

International pre-arrival guide





Welcome

Welcome to our pre-arrival guide for 2023/4. We are very much looking forward to meeting you on campus. However, before you travel to the UK – it is important that you read the information contained within the guide so you're fully prepared for each stage of your journey to the UK and being a University of Bolton student.

If you require further information relating to the University's support services please contact our [International Support Team](#) in Student Services and we will do our best to help you.

Contents

The University of Bolton and its location	4	Arrival in the UK	10
The surrounding area	4	Checklist	10
Places of interest	4	Biometric Residence Permit collection	10
Visa application	5	Enrolment	10
Documents needed to apply for your visa	5	ID verification	11
Costs	5	Student ID Card	11
Biometrics	5	Opening a bank account	11
Dependents	5	The myBolton app	11
Process after applying	5	Orientation - life in the UK	12
Timeframes	6	Student life	12
Travel dates	6	Self-help	12
Travelling to the UK	6	Health and wellbeing	13
Checklist of documents	6	The National Health Service (NHS)	13
Travel insurance	7	Registering with a GP	13
Money	7	Medical emergencies	13
Airports	7	Dentists	14
Accommodation	8	Disability support	14
Booking process	8	Mental health support	14
Orlando Village Halls of Residence	9	Sports and physical fitness	14
Other accommodation options	9	Outdoor activities	14
Guarantors	9	International Student Support	15
Other costs	9	Student Centre	15
Council tax	9	Multi-faith chaplaincy	16
Locations	9	Disability Team	16
Contents insurance	9	Life Lounge (student mental health and wellbeing)	16
		Libraries	16
		Careers	18
		Students' Union	19



The University of Bolton and its location

There is plenty to do in Bolton that will enhance your experience of studying in the UK and offer you fun opportunities for when you are not studying:

- Bolton Town centre offers lots of opportunities to shop and socialise, there is a large shopping centre called Bolton **Market Place** that offers a mix of unique independent stores and major high street names, and there are cafes, coffee shops and restaurants in the vaults
- Inside the Market Place you will also find **The Light**, a new state of the art nine screen cinema
- **Middlebrook** is the largest retail park in the UK, it's a great place to visit for shopping, eating out, watching a **film** at the Vue Cinema or bowling at **Hollywood Bowl**. You can get a bus or train from Bolton to Middlebrook
- In Bolton Town Centre you will find **Bolton Art Gallery, Library and Museum**. It has something for everyone; find out about the heritage of Bolton, visit the Ancient Egypt Gallery or take a walk-through Greater Manchester's only public Aquarium
- Why not take in a football match at **Bolton Wanderers Football Club**

What is the nearest city to Bolton?

Bolton is part of Greater Manchester, and Manchester City Centre is only 20 mins from Bolton by a frequent rail service. Manchester is one of the world's greatest cities with, many students heading to Manchester to shop, socialise and explore.

Where can I find more information on what to do outside of the University?

Call in to the Student Centre in Chancellor's Mall, to see what trips, events and activities are available to students that are coordinated by the University, Students' Union or the International Society.

Visa application

Once you have received your CAS, you can apply for a student visa on the [UKVI's website](#). The earliest you can apply for a visa is 6 months before you start your course. Below you will find some information on what you will need to know when it comes to submitting a valid visa application from outside of the UK.

What do I need when I apply for my Visa?

When you are completing your visa application, you should ensure you have the documents and funds stated below. The list includes documents that you will have provided in order to receive your CAS and additional documents that will be requested on the visa application form:

- CAS certificate
- Entry qualification
- Evidence of English language
- Current passport
- National identification card (if applicable)
- Financial evidence (if applicable) + [OANDA](#) currency conversion
- Evidence of relationship (i.e., marriage certificate; birth certificate; certificate of adoption) + a signed letter of consent from your parent(s) or partner if you are using their financial evidence
- Tuberculosis test certificate (if applicable)
- ATAS certificate (if applicable)
- Evidence of any previous visa refusals (if applicable)
- Evidence of any criminal convictions (if applicable)
- Evidence of any immigration applications to other countries
- Official professional translations of your documents (if applicable)
- Available funds to pay your application costs

You will be expected to provide copies of your documents to UKVI to support your visa application.

