

# University of Surrey Freshers' Guide



## Introduction

### **Hello Freshers!**

This guide consists of tips and advice compiled by your seniors based on their own experiences with moving into the UK. We hope this guide will give you an overview on what to expect to help you settle down quickly. It's a pretty extensive list and quite wordy so take your time to read it. Everyone has different experiences when moving in to an entirely new environment, especially for those of you who are going to live abroad on your own for the first time. As exciting as it may be, we are sure you're equally nervous. Therefore, this serves as a guide and not a must-do list!

The university's International Office also has a pre-departure briefing site that you can visit: <https://www.surrey.ac.uk/international-pre-departure-guide>. It has information on all university matters such as registration and accommodations.

Your seniors are always willing to help, so don't hesitate to approach us if you have any queries or doubts! We have been through this and we know how it feels like. All the best and good luck as you embark on a new adventure overseas! 😊

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# BEFORE LEAVING SINGAPORE

## Student Visa

If you did not apply for university through an agency, you'll have to apply for a Tier 4 (General) student visa on your own. Ensure that you have the CAS number from University of Surrey (do note that you might get it only in late August). Visas tend to take longer towards September, so as soon as you have the CAS number, apply for your Visa immediately if not you will not be able to come over.

1. Register online on Visa4UK, fill out the application form, pay for the online visa fee and print out the form
2. Pay for the healthcare surcharge (this is for NHS because your medical with panel clinics are covered) and print out the form
3. Book an appointment with VFS Global
4. For the appointment at VFS Global, you will need:
  - a. Passport
  - b. Another form of identification (e.g. NRIC, driver's license)
  - c. A bank statement that shows the funds available for tuition fees and your expenses
  - d. All your application forms
  - e. Any other documents on the list that you have

When you arrive in UK, you have to collect your Biometric Resident Permit (BRP) from the stated address (normally the post office at the top of High Street in Town) within 10 days of arrival. The BRP is like your UK NRIC, so ensure that you have it with you at all times.

## Finances

*(info on setting up a bank account in UK on page 10)*

### **HSBC**

There is a HSBC in Guildford Town and if you do decide to set up a bank there, we recommend that you set up a HSBC Advance account in SG first and use the Overseas Education option to create an account in UK.

The HSBC Premier account has a waiver of commission charges on telegraphic transfer or demand draft to settle school fees and preferential rates on foreign currency time deposits and foreign exchange. However, note that the HSBC Premier account requires a \$30,000 deposit.

### **DBS Multi-Currency Account**

You can also set up a DBS Multi-Currency Account in SG. The transfer rates are pretty good as they follow the market rates. You can use this account to transfer money to your UK bank account after you have it set up.

### **DBS UK Remit Services**

You can do a same-day transfer without a transfer fee via iBanking using the “DMS Remit UK” option.

### **Santander**

There is a Santander situated in the University near the library. For students, there are 2 different options: [1|2|3 Student Current Account](#), or [International Student Account](#). 1|2|3 Student Account basically consists of the Basic Bank Account and Basic Top-Up Debit Card. This account does not provide you with contactless payment and you will not be able to link your card for Uber or Netflix. However, the International Student Account can do otherwise, but there will be a monthly charge of £5 per month whether you have transactions or not. Santander bank accounts are normally set-up within 3 to 5 days of submitting your application. The bank does not charge for transaction fee if you're remitting money from Singapore over, but your bank in Singapore may charge a transaction fee.

### **Barclays**

Barclays is located in town on North Street. They provide an account similar to Santander's International Student Account (which allows for contactless payment) but without charging monthly fees. They tend to be very busy when the term starts so make an appointment as soon as possible.

### **Monzo (internet bank)**

This is an online bank which you can sign up for through the app. If you are expecting to travel a lot and prefer to go cashless, this card is practical as they do not charge any admin fee. However, the only charge is the bank's exchange rate.

### **Cost of Living**

The standard cost of living in Guildford is quite high. Eating out can be expensive so most of us cook our own meals. For a rough estimation, we spend about £300-£400 a month. Cheaper meals outside range from £5 to £10.

