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Introduction
Welcome to what will surely be the most exciting year so far in your life as a student. It will be a year of both enjoyment and frustration, but the great times in this adventure, we can assure you, will be far more numerous than the minor frustrations you are likely to encounter. The purpose of this handbook is to provide useful information that will help you to prepare for the experience and to relieve anxiety about what to expect. It is meant to be used in conjunction with orientation materials provided directly by the sponsoring UK university and the Cornell/Brown/Penn UK Office.

This handbook is intended both for you and for your parents because we feel that both those who go away and those who stay at home should share information about the foreign study experience. We urge both parents and students to take the time to read the handbook from cover to cover well before departure in order to be fully informed of its contents. If you do this, then at least you will know what questions you still don't have answers for and you will know whom to contact to find out. It is the nature of a guide like this to advise in strong language about "do's and don'ts". Please pay serious attention to these remarks, which are intended for your benefit.

If you have any questions or concerns now or while you are away, please contact our office immediately at the numbers/e-mail below. We accept collect calls from students abroad so don't hesitate to call because of cost. We also suggest that you regularly check the Cornell/Brown/Penn Office website for information before and after arrival in the UK.

If it is an emergency and not during normal business hours at Brown you can call Police & Security at (401) 863-3322. They can reach one of us at all times - ask them to contact one of the staff of the Office of International Programs at home following their emergency procedure directions from our office.

Brown University
Office of International Programs
Box 1973
Providence, RI 02912
Ph. 401-863-3555
Fax: 401-863-3311
E-mail: OIP_Office@brown.edu
The Cornell-Brown-Penn Office in London

The office is located at Faraday House, 48-51 Old Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AE United Kingdom
Telephone: 011 44 789 963 8861
Email: cornellbrownpennuk@gmail.com
http://www.cornell-brown-penn.ac.uk/

The Director of the office, Dr. Meghan Callahan, provides assistance to students from Cornell, Brown and Penn. Meghan is a dual US/UK citizen. She received her Ph.D. in Art History from Rutgers University and her MA in Art History from Syracuse University. Before leaving for the UK it is possible to contact Meghan for advice or assistance. Meghan will know that you are coming and can be reached by email at cornellbrownpennuk@gmail.com.

After arrival in the UK, Meghan will contact you to see how you are settling in to your host university and its surroundings. For those of you studying in and around London, she will arrange a welcome meeting that will happen sometime after your host university orientation. The meeting will give you the opportunity to address anything that you are still unsure about, and to meet other Cornell, Brown and Penn students studying abroad. Meghan tries to visit students who are not studying in London at least once during their stay, and encourages those students to keep in touch with her throughout the term.

Your first days in a new country may be exciting and full of adventure. However, if you are feeling down and are having difficulty adjusting, please be sure to contact Meghan. She will be glad to discuss with you any issues you may be facing, either concerning your academic program or more personal problems. Please remember that she is there to help you as needed.
Pre-departure Information
Passports and Visas

Make sure your passport is up to date and valid for at least 6 months after the last date you expect to be outside the United States. For students who are not American citizens, make sure your necessary USA visa documents are up to date with Brown’s Foreign Student and Scholars Office for your re-entry to the USA.

Who needs a Visa?

The best way to find out if you need a visa is to fill out a short questionnaire at the following website: https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

If you have EU nationality or you are from Iceland, Liechtenstein Norway or Switzerland, you do not need immigration permission to come to the UK. You can enter, study and work in the UK without restriction.

If you have dual nationality, and you choose to come to the UK using your EEA or Swiss passport, you do not need immigration permission.

If you are coming to the UK to study on a full year programme and you have no other immigration permission for the UK, you will need to apply for a Tier 4 (General) Student visa. You can only apply for Tier 4 when your offer at your chosen UK University is unconditional.

If you are coming to the UK for less than six months (i.e for one semester), and do not intend to work or volunteer, you can study at your UK University with a Student Visitor visa.

Student Visitor Visa

Where to apply?

Entry clearance applications for student visitor leave are made using form VAF1D or online and cost £80. Non-visa nationals can apply free of charge on arrival in the UK, in which case you must carry with you in your hand luggage all the documents you would otherwise have submitted with an entry clearance application, for example, the offer letter from the UK University, details of finances, and information about your accommodation in the UK. You can check if you are a non-visa national here: https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa

As a student visitor, you must leave the UK on or before the date that your immigration permission ends. Student visitors are not allowed to apply to switch into any other immigration category while still in the UK. If you wish to continue studying in the UK after your immigration permission as a student visitor has come to an end, you will need to return home and apply for entry clearance as a Tier 4 (General) student, or in another appropriate immigration category.
As a student visitor, you cannot do any kind of work or work placement during your studies in the UK. If you want to be allowed to work in the UK during your studies, you will need to apply to enter the UK as a Tier 4 (General) student or in another appropriate immigration category instead.

**Tier 4 Student Visa**

Firstly, do not apply for your Tier 4 visa more than 3 months before the start date of your programme. The date of your application is the date that you pay online or pay at the visa application centre. If you apply too early, your application will be refused and you will lose the application fee. That said, don’t leave it to the last minute either since there are several steps to follow.

Students who are not US citizens must check the UK regulations pertaining to their nationalities and secure any special entry documents or visas that may be required. Do this early since considerable time may be necessary for clearance to be obtained by citizens of certain countries. For more information, start here: [https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa](https://www.gov.uk/check-uk-visa)

**THIS IS A GENERAL GUIDE ONLY. YOU MUST CHECK THE UK CONSULATE WEBSITE TO MAKE SURE THAT THE REQUIREMENTS AND DOCUMENTATION HAVE NOT CHANGED**

**STEP 1 Complete the online application**

The online application forms can be found at [www.visa4UK.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4UK.fco.gov.uk) (Tier 4 general application form).

You will need to have the following on hand:

- An e-mail address
- Your CAS # (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies)
- A valid passport
- Your address in the UK if you know it
- Your travel itinerary
- Date of intended travel to the UK is particularly important
- A valid credit card or debit card to pay for your application and return postage.
- Access to a printer as you will be required to print your on-line Visa application form and biometrics appointment confirmation (with bar code) as part of the process. Pay online for the return mail service of your documents, plus the current visa fee, which is $481 as of April 3, 2014.

After completing the form and making the payments you’ll be directed to make an appointment at an Application Support Center to enroll your biometric data. Print out the completed application form, the payment confirmation and the biometric appointment confirmation.
If you haven’t completed the application online, print out a VAF9 form and complete it by hand but ensure you have the most up to date copy. There is also a Self Assessment form Appendix 8, which needs to be filled out and included with your application.

STEP 2 Attend the biometric data collection appointment

Remember to take along your appointment confirmation, as well as a copy of the completed online form, proof of payment and your original passport. You will not be seen without an appointment.

STEP 3 Submit your visa application by post

You must submit your visa application by post to the appropriate Consulate within 2 weeks of your biometric appointment. You will be notified during the application procedure, which is the right consulate to deal with. Be sure to send your application by certified mail or by an express mail service (e.g., Federal Express or UPS). Never send your passport by regular US postage.

SEND THE FOLLOWING ITEMS (all originals, plus photocopies):

• Your valid passport.
• Two passport-sized, color photographs. Ensure your photographs meet the correct specifications (i.e. recent, on a white background, not framed etc) or it will not be accepted.
• a printed copy of your online visa application and completed self assessment form Appendix 8.
• If your country does not support online applications you must download, complete and submit a VAF9. Make sure the form you are using is the most up-to-date.
• Original or certified copies of supporting documents (if requested): acceptance letter from your UK university or program with CAS # included, an up-to-date transcript or the document mentioned on your CAS.
• Proof that you meet the maintenance requirements. This means a minimum of £1000 per month in London or £800 per month elsewhere in the UK (for applications made on or after 1 July 2014, the monthly amount will increase from £1000 to £1020 for London and £820 for elsewhere in the UK). These funds should be in an account you can draw on, and must have been there for a minimum of 28 days prior to making your application. Proofs of assets, bonds, or investments are not acceptable.
  o Proof of maintenance also includes your course fees. However, your Tier 4 sponsor will state the amount you need to show for course fees on your CAS, and since we pay for your course fees, your CAS will state that no course fees are due.
  o While all applicants must have proof of maintenance available, ‘low-risk nationals’ need not to submit them with their visa application unless they are requested. Please check the UKBA website to see if you are a ‘low-risk national’.
Note: There are no immigration checks between the Republic of Ireland and the UK. To avoid later difficulties on entering or leaving the UK, please do not book your first flight via Dublin or any other Irish airport – even if it seems to be a bargain. Please see the additional Visa handout in your packet as it is more informative in its content.

Health Issues

Cultural Adjustment and Stress
Studying Abroad is an excellent opportunity for academic and personal growth. Living in a foreign environment can be exhilarating and at the same time, stressful. Adjusting to a new environment requires flexibility and the ability to try and fail without much concern. While studying abroad, mild physical or psychological disorders, which may be under control at home can become serious under the additional stresses of adjusting to a new culture.

