



University of
Reading



International Student Guide

reading.ac.uk/welcome





Welcome from
**Professor Robert Van De Noort,
Vice-Chancellor and Dr Caroline Baylon,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, International**

Hello and welcome to the University of Reading, a truly international community. For almost 100 years, the University has been innovating, pioneering, pushing academic boundaries and leading social change. This would not have been possible without the contributions made by international students, such as yourself. With campuses in Africa, Asia and Europe, the University of Reading prides itself on bringing bright minds together from all corners of the globe.

WELCOME

Become part of an international community of more than **4,500 international students** from **over 160 countries**. We want to welcome you to our global university.



**Welcome from
Nayib Fux Heras – International Officer,
Reading Students' Union**

Hi! I'm a 3rd-year Ancient History student from Argentina and I'm the International Students' Officer at the Students' Union.

What is the Students' Union? It is an organisation which represents student concerns and advocates to the University on our behalf on issues concerning us, big and small. As your International Students' Officer, I make sure that our voice is heard both at the Students' Union and at the University. We make up a large proportion of the student body at Reading, and it's important that our concerns are heard too.

Meet the students



**Asaf Ali Altun,
PhD Researcher
in Psychology**

"The journey of a PhD researcher can sometimes feel overwhelming and isolating. By immersing myself in various student societies, participating in trips around the UK, and working within the Campus Jobs team in different roles, I have found a balance between academic rigour and a fulfilling social life. To all the fresh faces out there, embrace every opportunity to engage and explore – your journey here can be as rewarding and unique as you make it."



**Sanya Gupta,
Undergraduate BA
in Art and Psychology**

"As an international student, I can often feel quite homesick and lonely, but the International Advisory Team always has fun events going on for students. I recently went on a trip and it was amazing to meet students from my home country as well as other international students. It was a great bonding experience and I felt so much more at home."



**Naman Sharma,
MSc Investment
Management**

"Since embarking on my Master's journey at the University of Reading, each day has brought a whirlwind of excitement! Immersed in a vibrant blend of cultures, I've learned and grown while forging lifelong friendships. Exploring the UK, from the bustling streets of London and Manchester, to the countryside landscapes of Cornwall and Yorkshire, has been unforgettable. Fulfilling a childhood dream of watching Manchester United at Old Trafford was the icing on the cake!"



Audrey Leung,
Undergraduate LLB Law

"Studying at Reading has been an enriching journey. Each moment, be it late-night studying at the library or laughter with friends, has become unforgettable. It has become my home away from home, a place where I've built lifelong friendships. As I embark on my final year at Reading, I'm excited to create more memories."



Grace Oteh, MSc Environment,
Climate Change and Development

"One of my most exciting experiences was with the HOST UK program, where I was matched with a family in Scotland. Visiting during the Christmas season was a welcoming experience and a great opportunity to immerse myself in British culture and traditions while forming meaningful connections. Participating in the HOST UK program also contributed to my RED Award."

SETTLING INTO LIFE IN THE UK

Moving to another country to study is courageous. It might be hard at first, but you will soon feel more at home in the UK and we have lots of events to help you settle in.

Documentation

UK Visa changes

- Biometric Residence Permits (BRPs) are being phased out in late 2024
- Some students will get an e-Visa instead.

If you get a Biometric Residence Permit

- Keep it safe – you may need it to re-enter the UK
- Store it securely in your accommodation, with your passport.

ID in the UK

- No requirement to carry ID daily
- You may need for places serving alcohol
- You can get a cheap alternative form of ID called a **Citizen Card**.

Housing and living arrangements

Tips for student house-sharing

Living with other people is part of university life and sometimes it brings challenges. To help avoid issues:

- Agree on cleaning duties for shared areas, like the kitchen
- Decide how to handle shared essentials, such as toilet paper
- Clarify how bills are split between you, if they're not included in the rent
- Set rules for overnight guests
- Organise to pay for the TV licence if you need one.

Council tax

Households where everyone is a full-time student do not need to pay Council Tax. If you live in private accommodation with people who are not students, you may qualify for a discount. Check gov.uk/council-tax/discounts-for-full-time-students. Reading Students' Union Advice Service can also give you advice.

