your budget at the University and to have a look at a Basic Student Budget, please check our website www.hw.ac.uk/support/your-money.htm

International students should be prepared to budget for higher expenditure than UK students for telephone and international travel for instance. Depending on circumstances, some may also be required to pay for visa extension or Police Registration (more information available page 19)

HEALTH AND INSURANCE

Pre-existing Medical Conditions and Vaccinations

Students from some countries, who are applying for UK visas valid for longer than six months, now require a certificate to show that they are free from infectious pulmonary tuberculosis (TB).

To check if you need to provide a TB certificate with your visa application, please visit: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/policyandlaw/guidance/ecg/med/

If you are currently under treatment for a medical condition and are bringing medication to the UK, it is important that you get a letter from your doctor to confirm this, so you can present it to the Immigration Officer when entering the UK.

Most UK students will have been vaccinated against Meningitis C before they come to university. Although this is a rare infection it is very dangerous, and we would recommend that you receive the Meningitis C vaccination before coming to the UK. If you come to the UK without being vaccinated you should ask your GP to arrange this when you first register with them.

For more information please check the UKCISA website www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/keeping_healthy.php

Healthcare in the UK

The University has a Health Service on Campus. The Health Service web pages offer information about Healthcare in the UK for EEA and NON EEA students and their families: www.hw.ac.uk/health

More information about Healthcare in the UK is available page20 and on our website: www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/healthcare.htm

ACCOMMODATION

The University guarantees all new students a room on-campus in their first year as long as **you apply online by 22 August 2012 1700 hours BST**.

Please note, we do not have on-campus accommodations suitable for families or couples.

For more information about **on-campus accommodation** and how to apply, please go to: www.hw.ac.uk/apply4halls

The Student Support and Accommodation office also offers information on **accommodation in the private sector and on university leased flats**. For more information please check our "Flats for rent" leaflet available to download on our website www.hw.ac.uk/off-campus-accommodation

It is important that you arrange at least temporary accommodation before arriving in the UK.

Please note very limited temporary on-campus accommodations may be available. For further information please contact: accommodation@hw.ac.uk

More information about accommodation is also available on our website www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/accommodation.htm or contact us halls@hw.ac.uk

ARRIVING IN THE UK

Most students will arrive in the UK by plane, although some will arrive from Europe by ferry or through the Channel Tunnel. For further information on what to expect when you arrive in the UK and how to travel around, please check the UKCISA website: www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/arriving_in_uk.php

At the Airport

At the airport you will have to go through immigration (different queue for EEA nationals and NON EEA nationals) and then customs.

Please note travellers from outside the EU who are travelling to the UK with €10,000 (£9,000) or more (in cash, bankers draft or cheques) will have to declare this at customs (red exit).

For more information on entry and customs rules, please check the UKBA website: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/customs-travel

HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE

The ISAO organises a free shuttle bus service from Edinburgh Airport to the Edinburgh Campus at the start of Fresher's Week. The Shuttle bus will run at the following times: **Saturday 1st and Sunday 2nd of September 2012 - every hour on the hour from 09.00hrs to 22.00hrs.**

When you arrive at Edinburgh Airport look out for the 'Universities and Colleges Scotland' welcome stand at UK arrivals. The student helpers will be able to direct you to the pick-up point for the free shuttle bus – you do not need to pre-book a place for this service.

If you are arriving at Edinburgh Airport on any other day, the easiest way to get to the Edinburgh Campus is by taxi – please visit the ISAO website at www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/ for more information



TRAVELLING TO EDINBURGH

Before booking any travel to the UK, you should check when you need to arrive at the University. For students staying on-campus, accommodation contracts start on 1 September 2012 and Freshers Week and orientation events also start that day so we advise you to arrive as soon as possible on or after 1 September. Although most courses for the 2012/13 academic year will start on 10 September 2012, pre-registration meetings take place in the week commencing 3 September 2012; dates are contained in your **Welcome Pack**.

For information on how to travel to the Edinburgh campus and around, please check our website www.hw.ac.uk/edinburgh-campus

LIFE AT HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY

You'll find a really friendly, welcoming community at Heriot-Watt. It's easy to get to know people and it's very convenient: all our amenities are within easy reach on our Edinburgh Campus. You'll also find you're well supported here. We have a range of services to help you make the best of your time at university and advice and support if you encounter any problems. Our new website dedicated to prospective students will give you a great overview of life at Heriot-Watt University www.hw.ac.uk/newstudent

WELCOME AND SOCIAL EVENTS

What is Freshers' Week?

