

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT GUIDEBOOK

BATH
SPA
UNIVERSITY

International



WELCOME to Bath Spa



Professor Sue Rigby
Vice-Chancellor, Bath Spa University

"I am delighted to extend a warm welcome to you as you embark on your educational journey at Bath Spa University. We are truly happy you are here and look forward to learning from the multitude of perspectives you bring with you.

Bath Spa is committed to providing a transformative learning experience, unlocking your potential to be confident, curious and creative professionals.

As you read the following pages and immerse yourself in our beautiful campus, you will have access to a wealth of resources to help you succeed. We are here to support you every step of the way.

I wish you success in your studies and in the adventure ahead and look forward to witnessing what you achieve."

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DOWNLOAD THE CAMPUS APP

The MyBathSpa App gives you access to University Services on your phone or computer. It brings together news, information and updates in one place.

You will need the app to check in to your classes and see your timetable!

Check out the international students tile for more resources for international students!

You can download the app from the App Store, Google Play, or access it on your computer at my.bathspa.ac.uk

KEY TEAMS

THE STUDENT INFORMATION TEAM AT THE STUDENT HUB

Bath Spa University's Student Information team is available at the Hub in Twiverton at Newton Park, to offer advice, and a range of support. Also based at the Hub are members of the IT Service Desk team, the Finance and Fees teams and staff from our Student Wellbeing Services team.

The Locksbrook campus also has a Student Hub located just off The Street.

The full list of support offered by the Student Information team can be found on the Student Hub [web page](#).

At certain times of the year, other teams such as the University's Accommodation, Careers, and the Immigration Advice teams will also be available.



Term time opening hours (summer hours vary):
9:00 - 16:30, Monday to Friday

MyServices tab on the MyBathSpa app

Call: +44 (0)1225 876115

IMMIGRATION ADVICE SERVICE (IAS)

The IAS sits within the wider Immigration Compliance and Advice team. They provide student-centred, high quality, impartial and free immigration advice and support to international applicants, students and graduates who are subject to immigration control.

An overview of services, and the areas of support and advice that we offered can be found [online](#).

Immigration Advice Service hours are typically Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm

Email immigrationadvice@bathspa.ac.uk or call **+44 (0)1225 875598** with your immigration queries and to request an appointment with an Immigration Advisor.

IMMIGRATION COMPLIANCE

The Immigration Compliance Team looks after the University's licence to sponsor international students. They ensure that the University fulfils its sponsorship duties and remains compliant with UKVI guidance. This includes assessing CAS requests from students to extend their visas, monitoring student engagement with their studies, and notifying UKVI of student changes of circumstances such as successful course completion to apply for the Graduate Route visa.

The Immigration Compliance team are contactable at: immigrationcompliance@bathspa.ac.uk

ENGLISH LANGUAGE UNIT (ELU)

If you are a pre-sessional student, arriving in Bath for English classes before the start of your degree, the ELU will be your primary point of contact: elu@bathspa.ac.uk

GO GLOBAL

If you are an exchange student from another country on a short-term programme, the Go Global team is your primary point of contact.

- Location: Main House G02 at Newton Park Campus
- Open: 10:00 -16:00, Monday-Friday
- Email: BSUexchange@bathspa.ac.uk

ACCOMMODATION AND TRANSPORTATION

ACCOMMODATION

As soon as you confirm your place at Bath Spa University, we strongly recommend you start looking for accommodation. The UK generally has a difficult housing market and securing accommodation may take longer than you think. If you are not able to secure accommodation from abroad, we strongly suggest you arrive in the UK a couple of weeks before the start of your course so that you can dedicate time to finding suitable accommodation.

If you are an undergraduate student in your first year you will be offered university accommodation. The accommodation team will contact you directly about this option if you are eligible. If you are an exchange student, or a student from one of our partner universities in China, you also may be eligible for university accommodation and will be contacted about this in due course.

Graduate students can expect to look for housing in the private sector. We have created an in-depth private sector guide to aid you in this search. Find it in the international student tile on the app or [here](#).

