

The Wash U Student's Guide to
The University of
Edinburgh

Academic Year 2011-2012

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Welcome to the University of Edinburgh!

Congratulations on your acceptance into the University of Edinburgh! For the next semester or academic year, you will be representing Washington University in St. Louis at the University of Edinburgh. Your time abroad may be challenging at times, but know that it will be ultimately rewarding as you come to see Edinburgh as your home-away-from-home.

This Handbook has been prepared to make your transition to life at the University of Edinburgh as smooth as possible. Please take the time to read the information carefully and share it with your parents. You will also be receiving emails and written transactions from both Washington University and the University of Edinburgh. Pay close attention to these correspondences to ensure that you arrive in Edinburgh prepared and open to your new surroundings.

If you have any questions or concerns prior to your departure, contact Overseas Programs at overseas@artsci.wustl.edu.

Best wishes!

Contact Information

Prof. John Heil

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Campus Box 1073
(314) 935-5427
Wilson 205
jh@wustl.edu

International Office

University of Edinburgh
21 Buccleuch Place
Edinburgh EH8 9LN
Tel: +44 (0)131 650 4296
enquiries.international@ed.ac.uk

Overseas Programs

Campus Box 1088
(314) 935-5958 main line
(314) 935-5555 for emergencies after
office hours
McMillan 138
overseas@artsci.wustl.edu

Documentation

Student Visitors:

For students studying abroad for less than 6 months with no intention of extending your stay another semester and who are NOT planning to work while abroad

You will need to have with you upon entry into the UK the following items (please note that you will need to have these items with you EVERY TIME you leave and reenter the UK if you plan to travel):

- Signed Passport valid for at least 6 months after your return date
- ROUNDTRIP ticket with a return date less than 6 months after the arrival date
- Official Acceptance letter from UK university
- Letter of Financial Guarantee from WU
- **Recommended to have:** Evidence of funds to cover expenses for the semester abroad
 - *There is no specific amount that you need to show, but I have included the amounts listed for students applying for visas as a guideline:*
 - *Academic Year:*
 - £600/month for 9 months (a total of \$8,654 according to today's exchange rate)
 - *Fall*
 - £600/month for 4 months (a total of \$3,846.22 according to today's exchange rate)
 - *Spring*
 - £600/month for 6 months (a total of \$5,769.32 according to today's exchange rate)
 - *Conversions from dollars to pounds must be written on the document before arriving at the border (you can handwrite this):*
www.oanda.com/convert/classic
 - *Documents can include a letter from Student Financial Services if you receive financial aid or scholarships, a bank statement in your name, a bank statement in a parent's name along with a signed letter from the parent that you will have access to these funds while abroad, or a letter from the bank*

Tier 4 Visas (a.k.a. Adult Student Visas)

- For students studying abroad for more than 6 months or who plan to work, intern, or volunteer in the UK

The processing time generally won't take more than 15 business days.

<http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/10368946/processingtimescustomers>

- You can pay to use a service like Travisa, www.travisa.com if you would like to expedite the process.
- Students cannot apply for the Tier 4 visa until 3 months prior to the start date of the program.

You will need the following items to apply for a student visa:

Please note: all documents must be original documents. The UK Border Agency will NOT accept copies of documents.

- Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies or CAS (Will be sent to you electronically from your program)
 - Do not start the process until after you have received this from your program
- Signed Passport valid for at least 6 months after your return date
- 2 Passport photos (Cannot be digital photos you have printed. These can be taken at Walgreens, etc.)
 - Must have name written on the back of each photo
- Visa Application, including Appendix 8 General Student self-assessment form
 - <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk/>
- £255 fee paid online (\$408.66 according to today's exchange rate)
- Biometrics
 - Must be done within 2 weeks of sending application
 - After you've submitted your online application, it will prompt you to schedule the Biometrics appointment. You cannot do this before you have submitted the application
 - Make sure to bring your passport
- **Maintenance funds**
 - *They will ask you in the application to declare that you have the required "maintenance funds" to cover your semester/year abroad*
 - *You should be prepared to be able to show evidence of funds just in case they ask to see it*
 - *Academic Year:*
 - £600/month for 9 months (a total of \$8,654 according to today's exchange rate)
 - *Fall*
 - £600/month for 4 months (a total of \$3,846.22 according to today's exchange rate)
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Students who wish to work, intern, or volunteer: If you want British permission to work part-time in the UK, you must apply for the Tier 4 visa regardless, even if you are

studying there for less than 6 months. You will be eligible to work a maximum of 20 hours/week during the term and 40 hours/week during term breaks up to the end date of your program.