If you have a physical or psychological condition that requires treatment or monitoring by a health care provider, you should consult with your physician or therapist about going to the UK. For example, if you are on medication discuss with your physician the type of care you may need while abroad and the best way to continue your regimen. Seriously evaluate the potential impact of stress from cultural adjustment and the availability and possible limitations of needed medical care in the new environment.

All students should have a complete physical check-up, have their eyes checked before departure, and take care of any dental problems that might flare up while away from home for an entire year or semester.

Shots:
There are no immunizations required for travel to the United Kingdom. However, due to meningitis outbreaks at several UK institutions, some institutions are STRONGLY recommending a meningitis vaccine before you enroll. Please check the materials you receive from your host school for information on whether they require this vaccine. So far this vaccination program seems to have reduced the risks of meningitis at the universities. If you are planning to travel to developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East during breaks, you should consult a qualified physician or the staff of the Miriam Hospital Travel Clinic before leaving about required shots.

Medication:
If you take prescription medicine bring enough with you for the entire time you are away. Medicines differ from country to country and cannot legally be mailed to you from the USA. You should also take with you a doctor's prescription which also gives the generic names of the drugs in case you need to consult a local doctor. You might also need this certificate to carry the medicines into the country with you, as customs officials can confiscate unlabelled or uncertified drugs. If you wear contact lenses consider taking extra solution and a special sterilizing unit which can be used overseas as well as a spare set of lenses or glasses. Contact lens solutions, even those with the same brand name, can differ from country to country.
Health Care:
Health care in the UK, through its free National Health Service, is generally excellent. Students spending the entire university year in England and Wales are entitled to free treatment through the NHS. Semester students will not be covered by the NHS but may use their university’s health services. In Scotland NHS coverage is offered to all visiting students. Upon arrival at your residence hall and/or during orientation you should receive information about how to locate and register with a G.P. (general practitioner) and obtain your numbered NHS card if appropriate.

For emergency care, naturally one should phone for an ambulance or, if able, go straight to the casualty (emergency) department of a hospital.

Counseling services are often available through the UK University at no charge. Alternatively, there a plenty of private options where you would need to pay a fee, unless the treatment received is covered by a U.S. health insurance policy. Remember that free National Health Service care is only available while you are on British soil. The moment you leave the UK, you need other health insurance coverage.

Insurance

Students are required to carry health insurance, whether Brown University’s student health insurance plan (SHIP) or family insurance is up to you to decide. Brown’s policy does cover you abroad in a manner similar to that at Brown (except for health services). In the case of private insurance, we urge you to check provisions for coverage abroad before you leave. Also, be aware that most international coverage is made on a reimbursement basis (including Brown’s policy) which means that you pay for the service on-site and then submit receipts to be reimbursed.

Note* Bring claim forms with you if your insurance works on a reimbursement basis in order to avoid delays in requesting repayment.

If you are carrying Brown student health insurance, medical/prescription claim forms are available at the Office of Insurance and Risk website at www.brown.edu.insurance.

If you have any questions regarding SHIP, you can call or write to:

Cheryl Moan
Brown University
Office of Insurance and Risk
Box 1848
Providence, RI 02912
Ph# 401-863-9481
Email: Cheryl_Moan@brown.edu
In addition we provide you with a Brown Travel Assistance Plan which covers evacuation and repatriation as well as some other services. This plan is provided by International SOS (http://www.internationalsos.com) and the contact numbers in case of emergency are:

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<th>If calling from:</th>
<th>Call Alarm Center in:</th>
<th>At this number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. or Canada</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>1-800-523-6586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Call collect: 1-215-942-8226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Call collect: 00-215-942-8226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South and Central America</td>
<td>Philadelphia, PA</td>
<td>Call collect: 00-215-942-8226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe, CIS, Africa or the Middle East</td>
<td>London</td>
<td>Call collect: 44-208-762-8008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia, Australia or the Pacific Rim</td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Call collect: 65-6338-7800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When you contact them you must reference: Group membership #: 11BSGC000031

The services provided by International SOS range from telephone advice and referrals to full-scale evacuation by private air ambulance. The SOS network of multilingual specialists operates 24 hour a day, 365 days a year from SOS Alarm Centers around the world. However, International SOS is NOT health insurance.

Requests for reimbursement for medical care received while abroad should be submitted to your health insurance provider.

You will also be given a wallet size card with important information on how to access International SOS services. Please carry this with you at all times in case you need emergency assistance. REMEMBER: In case of emergency, contact the site coordinator as well!

Other Types of Insurance

Also, advice to obtain insurance against theft, loss or damage to personal possessions is often mentioned in British student publications and you would be well-advised to look into property insurance, particularly if you are bringing a laptop or other valuable electronic goods with you. Note that many homeowner's insurance policies contain a clause about this coverage extending worldwide. Normally a copy of the police report filed at the time of loss or theft will be required by the insurer before any claim will be considered. With large student populations it soon becomes obvious which are student houses, and poor security encourages opportunist theft especially in the early days of the semester. Property insurance can be obtained in the UK if you fail to purchase it before leaving (Endsleigh is one the best known UK companies). Make sure it covers your property while traveling on vacation outside the UK.
**What to pack?**

1. **Appropriate clothing**: While winter is not usually snowy and frigid, it is likely to be rainy and cold from October through March. The average temperature is in the low 40s in winter and upper 60s or higher in summer. Waterproofs and clothes you can layer are essential.
2. **An outfit for formal occasions** (a jacket, tie and respectable pants for guys/a dress, smart trousers or skirt and nice top for girls). Bring a set of clothes for “going out” too. Certain places, particularly in London, will not allow entry if you are wearing sneakers.
3. **Good walking shoes**.
4. **Towel** (you can also buy one inexpensively on arrival)
5. **Camera**
6. **An adapter and converter**. Many travelers to Europe have had difficulties with their electronics, because European and American power systems are run differently. Most of the world, including Europe, uses a 220 volt/50 hertz system. A handful of other countries, including the United States, have 110 volt/60 hertz electricity. If you are bringing electronic items, it’s essential you have the correct adapter and converter. An adapter adapts your plug to fit into a UK socket (US have two prong plugs, while the UK have three-pronged plugs). A converter converts the electricity. You can of course get two in one, which both adapts and converts. Please seek advice from your local electronic store, such a radioshack.
7. **A laptop** would be convenient, although there are computer centers at the Universities if you do not own a laptop (the hours will likely not be as long as you are used to at Brown). Check your computer can be safely used in the UK (for the same reasons as stated in point 11).
8. **Extra passport-size photos of yourself** (needed for ID’s, tube passes, etc.)
9. **Some GBP** for when you arrive, incase you wish to purchase refreshments or pay for transport – it’ll be one less thing to think about when you are tired and groggy. You can get British pound notes easily by going to a teller at your bank in the US before you leave.

**What not to pack**

1. **Too much stuff!** If you don’t wear that outfit at home, it’s unlikely you’ll wear it in the UK.
2. **Hairdryers or hair straighteners**. Even with the correct adapter/ converter, it’s unlikely they will work as well as they do back home. You can buy them inexpensively in the UK (eg. at “Boots”).
3. **Pepper/mace spray** – it’s considered a firearm in the UK.
4. **Bed linen** - provisions depend on which halls of residence you are in so you should read your housing notice carefully to see what is provided. If it isn’t provided, you can easily buy cheap linens in the UK, and often they are better than what the University provide anyway.
Arranging Temporary Housing

If you will be living in university housing, you will be notified during the late summer or in late December of the date when your room will be available and its location. If you intend to arrive earlier than the date of occupancy, then you should make temporary housing arrangements before leaving home. Prices will range in the neighborhood of at least £40+ for university residence hall, £60 + for bed and breakfast, and £80+ for an economy class hotel.

For short-stay options, KCL have put together a list of hotels, bed and breakfasts and hostels are good options:
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/pg/accom/kings/private/attachments/s-stay.pdf

If you are going to London far in advance in the summer (July – mid-September), university residences are often available for vacation lets. LSE, Kings College London and University of Westminster for example, let out their housing commercially to all members of the public (not just their students). It’s quite likely your chosen university will offer similar housing options, so check there first.
http://www.lsevacations.co.uk
http://www.kingsvenues.com/Home.aspx
http://www.westminster.ac.uk/business/facilities-and-services/summer-accommodation

Budgeting for Brown-in-Britain

In order to help you budget appropriately, we have created a cost information sheet which is available on the OIP website and can be found at http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/program-costs-united-kingdom. **Airfare and living costs are based on our best information at the time of writing but these costs can change quickly with exchange rate fluctuations and price changes.** * Some students may find their academic programs extending further into June. Adjust living costs as needed.