TRANSPORTATION

You also will want to consider how you will get to campus and get a good understanding of how and when you will be required to be on campus. International students have an attendance requirement as part of their visa.

Lacking transportation, or not being able to afford transportation, is not an excuse to miss class.

If you plan to live further away and take the train, plan carefully. Train tickets are more affordable when purchased in advance or on off-peak hours. You also may want to consider getting a ***rail card*** if you will travel frequently. Train fares from London can cost between £40-£80 round trip and Birmingham £70-150.

The ***National Express*** bus can also be an affordable option, though the bus takes longer and has fewer places of departure.

Trains and buses arrive in Bath City Centre. You will then take the U5 bus to Newton Park campus.

It is your choice and responsibility to choose where to live. We have found, however, that students who have difficult housing arrangements, tend to struggle more with their academic experience as well. Your accommodation is an integral part of your experience in the UK and we urge you to consider all aspects carefully and set yourself up for success.



BEFORE YOUR ARRIVAL

Before you arrive, you will be sent a 'joining instructions' email and a link to our [Welcome Pages](#).

These pages outline what to expect during your arrival and your first weeks adjusting to the University. There is a lot of information, so please explore them thoroughly!

PRE-DEPARTURE WEBINARS

You should be notified about a pre-departure or in-country webinar for your region. This webinar will go over more details on the arrival process and what to expect when you are adjusting to the UK. You will also be given instructions on what to do at the airport. You can also check out our [arrival pages](#) for the most updated information for the current semester.

In general, expect to do the following before your departure:

- Pay any remaining balance you owe (you will not be able to enrol without doing this)
- Complete your online registration and select a day to enrol in person
- Submit your student ID card information
- Attend a pre-arrival webinar
- Review the university welcome pages to familiarise yourself with the university and what to expect.

If you have any questions about your arrival email international@bathspa.ac.uk and we will be happy to assist you.

WHAT TO EXPECT AT WELCOME AND ENROLMENT

BIOMETRIC RESIDENCE CARD (BRP) COLLECTION

If you used the Home Office's UKVI immigration ID check app during your online visa application, you may not need to collect a BRP. Your full visa is issued as an online digital status. You will be asked to provide a Share Code at in-person enrolment. You can generate and view your code via the 'View and prove your immigration status' on the Home Office website:

www.gov.uk/view-prove-immigration-status

If you did not use the Home Office's UKVI immigration ID check app during your online visa application you must collect your BRP upon your arrival in the UK. The BRP is evidence of your legal status in the UK and should be issued for the duration of your course plus a built-in "wrap up period." However, please be aware that BRPs are being phased out at the end of 2024, so if your visa expiry date is after this (i.e. 2025 or later) then you will only be issued a BRP card running up to 31/12/2024. UKVI will update you in early 2024 as to how you will be able to prove your immigration status after this date. The official expiry date of your visa should be listed on the decision letter you were given when you were informed that your application was successful.

Collection of your BRP:

- The letter that accompanies your vignette will specify where to collect your BRP. If you entered Bath Spa University's ACL code when making your application you can pick up your BRP on campus.
- **BRP Collection sessions**, along with details of documentation needed for collection, can be found on our website.
- If you did not enter Bath Spa as your collection point you must take your passport and collection letter with you to the location indicated on the letter. You must collect your BRP within 10 days of arriving in the UK or the end date on your vignette, whichever is later.
- If you have questions about your BRP, or you think there is a mistake, you can view our [self-help page](#) or contact immigrationadvice@bathspa.ac.uk

REGISTRATION

All students need to complete an online registration form and as an international student you will also need to attend an in-person enrolment session to verify your documents. Visit our registration and enrolment page to complete the registration form and sign up for an enrolment session. You will also be sent an email with this information 2-3 weeks before you need to arrive



WELCOME WEEK

In addition to the in-person enrolment session, expect to spend two to three days on campus in the week leading up to class. During this time you will be given additional information on the University, how to get involved, how to get support, meet new people, and get an overview of your course. **Attending this week is critical for your social and academic success!**

SETTLING IN

For many of you, this may be your first time living away from home or first time outside your home country. Know that you are not alone and whatever challenges you encounter, we are here to help! If you ever have a question you cannot find the answer to, the Student Hub in Twiverton or the international@bathspa.ac.uk is a great place to start - full contact details on page 1.

