



Guide to Medical School in UK

Congratulations on making it into medical school! We are the committee of Hong Kong Medical Society of United Kingdom and we welcome you to the big family of future medics! For years to come, you will be spending a lot of time at the UK so we created a list of things to help you get started. As international students, we too moved to an entirely new environment while trying to adjust to the university life - hopefully our experience can be of use. It may seem daunting initially, but we assure you that you will be having fun in no time!

Banking

One of the first things to do is finding a bank and setting up a bank account! Aside from the money-related matters, they issue bank statements which provide a proof of address – you will come to find this helpful and important. While choosing a bank and account type, keep an eye out on overdrafts, charges and student discounts. There are plenty of bank outlets available on the high street, including HSBC, Halifax, Santander, NatWest, Barclays, Nationwide and Lloyds.

Unlike banking in HK, once you have a debit card, you are free to use it on any ATM machines you find. The only caveat is that you should make sure it says Free Withdrawal to make sure you don't get charged. Another thing to note is to watch out for card skimmers if you are using ATMs that are not inside bank branches.

GP registration

Despite studying to be healthcare professionals, we are not invincible. It is essential to register to a nearby General Practice. Unlike HK, private GP practices are less common and charge more, so be sure to make use of NHS while you're here. And also the only other option is A&E which generally have long waiting times so do plan ahead!

Proof of Addresses

These are needed for GP registration, renting houses, signing up for monthly contracts and much more. As many of you will be staying at university accommodation, the Student Centre should be able to provide a proof of address (full name, date, address) and tenancy references should you need them.



BRP

The Biometric Residence Permit is a ID card form of your visa, introduced in recent years and replaces the old-school visa vignette that you find in your passport. It will have all your personal information as well as your right to study/public resources in UK. Once you have received your university's confirmation and Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS), you should apply for your visa at least 2 months before your current visa ends, or as soon as you can. If there is any uncertainty, please do not delay contacting your university's student centre or the British Immigrations department.

This card is extremely important so try not to lose it! It is a lot of trouble and costly to replace. For those who enjoy nights out, you might also want to apply for a UK driver's licence as a form of ID, so that your HKID/passport/BRP can be kept safe at home.

Travelling

you enjoy travelling by bus, tube or train, getting around in London can be expensive. Luckily, students are eligible for the 16-25 railcard which provides a 33% discount on rail fares. Even if you only intend to use the tube, it is still useful; you can extend it to your Oyster card and get the same discount for off-peak journeys and the daily cap (beyond which journeys will be free). Applications can be made online or at a rail station - to extend the discount to your Oyster, just visit a tube station and fill out a form! There is also a 'Hopper Fare' for those with contactless/Oyster: you get a second bus/tram journey free within one hour of touching in for the first bus/tram ride. Citymapper is an excellent application for planning journeys around the city. You may also have seen commuters using Boris Bikes (red bicycles) around London and you can rent these at any of the bicycle stations for as little as £2.

Peak and Off-Peak hours for London public transport system (TFL) are as follows:

Peak fares on weekdays 06:30 – 09:30 and 16:00 - 19:00

Off-Peak at all other times as well as those travelling from non-Zone 1 station to Zone 1 between 16:00 - 19:00 on weekdays

Mobile

There are numerous networks available in the UK, and living in a populated city like London means you usually won't have to worry about losing signal. There are two options when it comes to joining a network: using Pay-as-you-go (PAYG) or signing up for a plan. For those who are unfamiliar, PAYG is when you pay/top-up credit on your SIM card to use it. PAYG is generally aimed at those who do not call/text/use internet much while those using plans can afford heavier use (though at a higher, recurring monthly cost).

The common networks include Three, O2, Vodafone, GiffGaff, BT, EE, Talk mobile and Tesco mobile. There are also networks that offer very cheap international calls like Lebara,



but do watch out for high local call and data rates. Given that most calls and messages can be made over the internet for free, hefty fees can be avoided by going for plans that offer lots of data. For those that intend to use PAYG, pay attention to how and when your credit expires as you might leave the SIM unused for extended periods of time over long breaks. And also look out for freebies that these networks offer, e.g. Three regularly gives free coffees and discounts via their Wuntu app.

Internet

Unlike MTR in Hong Kong, there is no signal when you travel by tube (applies to most areas of London except some Zone 5 or 6 journeys). If you use certain network or broadband providers, there is an option to connect to Virgin Media Wifi while at tube stations (not present at all stations). Those on 3 network or have a Virgin Media account for home broadband will be able to register and use free underground wifi. However, wifi is only available at stations and not in the tunnels between stations, which means you have less than a minute to connect while the train makes its stops.

Similarly, those with BT broadband at home will be able to use public wifi named BT Wifi with FON or BT Wifi X for free by simply logging into your BT account in pop-ups. Very useful when at temporary accommodations with poor wifi.

Computer Essential

For those who do not have Microsoft Office programs installed, most universities will be happy to provide you with a legitimate copy. If your default access to university email is via Office 365, there should be options to use an online version of most programs eg Word, Excel, Powerpoint, etc. They may include a free One Drive which is a cloud storage solution.

An alternative is to use Google Drive, also cloud storage, which provides free online equivalents to Word, Excel and Powerpoint and is very convenient when it comes to collaborative work with others. This comes with a free 15 GB storage when you set up a Google account (you already have one if you already use Gmail).