Also, it can’t be stressed enough that these costs are based on living in the same way as a local student. They do not include eating out in restaurants every night, or buying a lot of imported American foods or products which are expensive, or travel beyond that needed for daily life and commuting to university. If you wish to include more of these in your budget, please add personal funds accordingly. Legally financial aid may only cover travel necessary to complete the academic program, therefore all outside travel will come from your personal funds. **Expect consumer goods to be double the price they are in the US.**

Since you are in an unfamiliar environment and you will be confronted with an almost endless array of entertainment possibilities, it’s easy to forget your budget. Keep in mind that most British students are all managing to survive and even to enjoy life on fairly limited means. Many take advantage of the subsidized cafeteria-style meals in the college, university, or student union refectories.
British students who are in subsidized university residence halls consider themselves lucky and, despite the quality of the food, usually take meals there or prepare their own food bought in street markets or large supermarkets as opposed to neighborhood groceries and convenience stores. During vacations, many now work as loans have replaced grants for student funding. Those who are able to travel use student-discount fares and the least expensive hostels they can find. While you may not be ready to live entirely as the British students do, everything you can learn from them will help you to conserve your own funds.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

• Make both weekly and daily budgets and stick to them.
• Learn the value of the money wherever you are. Be careful not to fall into the habit of equating one unit of a foreign currency with $1.00 when in fact £1 is currently worth around $1.45-$1.60 depending on the exchange rate.
• Cook your own meals or use refectory meals over restaurant meals and save even moderately priced restaurant outings for special occasions.
• Plan your entertainment and recreational activities around the availability of free, inexpensive and discounted events. Remember that the facilities and activities of the Student Unions are designed to serve the needs of students who are operating on tightly constrained budgets. Always be sure to inquire about student discounts - Britain is a student-friendly country and often provides significant discounts when you show a valid student ID.
• Plan to shop in street markets and major chain supermarkets such as Sainsbury’s or Tesco as much as possible and avoid specialty shops and convenience stores that add a 20-30% mark-up. In supermarkets buy the store’s own name brand products as they are usually cheaper. Avoid US brands since they are sometimes imported and much more expensive. Street markets sell quality fruits and vegetables at low prices and are a great way to explore the culture and flavor of a city.
• If you do need to eat out, take advantage of offers/coupons/vouchers using this website: http://www.vouchercodes.co.uk
• Try to put off making major purchases as long as you can. You may find that you can do without the item or will, at the very least, give yourself an opportunity to shop and compare goods and prices. Remember you will probably have limited room in your suitcase to pack everything- shipping goods home will only add to your expenses.
• Almost all of the Student Unions have travel information services, aimed at students on a budget.
• If you plan to travel via airplane, book your reservations well in advance- Ryanair and Easyjet are just two of the services that provide very cheap airfares, but if you wait until the last minute it will cost you much more.
• Good website for hostels: hostelworld.com
• Good website for flights: skyscanner.net (don’t use this website to book flights, just use it to compare providers and then book through the airline directly).
• Good website for travel guides: lonelyplanet.com or tripadvisers.co.uk
• Take advantage of the value-added tax (VAT) on goods exemptions for visitors who are not from countries of the European Union. The trouble is
only worthwhile for expensive items (over £75), and only certain stores participate in the program. Ask the store for a certificate of exportation when you make your purchase (they will need to see your passport), and present the certificate and the goods to the customs officer for validation when you leave the country. You must take the goods out of the country within three months of their purchase. Lines at airports are long so leave plenty of time. You can claim a refund of the tax from the store by mail—if possible, obtain it in your own currency rather than in pounds. For more information, visit http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/vat/sectors/consumers/overseas-visitors.htm

Program Costs

A cost information sheet for the Brown-in-Britain program is available on the OIP website and can be found at http://www.brown.edu/academics/college/special-programs/international-study/program-costs-united-kingdom. Airfare and living costs are estimated and can change quickly with fluctuations in the value of the British pound.

*Please note: In addition to the program fee, all students on Brown programs will automatically be billed for Brown Health Insurance. Students on Brown programs will receive information in regards to this bill from the Office of Insurance and Risk. The bill will be waived ONLY if students return the "Health Insurance Waiver Form" to the Office of Insurance and Risk. Remember! You must return the "Health Insurance Waiver Form" for the bill to be waived! For more information, contact the Office of Insurance and Risk: 401-863-9481.

Refund Policy

Withdrawal Prior to the Start of the Program
Any expenses that have been incurred by Brown on behalf of the student once the student has made a commitment to the program (in writing and/or by submitting the program deposit), will be the responsibility of the student (i.e., host institution fees, pre-payment of orientation housing, etc.) and charged to the student account.

Withdrawal After the Start of the Program
If a student withdraws from a study abroad program during the first five weeks of the program, he or she is eligible for a refund of Brown tuition payments based on the schedule below. Brown is not responsible for indirect costs paid directly by the student, including, but not limited to, passport fees, vaccinations, and transportation costs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Withdraw</th>
<th>Refund</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prior to program start</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the first 14 days</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in days 15-21</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in days 22-28</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in days 29-35</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>after day 35</td>
<td>no refund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For students who leave because of a medical or family emergency, the same refund policy applies. A student who is suspended, dismissed, or withdraws while under investigation for misconduct, will not have tuition payments refunded.

Students who choose to withdraw from a program abroad and, subsequently, enroll at Brown during the semester that corresponds to their semester abroad will be responsible for all costs incurred by Brown up to the time they withdrew from the program.

If a student withdraws from a program, the deposit paid to confirm his or her place on the program is not refundable. For housing or fees paid directly to the host institution abroad, the refund policy of that institution will be in effect.

**Dismissal from the Program**

The Office of International Programs in consultation with our partner institutions, Site Personnel, and the Program Faculty Directors at Brown reserves the right to dismiss a student and require that they leave immediately if in our judgment the student behaves in a manner which endangers him/herself, others on the program or the program’s continued operations. Illegal drug use is grounds for immediate dismissal.
Money and Banking

British money is the pound (£) sterling. It is decimalized and divided into 100p or pence. It usually fluctuates in value from $1.45 - $1.60 depending on the exchange rate. It's worth shopping around to compare exchange rates and/or fees charged for changing currency since these do vary and you may save money by making an informed choice.

You should arrive with sufficient funds to take you through the first several weeks of the term, including your first term's accommodation payment, which will be due either at registration or shortly thereafter. If you choose to rent privately, you may be expected to pay four weeks' advance rent + a deposit of four weeks' rent. We recommend you have around £1000/($1750 - $2,000) available to cover start-up expenses and make an initial bank deposit.

ATM and Electronic transfer of funds
There are ATMs (otherwise known as “cashpoints” in the UK) on pretty much every main street. In more rural areas, they may be harder to locate, but in the cities that you are studying in you shouldn’t have any problem finding one.

Check your bank fees as this may be expensive to use on a regular basis. Some U.S. banks charge $5 - $20 dollars per international withdrawal. You should check your bank statements online to monitor your account and fees being charged. Some US banks have relationships with British banks where you can withdraw money from specific British banks' ATMs without a fee (For Bank of America, this is true of Barclay's ATMs).

Also check to see if your bankcard can be used in Europe and under what systems. ATMs running on the Plus or Cirrus systems are as ubiquitous as in the U.S. With a U.S. debit card, you may generally withdraw up to £200 per day from an ATM.

Money can also be wired directly from an account in the USA to your account in the UK. The sender would need to know the name as you gave it to create your bank account (i.e. if you use your full name including middle name or initial the person sending the money needs to put this on the form), the full name and
street address of the receiving bank, your account number and your UK bank’s international banking ID number (readily obtained by asking your bank).

Another way to wire money fast – for instance if you have had your purse stolen and need funds instantly- is via Western Union. You can have money sent to you online, and you collect it from a Western Union Branch by showing ID (e.g. passport). http://www2.westernunion.co.uk/gb/home-beta.page?

**Traveler’s Checks**

Traveler’s checks are quite a dated way of managing your money whilst you are abroad, but it can be handy as a back up or for emergency use. They may be purchased in sterling or U.S. dollars from any number of companies, such as American Express, Barclay’s, Citicorp, Thomas Cook, etc. They are safe because they are refundable if lost, but you must have a record of the check numbers in order to have them replaced. Write down all traveler's check numbers and put them in a separate place from the checks. As a precaution, leave a copy of the list of numbers with someone in the U.S. American Express also offers a type of traveler’s checks in $25, $50 or $100, called American Express Gift Checks, which do not need to be endorsed by the donor and which will be replaced if they are lost or stolen. Marks & Spencer, a British department store, has excellent exchange rates and does not charge any service fee to exchange cash or traveler’s checks.

**Other Ways to Transfer Money**

You may wish to consult your own bank about other ways to send money abroad, since this is something that is always progressing.

Do NOT expect to cash regular US $ checks, whether institutional checks (i.e. from Brown) or personal. This takes 4-6 weeks to clear the bank before you actually get your money.

**Bank Accounts**

Fewer students now establish bank accounts in Britain. Although full-year students may find there are certain restrictions in opening an account we recommend you do so since it will simplify financial transactions. One semester students should check with the UK Office staff for advice about bank accounts. The four biggest banks in England are Barclay’s, Lloyds/TSB, HSBC and NatWest, all of which have branches around the country, and the two biggest in Scotland are the Royal Bank of Scotland and Clydesdale Midland.