CULTURE SHOCK

It is difficult to adjust to a new country and culture. It is normal to feel frustrated, anxious, lonely, and sad while you adjust. You also may experience physical symptoms such as tiredness or sickness. There are lots of good resources online to help you with your adjustment including advice from [UKCISA](#).

If you ever feel like you cannot cope, please reach out to a staff member at the university and we will get you help.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES:

The [British Council](#) provides information and advice on living in the UK and accessing support while you study.

The [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#) also offers lots of advice on studying and living in the UK.



STUDENT STATUS LETTERS

After you arrive and have fully enrolled, you may need a student status letter to provide confirmation of your enrolment at Bath Spa University. Student Status letters are used for a number of reasons including bank accounts, council tax exemption and academic verification. You can request a Student Status letter on the MyBathSpa App or in [My Services](#).

BANK ACCOUNTS

There are various banking services in the UK and it is up to you to determine which type of bank is best for you. Please note, some banks will not let you open a bank account if your visa duration is less than one year. Typical documents required to open a bank account:

1. Passport and valid visa
2. BRP card (if applicable) or National ID
3. Student status letter - you can obtain this from the student hub after you complete enrolment!
4. Proof of address in the UK
5. Your student ID card

HIGH STREET BANKS

The main high street banks in the UK are Barclays, HSBC, Halifax, Lloyds, Metro Bank, NatWest and Santander. All banks will normally offer you a basic account to begin with and may offer you further services after you have banked with them for some time. The basic account will allow you to withdraw cash for free from most cash machines, set up a direct debit payment, and use online and telephone banking.

DIGITAL BANKS

Digital banks are usually more flexible with how you open an account and there has been a rise in mobile-only banking in the UK recently. It is important to note that there is no in-person or telephone banking with these banks, and it is purely app-based. Some of the main digital-only banks include Monzo, Monese, Revolut, Starling, Atom Bank and Wise.

It is important to read the terms and conditions with any account as some banks put limits on how much cash, or how many transactions are allowed before a charge is incurred.

Whichever bank you choose, please ensure it is regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and protected by the Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS).

HEALTHCARE, AND REGISTERING WITH A GP

If you are on a student visa, you will have paid the NHS surcharge and can access all NHS services. Your healthcare, including mental health and sexual health, is completely confidential. Your records will not be shared with anyone unless you give permission.

As you are in a new country, you will be exposed to stress and new illnesses and at some point, you may need a doctor. You should register with a GP (General Practitioner) as soon as you can so that when you need service, you can access it. [UKCISA](#) also provides a good overview on UK healthcare and how the system works.

UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SERVICE

Bath Spa has a University Medical Service. If you live in Bath, you can register for this in person in the Sophia building or [online](#).

If you do not live in Bath, you can register with a GP close to your home. Most have information on how to register with them available on their website. Sometimes the process can take a couple of weeks to complete, so again, we urge you to do this early. If you need further help the NHS has guidance on their [website](#).

After paying the NHS surcharge, all appointments and treatment is free, including urgent and emergency services.

If you are on another visa status that does not need to pay the NHS surcharge, such as an exchange student on a visitor visa, you may need to pay for these services.

DENTISTS

Depending on where you live, you may or may not be able to **find an NHS dentist** as many NHS dental surgeries do not have capacity to take on new patients at this time. If you cannot find an NHS dentist, you should be able to find private care. There may be a waiting list to join the surgery, so again, we suggest you do this as early as possible.

If you do not register with a dentist and have a dental emergency call 111 and ask for assistance. More information on '**what to do with a dental emergency**' is available on the NHS website.

Please note that dental care and prescriptions are not free in the UK (with the exception of dependent children). Most prescriptions are less than £20 and dental costs will be listed on the dentist's website.