Money Matters

Program Cost: See the pricing sheet on the Edinburgh page on the Overseas Programs website for program pricing. Estimated costs for the program can be found at <http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~overseas/students/programprice.html>.

Spending Money: Remember that the exchange rate is not in favor of the US dollar, so budget carefully. At the time of this publication, **£1 = \$1.58**, or **\$1 = £0.63**.

Advice from Past Participants

“Credit cards are helpful to have so that you’re not constantly getting pounds out of the bank, but most stores frown on using them for purchases under 5 pounds.”

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

Academics

Teaching and Assessment Methods

Most courses are a combination of lectures and tutorials, with laboratory work for science based courses. The lectures form the main teaching framework and provide a guide to the subject matter, as well as setting out the foundations on which you, the student, are expected to build. The tutorials consist of a small group of students and provide the opportunity to develop themes and discuss problems, usually on the basis of written work. The style of teaching at Edinburgh may be different from what you are used to, involving less direct teaching and more independent study.

Most courses are assessed by a combination of essays, tests and examinations. A credit rating for each course is indicated in the course listing. At the end of your period of study in Edinburgh a transcript of the courses you have taken will be sent to your home university so that the credits achieved in Edinburgh can be transferred.¹

Advice from Past Participants

“Professors for each class change on a weekly basis; you might have one professor for 3 classes or so, then another one will come in for the next few, etc. So, you don’t get to know your professor like you would at Wash U, but you get more of a variety of expertise in each class.”

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

Student Services and Facilities

¹ Adapted from *The University of Edinburgh Study Abroad Guide*.

The Advice Place: The Advice Place is a drop-in advice center run by trained professional staff and student volunteers who offer free, confidential and independent advice on a range of issue, including money issues, accommodation problems, and academic concerns.²

Director of Studies: Your Director of Studies, or DOS, is available to provide you with advice concerning your studies. Their role is to provide you with guidance on such fundamental academic matters as course choices, approving study abroad plans, what to do when you have personal or health problems, and student appeals when there are special circumstances affecting your studies.

Library: Founded in 1580, Edinburgh University Library is one of the largest and most important academic libraries in the world. The library's collection is dispersed over many different locations and includes a wide range of electronic resources. The Main Library is the largest unit in the system and includes study and discussion areas, open-access computer labs, wireless network access, a "laptop loan" service, a cafeteria, and photocopying facilities.³ See <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/howto/startml00.shtml> for a list of "Ten Essential Things You Need to Know" about using the Edinburgh Library system.

University Card: All students are required to have a University Card as proof of their student identity. The Card also covers other functions such as allowing Library and door access. Further information and an application form will be sent to you before your arrival in Edinburgh. Additional information can be obtained from the Card Services website at www.card.ed.ac.uk.⁴

Registration

See <http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/visiting-exchange/courses> for information on courses available to exchange students. All courses in the Visiting Student Prospectus are open to home students as well. In other words, as there are no courses designed exclusively for visiting students, you will more than likely be in classes with native Scottish students.

Students can check to see if they have been registered by checking on the MyEd Student Portal at www.myed.ed.ac.uk/. Allow five working days for your registration to be completed. Contact HSSvisitingstudents@ed.ac.uk if there is a problem with your registration.

Course Equivalencies

Most courses at the University of Edinburgh are between 10-20 units. You will be taking between three and six classes for a maximum of 60 units, which is the university's maximum load. This will be equivalent to 15-16 WUSTL units.

² Adapted from *The University of Edinburgh Visiting Student Guide*.

³ <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/>

⁴ Adapted from *Who What When Where: The University of Edinburgh Pre-Arrival Guide 2008*.

Housing

The University of Edinburgh offers full board residence halls, self-catered dorms/houses, and self-catered shared apartments. University housing is guaranteed for full year visiting students who submit the accommodation application in a timely manner. Similarly, one semester visiting students have a good chance of being assigned university housing if they apply promptly. Otherwise, Accommodation Services assists students in securing suitable private accommodation.

