

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDANCE

Your Step-by-Step Guide to Thriving at Manchester

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Welcome to Manchester!

Hello and welcome! We are so excited for you to begin your journey at the University of Manchester. We know that moving to a new country is a huge step, filled with excitement and a lot of questions. This guide is designed to be your central starting point – your roadmap from preparing to leave home to successfully navigating your academic and social life here in the UK.

We've broken down the process into three key stages. Each section provides a summary of what you need to know and then links out to more detailed resources. Let's get started!

Phase 1: The "Getting Ready" Phase (Pre-Arrival)

This is all about preparing for your move. Getting these steps right will ensure a smooth arrival.

1. Your Immigration Journey: Visa & ATAS

This is your most important first step. You cannot travel to the UK without the correct immigration permission.

- **Student Visa:** Nearly all international students need a Student Visa. The process involves getting a **CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies)** from the university, proving your finances, and attending a biometrics appointment.
- **ATAS Certificate:** If you are studying a postgraduate course in certain science or technology fields, you may also need an ATAS certificate, which is a separate security clearance. Your offer letter will tell you if this is required.

➡ **Action Step:** For a complete walkthrough of the entire process, please see our detailed [UK Student Visa and ATAS Guidance Presentation](#).

2. Planning Your Budget

Understanding how to manage your money in the UK is key to a stress-free experience. The first month is often the most expensive as you buy essentials for your new home.

- **Mindset:** Start thinking in Pounds (£) and don't stress overspending slightly in your first month – it's a one-time investment.
- **Savings:** Learning to cook at home and knowing where to shop for deals will be your financial superpowers.

➡ **Action Step:** Get all the best tips and tricks in our [UK Budgeting Hacks Presentation](#).

3. Packing for Your New Life

Knowing what to bring (and what to buy here) can save you a lot of money and suitcase space.

- **Essentials:** Bring important documents, any prescription medication, and adapters for your electronics.
- **Leave Behind:** You can buy most things affordably in the UK, like bedding (duvets), kitchen supplies, and winter coats.

➡ **Action Step:** Check out our [Ultimate International Student Packing List](#) for a detailed checklist.

Phase 2: The "First Few Weeks" Phase (Arrival & Settling In)

You've arrived! This phase is about setting up your new life and finding your feet.

1. Navigating UK Culture & Language

The UK has its own unique culture and slang. A little knowledge goes a long way in helping you feel comfortable.

- **Politeness:** Saying "please," "thank you," and "sorry" is very common.
- **Queuing:** Brits queue for everything! Always wait your turn in line.

➡ **Action Step:** To learn more about common phrases and social etiquette, see our [Guide to British Banter & Phrases](#).

2. Setting Up Your Essentials

- **Healthcare (NHS):** One of your first tasks should be to register with a local doctor, known as a **GP (General Practitioner)**. This is free and gives you access to the National Health Service. You can register at the University GP Service on campus.
 - **Find a GP:** <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/find-a-gp>
- **Banking:** Open a UK student bank account to manage your money easily and avoid international transfer fees.

Phase 3: The "Thriving at Uni" Phase (Academic & Social Life)

You're settled in. Now it's time to excel in your studies and build your community.

1. Adjusting to the UK Education System

Studying at a UK university might be different from what you're used to.

- **Independent Learning:** You are expected to do a lot of reading and research on your own outside of lectures. Your lecturers are your guides, but you drive your own learning.
- **Critical Thinking:** You will be expected to analyse and question what you read, not just memorise it. Your coursework feedback may mention the need to be more "critical", this means showing deeper analysis.
- **Academic Support:** The University offers fantastic resources to help you.
 - **My Learning Essentials:** Offers workshops and online guides on everything from academic writing to presentation skills. <https://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/training/my-learning-essentials/>
 - **Academic Success Programme:** Provides non-credit bearing courses to improve your academic English. <https://www.ucae.manchester.ac.uk/study/academic-success-programme/>

2. Challenges and Action Steps

2.1 Language and communication skills

2.1.1 General English skills

The library stocks a wide variety of materials in text, audio, CD-ROM and DVD formats, including more than 4,500 world cinema titles.

Website: <https://www.ucae.manchester.ac.uk/resources/library-services/>

Free audiobooks: <https://librivox.org/>

eBooks: Project Gutenberg is a library of over 70,000 free eBooks. Choose among free epub and Kindle eBooks, download them or read them online. <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

2.1.2 Academic writing and presentation

If you are interested in a non-credit bearing academic English course please visit Academic Success Programme.