Student Discounts

If you shop at Waitrose, Tesco or Sainsbury's, be sure to sign up for their loyalty cards early on as they will give you coupons for free. Take full advantage of offers available from different banks. For example, Santander gives a free 4-year Railcard to students (conditions apply). NUS cards also offer discounts on Railcards, restaurants and apparel stores. NUS also offer international cards which can get you discounts across many countries. Additionally, signing up to UNIDAYS online provides students a massive selection of student discounts, both in-store and online. Every penny counts!

Shopping and Groceries

For those who loves shopping or just feel like being lazy, Amazon Prime is always an option. Amazon itself provides free delivery for most things, but they also offer student prime (one day delivery of some items at no extra cost) free of charge for the first 6 months and then membership at half price for up to 4 years. Prime also comes with Amazon Music and Video which is similar to Spotify and Netflix, however their selections are not always the best.

Not every town or city in UK will be as convenient as the life we live in Hong Kong and you may find your weekly grocery trips too much trouble. Sainsbury's and Tesco also provide delivery services if you shop online. And if you sign up for their loyalty cards, you will occasionally receive coupons for online shoppings. You might also consider trying Ocado, which is similar supermarket but only online. Hello Fresh is another option, where you can have pre-portioned ingredients and recipes delivered to you.

For electronics and household items, you might find what you need at Argos. You can find their catalogue in-store or online and they offer same day delivery/collections too.

Moving Out of Halls

We know this seems very far into the future, but it is nonetheless useful to keep in mind throughout the year. Take your time to pick your housemates carefully and don't be afraid to negotiate for the right house. As international students, it is quite likely that you will need to have a place to store your belongings during the summer (if your contract with halls end quite early), so you may need to pay rent over the summer unless you find other arrangements. One tip is to spend a decent amount of time planning, so as to avoid having to discard loads of useful things that can't fit into the luggage at the last minute. There is likely to be an accommodation group for your university that makes housemate/house hunting less of a headache, so be sure to find out about these on Facebook or other platforms.

We can also recommend some professional storage facilities that students can contact to temporarily deposit some belongings at a relatively cheap rate, such as ABC Self Storage (good option for those who need to store luggage long-term, but are unsure for exactly how long), SafeStore (has 107 facilities around London, so you can choose the nearest or most convenient facility, and also offers discount for long-term storage) and CityStasher. London airports also allow storage of items at a cost of £10 + £5 per additional day.

Once you start renting a flat/house, you will also have to deal with council tax which pays for services such as rubbish collection. Fortunately, we are full time students and are not required to pay council tax. Once you move in, you should go to your local council's website and submit a student exemption. Please **do not ignore** this as they will assume everyone in the household is a working adult with no exemption and charge council tax and any non-payments. Although it varies between councils, they will most likely need you to provide a scan of a headed letter from university, stating your full name, new address,



course duration and contact hours. Just reach out to your student centre and they will know what to give you!

Working in UK

Many students may be interested in making some money while studying in UK and it is definitely possible to balance your work and study life. However, you must make sure you have the right to work in UK and need to check for other work restrictions (information available on visa/BRP cards).

If you earn up to certain amount of money, the government requires that you have a National Insurance Number. This is for tax purposes and makes sure any taxes you pay will be recorded against your name. Those born and raised in UK will be allocated a NI number, but if you are not native you will need to apply for one (only available via phone calls and may require interview).

For official NI website: click [here](#) or full link below

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-national-insurance-number>

Safety

For those who live in big cities like London, Manchester and Birmingham, please stay safe. Scammers and motorcycle gangs are on the rise and foreigners/internationals are often targeted. Pavements and traffic lights are hotspots for pickpockets and moped robbers, so keep your belongings safe at all times and don't use your phone while walking. There has also been a rise in hate crimes in London Underground, mostly involve people being pushed onto tracks. Please stay alert at all times.

Metropolitan Police recommendations [here](#).

Study Resources

There are plenty of question banks and youtube tutorials available for free that may help your studies. Most of these books will be available from library, so you don't have to buy them!

Video Tutorials: Armando Hasudungan, Acland anatomy, Sketchy Medical, Doctors in Training, Osmosis, Dr Najeeb, Pathoma

Books: Top 100 Drugs, ECG made easy, Oxford Handbook of Clinical Medicine, Netter's Atlas, Kumar and Clark, USMLE First Aid Step 1, Gray's Anatomy, Unofficial Guide to Medicine series (20% discount available), BNF (online/app/book)

Question banks: Pass Medicine (Pre-Clinical Sciences for free, clinical science £25/year), Pastest (£35/year), Geeky Medics (free), Acland (short anatomy quizzes)



Essays/Books: Pubmed, Google Scholar, university online library (should have access to major publication journals and eBooks)

Things to Have

- Accommodation: many items will not provided
 - Duvet, bed sheets, pillows, desk lamp, pots/pans/cutleries
- Clothing:
 - No dress code at university
 - Smart casual (does not need blazer) for simulated/real patient sessions
- Stethoscope:
 - Not really needed until clinical years (a must have for clinical years)
 - Available from Littmann website/Amazon/Medical school
- Tendon hammer
 - Good for OSCE practice but not essential
- Lanyards/ID badge clips
 - A must have for clinical placements
- Vaccination records
 - University will require proof of certain vaccination prior to registration
 - Proof may be required to exempt any supplementary jabs such as MMR/HBV/Meningitis