For a detailed guide to banking in the UK as an international student, please see http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/International-Students/When-you-arrive/Opening-a-bank-account/

**Working in the UK**

Working while you are on a study abroad program can be a very satisfying personal experience and give you a better opportunity to meet people from different walks of life outside the "ivory tower." Be forewarned that if you
attempt to work without formal permission and are caught, you are subject to immediate deportation without right to appeal. While in the past students who worked illegally were generally ignored and/or let go with a caution, it seems that immigration officers are now raiding pubs and fast-food outlets, seeking actively to enforce the law. You will then not receive the academic credits which you have been working towards, as you will not have completed the necessary coursework and exams. Brown also does not consider this appropriate grounds for any refund of fees paid as this is at your own risk.

Visiting students who are registered as full-time students at a British university for a full academic year and therefore have obtained a Tier 4 Visa, are permitted to work for 20 hours a week during term-time and full time during vacations. Students registered for less than six months, who know they want to work, should apply at the nearest UK consulate or embassy for a Tier 4 visa before coming to the UK. If you do not get pre-entry clearance, you will be given a prohibition on employment stamp in your passport, which does not allow any employment at all. Keep in mind that obtaining a Tier 4 visa is expensive, and weigh up if it’s actually worth it.

For all students, check the stamp you received immediately and if you think there’s been a mistake, ask about it! Also, be aware that, the Immigration rules require a student to be "able to meet the costs of his course and accommodation and the maintenance of himself and any dependents without taking employment or engaging in business". Translated from bureaucratese, this means you must still be able to show proof of sufficient funds to support yourself while in the UK and cannot use income from anticipated part-time work to count towards this proof. This work permission allows a student to work up to 20 hours per week during term time. It specifically prohibits a student from engaging in business, self-employment, providing services as a sportsperson or entertainer, or filling a permanent full-time job vacancy.

Upon Arrival

Documents Needed for Entering the United Kingdom

In addition to your passport, and your entry clearance stamp if you will be there longer than six months, you will need the original admission letter from your British university and your acceptance letter from Brown. You will also receive (in your pre-departure packet) an entry letter (“To Whom It May Concern”) which states that you are enrolled as a full-time student at Brown University and are a participant in one of our officially recognized foreign study programs. The letter will refer to your sources of funding and guarantee adequate funds for tuition and fees. In addition to the letter provided by Brown, you must provide documentation concerning the financial resources available to you to cover your living costs. If you are not receiving financial aid, a notarized letter from your financial guarantor stating the amount of money at your disposal to cover expenses will be sufficient. Financially-aided students should carry with them the original (and copies) of their financial aid award letters. Upon arrival in the UK, you may be asked to present both admission letters as evidence of your
legitimate purpose in entering the country. Keep these letters with you for use while traveling (with photocopies left in a safe place).

**Immigration and Customs**

If you fly to London from the U.S., you will probably arrive at London Heathrow or London Gatwick airport. If going to Scotland you can fly into Edinburgh or Glasgow. In any case, you will be required to fill out a landing card provided by the flight attendants. Remember that admission to the country is entirely at the discretion of the immigration officer and it is useful to be polite. The interviewing immigration officer will determine from your documents the length of stay to be authorized and stamped into your passport and will ask you how long you plan to remain in the UK. If you have not applied for ‘pre-entry clearance’ or a visa, you will enter the UK as a ‘student visitor’: this status will not give you permission to work and you will not be given this permission on entry so do not ask for it. Doing so could result in your being sent straight back to the US! Note: There are no obvious immigration checks between the Republic of Ireland and the UK – you are strongly advised not to enter the UK for the first time via Ireland.

Before leaving Immigration Control, check that the Border Force Officer has put a date stamp (if you had a Visa or Entry Clearance) in your passport; or (if you are a non-visa national coming for a course of less than six months and do not have Entry Clearance) check that you have been stamped in as a 'Student Visitor'.

After going through immigration you will go through customs. The customs officials have the right to search you and your belongings, and you are responsible for unpacking and repacking your goods. It is advisable to declare any dutiable goods and it is strongly advised that you not attempt to bring in any drugs unless you have a certificate from the doctor who prescribed them. Personal items sent to Britain are also subject to Customs examinations and may in some cases require import licenses. It is your responsibility to ensure that you conform with the British Customs regulations. If in doubt, ask before departure. Do not attempt to import any warm-blooded animal into the UK. All animals are quarantined for six months at a hefty cost. If caught with illegal items, you may be sent to prison and then deported. Mace-type sprays for personal safety are classed as offensive weapons in the UK and are illegal. You will be charged if caught with them.

After immigration control / customs, you will be able to collect your baggage. At most airports baggage is unloaded on to one of a number of moving belts ('carousels') in the baggage collection area. Look for your flight number and the name of the place your flight departed from on the screens, or above the carousels, and wait for each item of your baggage to appear. If any item does not come through, find a representative of the airline you travelled on and fill in a lost baggage form.
Aliens’ Registration

Passport holders from certain countries are required to register with the police. This does NOT apply to American citizens or European Union passport holders. If registration is required, the immigration officer will instruct those staying in London more than six months to report within seven days to the Overseas Visitors Record Office at 180 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LH to register with the police. People going to locations outside London will register at their local police stations. The procedure is simple but there is a fee and you will also need two passport-type photos. If you will be leaving the UK permanently in less than six months, advise the immigration officer before he or she stamps your passport so you won’t have to register. The certificate of registration should be carried at all times as a means of identification and surrendered at the port of final departure from Britain. **Note:** It is your responsibility to ensure that all the police formalities are carried out and conditions fulfilled.

Change Money

If you haven’t brought cash in sterling with you, before continuing onward toward your final destination, you may need to change some money at the airport or if you are using your bank card withdraw some money at an ATM machine (quickest, easiest, and the best rates). It is usually better to change your money at a bank rather than at exchange agencies, which are found in airports or on the streets, because the latter charge higher commissions. Change only what you expect to need for immediate expenses; you will be able to change more at a bank later.

Getting to Your Final Destination

After finishing with the necessary entry procedures, it is time to be on your way to your final destination. You may find that your university has arranged a ‘meet and greet’ scheme at the London airports to give you advice on onward travel. Check with your hosting university’s own materials for new students.

Getting into London (or to train stations for onward trains to other destinations)

From Heathrow, there are four basic forms of transport into central London -- by ‘Heathrow Express’ train, by coach (bus), by underground (tube) or by taxi. The express train service runs to Paddington Station. The National Express (coach) service runs from Heathrow to Victoria Coach Station. Although slower, the coach is usually cheaper than the train.

There are three Underground stations at Heathrow; one for terminals 1, 2 and 3; one for terminal 4 and one for terminal 5. During the day trains run roughly every 10 minutes, and the journey takes about 50 minutes to central London. The fare to any central zone station is around £5-6. Problems for the visitor can be the long lines for tickets and minimal space for luggage; there are no carts for bags at the other end. All this can be a bit daunting after a transatlantic flight. However,
tubes run 20 hours a day (slightly less on Sundays) and are easily reached by moving walkways at Heathrow.

The cost of a cab from Heathrow into central London will come to well over £60 without tip depending upon the time of day and traffic conditions. It takes twice as long to reach the city by cab as by train.

From Gatwick, there are overground trains and a choice of coaches. Though the journey can be done by taxi, the distance involved makes it extremely costly. The National Express coaches run hourly between Gatwick and Victoria coach station from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and cost £12. There are train services from Gatwick to London Bridge and Kings Cross-St Pancras, and the ‘Gatwick Express’, which is a non-stop train service to Victoria, every half hour (more expensive than the standard train). The station is inside the airport, just a short walk from the Arrivals Hall. Between 6.00 a.m. and midnight there are four trains an hour to Victoria and a similar number of the London Bridge/King’s Cross-St Pancras route.

For making connections outside of London it’s best to follow the arrival instructions provided by the host university, which will likely include taking a bus or train from London. Remember to have money for a taxi from your final station stop to the university.

For Oxford the easiest way to travel to Oxford is by bus (http://www.theairline.info). There is a regular bus service from Gatwick and Heathrow airports, which arrives at the central bus station in Oxford. The cost of a single ticket is about £20 (from Gatwick) and £16 (from Heathrow); you will, therefore, need some sterling currency immediately on arrival. When you arrive at Oxford, you may need to take a taxi from the bus station if you have a lot of luggage.

Finally, check the UK Office www.cornell-brown-penn.ac.uk site for further links to travel information.
UK Higher Education System and the Visiting Student

The British higher education system comprises two major groups of institutions. These are the 82 universities and the approximately 800 colleges and institutes of further education which provide vocational and technical programs. This system has been undergoing many changes in the last decade, stemming from the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992. The changes that most affect you as visiting students are the change in enrollments, admission requirements, course structures, and the modularization of courses.