Applications for accommodation must be made separately from any application to study at the University of Edinburgh. With the letter offering you a place to study at the University, you should have received the Accommodation Guide in Brief advising you to apply online for accommodation. If not, check the Accommodation Services website at www.accom.ed.ac.uk, where you will find information such as the application and the terms of the accommodation guarantees.⁵

Advice from Past Participants

“If you’re living in Pollack Halls, be prepared for a 20-25 minute walk to class each day (bring or buy comfortable, waterproof shoes!).”

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

Catered Residences

Traditionally catered residences (formally referred to as “full board”) is provided at the Pollack Halls of Residence, the largest housing complex at the University of Edinburgh. The complex houses around 1,900 students, mostly in single study bedrooms. Catered accommodations provide students with breakfast and an evening meal on weekdays, and brunch and an evening meal on weekends. There is a vegetarian option every day. For more information, see <http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/newstudent/index.htm>.

Self-Catered Residences

Self-catered housing implies that students are responsible for their own meals. There are two options for students who chose to live in self-catered housing:

Student Flats: Most student flats consist of three to six single study bedrooms that share a common kitchen, bathroom, and living area. Another option are those at Kincaid’s Court, which are more like small student residences, and can house up to ten or twelve students. They are fully furnished, almost always within 3km of the main university campus, and provide access to communal laundry facilities.

Self-Catered Residences: The University of Edinburgh houses about 570 students (the majority of them post-graduates) in their five self-catered residences. The great majority of

Advice from Past Participants

“My recommendation is to live in College Wynd or Kincaid’s because of the culture surrounding them and their proximity to the Old Town, especially if you’re looking forward to pubs, nightlife, museums, old buildings, and basically everything fun.”

-Patrick McBryde, Spring, Engineering

⁵ Adapted from *Who What When Where: The University of Edinburgh Pre-Arrival Guide 2008*.

study-bedrooms in self-catered residences are singles.

Private Housing

There are many privately rented rooms and flats available in the city, with many located in districts adjacent to the main University areas. Private housing represents a real and affordable alternative to University Housing, but is not covered by any accommodation guarantees.

The University of Edinburgh's Accommodation Services offers a wealth of information and advice concerning finding private accommodation: http://www.accom.ed.ac.uk/accom_info/private_housing_including_studentpad/index.htm.

Student Life

Occupying four buildings and operating facilities in several others, EUSA (Edinburgh University Students' Association) provides all on-campus catering, bars, game rooms, Union shops, libraries, theaters, TV rooms and meeting rooms. EUSA also organizes a regular program of events, including live bands and clubs. There are also 180 plus student societies servicing a variety of interests, including social, cultural, academic, and political. See <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/> for more information on the EUSA and for a complete list of student societies: <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/societies/list>.

The University of Edinburgh also has an Edinburgh University Sports Union (EUSU), a student-run body that organizes sports. The union offers a range of intramural activities to choose from, and the University itself is home to first-rate facilities, exercise classes, gyms, and other resources. Pleasance Sport Centers is one of the biggest and best-equipped gyms in Scotland, and includes free entry to over 50 fitness classes. For more information on the Edinburgh University Sports Union, see <http://www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/>.

Other pastimes at the University of Edinburgh include museums, galleries, concerts, and a student-run theater.

Famed for its history, beauty, and culture, Edinburgh is itself one of the gems of Europe. Edinburgh is Scotland's capital city and is

Advice from Past Participants

"Because I had fewer hours of class and less extracurricular commitments in Scotland, I was able to volunteer weekly at a soup kitchen. I developed personal relationships with both the people running the soup kitchen, and those utilizing the services.

-Caitlin Molloy, Fall, PNP

Advice from Past Participants

Fun Places to Go in Edinburgh

"Author's Seat (especially on bonfire night!), the castle, underground ghost tours, art museums on Princes Street (all free!), Holyrood palace, Jenners (extravagant clothing store), the Scotch Whiskey Heritage center (ride in a barrel while you take a historical tour of whiskey making), Chocolate Soup (for decked-out hot chocolate)..."