How much does it cost?

The cost of applying for a Student Route Visa outside of the UK is £490, as of November 2023.

You will also have to pay the healthcare surcharge as part of your application. How much you pay depends on the length of your visa. More information on the Immigration Health Surcharge (HIS) is available from here.

Additional biometric enrolment fees and value-added service fees may also apply, including if you choose to use the [UKVI priority service](#).

What are biometrics?

As part of your visa application, you'll need to prove your identity. You will be asked to give fingerprints and a photograph; both biometric information. How you do this depends on where you are from and what type of passport you have.

More information on this is available from the [Admissions Team](#).

Can my family members apply?

In order to bring dependents to the UK, you must be one of the following:

- be sponsored by your government, and studying a course longer than 6 months
- be a full-time student, studying a postgraduate course (RQF level 7 or higher) that lasts 9 months or longer

If your postgraduate level course starts on or after 1 January 2024, it must be either:

- a PhD or other doctorate (RQF level 8)
- a research-based higher degree

For more information visit the [UK Governments website](#).

What happens after I submit my visa application form?

During the visa application process, you may find UKVI contact you for further information:

- they may wish to verify your supporting documents
- you may be invited to an interview
- you may be required to provide more information

When will I receive a decision on my application?

In some instances decisions can be received within 3 weeks, however it very much depends on when you apply; certain times of the year are busier and therefore decisions can take longer. You may be able to apply for a **priority service** to get a quicker decision, if this service is offered in your area.

When can I travel?

You should try to arrive before your course starts, however, the start date on your visa is the earliest

you should arrive in the UK. If your visa application is approved, the earliest you can arrive in the UK before your course begins is:

- If your course lasts 6 months or less, you should be able to arrive up to 1 week before your course start date

OR

- If your course lasts more than 6 months, you should be able to arrive up to 1 month before your course start date

The first few weeks of University are really important, it is during these weeks that programme/course inductions take place, students become familiar with their academics, meet their peers and teaching starts.

Traveling to the UK

Preparing for your arrival to the UK can be overwhelming. You may have lots of questions such as 'How do I arrange my travel?' or 'What paperwork do I need to have ready at the UK border?'

What do I need to bring with me on my journey?

You will need original versions of the following documents in your hand luggage:

- Your valid passport, with a visa or UK entry clearance (if applicable)
- Your visa permission – in the form of your UK entry clearance or online digital visa status
- Visa application decision letter that confirms your BRP collection point
- Your original academic qualification certificates (not copies) used as evidence on your CAS
- Your travel tickets
- Vaccination/X-ray certificate (if applicable)
- TB Certificate (if applicable)
- A printout of your unconditional offer letter and CAS certificate which were emailed to you
- Confirmation of your accommodation booking(s)
- If you are arriving late, a printout of your travel support letter which was emailed to you



It is a UKVI requirement that you can demonstrate you have access to enough money to support yourself in the UK, so you must bring recent financial evidence proving you can cover the cost of your living expenses and your tuition fees. This may include bank statements, proof of scholarship, sponsor letter or online bank statements.

It is important you have all required documents to hand, because if you are not prepared, you may be interviewed by a Border Force Officer. If you cannot provide the required evidence, you may be refused entry into the UK. As well as original documents in your hand luggage, we advise you to keep copies in your main suitcase and leave additional copies with a family member at home. It would also be useful to have digital copies of important documents you can easily access.

Do I need travel insurance?

You are recommended to take out travel insurance to cover your travel to the UK. A good policy will cover travel delays and cancellations, medical emergencies, and loss of any belongings in transit.

What money should I travel with?

You are encouraged to order British Pounds currency and travellers' cheques and should bring enough to cover your immediate needs upon arrival in the UK.