Website: <https://www.ucae.manchester.ac.uk/study/academic-success-programme/>

This guide links to all writing support provided by the Library including workshops, interactive guides, and strategies to help you overcome challenges such as writers block. There is also information about organising one to one feedback on your writing with our Royal Literary Fellow.

Website: <https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/packages/writing/>

- I. **Writing scientific reports:** In this guide we explore how scientific reports differ from general report writing, including structure, conventions and other key elements.

<https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/report-writing-scientific/#/>

- II. **Writing essay:** Find out the purpose and process of writing an essay.

<https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/writing-essay/#/>

- III. **Referencing:** This resource explores the principles behind referencing, highlighting why it is good academic practice.

<https://education.library.manchester.ac.uk/sls/packages/referencing/>

- IV. **Presentation skills:**

<https://www.education.library.manchester.ac.uk/mle/packages/presentations/>

2.1.3 Email etiquette

As a university student, you need to check your email reasonably regularly during the working days. Having a good email etiquette will enhance your communication, promotes professionalism, and avoid misunderstanding. It is important to convey a sense of respect, consideration, and efficiency when sending emails.

Tips of writing emails:

- Start the email by greeting/addressing the person you're writing to.

For Formal emails, if you know the name and their title then you could use, for example, "Dear Dr. Smith" or "Dear Prof. Jones". If you don't know the name of the person, then use "Dear Sir/Madam".

For informal emails, you can use the greeting with the person's first name, e.g., "Dear Elizabeth", "Hello Elizabeth", or "Hi Elizabeth".

- Politeness is very important.

If you need to request something, it is polite to use the word "please". You could also form your request as a question, e.g., "Can I have...", or "May I have...".

Please avoid using a command, e.g., "Give me a ...", or "I want an ...".

- Use correct grammatical English in the email. Please avoid obscure acronyms and text speak.
- Email Sign-offs. For example, "Kind regards, [Your name]", "Best wishes, [Your name]", "Yours sincerely, [Your name]".
- Please remember that it is reasonable not to receive a reply from someone for up to 3 working days.
- Please keep your email simple and brief, and clearly identify any action required, by whom and by when.
- Ensure that your emails target the correct audience.

3. Building Your Social Life & Community

Your university experience is also about the friends you make and the community you build.

- **Making Friends:** From our workshops, students said the best way to connect is to be proactive. Join societies, talk to people on your course, and don't be afraid to say hello first!
- **Student Societies:** The best way to find people with similar interests. There are societies for everything – from sports and hobbies to academic subjects and nationalities.

- **Wellbeing Support:** University can be stressful. The University's Counselling & Mental Health Service is a free and confidential resource available to all students.

4. Do's and Don'ts in the UK

Do's

- Strive to maintain polite and friendly interactions, balancing directness with humour and humility, even in stressful situations.
- Be patient and respect established processes, such as queuing. Trying to rush or disrupt the order may be met with disapproval and could result in a longer wait.
- Be mindful of how direct you are and avoid introducing difficult topics too bluntly.
- Keep your emotions in check, as public outbursts or displays of strong emotion are rare in the UK.
- Recognize and respect where a person is from in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland), but avoid relying on stereotypes to make distinctions.

Don'ts

- Avoid boasting or making comments that suggest you see yourself as superior. Bragging is often viewed as artificial and obnoxious.
- Don't be overly critical in public settings. The British tend to minimize confrontation, so loudly complaining (e.g., to a waiter) may embarrass those around you.
- Refrain from asking personal questions at the start of a conversation, especially about relationships or finances. If someone is hesitant to share, it's best to change the topic rather than push for openness. Neutral topics like the weather or sports are safer choices.
- The British often tease in good fun, so try not to take their jokes too seriously or literally.

Your Support Network

Remember, you are not alone. The university has a dedicated support network to help you succeed.

- **Career Services :** <https://www.careers.manchester.ac.uk/>
- **Student Support & Advice:** For general queries, immigration advice, and wellbeing.
- **Students' Union:** For advice, societies, and representation.
- **My Learning Essentials:** For all your academic skills needs.

Contact

For any questions regarding this guidance, please contact:

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This guide has been co-created in partnership with a student collaborator, Sanket Vilas Chaskar, drawing on insights gathered from interviews with international students at the University of Manchester.