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

also host to the world's largest arts festival – The Edinburgh Festival, which takes place during August. The city offers a unique blend of ancient and modern architecture, and mixes the fast pace of a capital city with the tranquility of public parks and gardens. With a large student population (Edinburgh is home to four universities and ten colleges), the city contrasts its ancient history with a vibrant nightlife and music scene. Student-friendly promotions and discounts are available throughout the city year-round.

The International Student Centre is run by students and has a café where students can take study breaks and chat with other students. They provide events such as parties and dinners. They also offer excursions on the weekends to lochs, castles, and other exciting places around Scotland. For information about the ISC, please refer to

<http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/isc/>

Communication

Telephone

At the University of Edinburgh, almost all student study bedrooms have a phone, as well as voicemail, free calls to any other room on that network, and calls to numbers outside the University network at standard rates.

Many students choose to purchase a cell phone abroad, which is usually cheaper than enabling your U.S. phone to work internationally. Some providers have a pay-as-you-go system, in which students can purchase a phone and then “top up” (add money) as it is used. All plans differ, so find the one that works best for you. Keep in mind that making calls in England can be expensive, and so most people chose to text instead of call.

Internet and Email

As a part of its student housing, the University of Edinburgh offers unlimited access to the University Intranet, which includes email and departmental servers. You will be allocated a university email address before you leave for Edinburgh, and will be able to access your account after you have registered with EASE (The University of Edinburgh Authentication Service). Study bedrooms also usually provide students with restricted 24-hour internet service.

If you plan on bringing a laptop with you, the university provides support services to help you get set up. On the web, check out the Student Helpdesk at www.students.ucs.ed.ac.uk/helpdesk/student. Or, after you arrive in Edinburgh, visit the staff at the Student Support Helpdesk in the Learning & Resource Center on the second floor of the Main Library.

Skype

Skype allows you to make calls from your computer to anywhere in the world. Skype calls are free between Skype accounts, and can also make calls to landlines and cell phones. For more information, go to <http://www.skype.com/>.

Transportation and Travel

If you arrive earlier than the date specified, you will need to make your own arrangements for accommodation until housing opens on the arrival day. In setting a return date, bear in mind that you must remain for your last scheduled exam – that is, **early exams are not allowed**. You should not ask your lecturers for special exam dates.

Getting to Edinburgh

DO NOT purchase a ticket to Edinburgh via Ireland! Students have had trouble with entry clearance when traveling to Scotland via Ireland, so please avoid taking this route when purchasing plane tickets.

From London to Edinburgh: If you are arriving at an airport in London, there should be public transportation available between the airport and the city. Then, there is a limited bus service to Edinburgh available daily, leaving from Victoria Coach Station, costing about £31 one way and taking about 8-9 hours (see www.nationalexpress.com). Remember to book the direct option. For other options, see www.megabus.com.

From Glasgow to Edinburgh: It is necessary to take two buses to reach the center of Edinburgh from Glasgow Airport.

1. Arriva operates the Glasgow Flyer shuttle bus service (No. 500) from the Airport Terminal to Buchanan Street Bus Station, in the center of Glasgow, which runs approximately every 10 minutes. The journey takes 20-25 minutes. Current cost: £4.20 one way. Ask at the Airport Information Desk for directions to the bus stop just outside the main terminal.
2. From the Buchanan Street Bus Station, board Citylink No. 900 (available every 15 minutes), which will take you to Edinburgh Bus Station (St. Andrew's Square in the center of Edinburgh) in 1 hour 18 minutes. Current cost: £5.10 one way.

Arriving in Edinburgh

Welcome Service: The International Office will be running a Welcome Service in September to help you find your way to your accommodation. The Welcome Team will be based at both Edinburgh Airport.

You can let the International Office know of your plans by filling out the online form at this address: <http://www.international.ed.ac.uk/forms/travel/>

At the airport, the Welcome Team will advise you on finding transportation to your accommodation. If you plan to arrive before or after the date and times listed above, you will have to find your own way to your housing. Contact the University of Edinburgh International Office for more details at enquiries.international@ed.ac.uk.

One option is to hire a taxi to reach your destination. Consider sharing the cost if you find other students who are also making their way to the same area. Taxis are expensive and

will cost up to £20. There is also a door-to-door shuttle service available. Cost: £9 single. See www.edinburghshuttle.com.