We advise you not to bring large sums of cash for your own safety, avoiding the risk of theft. We recommend travelling with no more than £500-£600 in cash and putting the rest of your funds on a pre-paid credit card or Travellers' cheques. Please note that if you travel with more than £10,000 in cash funds, you must declare it at UK customs.

Once you have arrived in the UK you should aim to setup a UK bank account as soon as possible. The International Student Support Team and Student Advisors in the **Student Centre** can provide you with a letter to introduce you to your preferred bank.

Which is the nearest airport to the University of Bolton?

Manchester Airport is the closest airport to Bolton. If you arrive at Manchester Airport you can catch a train to Bolton or "Street Cars", located in each terminal has always provided a competitive taxi service for students travelling within Greater Manchester.

Having suitable accommodation is key to the experience you will have of living and studying within the UK.



Accommodation

When should I book my accommodation?

If you are going to live in purpose built student accommodation, often called Halls of Residence you should book this before you travel.

If you are planning on living in private rented accommodation, you are advised to book this after you have arrived, so you can view the property in-person and have time to read and understand the contractual obligations. However, this may mean you need to stay in temporary accommodation until you have found somewhere to live. Temporary accommodation is limited and often means staying in a hotel or guest house, both can be expensive options.

What Halls of Residence are available to me?

Orlando Village is the only accommodation provider approved and recommended by the University of Bolton. Orlando Village is only a short walk from the main campus, train station and Bolton town centre. It is staffed 24/7 to assist you before and throughout your stay.

What other options do I have?

Alternative accommodation in Bolton and the surrounding area, as well as in Manchester, can be found via high street estates agents or by searching online. The University's Students' Union has produced a **housing guide** with information about things to consider when renting from private landlords as well as legal information you need to be aware of.

Will I need a guarantor?

It is very common for all landlords and letting agents to ask you to provide a UK-based guarantor. A guarantor is someone who agrees to cover your rent and other housing costs if you cannot or do not pay them. It is usually a parent or guardian, family member or close friend. Most landlords insist that your guarantor is based in the UK. They may also need your guarantor to pass a credit check or provide proof of income.

What if I don't have a UK based guarantor?

The University does not provide a guarantor service but private companies will act as your UK guarantor in exchange for a fee. We cannot recommend any particular company, however if you would like to explore this option, you should be able to find these by doing an internet search for UK rental guarantors.

What other costs may I incur living in the UK?

Most Halls of Residence include utility bills (gas, water and electricity) and high speed internet access with no additional charge.

Private rented accommodation may or may not include utility costs within the rent and you are encouraged to check with your landlord/letting agent. It is also important to check how these additional costs are split if you are not the only tenant.

What is council tax?

Council Tax is a system of local taxation collected by local authorities. It is a tax on the properties in which people live. Full-time students who live only with other full-time students or in halls of residence do not have to pay Council Tax. If you live with others who are not students you may be liable for Council Tax. If you live in Halls of Residence, you are not liable for council tax if you are a full-time student.

Can I live in other parts of the UK?

You should try to find accommodation as near as possible to The University. If you live too far away, you may struggle to get to your lectures on time. You should also consider the cost of travelling to and from your place of residence and the University.

Do I need to insure my belongings?

It is important you protect your belongings whilst in the UK by taking out contents insurance. Some Halls of Residence include contents insurance as standard; however you are advised to check what the policy covers. Orlando Village and private rented properties do not include contents insurance and you are advised to take out a policy to cover your belongings. You can find student insurance companies online; shop around for the best policy that covers your belongings.

What if I need more advice on anything accommodation related?

Contact the University of Bolton International Student Advisors in the Student Centre by:

 internationalstudents@bolton.ac.uk

 +44 (0)1204 903 828

 +44 (0)1204 903 510



Arrivals

Arrival in the UK

When I arrive in the UK what should I do?

The following suggestions are things you should do once you have arrived in the UK?