Freshers' Week is the week before the first week of the academic year at university. During that week, academic and social events are held to orientate and welcome new students (known as Freshers). In addition to completing your student enrolment requirements, Freshers' Week is an excellent opportunity to get used to living in a new country, meet people and become familiar with Edinburgh before starting your studies.

International Student Orientation and Social Events

There are a number of welcome events specifically for international students, and these take place across the University during Freshers' Week and into the start of the first session.

The International Student Advisors' Office (ISAO) organises orientation and information events specifically designed for international students.

For more information and to look at the programme, please check www.hw.ac.uk/newstudents

University facilities and services

Sport

The Centre for Sport and Exercise (CSE) at the Edinburgh Campus is recognised as one of the best university sports centres in the UK. Facilities include sports halls, playing pitches, squash courts, gyms, fitness classes, physiotherapy, podiatry, sports massage, and sports science testing services. As a student, you'll be able to access all these facilities for less than 20p per day!

Heriot-Watt University's Sports Union is a student-led organisation that offers our students the perfect opportunity to join a club, receive coaching and compete in your chosen sport at higher education level.

Sports clubs are run by students, for students and are an excellent way to get involved in something active at university. The Union regularly competes at national and international levels in a range of sports, including aikido, archery, fencing, mountaineering, sailing and volleyball.

Student societies

University is the time to find a hobby: with flexible working hours, some say you won't find another chance like it. Societies are a great way to meet new people and make friends with other students from around the world.

The Heriot-Watt University Students' Union (www.hwunion.com/) is very active and plays a key role in bringing students together through a wide range of student-run clubs, societies and events. From the Computer Games Society to the Dance Club, we're sure you'll find something that interests you!

With about one third of our students from countries outside the UK, we have a real international flavour to our community.

African, Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Iranian, Libyan, Malaysian, Polish, Saudi and Singaporean groups help support students from those countries, while the Muslim students' group offers support to all Muslim students in the University community.

Chaplaincy

The on-campus Chaplaincy Centre is not just for people who are religious; it is open to everyone. You can, for instance:

- » relax in the lounge over coffee or tea, microwave your lunch
- » play a game of snooker, table-tennis, darts or table football
- » watch the TV or DVD/Video
- » use wi-fi
- » practise the piano or your own musical instrument
- » enjoy the patio area and barbecue facilities
- » use the lounge/dining room/kitchen

Attend services in the Chapel

- » come to the FREE Wednesday meal at 6.00 pm - students cooking for students during semester.
- » Separate prayer rooms are provided for Muslim worship.

LIFE IN THE UK

Once in the UK you may experience different practice and customs, particularly with respect to day to day life. The ISAO will be happy to help you if you have any questions. We also have a lot of useful information on our website regarding life in the UK, from how to open a bank account to how to deal with culture shock. You will find it all here www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao

Immigration

Entry Clearance Correction Scheme

If you are coming to the UK for a course of study of 6 months or more, but less than 12 months, you should obtain leave to enter for the full length of the degree course for which you have been accepted plus 2 months after the end of your course.

If you are coming to the UK for a course of study of 12 months or more, you should obtain leave to enter for the full length of the degree course for which you have been accepted plus four months after the end of your course, as this is the current guidance which British Embassies and High Commissions should follow.

If this total visa length is not granted it may be possible to have this corrected by the International Student Advisors' Office after you arrive in the UK through the Entry Clearance Correction Scheme (ECCS). For further information about the Entry Clearance Correction Scheme, please check our website at www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/ecc

Visa Extension

If you need to extend your leave to enter/remain under a Tier 4 visa once in the UK, you can check our website for information and assistance on how to complete a PBS Tier 4 visa extension form.

The International Student Advisors' Office can also provide you with a copy of the visa extension application form and if you need further assistance, our International Student Advisors will be happy to help you by checking your application and supporting documents.

For further information about visa extension and immigration, please check our website at www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/immigration.htm

Police Registration

If your student visa has the condition "Register with the Police within 7 days" then you will need to apply for a Police Registration Certificate soon after you arrive in the UK. Check the ISAO website for information on on-campus police registration.

Further information and a leaflet (leaflet also available in Chinese and Arabic) on Police Registration are available at the International Student Advisors' Office (ISAO) and on our website:

www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/police-registration.htm

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

Before leaving home it is a good idea to check whether your existing bank either has branches in the UK, or has reciprocal arrangements with a UK Bank which would allow you to continue using their banking services when you arrive in the UK.

For the longer term, most students will find opening a UK bank account is the most efficient way to manage their finances.