SAFETY

Bath is one of the safest cities in the UK! Still, in case of emergency it is best to be prepared. Student Wellbeing Services works closely with Security and our Accommodation team to enable the health, safety and wellbeing of students - this includes out of hours. There are many ways you can get support and you can find each of these on our **website**:

NEED HELP?

CAMPUS EMERGENCY NUMBER If you are on campus and need urgent help, please call security on +44 (0)1225 875555.

CALL 111 for medical advice that is not life threatening. This is free and is a service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also visit 111.nhs.uk

CALL 999 if someone is seriously injured or in distress.



BEWARE OF SCAMS!

Even if Bath is one of the safest places to live, the UK has seen a rise in sophisticated, digital scams, particularly targeting international students. It is important to be aware of how to keep yourself, and your money, safe.

Scams usually start with attempts to obtain your personal information or persuading you to pay money for items or service. The University and UK banks will never ask for you to give bank details, your login or passwords – especially over the phone or email.

The Home Office publishes guidance on '**Fraud, tricks and scams**' with which we strongly encourage you to familiarise yourself.

If you are concerned that you are being targeted by a scam and wish to check with a member for staff, please contact immigrationadvice@bathspa.ac.uk

WORK DURING YOUR COURSE OR DURING VACATIONS

Work rights are a condition of your immigration permission so it is important that you are clear about what you may and may not do.

The Home Office [caseworker guidance](#) is useful for in-depth guidance on working conditions.

Important note: If you breach these conditions, it means that you are working illegally, and your Student sponsorship must be withdrawn.

Your student visa will indicate how long you are permitted to work each week (Monday-Sunday) during term time. For most students, the work allowance is 20 hours per week during term time with the ability to work full time outside of term time. You will also be able to work full time after your course end date on your CAS during your 'wrap up period'.

Please refer to our [term dates web page](#) for specific dates.

- You can only be employed on a temporary basis and cannot be employed on a permanent contract.
- Cannot be self-employed or set up your own business
- Cannot be employed as a professional sports person or entertainer

RIGHT TO WORK CHECKS

Your employer will also be required to submit a Right to Work check to confirm it is legal to employ you. You will need to obtain a share code for your employer:

We recommend that you read the [UKCISA Blog 'A working definition'](#), a blog for students which looks at some of the most common questions and conundrums about working with Student Immigration permission.

PLACEMENTS

You are also permitted to take up any work placements that form an **assessed part of your course**, providing the work placement does not amount to more than 50% of the course. You must give the Placements Team placements@bathspa.ac.uk details of your placement before it starts. If you did not originally apply for a course with a placement element but are considering having one added, please contact immigrationadvice@bathspa.ac.uk for guidance before officially requesting a change of course.

Work placements can be paid or unpaid and can be full time, even in term time. The work endorsement in your passport or on your BRP card will not state this, but the Home Office guidance for employers explains it.

You can work your permitted hours in addition to the hours you work on your placement.

TRAVEL OUTSIDE THE UK

You may want to travel outside the UK during vacations. It is your responsibility to check the entry requirements of the country you are visiting. In addition, to be admitted back into the UK after your visit abroad you must have proof of your immigration status (for example, your valid BRP card).

You may not travel during term time without permission from the University. You must be given permission from both your course leader and the Visa Compliance Team before making any arrangements to leave the UK in term time.

Please note, this permission will be granted only for exceptional circumstances or emergencies or if you need to leave the UK for a field trip as part of your course or research.

SCHENGEN VISA

If you would like to travel around Europe, the [Schengen visa](#) will grant you entry to most countries. The Schengen Area is the area including 26 European countries that have abolished passport and border control at their mutual borders, thus travel is simple once you have obtained the Schengen visa. Please note: The Republic of Ireland is NOT included in the Schengen Area.



ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

UK ACADEMIC CULTURE

Email is the official means of communication from the University. It is your responsibility to check your email daily, as well as Ultra, the university's virtual learning platform

Read the newsletters you receive as they often contain important information!