- Contact Home
- Check in to your accommodation
- Collect your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP)
- Complete e online enrolment (stage 1), if you haven't already done this
- Complete your ID verification with the University
- Collect your Student ID Card
- Open a UK Bank Account
- Register with a GP
- Download the myBolton App
- Attend your inductions
- Visit the Students' Union
- Socialise and make friends
- Enjoy your studies, don't worry if you struggle, we are here to help

What is a BRP?

If you enter the UK to study before 01 January 2025 you will be issued with a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). This is a secure identity card that provides proof of a right to study in the UK. Where you collect your BRP will depend upon what you requested on your visa application form and where you applied for it. From 01 January 2025, you will instead be issued with an eVisa indicating your digital immigration status. Please check your letter you received with your visa for details. Further information is available on the government website here.

If you need more help speak to a member of the International Student Support Team in the Student Centre, Chancellor's Mall.

@ internationalstudents@bolton.ac.uk

+44 (0) 1204 903 828

+44 (0) 1204 903510

How do I enrol online?

All students must complete the online enrolment at the start of each academic year. For new students, this important step helps you officially become part of the University of Bolton. You will receive an email inviting you to engage with this process and providing you with all required information. Please ensure you update your term-time address.



What is the ID verification process and how do I do this?

All new or returning students who are not a British, Irish, Channel Islands or Isle of Man national must have their ID verified before they can be fully enrolled. You will receive an email from the Visa Compliance team inviting you to an in-person appointment. You must ensure you have completed the online enrolment before you undertake your ID verification. After you have completed both stages, you will be able to access your course timetable and other University systems.

You will need to bring the following documents to your appointment:

- Passport
- Entry clearance visa stamped by UKVI, or a share code, along with travel documents confirming the date you entered the UK
- Visa decision letter
- Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) or proof of eVisa (01 January 2025 onwards)
- Proof of English Language proficiency
- Original qualification certificates and any transcripts, as stated on your CAS

Where do I collect my ID Card from?

You will be able to collect your ID card from the Student Centre once you have completed your right to study check and online enrolment. You will also receive a lanyard to enable you to wear your ID card at all times when on campus.

How do I open a UK bank account?

Once you have completed online enrolment, ID verification and collected your ID card, we strongly recommend you open a UK bank account.

There are a number of factors you should consider when choosing and opening a bank account as an international student in the UK, and you may find this [guide](#) helpful. You may be able to apply for a bank account online, or be required to visit the bank you have chosen and take documents that show who you are, such as passport, BRP, proof of UK address and a letter from the University confirming your status as a UK student, the Advisors in the Student Centre can help you with this once you are fully enrolled.

Why do I need to download the myBolton App and how do I do this?

The app allows you to access:

- Emails
- Moodle
- Campus maps
- University calendars
- Advice and support

The app is also vital for you to access your timetable and check into your lectures to record your attendance, as this is a very important element of your visa compliance.

Please download the myBolton app from the App store or Google Play to stay connected with important university information.



Orientation - student life

We understand that when moving to a new country and starting university there is a lot for you to take in. There may be times when you are feeling overwhelmed, you may notice differences between your home country and the UK. This may include the way people speak, dress and behave. You may also encounter changes in food choices and social activities. There is a wealth of support services available to you at Bolton.

Come and speak to the International Student Support Team in the Student Centre Chancellor's Mall.

@ internationalstudents@bolton.ac.uk

+44 (0) 1204 903 828

+44 (0) 1204 903510

What can I do to help with culture shock?

- Try to build a support network by reaching out to other international students, the university support services, chaplaincy, etc and make a real effort to join Students' Union clubs and societies to meet students with similar interests
- It can help to keep busy, the more you can pack into your day the less time you will have to feel homesick or lonely. Spend some time learning about the new culture and getting to know your new surroundings
- It's a good idea to surround yourself with familiar items and reminders of home, find familiar food items but remember to eat a healthy balanced diet. Try to exercise regularly; it's good for your health and can also be a good way of meeting people, even if it's just going for a walk
- Don't expect to get everything right the first time: accept that you will make mistakes, get lost and forget things in the first few weeks. However, if things get bad don't make any major decisions, take your time and reach out to talk to others first. If you feel unwell, can't sleep or eat properly, see a doctor or contact the [University Life Lounge](#)

Health and wellbeing

You may be unsure on what you need to do to access healthcare during your studies. This section provides advice on looking after yourself in the UK and how to access healthcare services via the UK's National Health Service (NHS) and the University.