Get organised for next year

Find your second-year housing early with help from:

- The Reading Students' Union Find a Housemate group on Facebook
- **Spareroom**, a site to find room mates or rooms.

Choose housemates with similar habits (drinking, diet, noise-levels) and preferences (mixed-sex or not) to yourself.

Driving and cycling

If you drive or cycle in the UK, you must learn the UK's driving rules. www.think.gov.uk is a good place to start. Depending on where you have come from, you may be able to convert your driving license so you can drive in the UK. You can check this online at gov.uk/driving-nongb-licence.



Cultural adjustment

British culture may be quite different from what you are familiar with. It is impossible to summarise a culture into a few words but here are some handy tips on British culture:

- Drinking **alcohol** is quite a large part of British culture, especially at universities. However, not everyone likes to drink and there are lots of non-alcoholic activities to get involved with
- **British humour** can feel like a new language! It often involves sarcasm and friendly teasing (“banter”). If you’re not sure about a joke, ask and if something upsets you, it is important to mention this at the time or discuss it with a friend or staff member
- People in Britain are known for **being indirect** and so they may hint at issues rather than addressing them directly
- **Manners are important** in the UK. It is polite to say please and thank you and to apologise by saying sorry. Hold doors for others and make sure you respect queues (lines) – don’t try to push in or jump the queue

- The **LGBTQ+ community** is celebrated across the UK. You may notice staff with LGBTQ+ rainbow lanyards and people being open about their sexuality. In the UK, it is important to be open-minded and accepting of others
- Many places are now **cashless** and prefer card payment, especially in cities
- There are many **festivals and celebrations** throughout the year and Bank Holidays (public holidays) see many shops and services (including the University) close for a day. Try the **British Council website** for a calendar of the popular events during a year in the UK.

Weather in the UK

The weather here is very erratic meaning we need to be prepared for changes throughout the day. It is a good idea to check the weather forecast in the morning. You will need a waterproof rain jacket, an umbrella and a warm winter coat for the winter months.

Studying in the UK

Academic integrity Academic integrity is taken very seriously in UK Higher Education. Always give credit when using others’ ideas. Keep track of sources as you research.

For help with referencing, visit your Academic Liaison Librarians in the main Library on the Whiteknights campus and check the **Study Advice** section of the Library website. They also have a dedicated ‘**LibGuide**’ for international students.

The **Academic English Programme** (AEP) can help you develop your academic language and communication skills while you study. Offering an extensive and flexible programme of courses, webinars and one-to-one consultations, it is free to all fee-paying international students at the University.

English Conversation Cafés Would you like to practice your spoken English in a relaxed and friendly setting? Or would you just like to meet other students? Come along to the Global Study Lounge on Wednesdays from 13:00–14:00. You don’t need to book – just come along! Online conversation cafes are also available. For more information contact int.adv@reading.ac.uk.

SUPPORTING YOU TO SUCCEED



Hi, I'm Corinne. As the **International Student Experience Manager**

I'm here to support you to make the most of your time here at Reading. If you need help with anything, from homesickness and loneliness, getting used to UK culture, money worries or anything else, please get in touch or come and see me during my student appointment times.

Feel free to contact me at int.adv@reading.ac.uk and check the International Student Advisory Team page on Essentials.



Specialist support for international students

The **International Student Advisory Team** is dedicated to supporting international students and can help with visa and immigration queries, as well as any questions or concerns related to your experience at Reading.

Visa conditions and what they mean

It is very important you know your visa expiry date and that you understand its conditions. Please read the University's Institutional Home Office Compliance Policy and ask for help if you don't understand something.

The UK's Immigration Rules can be complicated and confusing, so the **International Student Advisory Team** is here to help. We are the only team on campus who can provide you with immigration and visa related advice and we have loads of guidance online. **Find the Visas and Immigration section under International Advice on Essentials.**

These are some of the most common visa-related areas queries we receive:

Your working rights – your visa decision letter/email will set out how many hours you are entitled to work during semester-time* and the kinds of work you are not permitted to do. The number of hours will vary depending on your level of study. You must not work more hours than permitted or undertake work that is not permitted.