Two points to remember: First, unlike most of the higher education systems of continental European countries, there is no tradition in the UK of automatic access to tertiary education based upon success at the secondary level. Second, by and large, British students entering a university at age 18 or 19 know what subject they will major in and will have a level of knowledge and experience roughly equivalent to that of an American student at the end of the freshman year. They will take almost all their courses in their chosen departments and know from the entry to university which courses they will be taking.

Due to academic specialization at the secondary school level, admission to UK universities is done by the specific teaching department in which the student intends to take his or her degree. Since there are constraints on the total number of "home" students (UK citizens) that a university is permitted to admit, the process is quite competitive. Your application must also be accepted by a specific primary department, although for the most part you will not need to follow the same restrictions as UK students do in course choices. With the exception of the Scottish universities as noted elsewhere, first-degree courses at most universities and in most subjects last for three years and lead to a classified bachelor's degree.

Students carry a course load consisting of regularly scheduled lectures, seminars and tutorials, and laboratory classes depending upon the subject. What constitutes a full course load varies amongst universities and even departments. The number of classroom contact hours also varies by the methods employed to teach a given subject. Arts and social sciences students may have as few as ten contact hours per week whereas science and engineering students are likely to have around 20 hours. All of these courses will normally be in your concentration or in closely related subjects. Traditionally, and still commonly in many fields, a course is taught over the entire session (year) and cannot easily be divided into discrete parts like semester courses at Brown. However, at some universities there are increasing numbers of 'modularized' self-contained one-term, two-term or one semester courses.

Assessment of a British degree candidate's academic performance is very different from the system to which we are accustomed in the US. In most institutions very little, if any, weight is given to work done in class or to examinations taken during the course of the degree. The only assessment that counts is the final examination at the end of the final year of the degree course. In the competitive environment for access to universities, it is expected of all admitted students to work at the "Honours" degree standard, thus translating
into a very low percentage of failure. Essay marks and grades on mid-course examinations that might be required at the end of the first or other years are useful primarily to reveal the student’s self-discipline and analytical powers in working his or her way independently through the suggested readings. This means that you will be expected to show the same self-discipline and self-motivation in pursuing your own course of reading and study.

**What level of courses to take?**

It is reasonable to say that the British second and third years are roughly equivalent to the American junior and senior years and therefore Brown students studying at British universities should expect to enroll primarily in courses in their concentration intended for second year undergraduates. Occasionally, but very rarely, they may be permitted to take third-year courses if they have an outstanding background and can present clear justification of need. Lower-level courses are usually advisable in non-concentration fields. In fact, it would be unusual to be admitted to an upper-level course without at least two, and preferably three, previous courses in the subject.

**Studying Habits and the System**

The non-existence of a tradition of “loco parentis” in the UK, and the attitude toward scholarship leads to the assumption that a student's presence in the university automatically means that he or she is self-motivated and prepared to work independently.

American students unfamiliar with the British system will find that course organization and the methods of teaching can vary even from department to department. Because British students, given cultural values on understatement and modesty, will often give an appearance of doing less work than they actually are, the visiting student must be careful not to be lulled into a feeling of complacency. Remember that your fellow British student is trained to work independently and, by knowing how the system works, is able to develop a rhythm suited to the requirements of the specialized degree program carried out over the course of three or four years. He or she will seem to work harder at peak periods prior to the all important examinations because these are the only assessments that really count for UK students. Otherwise, the written work prepared for discussion in tutorials and based on extensive reading generally carries little weight in terms of final grading for the UK student.

This is usually, however, not true for visiting students. In fact, frequently, tutorial work and active participation constitute the primary means of assessing junior year abroad students. This is not to say that the classroom atmosphere is as non-competitive as it may appear to be initially to the American student; on the contrary, the competition is there but it is more subtle and less blatant than in American universities. This observation is confirmed in the remarks of many British and other European students who have had the opportunity to experience the American system.
Teaching Methods

Courses are arranged by individual teaching departments to suit their own needs, standards and objectives. Courses consist of lectures, smaller group seminars and discussion classes, laboratory and practical classes, and tutorials or supervisions. End-of-year or end-of-term course examinations are becoming an increasingly common feature of monitoring progress and may count for 70 percent or more of the final grade for visiting students. Other than for these examinations, do not expect to find any form of periodic assessment such as mid-terms and quizzes which are so much a feature of American academic life. Even more, do not expect detailed reading assignments and highly structured lectures of the kind that predetermine the scope and depth of the knowledge required of you. Frequently the number of contact hours is small in relation to the amount of outside reading it is presumed a student is doing in order to gain the breadth and depth of knowledge expected for high performance. Remember that students in the United Kingdom "read for a degree". In other words, the British system generally will not "spoon-feed" students with simply the amount of information they need to know in order to pass the examinations. It is crucial for a student to regularly contact his tutor and professor throughout the term and go to office hours.

Lectures

In the non-science disciplines, lectures and tutorials form the basic instructional program and it is worth pointing out certain features of both along with some recommendations on how to adjust to the system. As mentioned above, lectures are not intended to cover all the material you need to know in order to pass. Rather, lectures are usually topical in nature and serve to highlight specifically selected areas of relevant course material. This can present problems to the American student because, other than being presented in some degree of chronological order, these lectures often appear unrelated one to the other. Remember that the British system is designed to encourage and develop independent and critical thought. Certainly, one purpose of the lecture is to provide information, however, it is assumed that the student is reading the standard works and building a basic understanding of the overall material as background. Thus the lecturer is seeking to suggest questions as well as answers and to offer a train of thought for further examination by the student. It is not common for students to interrupt lectures with questions or comments, although fresh arrivals from America have been known to do this to the great surprise of the British lecturer and the tolerant smiles of British students. Lectures are usually two hours long.

In science and engineering courses (and in some pre-professional disciplines such as architecture), lectures will tend to be more comprehensive, as you would expect in an American university, and will be supported by a heavy load of laboratory and practical classes or problem-solving tutorials.
Seminars and Tutorials

Formal lectures generally do not give students an opportunity to question or debate a point; this is reserved for individual follow-up in seminars or discussion classes and in tutorials. **It is important to attend all the mandatory tutorials.** A seminar is somewhere between a lecture and a tutorial in that it consists of a teacher and from ten to fifteen students but it focuses on the discussion of a pre-assigned topic or of a seminar paper prepared by one of the students.

Tutorials and Academics at Oxford and Cambridge

The tutorial (sometimes called a supervision) is a regularly scheduled meeting between an assigned member of the teaching staff and usually from one to three students. The tutor will ask you to do a good deal of reading around some topic and to write an essay to be submitted at the next meeting. Sometimes the essay will be read by the tutor and marked with written comments, but on other occasions the tutor will ask you to read aloud your own work. Either situation is likely to lead to public discussion of the style and content of the essay and its merits and shortcomings. The focus in tutorial work is on developing critical skills of analysis and synthesis (not simply regurgitating information) that you can later rely upon when working independently.

British degree students rely on the tutor both as a helpful resource for information and as a guide to their academic progress. It cannot be stressed too forcefully the degree to which a successful academic experience for an American student in the UK is very much based on his or her ability to capture the intellectual attention of the tutor, especially at Oxford where this is the primary form of instruction. Otherwise, there is a strong chance that you will remain anonymous in the system and, without proper guidance and encouragement, will inevitably do poorly in the final assessment.

With regard to academics, you’ll find your own pace. As a Brown student, you have the opportunity to make the most of Oxford, not being bound by requirements, unless you are taking courses for credit within your major. You must however stay to the end of each term, including into June, and attend all scheduled tutorial sessions. You will take, on average, two courses during each of Oxford’s three terms. You will meet with your tutor for each subject once a week or once fortnightly. In the interim you will have either a mammoth reading list (American reading lists are light by comparison) with a lengthy essay or problem sets which usually involve the practical application of a concept which you have only been taught in the abstract. At the tutorial you will either present your work and defend it against your tutor’s criticism, or you will have submitted your work in advance and your tutor will conduct a more casual discussion.

Depending upon your course, lectures will be of varying levels of importance. In general, lectures can be attended for enjoyment rather than as a requirement. Within your week, you must do your reading and finish your essay (10 pages per
week per course is typical) or problem set, and be prepared to know your material upon your tutor’s inquiry or circumlocute your ignorance.

There is a strong duality to the tutorial system. If your tutor is good, it is a far superior academic experience to that of a class room system. If your tutor is poor, it is an utter waste of your time. As a result, utilize your flexibility as a Brown student to request courses for which you will be assigned a good tutor. This may involve some contact with your head tutor, who is responsible for coordinating your studies whilst at Oxford and senior students within the subject. You should also focus on topics you find most interesting, since you will be studying them intensely.