What healthcare can I access in the UK?

When you applied for your student route visa, you will have paid the **Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS)**. This provides access to healthcare during your studies, though some services may still accrue a cost. You may be asked for evidence of your immigration status when accessing healthcare; if so present your vignette, BRP, visa decision letter or digital share code.

How can I register with a GP/Doctor?

The International Student Advisors and Student Advisors based in the Student Centre can help you find a GP local to where you live. You are encouraged to register with a GP as soon as possible having arrived in the UK. You can also find a **[GP online here](#)**.

What if I have a medical emergency or need help when my GP is closed?

If you need general medical advice, you can call 111. If you would like to discuss a minor health problem you can get free, confidential advice at a pharmacy. Some pharmacies are open late and at weekends, which can be useful if you need advice when your GP is closed.

In an emergency you should call 999. The operator will ask you questions on your condition, or the person you are calling about. Depending on your circumstances, they may send an ambulance to transport you to hospital, or ask you to make your own way, if you are able to do so safely. You should only call 999 in the event of a serious illness, injury, or urgent need for medical care.



I have a problem with my teeth, what help can I get?

To find a Dental practice near you, please read the government guidance [here](#) then click 'Find a dentist'. Some practises are full, so if you need to see a dentist but cannot locate one accepting patients, please dial 111 for more advice.

I have a disability or long-standing illness can the University help me?

Of course, if you have a disability or long-standing illness you are encouraged to disclose this as part of your application. You can also disclose a disability at the point of enrolment or during your studies. The earlier you disclose the quicker the [Disability Team](#) can coordinate support for you.

I am having problems with my mental health or need advice on my wellbeing, where can I go?

We have you covered, the [University Life Lounge](#) employs:

- Wellbeing Advisors/Coordinators
- Mental Health Advisors
- Counsellors
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapists

All of the above services are free, non-judgemental and confidential.

I want to improve my fitness or do some sports, where can I go?

We have a multi-use sports hall available in the [sports centre](#) offering a range of activities, such as badminton, table tennis, 5-a-side football, and much more. We also have social sport activities, fitness classes and a 50ft climbing wall with many sessions free for our students. You will have the opportunity to compete for the university in competitive leagues by joining a club at the University Sports Centre Reception.

The Anderton Centre is an Outdoor Learning Centre where you can have fun whilst discovering your full potential through fun adventure-based activities, on land and in the water. Land based activities include abseiling/climbing, archery, bushcraft, fell walking and rope courses. Water-based activities include kayaking, sailing, raft building, paddle boarding, canoeing and powerboating. For more information visit the Sports Centre.



International student support

We want you to have the best experience whilst studying at the University of Bolton. There are a number of support services here to help you both before you arrive, during and after your studies.

What support is available for me?

The Student Services team is based in the Student Centre in Chancellor's Mall but as a student you will also be able to access support online. Student Advisors, International Student Advisors and other specialist support staff can provide information, advice and guidance on a wide range of academic and pastoral matters.



We can help with (non-exhaustive list):

- Understanding university policies and procedures
- Timetabling
- Official letters
- Council Tax exemptions
- Student ID cards
- Getting the most out of your studies
- Social events and university activities

If you have a question that needs answering or need some advice please call in to the Student Centre.

We are open Monday to Friday between 8:45 am and 5:00 pm for any support you require. If we can't help we will support you by signposting or onward referrals.

 **+44 (0)1204 903 733**

 studentadvisors@bolton.ac.uk

I practice a faith or religion. Where can I access support of information in relation to this?

Our Chaplaincy Team provide free pastoral support, whatever your religion or belief. The service consists of a part-time Co-ordinating Chaplain and a team of volunteers. The Chaplaincy is based on the ground floor of Eagle Tower and comprises a resource area, quiet room, prayer room and ablution facilities.