Distance learning is not permitted as a Student visa holder. You must undertake all study-related activity from within the UK during semester-time. This includes working on all your assignments, dissertations and sitting all your exams, even if scheduled to be online, from within the UK.

Travel outside the UK outside of vacation periods is not permitted without prior authorisation from your School and unauthorised absences from your studies may affect your student visa sponsorship and graduate route eligibility. You should arrange any travel outside of the UK during University vacation periods. If there are emergency or exceptional reasons why you need to

be absent from your studies outside of vacation periods, you should contact your Support Centre/Henley School Office in the first instance.

The University's responsibilities

As your sponsor, the University has various duties and responsibilities set out by UK Visas & Immigration (UKVI). This includes notifying UKVI when there are changes in your circumstances, for example if you change course, suspend or withdraw from your studies.

Financial advice

Opening a bank account

You will need to open a UK bank account. It is a simple process:

1. Get a bank letter from your RISIS portal:
 - Go to 'Actions' > 'Self-Service Letters'
 - Choose your preferred bank
2. Open an account:
 - Some banks need a physical letter
 - Others let you use an app
3. For more help, **check the Essentials website 'Opening a bank account' section.**

Budgeting

The UK may be more expensive than you had first thought but we offer a range of services to help you manage your money:

1. **Student Financial Support Team:** Provides advice and assistance. Find them in Carrington building or the Student Services section of Essentials
2. **Blackbullion:** An online resource providing money management tips and resources, including 'Managing your money as an International Student'.

If you need help with your finances, please don't struggle alone. Get in touch for support.



*By 'semester-time' (the Home Office refers to this as 'term-time'), we mean the official semester periods when you are expected to be on campus engaging with your programme. For all students, this is semester 1 and semester 2.

Careers and working part-time

Working in the UK

You may want to work while you are here. Ensuring you understand your work conditions and how to prove your right to work are essential.

Make sure you:

- **Understand your work conditions and rights**
- **Know the limits to the number of hours you can work at different times of the year**
- **Have a National Insurance number – you need one to work here.**

During your studies, you can work on or off campus. To find jobs:

- On-campus: check **Campus Jobs on Essentials**



- Off-campus: Use sites like Indeed or LinkedIn
- Be aware of “zero-hour contracts” (flexible work agreements that don’t guarantee a set number of work hours per week for employees).

The University’s Careers team can help with job search and placement advice.

Volunteering

You can gain extra experience by volunteering and it can also contribute to the **RED Award** – a great way to showcase your non-academic achievements when looking for work opportunities. Just remember that hour restrictions may still apply depending on the type of volunteering.

Local organisation, **Reading Voluntary Action**, can help you find volunteering roles.

Religious and spiritual care

Reading Students’ Union has various **faith societies** – the details are available online in the ‘societies’ section of their website.

The Chaplaincy offer support to students, regardless of their religious beliefs. It is a welcoming, inclusive multi-faith space with a calendar of events, information about places of worship and

much more. You can find them on campus and online at reading.ac.uk/chaplaincy

Health & wellbeing

It is important to register with a General Practitioner (GP) after you collect your BRP. A GP is a doctor, based in a surgery, who you visit for preventative care, routine check-ups and to manage long-term or chronic health conditions.

You can find a doctor quickly and easily using **Find a GP on the NHS website**. The **University Medical Group** is close to campus and is experienced in students healthcare.

- If you paid the Immigration Healthcare Surcharge (IHS) or were exempt:
 - **Free:** GP visits, hospital treatment, care in the Accident & Emergency/ Emergency Department at hospital
 - **Not free:** Prescriptions, dental care, eye tests.
- If you didn’t pay IHS (and weren’t exempt):
 - You can still use services, but may have to pay later
 - Having health insurance may cover costs.

You can also ask for medical advice by calling 111 or visiting [111.nhs.uk](https://www.nhs.uk)

In a life-threatening emergency, call 999.

The nearest hospital and A&E Emergency Department is the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

For information on vaccines, please see the main Welcome Booklet.

Welfare

We know university can be challenging, and you may experience issues when you are here. You are not alone, and you don't have to get through it by yourself. **The Student Welfare team** are here to help you with any personal difficulties, including:

- Settling in and adjusting to university life
- Crisis support
- Difficulties with flat/housemates
- Family or relationship issues
- Coping with your studies and/or university life.