## Accommodation



- Details on the different campus accommodations here:  
<https://www.surrey.ac.uk/accommodation>
- University accommodation may be slightly cheaper as the rent for most self-sourced accommodation do not include electric and water bills.
- Try to avoid choosing Band A and B as you WILL NOT be guaranteed accommodation on the main campus, but in Hazel Farm, which is 35 minutes by bus and 50 minutes by walking. You do get a free bus pass, but there is nothing much to do in that areas as it is a residential area and the bus frequency to and from university/town is low. It is rather quiet there and far from all your other Singaporeans who are likely to be staying on campus or in Manor Park.
- Do note that older blocks on campus and Manor Park do not have elevators, if you do require an elevator, please add it in the remarks when selecting your accommodations.
- If you have your own bathroom, do clean it on a regular basis! Checks will be conducted at the end of the year and if your bathroom does not meet the cleanliness requirements, you will have to pay a fine. Tip: To get rid of toilet bowl stains due to the build-up of

minerals, you can use coke and toilet cleaner and leave it overnight before scrubbing and flushing it down.

- Be open-minded when living with others. Everyone has different living standards and expectations. If you have any problems, do voice it out nicely!
- Main Campus: If you're buying anything online that is not delivered by Royal mail, it would go to the Central Distribution Centre (opposite International House). CDC serves everyone on main campus hence you will not receive an email if it is delivered, so do check the status from the website you purchased it from. Letters and registered mail will go your court reception.
- Manor Park: All letters, parcels and registered mail will be sent to the reception. You will receive an email for the reception for parcels and registered mail.
- Hazel Farm: All letters and registered will be delivered into a basket just at the entrance of your 'houses'. If you've ordered anything, you have to be there to receive it.



## Things to Bring Over

### 1. Cash

Setting up a bank account may take a while, so ensure you bring enough money for at least 2 months as well as to buy all your necessities for moving in. (more information on page 12)

### 2. Bolster

You will not be able to find bolsters here, so if you cannot survive without one, please pack it with a bolster cover.

### 3. Bedding Pack

Campus accommodation does not provide bedding. You can order a bedding pack online from <http://store.surrey.ac.uk>. It will be ready at your accommodation when you arrive, so it saves you the hassle of having to buy a set when you arrive. However, the pillows can be quite soft and for those of you who are not used to the cold, it may not be warm enough. You can get more duvet from town.

### 4. Rice Cooker

If rice is a must-have in your diet, we recommend getting a mini rice cooker to bring over, you can buy it online on websites such as Qoo10. If you don't have space, you can purchase one from Argos in UK.

### 5. Food

Milo, kaya spread, sambal paste, DIY chicken rice, BKT ... whatever you think you will miss when you're here. Tesco and the Asian marts have limited variety, they might not taste the same and is relatively more expensive. Trust us, we've tried.

### 6. Recycled bags

Grocery stores charge 10p for a plastic bag.

### 7. Clothes

Thermal wear, jackets, (preferably waterproof to keep you dry from the rain or maybe snow!) pants. Bring more layers instead of thick individual jumpers.

### 8. Medication

Waiting lists for doctor's appointment are typically 3 weeks unless it is an emergency. Over-The-Counter medicine can be purchased from Boots and Superdrug.

### 9. Short medical history

If necessary – will be helpful if you need to see a doctor

### 10. Notes from JC/Poly

Whatever related to your future course, it would really come in handy

**11. Stationery**

Cheaper in SG, but available at Appleseed Bookstore and Ryman's

**12. Hard disk/Thumbdrive**

A LOT cheaper in SG

**13. Contact Lenses and solution**

A LOT cheaper in SG

**14. Musical Instrument (if you're really attached to it)**

Can be purchased at reasonable prices in UK, more variety as well

**15. Photocopies of important documents**

Passport, Visa, NRIC, CAS, Bank statement, offer letter

**16. Passport photos**

Both soft and hardcopy may be necessary for application forms

**17. Photos to remind you of home**

Printing photos here are not as cheap as Singapore, so you can print some before coming over

# ARRIVING IN UNITED KINGDOM

## Immigration Checkpoint

Make sure you have your **passport, CAS letter and offer letter** at hand. The immigration officer checking your documents may ask you random questions about your studies or even your parents' jobs. This is just a formality to ensure your identity and visa are legitimate.