 **+44 (0)1204 903 415**

 chaplain@bolton.ac.uk

I have a disability or long standing illness. Can the University help me?

Of course, if you have a disability or long-standing illness you are encouraged to disclose this as part of your application. You can also disclose a disability at the point of enrolment or during your studies. The earlier you disclose the quicker the Disability Team can coordinate support for you.

 **+44 (0)1204 903 478**

 disabilityinfo@bolton.ac.uk

I am having problems with my mental health or need advice on my wellbeing. Where can I get support?

We have you covered, the University Life Lounge employs:

- Wellbeing Advisors/Coordinators
- Mental Health Advisors
- Counsellors
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapists

All of the above services are free, non-judgemental and confidential.

 lifelounge@bolton.ac.uk

 **+44 (0)1204 903 566**

What library facilities are available?

Here at the University of Bolton we have two libraries. The Peter Marsh Library is the larger of the two and is located in Chancellor's Mall, the second is Queens Library, Queens Specialist Building.

If you need to study late into the evening or over the weekend then The Peter Marsh Library is open late in to evenings and at weekends, but please remember to wear your student ID card at all times for security purposes. Queens Library is a self-service library.

For those seeking a quiet study space or space to study as group, Peter Marsh Library offers both. Additionally, if you require technology support, we offer laptop loans and first-line IT assistance, with specialists on hand to deal with any challenges that come your way.

To find out more about the library there is a great 'Get Started' guide to help you. There you will find short videos which introduce you to using the Library resources, such as Discover@Bolton. This is a service you will find very helpful in researching journal articles, eBooks and more, all in one place. In addition to printed books and material, the Library has over 500,000 eBooks, and over a million journal articles that can be accessed by using Discover@Bolton. Online or face to face appointments are available with Academic Librarians and live online chat can be accessed from the library website available Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm. Automated responses based on frequently asked questions are available outside of these time.



The Library also offers support via the award winning Learning Excellence Achievement Pathway (LEAP):

- LEAP Online, this is designed to support your academic and personal development. It contains information, videos and activities on a range of topics including academic development, digital literacy, personal development and more
- LEAP Live is a programme of in-person/online workshops, all of which aim to support your academic and personal development

I want help finding a job. Who can I speak to?

Working while you study as an international student is a popular way to gain work experience and improve your employability.

If you are studying for a qualification at degree level or above you can usually:

- work up to 20 hours per week during term-time
- work full-time during vacation periods and after your course has ended before your Student visa expires

We advise you to check your eligibility to work during your studies with the UK Council for Student Affairs (UKCISA). You can also check your BRP card as your working restriction(s) should be specified on there. There are also some types of work you must not do during your studies under your Student visa (e.g. work self-employed or start a business).

Our Jobs for Students Office, based in Chancellor's Mall employs a team of qualified staff who offer:

- careers information
- advice and guidance for students
- skills acquisition
- career planning
- job search
- CV writing
- interview preparation
- and much more

They offer one-to-one guidance online or via the telephone, as well as answering your questions via email and helping you to access our suite of online resources. If you would like to meet with one of the team in person, via a telephone appointment or via Zoom/Teams, please email or phone to arrange an appointment. Further details are available here, and you can contact the team at:

@ studenthub-careers@bolton.ac.uk

+44 (0)1204 903 080



What is the Students' Union and what do they offer?

The Students' Union, based in Chancellor's Mall offers:

- Free, impartial advice on academic issues and complaints
- Societies you can join that will put you in touch with other like-minded students
- Volunteering opportunities
- Work experience opportunities
- The Students' Union shop, where students can buy snacks, drinks and branded clothing,
- Two social spaces, the Loft and the Hangout; play pool, table tennis or just sit and relax
- Opportunities to take part in events and activities

The Students' Union is independent of the University and is run by students for students to help you make the most of your experience at the University of Bolton.



Students Union



info@boltonsu.com



+44 (0)1204 900 850



University of Bolton
Student Nurse