ATTENDANCE

Attendance in class is a mandatory requirement of your Student visa. All students will use the *MyBathSpa* app to check-in to your classes.

Your attendance is regularly monitored by the Visa Compliance Team and you will receive warning emails when you miss too many classes. Your visa will be cancelled if you have excessive absences without good reason.

It is our duty to the Home Office to report attendance and engagement. If you are struggling to engage with your studies, you can contact the [Student Engagement Team](#) for advice and assistance.

ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Current international students say that the academic culture of the UK was one of the most difficult aspects to adjust to. There are a lot of resources available online discussing UK academic culture, particularly [Skills for Study tool kit](#), [Prepare for Success](#) and [UKCISA resources](#)

Generally you can expect a mix of

- Written assignments
- Exams
- Group work
- Assessments
- Dissertation

The UK emphasises independent learning and critical analysis which can be quite different to your previous education.

We strongly encourage you to go to your course's welcome session during welcome week to get a better understanding of your specific course expectations.

Luckily, Bath Spa has many resources to help you with your academic journey. Check out the [Welcome Pages](#) on the websites for more information!

The [English Language Unit](#) offers one-to-one support or group workshops for English language support.

The [Library](#) has a vast number of resources to help you with your academic journey, including help with [referencing](#) and research.

The new [Academic Skills](#) team (ASk) also offers workshops on academic writing, critical thinking, presentations, and various digital literacy skills. They can also help you with assignments in individual appointments.

All of these services offer one-to-one appointments, but you will need to book early, as spaces are limited during busy periods.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

Bath Spa uses the term Academic misconduct to refer to any unfair academic practices. Honesty and integrity is expected at all times, including when it comes to acknowledging the work of others (referencing). The concept of plagiarism and other academic misconduct can be confusing for international students, and to avoid a violation, we strongly encourage you to use the academic resources outlined above.

Academic integrity is a serious offence. More information can be found on the [University website](#) about what is considered academic misconduct.

If you are accused and are confused by the process, we encourage you to reach out for help. The [Students' Union](#) offers an advice service that can explain the process and help you respond to the accusation.

If you are here on a student visa then your permission to remain in the UK depends on your continued engagement with your programme. If you leave your course of study early for any reason (including academic failure or misconduct, suspension or withdrawal) then your student visa will be cancelled, and you will need to leave the UK within 60 days of sponsorship being withdrawn.

THE STUDENTS' UNION

The Students' Union (SU) is an independent organisation from the University that is located on the Newton Park campus. Their role is to represent Bath Spa's student interests and advocate for change when needed. In doing so, they offer a variety of advice and support. They also facilitate activities, clubs and societies and other opportunities for students to get involved. There is also a bar, gym, and food shop within the Students' Union itself.

The SU is a great resource to go to for help if you want independent advice on university processes or even housing help. They also can help you set up a cultural society or plan a cultural event. Check out their [website](#) for more information!

GRADUATION AND BEYOND

GRADUATE ROUTE

After successfully completing your studies, you may be interested in applying for a [Graduate visa](#).

This is a post-study work visa that allows you to stay in the UK for two years (three years for PhD students) after successfully completing your course of study to work or seek employment. To qualify for this visa, you must successfully complete your course: you cannot apply for a Graduate visa if you fail your course, voluntarily withdraw, or finish with a lower award.

Having to re-sit modules can also affect your eligibility for a Graduate visa, as it may mean that you cannot successfully complete your course before your current visa expires.

Bath Spa University will inform you by e-mail after your course has finished if you are eligible to apply for a Graduate visa. You must not apply before receiving this e-mail. If you need further guidance, please contact immigrationadvice@bathspa.ac.uk

SKILLED WORKER VISA

If you have been offered a job after completing your studies, you may be eligible to apply for a [Skilled Worker](#) visa.

To be eligible for this, you need to have an offer for a specific job with a licenced employer. The job must also be at the appropriate skill level and salary.

You can only switch to a Skilled Worker visa from within the UK if you have successfully completed your studies, or after 24 months of your course if it is at PhD level.