## Getting to Guildford

The International Office has a Meet and Greet airport pick up service from Heathrow Airport to the University/Manor Park. It is a lot cheaper than booking a taxi, so do make use of that service. Students would not have to pay, however if you have someone accompanying you, they can also use the service with an extra fee (£25). Just register online, links are in the university's pre-departure guide.

Here are the dates and timings:

**Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> Sept 2018, 0700 to 2100**

**Wednesday, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2018, 0700 to 2100**

**Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept 2018, 0700 to 2100**

If you are due to arrive outside those timings, we recommend that you use Uber or book a car with a taxi company in advance. Just Google "Guildford Airport Transfers" for a list of options. Do avoid the black London Cabs AT ALL COST. Although comfortable, they are extremely expensive.

## Things to Buy

### 1. Household items

Bedding, cutleries, pots and pans, toiletries, towels, cleaning supplies (if you have a toilet) can be found cheaply from Tesco, Poundland and Primark. Get your necessities during International Orientation Week before the locals arrive and the stores start running out of stock.

### 2. Winter wear

Cheaper and more available in UK. If you like clothes from Uniqlo, it is cheaper in SG, plus Guildford does not have a Uniqlo.

### 3. Moisturizers

Climate in UK is drier than SG. Be prepared to buy not only body lotion, but hand creams and lip balms as well.

### 4. Textbooks

Textbooks from Appleseed Bookstore can be pretty expensive (Around 45 ~ 80 pounds per book). We recommend getting secondhand books from your seniors or online from Amazon or AbeBooks.

### 5. Camera equipment

A Digi-Cabi or Drybox is NOT required in UK. Head to the local camera store and ask for packets of silica gel. Just toss them into your camera bag along with your equipment.

## **Bank Account**

There are a few banks in Guildford – **Santander, Barclays, HSBC**

Bank accounts can only be setup after you have officially registered with the school and received your student card.

To set up a bank account, you will need:

**1. Proof of residence**

If you live in university accommodation, get it from Student Services. IF you don't, bring your utility bill or any other proof of address. Other than Santander Bank (which is located on campus), you are required to get a letter from student services to open your bank account.

**2. Student card**

You will only get this after university registration.

**3. Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)**

Remember to collect it from the post office.

Make an appointment with the bank ASAP as many other freshers will be signing up for appointments as well. After the appointment, your bank card and bank PIN number will be sent separately to your residence. The whole process may take up to a month, so be prepared to wait.

Sign up for free membership cards at shops such as Tesco, Boots and Superdrug. They provide some perks and/or discounts through point collection.

## Mobile Phones and Plans

There are plenty of telecom options for you to choose from: **GiffGaff, Three, EE, Vodafone, O2**. They all have different pros and cons to them so choose whichever that fits your needs the best. Most plans are reasonably price, sometimes even cheaper than what you can find in SG.

**giffgaff**

We recommend that you start off with **GiffGaff's** free SIM card and top up however much you need for the first month because you need your bank card and PIN number to sign up for a mobile phone/SIM plan.



If you are planning to travel a lot, **Three** provides FREE data roaming in 60 destinations around the world at no extra cost (Singapore inclusive). That way, you don't have to buy SIM cards and save money.



EE has the best reception in UK. More often than not, you'll find yourself not having reception in some areas for many of the other telecoms.

*Visit the respective telecoms' websites for the options and prices.*

# University Orientation

## **International Orientation Week**

This additional orientation week provides more time for international students to settle down and it is not compulsory. There's nothing much going on during this week other than tours that the university organizes, which can be pretty boring. Although it may be a good way to meet new people. Try to buy all your stuff and book your bank appointment within this week.