Further information and a leaflet (leaflet also available in Chinese and Arabic) on how to open a bank account in the UK are available at the International Student Advisors' Office (ISAO) and on our website: www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/banking.htm The same page also contains links to information on budgeting your finances as an international student in the UK.

HEALTHCARE

Registering with a GP (General Practitioner)

In the UK you need to register with a GP (local doctor) every time you move to a new area. Once you have found your accommodation you should look for GPs in your area and register with one of them. You shouldn't wait to be ill or require treatment to register.

Students living within the City of Edinburgh boundary can register with the **University Health Service** on campus www.hw.ac.uk/health or with a local GP.

Please note students and their families should register with the same GP in the area where they are living.

For more information about Healthcare for international students (GP registration, dentists, health insurance, Accident & Emergency etc), please check our website: www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/healthcare.htm

In the UK the Emergency Services for ambulance, fire and police services can be contacted by dialling 999.

WORKING IN THE UK

EEA and Swiss Nationals

All EEA and Swiss national students can work in the UK.

However, if you are a national of Bulgaria or Romania, you might be subject to the **Worker Authorisation Scheme**.

For more information please visit our website: www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/work

Non EEA Nationals

If you enter the UK with a Tier 4 student visa then this will feature either a Prohibition or Restriction condition relating to employment. If you are prohibited from taking employment your visa will clearly state that you are not allowed to work, or engage in any business or profession.

Tier 4 student visa holders can work up to 20 hours per week during term time, and full time during vacations if they are studying at degree level or above, or studying a foundation degree (course that leads to a qualification at level 8 of the SCQF).

Students studying any other course will only be able to work up to 10 hours per week during term time, and full time during vacations.

Please note that term time covers all periods of your course when you are doing academic work, and includes for example preparing for examinations, time spent producing MSc projects, dissertations and writing up thesis.

For more information about employment restrictions for Tier 4 visa holders and their dependants please visit our website: www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao/work

Students are also encouraged to refer to the **University Careers Advisory Service** website at www.hw.ac.uk/careers for comprehensive guidance on employment during and after studies and for access to job vacancies.

PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

Important things to do and check before leaving your home country:

Heriot-Watt Documents and Information

- Make sure you have accepted your course study place
- If staying in University halls, accept your contract online and pay your reservation fee
- If arriving at Edinburgh Airport, check whether you will arrive on a day when the free campus shuttle bus is running
- Check the International Student Orientation Programme online at www.hw.ac.uk/newstudents

Travel Documents and Immigration

- Carry the University's letter confirming your acceptance of your unconditional offer (CAS letter if you are required to have a visa)
- Check that your passport is valid
- If you are a non-EU national, contact your local British Embassy or High Commission to check immigration control rules and to obtain a student visa www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/countries

Healthcare

- Obtain a record of your medical history so that you can pass this to your doctor in the UK when you register with a practice or health centre
- Obtain a Tuberculosis Certificate if this is a requirement of your country of residence (more info available page 10)
- Check whether you need any additional vaccinations or vaccination certificates for travel to the UK
- If you need to bring any prescription medication to the UK, make sure you have a letter from your doctor detailing the medication and the medical condition for which you are being treated.

Money

- Bring some cash - £300-500 sterling should be sufficient
- Either pay your tuition fees online (www.hw.ac.uk/payment) or have a sterling bank draft raised made payable to Heriot-Watt University
- If you receive financial sponsorship, remember to bring the letter from your government or employer confirming your sponsorship arrangements.

General

- Arrange travel insurance to cover both you and your possessions in transit
- Include a piece of paper inside your luggage with your name, flight number, and destination in case your luggage label is damaged or lost in transit,
- If you are planning to arrange long-term accommodation after you first arrive, make sure you book temporary accommodation for your first few days well in advance
- If you are planning on driving in the UK, make sure you bring your driving licence and check that it is valid www.dft.gov.uk/dvla
- Keep separate photocopies of your documentation just in case you lose any items in transit
- Bring some light waterproof clothing.

Contact Us

Heriot-Watt University
ISAO, Student Support and Accommodation
Hugh Nisbet Building
@ isao@hw.ac.uk
www.hw.ac.uk/support/isao

Follow the ISAO team on Twitter



@HeriotWatt_ISAO



This booklet is produced on Revive 50:50 Silk produced at a mill that is certified with the ISO 14001 environmental management standard and is a FSC Mixed Sources grade – product group from recycled wood or fibre, well managed forests and other controlled sources.

www.hw.ac.uk

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