You can also access help with these issues from our **24/7 Student Support Helpline**. Providing support in over 240 languages and by phone, live chat and video calls, this confidential service is free for all University of Reading students.

To find out about the support available **visit the support and wellbeing section of Essentials**.

Keeping Safe and Fraud Awareness

Staying safe

The University Security team keep our campuses safe and secure and are available onsite 24/7. You can contact them in person or by phone (+44 (0)118 378 6300).

The University does not tolerate harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, hate crimes and other problematic behaviours. An online tool called **Report and Support** enables you to report any issues of this nature.

If you find yourself in a situation that poses an immediate risk to health, life or property, call 999, the number for the emergency services (ambulance, police, fire department).

If you experience something that makes you feel unsafe, uncomfortable or scared, but it's not an emergency, contact the police on 101 (by phone) or online: www.police.uk

Important: UK police never call or text you first. If they do, it might be a scam. Report it to the International Student Advisory Team.

Fraud

There has been a worldwide rise in the number of scams. Fraudsters are very clever and anyone can be a victim. Some of these scams target Chinese students in particular, however all students should remain vigilant. Think carefully before joining social media groups online, we recommend using only official university accounts.

If you get an odd call, text, or email, contact int.adv@reading.ac.uk

Visit the Money Matters section of Essentials to find more information about avoiding fraud and scams – it's in the **Advice section**.



EXPLORING NEAR AND FAR

Food and drink in Reading

Food plays a significant role in our experiences of a new country. It affects how you feel physically and emotionally.

Some students easily adapt to new food in the UK. Others find it hard. At first, new foods may seem strange, but you'll get used to them. It's good to have some comfort food to cope with occasional homesickness.

The International Student Experience Team's food blog has information about:

- Shopping
- Cooking
- Eating out in Reading
- Where to find international food
- Tips to save money.

Check it out at: rdg.ac/international-student-food-project

Entertainment in Reading

Reading offers lots to entertain you:

- Watch movies at the cinema
- Go shopping
- Walk by the River Thames.

Explore your new local area and community. See reading.ac.uk/essentials/Community to discover events, opportunities and places of interest

Places to visit in the UK

While you are here, try to get out and explore different areas. Reading has great connections to many interesting places to visit, including:

- London
- Windsor
- Oxford
- Bath
- Henley-on-Thames
- Brighton.

Nervous about exploring new places by yourself? Sign up to Host UK and stay with a host family. Your visit will be funded by the University, excluding your transport costs: www.hostuk.org

Trips

The International Student Advisory Team run a range of trips throughout the year. Visit our page to join the mailing list and be the first to hear about trips and events for international students.



FURTHER INFORMATION

University services

Support Centre

Support Centres (Henley School Office or equivalent) are the first place you should go for all questions, help or advice throughout your time at University. Visit reading.ac.uk/support-centres to find your Support Centre contact details and opening times

International Advisory Team

Email: int.adv@reading.ac.uk

Halls Hotline

24/7 support for any issues in Halls
0800 029 1984

Campus Security

Phone: 0118 378 6300
or 0118 378 7799

24/7 Student Helpline

Phone: 0800 023 2466

Report and Support

Website:
reportandsupport.reading.ac.uk

Disability Advisory Service

Website: [reading.ac.uk/essentials/
Support-And-Wellbeing/Disability](https://reading.ac.uk/essentials/Support-And-Wellbeing/Disability)

Reading Students' Union

Website: readingsu.co.uk/

External services

LinkedIn Group for asking questions and finding out information about UoR: [linkedin.com/groups/130816/](https://www.linkedin.com/groups/130816/)

UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)

Advice Line: 020 7788 9214
Website: ukcisa.org.uk/

Student storage facilities

One Stop Worldwide

Phone: 0330 333 8784

Transport for international students

International Students UK, specialise in the arrival and departure of international students, parents and staff travelling to any destination within the United Kingdom.

Phone: 0330 043 16 01

Email:
info@internationalstudentsuk.com

Socials

 [uniofreading_int](#)

 [uniofreading.int](#)