## **Freshers' Week**

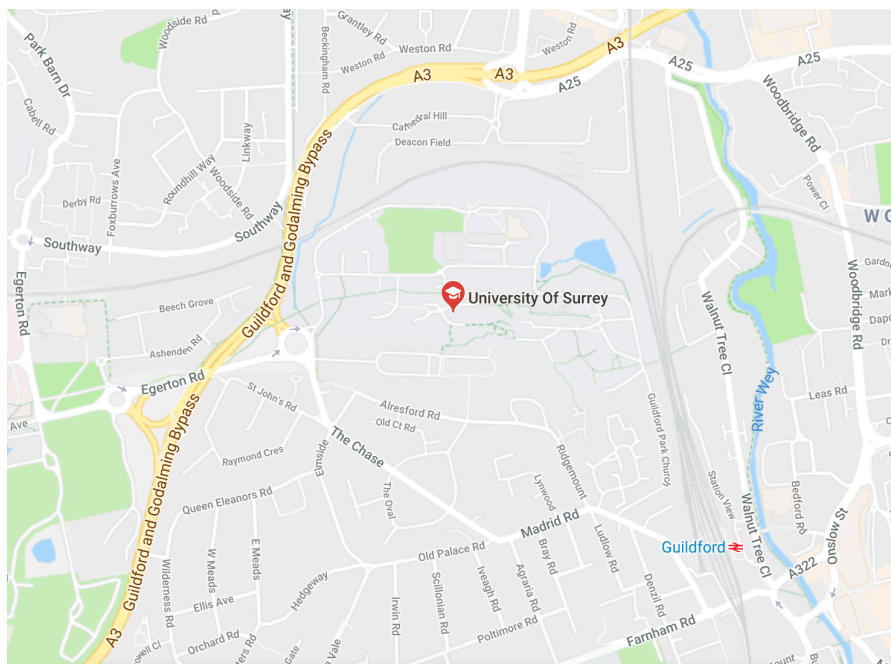
During this week, there will be many talks that will give you an overview of your course and briefings about overseas exchange programs and placement year. Even if you're not interested, they are useful and informative.

Remember to register with NHS as you have already paid for the healthcare surcharge. You would also have to book an appointment for the meningitis jab (Free of charge) if you have not done so Singapore. Visiting the doctor and prescribed medicine are free, but waiting lists are very long.

Register with the university on the stipulated date. You will get your student card during the registration.

You can find out more about the different clubs and societies at the Freshers' Fayre, and of course, don't forget to drop by the Singsoc Booth! Sign up for those you're interested in and they will email you with the details of their meetings/trainings. Active Freshers' Fayre is held on that weekend. It is a good opportunity for you to try out the different sports clubs as well as get a preview of the Surrey Sports Park.

# GUILDFORD



Link to campus map: <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/files/pdf/campusmap.pdf>

## Getting Around

### Buses

If you stay in Manor Park, we highly recommend that you get the Arriva bus pass. It takes about 20-30 minutes to walk to university and 40-50 minutes to walk to town. The bus pass cost £70 and £160 for 3 months and 1 year respectively and can be purchased from the Surrey online store at <http://store.surrey.ac.uk>. After purchasing it, you have to collect it from the Accommodation office on the following day.

If you stay on campus (Stag Hill, International House, Battersea etc.), it is not necessary to buy a bus pass as town is just a 20-25 minutes' walk away. You can download the Arriva bus app to check bus timings. Do note that bus timings can be pretty unreliable and intervals between buses can go up to 30 minutes. However, you can just use it for a rough estimate. It would be better if you are at the bus stop 5 minutes before the arrival time.

### Bicycles

You can also purchase a bicycle from GumTree or Surrey Bike Project for around £45. Note that it may get too cold in winter to ride it!



## **Campus Facilities**

### **Library**

Opens 24/7. Well equipped with computers, printers, private and group discussion rooms, textbooks, journals and more. Group discussion rooms and booths can be booked through the surrey library website with a maximum of 2hrs per person per day. If you require absolute silence while studying, you can go to the silent study areas. If you want a nice place with sofas and tables, go to SPLASH which is on level 3. At SPLASH, you can also get help for your assignments. They offer daily walk-ins or you can book an appointment. Do note that all of these that require bookings tend to be filled up very quickly when it gets closer to submissions, so do plan ahead and book in advance.

### **Printing Services**

Each student will be given £10 worth of printing value in your student card after you have received it. Only for Business faculty students, there is a complimentary printing service in any school computer labs that entitles you to 1,000 printing credits for each academic year.