Around Edinburgh

The main mode of public transportation in the city is the bus service. This is operated by two companies – “Lothian Buses” (www.lothianbuses.co.uk) and “First Edinburgh” (www.firstedinburgh.co.uk). Fare and timetable information is available on the web.

Advice from Past Participants

“Always carry 1 pound coins with you for the buses (1 pound per trip, or more for multiple trips).”

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

Other Travel

You will likely plan other travel on your own throughout the semester. If you plan to travel throughout the UK or further afield during your time in Edinburgh, consider the following:

- **Train:** Consider purchasing a Young Persons Rail Card, currently £24. You will need an ID and a passport-sized photo when applying. These cards are good for one year and entitle you to discounted travel. Note that you may be asked for identification to prove you are the cardholder when travelling, so always carry your University Student Card with you. See www.railcard.co.uk.
- **Bus:** The main coach bus operator in Scotland is Scottish Citylink. See www.citylink.co.uk for details of routes and timetables. See www.megabus.com for more bus options.
- **Plane:** Using the web will help you find flights at competitive prices. You may want to consider buying an International Student Identification Card (ISIC), which costs about £9 and is available from travel agents. The card entitles you to discounted travel, and could help keep your flight costs down. To obtain a card you will need a photograph and your University Student Card.⁶

⁶ Adapted from *Who What When Where: The University of Edinburgh Pre-Arrival Guide 2008*.

Before You Go

Packing Tips

Though Edinburgh's annual rainfall is less than that of London or Brighton, you should come prepared for rain, wind, and a cold winter season. Invest in a warm, waterproof winter coat, and lighter waterproof apparel for later in the spring.

Advice from Past Participants

"[Bring] a sturdy umbrella, a warm winter coat, and comfortable waterproof shoes."

-Myra Blake, Fall, PNP

Also, be aware that many US toiletries brands are available in Scotland and the UK, but not all are. If you are brand-specific, bring the toiletries you will need with you; otherwise, it's a good idea to save the space and buy once you arrive.

Here are some suggestions and tips for what to bring:

- Work around a basic scheme of coordinated colors to minimize the number of clothing items you bring with you
- Wash-and-wear shirts
- Sturdy, comfortable, waterproof pair of walking shoes that have been well broken in
- Adapter plugs (if you plan to use US appliances)
- Laptop computer if you have one; you can buy an inexpensive adaptor cord at an electronics store
- Alarm clock (wind-up or battery-powered/extra batteries)
- Umbrella or raincoat
- If you wear contact lenses, you should take your eye care products with you
- Prescription medicine – enough to cover your entire stay, and bring a copy of your prescription and a letter from your doctor outlining your medical condition and the medication required just in case you run out
- You may wish to take along a few small token gifts; something typically American or representative of the area in which you live in the U.S.
- Some students recommend that you leave room in your bags when you go so you'll have more room on the way home
- Make sure each piece of luggage (even carry-on) has an address tag. It is also a good idea to put a copy of your address inside each piece of luggage.
- Finally, before you leave home, make sure you can comfortably carry all of your luggage at one time (try it for 15 minutes)

Useful Websites

British Government Website for Visa Services: <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/>

British Embassy in the USA: <http://www.britainusa.com/>

Edinburgh Airport: <http://www.edinburghairport.com/>

Edinburgh Bus Services: www.lothianbuses.co.uk; www.firstedinburgh.co.uk).

Edinburgh Official Tourist Board: www.edinburgh.org

Edinburgh University Library: <http://www.lib.ed.ac.uk/about/>

Edinburgh University Sports Union: <http://www.eusu.ed.ac.uk/>

Edinburgh University Students' Association: <http://www.eusa.ed.ac.uk/>

“The Skinny”, Scottish Culture and Current Events: <http://www.theskinny.co.uk/>

Skype: <http://www.skype.com/>.

University of Edinburgh Accommodation: www.accom.ed.ac.uk

University of Edinburgh International Office:
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/new-students/international-office>

University of Edinburgh Visiting Students Pre-Arrival Guide:
<http://www.ed.ac.uk/studying/international/new-students/pre-arrival-guide>