For specific advice about whether a job you have been offered is eligible to be sponsored under the Skilled Worker route, please speak to your prospective employer.

OTHER POST-STUDY WORK VISAS

There are several [other visa types](#) that permit work that you may possibly be able to apply for after your studies.

STUDENT CIRCUS

As a Bath Spa Student you have access to Student Circus to help you prepare for and find jobs in the UK, back home and many other countries!

FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS

Like any new experience, things may not always go exactly as planned or expected. We encourage you to embrace minor bumps in the road with humour and patience and view them as part of the learning process. However, if you feel strongly about a particular experience you encountered at the university, you have a right to offer feedback or formally complain.

[Unitu](#) is our online student feedback platform. Any student can offer anonymous feedback or ideas on this platform and a representative from the University or Students' Union will respond.

You may also choose to submit a formal complaint relating to a specific issue around the delivery of teaching or another service provided by the university. A complaint is a grievance relating to a specific issue regarding the delivery of teaching or other services provided by the University. The complaints section of the [website](#) has more information on the process.

International students may be hesitant to submit feedback or complaints for a variety of reasons. While we certainly hope that your experience is positive, if there is information that you wish to share, it is okay to do so. It will not affect your student visa.

RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND RESTRICTIONS

YOUR RIGHTS ON A STUDENT VISA

- You have a right to part-time work
- You have a right to use the National Health Service (NHS)
- You have a right to send your children (if you have dependants) to school in the UK
- You have a right to be exempt from **council tax**, like other students. Scan for info:
- You have a right to complain, appeal, and give feedback on your experience
- You have specific educational rights (check out the [SU website](#) for more info).

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ON A STUDENT VISA

- You must collect your BRP card (if applicable) within 10 days of arrival in the UK or by the expiry date of your vignette (whichever is later)
- You must ensure the dates on your immigration documents are accurate and report any mistakes.
- You must attend your classes.
- You must keep your address updated with the university
- You must speak with immigration advice about any change in circumstances that may affect your visa (for example, extending your course, withdrawing from studying, or a work placement).
- You must speak with immigration advice about travel outside the UK during term time.
- You must check your email to keep up to date with university information or immigration and compliance updates.
- You must submit all assessments and exams and any other requirements of your course.
- You must re-enrol on time for your course each year



YOU MUST NOTIFY THE HOME OFFICE IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CHANGE:

- Address
- Name
- Nationality (change of citizenship)
- Date of birth
- Gender
- New passport
- Criminal conviction
- Changes to dependants

YOUR RESTRICTIONS ON A STUDENT VISA

- You are restricted in how much you can work.
- You cannot apply for public funds.
 - » *Public funds are certain specific welfare benefits, such as certain housing, childcare benefits, or disability allowance. For information on what is a public fund in the UK, [check here](#). If you claim public funds it may impact your ability for staying in or visiting the UK in the future.*
- You cannot stay in the UK indefinitely. You must depart the UK before your student visa expires (unless you are in process for applying for another visa)

THE UNIVERSITY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As your sponsor, Bath Spa University is expected to ensure that we and our students are compliant with the immigration rules. If we fail to comply, we are at risk of losing our ability to recruit other international students. Thus, we take the following duties very seriously:

- We must have a copy of your current passport and current immigration documents
- We must Keep up-to-date contact details including address in the UK and telephone number
- We must monitor your engagement (attendance) with your studies.
- We must notify the Home Office if you do not arrive as expected
- We must notify the Home Office if there is a change in circumstances with your studies
- We must notify the Home Office if you are breaching the conditions of your student visa (including lack of attendance).

TOP TIPS AND TAKEAWAYS FROM THE EXPERTS (STUDENTS LIKE YOU!)

- Expect the culture to be different, lean into the experience and learn from it.
- Find accommodation early and consider all costs before signing any agreement.
- Use the University resources, there are a lot of them that are very useful in helping you adjust to your experience abroad.
- Get involved in your community or in campus clubs and societies. This will help you make friends and feel more at home.
- Ask for help if you need it! The university community is a very friendly place.



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#WeAre
International