### **Appleseed Bookstore**

Located on the ground floor of the library opposite SimplyFresh. You can purchase your textbooks, stationery and University of Surrey merchandise from here.

### **SimplyFresh**

A convenient store that is located on the ground floor of the library selling common grocery items such as eggs, milk, snacks, alcohol and microwavable food. It is convenient for those living on campus and are too lazy to go Tesco.

Operating Hours:

Monday – Friday 0700hrs to 2300hrs

Saturday 0800hrs to 2200hrs

Sunday 1200hrs to 2000hrs

During exam periods, they operate 24/7 where you can pick up meal deals if you don't have time to cook. There is also a post office conveniently located in the SimplyFresh.

Operating Hours:

Monday – Friday 0800hrs to 1700hrs

Saturday 0900hrs to 1300hrs

Sunday Closed

### **Eateries**

Campus has several eateries including Starbucks, Hillside, Lakeside Cafes, Pizzaman, Young's Kitchen. Manor Park has Heart and Soul, and it is a nice place for group meetings or studying.

Heart and Soul Operating Hours:

Monday – Friday 0900hrs to 2100hrs

Saturday 0900hrs to 1500hrs

Sunday Closed

### **NHS Clinic**

Located on campus. Call the clinic beforehand to tell them about your symptoms and if the nurses deem it as an emergency, they will book an appointment for you within the week. If it's just a cold, you'll be put on the waiting list which is usually 3 weeks, so don't bother trying to see the doctor. Get medicine from the pharmacy, drink lots of water and rest at home. Freshers' flu is very common at the beginning, so remember to eat more fruits and vegetables. Tip: for those who are experiencing sore throat, you can drink soda/sparkling water.

### **Surrey Sports Park**

Located near Manor Park. The university's pride and joy house several well-maintained facilities such as a gym, rock-climbing wall, studios, basketball and tennis courts. There's also a Starbucks (another study hideout) and a sports bar. Full membership costs £235 for a year, off-peak membership cost £185. If you're joining a sports club, they may require you to purchase the membership in order for you to compete in competitions.

### **Launderettes**

Located on campus, Manor Park and Hazel Farm. Cost of each washing and drying cycle £2.20 and £1.10 respectively. There is only 1 big launderette on campus near senate house, 2 launderettes in Manor Park and 2 launderettes in Hazel Farm.

### **Rubix**

It's a club in the school run by the Student Union. You can often find parties over here.

## Guildford Town



### Eateries

Just to list a few:

- Rumwong (really good Thai Food and Thai iced tea)
- Thai terrace
- Kokoro (Japanese dons, favourite of many)
- Gourmet Burger Kitchen
- Franco Manco (good and affordable pizza)
- Zizzi (Italian food with 40% discounts on Mondays)
- Five Guys (Fast food)
- Positano Restaurant (Cosy Italian restaurant offering weekday 2 course lunch from £9.95)
- Cream's (waffles with tons of ice-cream flavours)
- Sushi Nara (sashimi and unagi)
- Tea Terrace (scones and tea because British)
- Turtle Bay (2-for-1 cocktails from 10pm onwards)
- Food court at Friary Centre (KFC, McDonald's, Thai Express, Subway)
- Hungry Buddha (Thai food)
- Bubble Ci.Tea (our sponsor, so please support them, we've discounts with them too!)
- Krispy Kreme
- Poke House (Hawaiian rice bowl)



### **Friary Shopping Centre:**

- Topshop, Mango, Zara, Primark, Muji, Hollister, Urban Outfitters, Schuh
- Tiger for unique household items

### **White Lion Walk:**

- Robert Dyas for household items (student discount available with student card)

### **North Street:**

- Mountain Warehouse
- Poundland
- Marks and Spencer

### **High Street:**

- House of Fraser
- Kikki.k
- Boots (UK version of Watsons and Guardian)
- Superdrug (UK version of Watsons and Guardian)
- Ryman's for stationery (10% student discount)

### **Woking:**

- 1 train station away from Guildford (£3.15 return)
- You can find more affordable household products at **Wilko** – in Peacock
- There is also H&M here

**Guildford Spectrum:**

You can just take bus 100 from Guildford Friary bus station to go to Guildford Spectrum, a leisure complex. There is an ice-skating rink, and bowling alley which the Sports Park doesn't have.