**Choosing and Arranging Tutorials**

For most JYA students the choice of subjects for their tutorials can be confusing. Naturally coming from a background where you look at a course catalogue each semester and select from a range of subjects, each described in detail and aimed at a particular year group, you will inevitably find difficulty with the more individualized tutorial system used in several UK institutions. The tutor always assumes that the individual student will undertake the necessary preparatory work on his or her own to acquire a sufficient background knowledge of the topic. Tutorials, then, provide an opportunity for the tutor to use his or her specialist knowledge to the full, rather than to provide an introductory summary of a subject. Therefore you can choose a topic such as ’English Literature 1832 to 1900’ and expect to deal in detail with perhaps only four or five authors, working together with your interests and the tutor’s suggestions to come up with a representative list. Your topics should be broad enough to encompass this kind of selection but not so broad that no sample can be drawn.

The success of any tutorial lies in the relationship which develops between the student and the tutor. Once the initial arrangement has been made by the Academic Adviser, you will meet with your tutor for an exploratory discussion to plan the term’s work. At this stage you should inform the tutor of your expectations, prior knowledge of the subject, and requirements in order to obtain credit at Brown. On this latter point, please bear in mind that it is much easier to sort out potential problems of credit transfer before tutorials begin rather than afterwards. For example, if certain topics within the subject must be studied in order to obtain credit, the tutor should be told of this immediately. Details of whether the tutorials meet regularly on the same day each week at the same time or whether times vary, is also a matter which is arranged directly between you and the tutor. Likewise, tutorials may be held in a variety of locations: College room, University building, or tutor’s own home. Moreover, tutorials are often loosely structured to cater to your interests - you will not necessarily discuss everything in the course but can focus on your areas of interest.

During term it is vital that you maintain good contact with your tutors. Offer to exchange telephone numbers and e-mail addresses, and ask the tutor how she/he prefers you to get in touch in the inevitable case when a tutorial needs to be postponed or changed.
For the JYA student this comparatively amorphous approach to teaching and examination brings both problems and benefits. The main difficulty lies in narrowing tutorial contents. However, on balance this is more than offset by the enormous range of possibilities which the system permits in terms of subjects which may be studied. This is of particular advantage to those JYA students who find themselves having to take particular courses in a certain way in order to be able to obtain credit at their home institution and to those who have a good idea of their interests and want to focus closely on these specific areas.

Reading

Independent reading and research are integral parts of the instructional program. In the final exams, it is assumed that you have taken the initiative to do extensive reading to cover the areas not touched in the lectures and seminars. Normally you will be given a comprehensive reading list for each course with the suggestion `you might want to have a look at these works'. While the list may be daunting, the expectation is that you will work through the list by examining each of the books to see what each contains. You can then select for in-depth reading those works which help develop your fundamental knowledge of the subject or support an idea to be defended. Nevertheless the suggestion to investigate particular books should be interpreted as an imperative `make sure you read' this or that. American students sometimes have difficulty adjusting to shorter library hours and the heavy reliance by British students on library use and borrowing privileges. You must learn quickly how to use the library system and to respect lending rules. It is crucial to keep up with your reading throughout the term.

Libraries and Books

Libraries are an important study tool and JYA students should be aware of the library facilities that are available to them. In general, UK students don’t expect to purchase all the books required for classes as you do in the USA. You can expect to rely much more heavily on the libraries and on borrowed books. This means planning ahead because many libraries in the UK are not lending libraries but rather many books must be read on the premises; in addition, most books need to be ordered up from the stacks (unlike most U.S. college libraries, there may be limited access to stacks except for the staff). In order to use the library, it is important to plan ahead: books can take several hours to arrive, so are best ordered the day before they are required. Some books required for classes are kept on "short-term loan" or are "reserved", where they are in a separate part of the library and you can only check them out for a few hours a day, which calls for even more organization and planning on the student's part. Also library hours are quite different to what you are used to at Brown. In general, it’s best to plan your day as if it is a 9 am-5 pm job and study in the libraries during the day rather than expecting to study late at night.

In addition to main university libraries, JYA students may have access to the Faculty libraries within individual departments or colleges, although access will
be limited to those specific libraries that relate to your main area of study. These may be the best ones to start at for books required by specific department courses.

**Books and Oxford or Cambridge**

In general, you do not buy books at Oxford or Cambridge. Rather, use is made of the college and University libraries. You will be frustrated by the library system. Inevitably, tutors will assign readings in obscure out of print books that can only be found in the library of some college other than your own. Consequently, you will most likely be denied access to that library. Try to develop a network of friends in other colleges who can help you circumvent the system.

**Course load**

The question of what constitutes a full-time course load can be very difficult to understand for American students.

British universities use the term course in two ways. On the one hand, a course is the course of study towards a degree, i.e., the body of knowledge within a discipline which a teaching department sets as the curriculum of a degree program for a UK student. In this sense, a course means the equivalent to the requirements for the major in a U.S. liberal arts degree program. On the other hand, a course is also a specific class as we know it, e.g., English Literature 1700-1790. Since UK students worry about the former and not the latter meaning of course, it is only recently, in order to accommodate movement among universities in Europe, that British universities have begun to assign credit weightings to specific courses.

It would be relatively easy to translate the credit value of coursework done in the UK into American credit systems if a JYA student respected the coherency of the British educational system, i.e., if he or she remained at the British university for a full year (30 weeks) and studied only in a single subject (the major). Such a student would take the same full course load and year-end examinations that are required of a British student at the same level and should therefore receive the same amount of U.S. credit that he or she would be entitled to for a full year at home. This concept forms the basis of calculation for credit conversion.

You, however, normally want to select only certain specific courses relevant to your concentration and combine these with other classes in an outside subject. This can lead to complications. A full load may consist of as few as three specific courses in some departments or as many as eight in others. At King’s College and University College London, where courses are assigned credit weightings, it is generally considered that a full year equals a total of 32 credits; however the total might vary between 30 and 34 credits depending upon the course of study and the make-up of a program in different departments.

The issues are complicated by differences between the U.S. and the UK with regard to academic calendar (either three ten-week terms or two twelve week
semesters plus a six week examination period vs. two fifteen-week semesters) and the American concept of a credit system vs. the British concept of a full-time course. A further complication for Brown students is that we use a course-unit system as opposed to a semester credit hours system. One Brown course is generally considered to be worth four semester credit hours. Therefore, a full Brown course load would be 16 semester credit hours per semester or 32 for the full year.

However, 12-week terms are too short, as are 10 week terms, to equal a semester at Brown. In the Spring semester, we consider the 12 week term plus the 6 week examination period as the total, so that 4 Brown credits are awarded for a full load of study. For fall terms in those institutions that have changed to a 12 week term we award 3 Brown credits for a full load of work. This makes it critical that Fall term only students complete a full load of courses. If less than a full load is completed the student might be on academic warning. For institutions with three 10 week terms, students in the spring complete two terms for four Brown credits. For the Fall terms in those institutions no Brown credit is possible. For full year, 8 Brown credits will be awarded for a full load of courses taken. Be careful in systems where 3-4 courses are followed for the entire academic year, if one course is dropped this results in receiving only 6 Brown credits, not 7, and again you might end up on academic warning. You are expected to take all examinations that are available to you as a non-degree student, regardless of what other American university students are required to do. Because of Brown’s unusual system, it is not possible to observe a strict equivalency between credit weightings and course units. General credit toward graduation will be counted as a total sum based on the estimates above, but concentration credit should be discussed directly with the relevant department advisor.

Remember: the comments above are only guidelines to help you and your advisor(s) overseas to work out an acceptable full course load. If either you or your advisors have questions about your course load, you must make the effort to contact (preferably by e-mail with written details) the London Office and the OIP to reach agreement on what is acceptable. You can expect Brown to treat you fairly in its allocation of equivalent credit but not to make any gifts without sufficient evidence of your goodwill and effort to carry out a heavy study load. You will have ample time to travel and enjoy the pleasures of European life during vacation periods; you are expected to devote term time to academic pursuits.

**Grades**

Methods of grading in British universities differ greatly from the American system. The results of end-of-term exams (when these are available) and end-of-year exams will usually determine the final grade (at least 60-70% and sometimes more). When examinations are not open to visiting students (normally because they are too comprehensive to be feasibly undertaken by a non-degree student), the grade may be determined by a combination of class participation, tutorial essays, and other written work. The degree to which these elements are combined to contribute to the final grade varies between individual departments. The final grades will be determined in accordance with the prevailing standards at the host university and will be reported to Brown in the form of the local
grading system as well as with a recommendation for conversion to an equivalent American grade.

Traditionally, the British don’t give a lot of A’s which are awarded only for truly outstanding performance and are achieved by only about 5-7% of a large class. To score above 80% on an examination or portfolio of essays is very difficult, and while of course some students fail, to score in the 50-40% range would be a sign that a presumably able student is simply not studying seriously. Remember that examinations consist of questions requiring essay answers and that British academics are concerned with quality, not quantity. Unless you read widely and carefully enough to offer succinct and pertinent comments on your subject, you may be disappointed with your UK grades.