## Grocery Shopping

The 3 main supermarkets in Guildford are **Tesco, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer**, arranged in affordability. Tesco is located between campus and Manor Park, the others are located in Town. A plastic bag cost 10p, so we recommend bringing your own recyclable bags (you can help to save the earth too!). Note that you have to pack your own groceries, unlike in FairPrice where the cashier does it for you.

If you're too lazy to go to Tesco, you can opt for **Tesco delivery**. Delivery is free if you spend up to £40, so you can order your groceries with a friend. The stuff delivered are good quality and they deliver them on time.



There are **2 Asian grocery stores located near the Friary bus station (Chinese Taste)** where you can get some imported Asian suppliers, such as snacks, noodles and dumplings. There is also a Thai grocery store located next to Rumwong.

On Thursdays, a **'Fresh fruits and vegetable market'** will be set up in **Rubix** from 0830 to 1700hrs. There will also be stalls set up outside selling various cuisines, such as paella and falafel wraps.



Every Friday and Saturday, a **farmers' market is set up along North Street** in town. A variety of fruits, vegetables, meat and flowers are sold at pretty good deals. It's best to go around 1600hrs when they are clearing stocks and selling items at discounted price.

Certain groceries (e.g. salmon and berries) are relatively cheaper in UK. Cooking your own meals are a great way to save money when living here.

# TRAVELING

## 16-25 Railcard

We highly recommend that you get this railcard as you can get 1/3 off train tickets fares to London and other parts of UK. You can register for one online or download the railcard app. Railcard can be linked to your oyster card (London's Ezlink card) and you get discount off the fares as well. Railcard are sold by 1 year or 3 years. If you're going to be here for only 2 years, it makes more sense to get the 1 year railcard and purchase again after it expires.

## London



London is just a 40 minutes train ride away from Guildford station. When purchasing the train ticket to London, remember to get the one with the **travelcard** which gives you **unlimited rides on public transport** in London. It's a lot cheaper than using the Oyster card. If you have the 16-25 railcard, a return trip with travelcard will cost about **~£16**. Alternatively, if you want a cheaper option, you can take the National Express Bus from the bus stop in front of Tesco, however you would have to book this way ahead to enjoy the cheaper fares. London can be a good getaway if you're looking for something more exciting to do and want to shop till later at night. Things to do: Free museums, markets and shopping!!

## Airports

There are 4 airports in **London, Heathrow, Gatwick Stansted and Luton**. There is a direct train to Gatwick from Guildford (£8.10 with railcard) which takes approximately 50 minutes. Travelling to other airports can be a pain. If you're coming from Heathrow, you can take the





**National Express Bus to Woking** (1 stop away from Guildford) and from Woking you can take a train to Guildford. If you're travelling in a group, we recommend that you book a taxi and split the fare. It's way more convenient and sometimes even cheaper depending on the airport.

A word of caution about Stansted Airport, they are EXTREMELY strict with bag checks, so ensure that your liquid bottles are <100ml and they can all fit into ONE zip lock bag that they provide. If you're unsure, just get check-in luggage.

## **Europe**

Budget flights to other European countries are pretty cheap, so it is very possible to plan budget trips. If you don't like flying, you can also take overnight buses or trains to certain countries. Don't forget to bring your BRP (equivalent to your SG IC) along with you especially when you're going out of the country as you will need to show it as prove when you re-enter the UK. BRP may also give you student discounts to attractions as well!

## CONTACT US

If you have any other questions that was not covered in the guide, don't hesitate to contact us, we will be more than willing to help you!

**Email:** [ussu.singapore@surrey.ac.uk](mailto:ussu.singapore@surrey.ac.uk)

**Facebook:** <http://facebook.com/groups/surreysingapore>

**Instagram:** @surreysingsoc

**WordPress:** <http://surreysingapore.wordpress.com>

**YouTube:** Surrey Singapore