Student Life/Accommodations

Student Unions

Social life in British universities is based around the activities organized by the Students' Union. As the name implies, this is a student group similar in organization to a trade union plus everything you think of as student activities at Brown. These groups are at times quite active in local and national politics on behalf of the interests of students. Recent hot issues have been tuition charges and shrinking student grants. Other long-term concerns focus on anti-racism, liberation campaigns, and AIDS awareness, to name but a few.

In addition, on campus, the Union's elected officers represent its members to the University authorities and are actively involved in decision-making. The Union promotes the social, cultural, athletic, academic, and welfare interests of its members by financing and organizing a wide variety of clubs, societies, and welfare advisory/counseling services. The Union arranges parties, concerts and events for all students and helps to integrate people housed in the various on and off-campus residences, as well as independent students.

All students enrolled in colleges in the UK automatically have rights to participate in Student Union activities. Students in the colleges of the University of London system have access to facilities and services offered by their college Unions as well as to the tremendous range of activities provided by the larger University of London Union (ULU). Upon arrival at your university, you should immediately visit the Students' Union office and obtain literature about its services. Often this information will be provided to you during orientation in the
UK and there may be an activity fair where you can sign up for something that interests you. Your active involvement in Union-sponsored activities is the very best way to break the ice with British students and to achieve your goal of becoming truly integrated into the mainstream of local student life. You can also join the university’s student union group on Facebook to make friends and keep up with student life.

Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Travelers

Although many residents of Britain are accepting of gay, lesbian, and bisexual lifestyles, some intolerance does exist, and is manifested in ways that range in degree from subtle to openly hostile. In Britain, consensual sex between two women is legal, as is consensual sex between two men over the age of 18. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual organizations exist on many British campuses, and some of London’s bars and nightclubs cater to gay, lesbian, and bisexual clientele. Legislation to allow same-sex marriage in England and Wales was passed by the Parliament of the United Kingdom in July 2013 and came into force on 13 March 2014, and the first same-sex marriages took place on 29 March 2014.

For more information on issues and resources pertaining to gay, lesbian, and bisexual travel and study abroad, consult the following:

- Gay’s the Word (66 Marchmont St., London WCIN 1AB; tel. (0) 20 7278 7654) has the most comprehensive collection of gay, lesbian, and bisexual literature in England.

- Europe’s largest gay news service, Pink News http://www.pinknews.co.uk/home/

- London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (tel. 0300 330 0630) for information, advice and support. http://www.llgs.org.uk

- Further information about specific events and places can be found in the weekly Time Out guide. And the following website is a good resource for gay women www.gingerbeer.co.uk.

Student Life at Oxford

Oxford is a world unto itself unlike any other. Apart from Cambridge, the arch rival of Oxford, there is no place in England like the “Dreaming Spires.”

One of the defining features of Oxford University is the college system. Depending upon how you count, there are 47 colleges constituting the University. If possible, get a feel for the character of each college, and how your college fits into the University scheme. There are the “all work, no play” colleges such as St. John’s, the aristocratic colleges like Magdalen and Queen’s, the rowing colleges of Pembroke and Balliol, the rugby college, Teddy Hall, and so forth. If possible, obtain a copy of OUSU’s (Oxford University Student Union) The Oxford Handbook, which is filled with vital information, including the
colleges, theatres, cinemas, restaurants, clubs, pubs and most importantly, kebab vans.

If you want to truly be part of the University, you must be an integral part of your college. Try to live with first year UK students in college, as opposed to housing reserved just for Americans. Know that once you accept your offer of accommodation you cannot move out without being responsible for the entire bill. The first year students are all meeting each other for the first time, and you will find it easy to make new friends with them. Second and third year students are a bit less accessible, unless you have tutorials or play a sport with them. It is best to study at Oxford for a year, rather than a semester. Studying at Oxford for only one year is viewed as an odd practice by British students, but they can adjust to the fact. The concept of a semester of study seems to evade them.

If your college has an active JCR (Junior Common Room - the student union within a college) go to the meetings. Hustings, at which prospective candidates for office are put to various dares are great fun. Even if you don’t drink, go to the college bar, as it becomes one of the central meeting places on any night of the week. Also, give pubs a chance. They have cheap eats, and are a unique social institution in the UK.

Join a sports team, theatre or music group. Being on a sports team will make you a hero within the college and gives you a tight group of friends. Theatre and music offer a unique opportunity to make friends throughout the University.

Join the Oxford Union, Oxford’s debating society founded by Gladstone. It has a full program of events every week. It attracts speakers of world renown, from FW DeKlerk to WWF wrestlers. The Ambassador’s ball is fantastic. It’s a bit pricey to join, but well worth it. Everyone goes to the Union bar, the Purple Turtle, after 11pm when the pubs close. The Turtle is one of the few venues with a late license.

A bicycle is a plus and can be used on designated lanes, tracks and routes. Most students buy bikes within the first two weeks of arriving. Prices vary greatly from £50 for a wreck to £110 for a good bike. Local newspapers run ads for bicycles and there are numerous second-hand shops. Bikes may also be rented for about £38 per term. Safety helmets are recommended and the rules of the road apply to cyclists. In particular, it is a legal requirement to have functioning lights on your bicycle when using it after dark. You are strongly advised to insure your bicycle against theft, to obtain a strong lock and to keep it locked when parked.

You will likely need a formal outfit including an evening dresses or good suit/tux. You should bring this with you, since it is less expensive to buy in the US than the UK, and rental fees for formal wear are very expensive in the UK. Academic gowns are also required for formal dinners, which are held weekly in some colleges. A gown can be purchased for about £15.00 new or about £5.00 second-hand and can usually be resold at the end of the year. It is recommended that you make these arrangements after arrival.

Above all, let Oxford become your home. It will be the most memorable year of your life.
Housing

All Brown-sponsored program students have the option of applying to live in student housing at subsidized rates if they accept unconditionally the offer of admission to study at their university and apply by the deadlines set by the accommodations service. As a junior year abroad student you are considered equivalent to a first year undergraduate in terms of priority for college accommodation, that is, you will be at the top of the list. Barring unforeseen enrollment jumps in the UK you will almost surely receive an offer of a place if your papers are returned on time. (Note that certain universities cannot guarantee housing for students enrolled for less than a full year).

Room and board costs are paid on-site directly to your housing provider. Students are normally responsible for all housing costs, including deposits. You will be responsible for paying your dormitory costs within two to three weeks after arrival. In most cases you will also have to pay a deposit in pounds sterling (often about £200) before your arrival. If you apply by the deadline, you will normally be informed by the end of August or December if you have been offered accommodation. In certain cases, specific hall assignments for fall or full-year students will not be available until September, just before the start of term-time. Stay in touch with us at OIP and we will let you know as soon as we can confirm assignments.

Accommodation may be in a catered or self-catered residence. A catered residence means that you must accept meal service as part of the contract; a self-catered residence means that communal kitchen facilities are available and students prepare their own meals or eat out. Past students have commented that British hall food service is VERY limited compared to the USA. Usually you are only allowed one trip through the meal line, portions are small, and there is a more limited selection. Also worth mentioning, self-catered accommodation will come with some basic cookware (and the University will notify you if this is the case), but it is also easy and cheap to buy things for the kitchen. Previous students have said that self-catered flats are a social experience, and a great way to meet and socialize with your flat mates and other local students in your building.

There can be no guarantees that a participant will obtain his or her first choice of accommodation. There is generally a shortage of housing in all British universities and this is particularly true in London. The allocation system is an extremely fair one by its random nature. If, in the end, you do not like the residence to which you are assigned, realize that you have indeed been awarded a place as a privilege since you are no doubt depriving another deserving student of a subsidized housing space. You should also realize and accept that housing standards will be different and especially in the cities most likely will require daily commuting.

Not all Halls permit students to remain in hall during vacation periods, except by special arrangement and at additional cost. If you are planning to remain make sure you verify with the housing office well in advance what they require for you to get permission to stay.
You may find that you are living with a lot of first year UK students. Bear in mind that they are often older than first years at American universities, and besides you are just as new to the system as they are.

**Private Sector Housing**

Some students may want to arrange their own housing in a private home or renting a flat either alone or with friends. You will need to arrive well in advance of the beginning of the program in order to make arrangements personally. A word of caution: Do not sign any contract for services/rental agreement/etc. without first having it reviewed by someone who knows about local laws and tenant rights. In the private market, landlords and agencies are increasingly asking for guarantors, sometimes with UK addresses and/or several months’ rent in advance. The College Student Union Welfare office will be able to provide assistance.

There are different types of private accommodation including:

(a) **Lodging in a private home** – sometimes with meals provided with the host family or with facilities to cook your own meals (a ‘bedsit’). Occasionally, householders might reduce the rent in exchange for services such as shopping or babysitting.

(b) **A room rented in a flat or house** with shared kitchen and bathrooms – typically where tenants need to reduce their costs by bringing in extra tenants.

(c) **Flats** are often shared either communally or rather more independently depending upon individual taste. One way of finding this accommodation is for a group of friends to join together and register with the appropriate university’s accommodation office as a group. Accommodation offices have a number of addresses of flats and/or houses for groups of various sizes. Agencies and evening papers also advertise flats of this kind.

For London, you can get excellent information about the private rental sector from the University of London’s Housing Services (part of the Accommodation Offices) [www.housing.london.ac.uk/cms/](http://www.housing.london.ac.uk/cms/). Even if you are outside London it will provide useful guidance.
Communications

E-mail

All students are usually assigned an e-mail account through the university where they are registered. This will be done for you soon after your course registration on-site. Remember to check your Brown email address regularly too, because we will use this to communicate with you.

Phone

Most students buy a “pay as you go” phone while they are in the UK. ‘Pay as you go’ means that you add credit to the phone and use it until it runs out. You can ‘top up’ your credit whenever you like. There is no monthly commitment and you only pay for the calls and texts that you use. You can buy credit in many shops and at cash points.

This list is not exhaustive and does not constitute a recommendation, but it does highlight the main providers that offer competitive packages. If in doubt, on arrival find a store called “Carphone Warehouse” and they offer packages from all of the companies below.

- Vodafone
- Orange
- o2
- T-Mobile
- EE
- Virgin Mobile
- Three
- Lebara
- Lycamobile

Unless you choose a package that tailors for international calls (Lebara are good for this), it’s likely that when you call abroad it will eat up your credit. To avoid this, you may then want to get an international calling card, which allows you to make low-cost international calls.

Cheaper still, Skype, What’s App, Google Hang-outs and Facetime are all free online options.

Some useful numbers:

- For UK Emergencies, police, fire and rescue dial: 999
- Reach the Office by calling: 020 7255 2715 or 07794253992
- For non-emergency medical advice: 111
- For non-emergency police: 101
Getting Around

In London

The four basic options for getting around are by foot, by licensed taxi (expensive) or more likely by underground or bus. If you are spending any amount of time in London, it is essential you familiarize yourself with the following website: www.tfl.gov.uk. It is a useful navigation tool, and if gives information about any delays in service. Every Londoner uses this website to navigate their way round London.

The Underground railway system, or the "tube," is the easiest way to get around London and runs from 6 am until about 12:30 am. There are eleven lines (Bakerloo, Central, Circle, District, East London, Hammersmith and City, Jubilee, Metropolitan, Northern, Piccadilly, and Victoria) that cover London comprehensively. Fares depend on the distance traveled through concentric zones centered on Charing Cross.

Most people get an ‘Oyster Card’, either registered for a set amount of time or ‘pay-as-you-go’. You can use Oyster cards on the Underground, Overground and Buses. Paper tickets are still existent if you are in London for the day, or for 7 days.

After tube hours and for other routes you can take buses. Buses can seem complicated at first, but if you use the tfl website and spend some time looking at the resources within each bustop, it is actually quite simple. Buses stop automatically only at clearly indicated stops. Main stops have a plain white background with a red LRT symbol on it. On stops marked "request," buses stop only if you flag them down (to get on) or press the button (to get off). While waiting, you must queue up (line up), since bus conductors may refuse to take all
passengers at the stop during crowded periods. The British take queuing up seriously; don't shove your way to the front of the line.

Regular buses run from about 6 a.m. to midnight, though they can be impossibly slow during rush hours (8-9:30 a.m. and 4-7 p.m.). Also, keep in mind that on Sundays and public holidays the schedule will vary. There are night buses (marked "N" on route information) which now run frequently throughout London and which are very useful after the tube closes. All central-zone night buses stop at Trafalgar Square (tube: Charing Cross); Victoria, King's Cross, and Liverpool Street stations are also good spots to catch one.

Overall, walk when you can. Walking is the best way to see a new place, hands down.

In the UK

Both coach (bus) and rail travel is available for longer trips within the UK (please note that your oyster card will not be valid outside of London). Coach travel has traditionally been the cheapest public transport in Britain. Coach companies network the whole country and services are frequent although traveling time is considerably longer than rail. Coach companies run express services at regular times between specific points. National Express (www.nationalexpress.com) issues an ‘NX2 card’ for £10 which gives a year’s discounted travel. Megabus also offers cheap fares (www.megabus.com). Enquire at travel agents.

Rail travel is probably the most efficient way of traveling in Britain. After arrival in the UK you will be able to purchase a 16-25 Railcard for £30, which will allow you a third off train fares (including to and from the airports) and some additional reductions on rail/sea journeys. If you intend to do a lot of continuous traveling within Britain during one of your long vacations, a BritRail Pass may be a good investment, offering considerable savings on standard fares. As with the Eurail Pass, the BritRail pass must be purchased in the U.S. before departure and travel must be initiated within six months of purchase. However, don't purchase one unless you know you will use it since there are substantial cancellation fees. If you travel in the United Kingdom on weekends it is best to try and make your trip run from Friday morning to Monday - travel is more expensive, with fewer reductions on fares on Friday afternoons and evenings. Always check for timetable changes affecting travel at weekends, as engineering works are often scheduled then.

Excellent basic guides to budget travel, tourism and accommodation in the UK include: Let's Go: Britain and Ireland, published and revised annually by Harvard Student Agencies (St. Martin's Press), the Lonely Planet Guide Book, and the Rough Guide series, a UK publication.

Youth Hostels provide cheap and reliable accommodation. Generally hostels provide meals or cooking facilities and are much sought after, so it is advisable to book in advance (see www.hostelworld.com).
In Europe

When travelling around Europe, you can either fly from city to city, or get a train. When booking trips, always think, “less is more” and try not to cram multiple cities into one weekend or you’ll spend all your time on a train!

The Cornell-Brown-Penn website has heaps of advice and resources for travelling in Europe, and you can also contact Amy with any questions. [http://www.cornell-brown-penn.ac.uk/travel](http://www.cornell-brown-penn.ac.uk/travel)

Suggested Reading

The richer your background, the more you will benefit from study in the UK. A sense of British history is important and knowledge of serious fiction by British authors is valuable. Please try to become informed about British news and current affairs. You may want to begin by reading Anthony Sampson’s *The Revised Anatomy of Britain: The New Europeans*, which provides a general account by one of Britain’s leading journalists. While you are abroad, you will be regarded not only as a student but also as an American and you are likely to be questioned by people on many subjects related to U.S. history, politics and cultural life. Many Americans find that they have at best a sketchy knowledge of their own country and the complexities of American life. You will likely find that most European students with whom you come in contact have a rather thorough knowledge of the U.S., its politics and its background. For this reason, we strongly suggest that you spend some time familiarizing yourself with current literature on U.S. history, politics and social trends before your departure.

The following guidebooks and works of fiction have been recommended by former students and travelers. OIP would welcome comments from individuals on these and suggestions of other items.

- The Time Out London Guides
- The "Alternative Prospectus" and other handbooks published by the students' union at your university
- The Rough Guide: Britain
- The Penguin History of England series (each volume has a separate title)
- Maggie & Gemma Moss, Handbook for Women Traveller’s
- David Andrusia, Gay Europe
- Itchy Guides to various cities ([http://www.itchycity.co.uk](http://www.itchycity.co.uk))
- Justin Cartwright, This Secret Garden – Oxford Revisited
- Cheeky Guides ([http://www.cheekyguides.com](http://www.cheekyguides.com))
- Kingsley Amis, Lucky Jim
• Bill Bryson, Notes from a Small Island
• Melvyn Bragg, For Want of a Nail
• Margaret Drabble, The Realms of Gold
• Paul Gilroy, No Black in the Union Jack
• David Lodge, Nice Work, Changing Places and Small World
• George Mikes, How To Be a Brit (Penguin, 1986)
• Iris Murdoch, A Fairly Honourable Defeat
• George Orwell, Down and Out in Paris and London
• Anthony Sampson, The Revised Anatomy of Britain: The New Europeans (Random House)
• Raymond Seitz, Over Here
• Any murder mystery written by a British author (e.g., Dorothy Sayers, Ruth Rendell, Colin Dexter, Agatha Christie, P.D. James, Edmund Crispin, Ian Rankin)
• J I M Stewart, Young Patullo and other volumes of his quintet set in Oxford, A Staircase in Surrey
• Paul Theroux, Kingdom by the Sea and London Embassy
• Zadie Smith, White Teeth
• Andrea Levy, Small Island
• Kate Fox: Watching the English: the hidden rules of English behaviour


Public Holidays

There are eight public holidays in England and Wales (plus some others in Scotland and Northern Ireland) which are often referred to as bank holidays since banks are closed:

- Christmas Day: December 25
- Boxing Day: December 26
- New Year’s Day: January 1
- New Year’s Holiday: January 2 (Scotland only)
- St. Patrick’s Day: March 17 (Ireland only)
- Good Friday: Friday preceding Easter
- Easter Monday: Monday after Easter (not Scotland)
- Spring Bank Holidays: the First & Last Mondays in May
- Battle of the Boyne: July 12 (N Ireland only)
- Summer Bank Holiday: First Monday in August (Ireland and Scotland)
- Summer Bank Holiday: Last Monday in August (England and Wales)