STUDENT GUIDE

TO

LONDON
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STUDENT GUIDE TO LONDON
London Law Program 2017

This guide is designed to answer the most pressing questions about studying in London. The following advice has been compiled over the years and has been updated yearly by student assistants to the program director. We hope this will be a good start in helping you through your preparations for travel and your visit to the amazing city of London.

About London

London, with a population of seven million people, is one of the world’s great cities. Situated on the River Thames in the southeastern part of England, London stretches in every direction over more square miles of parks, squares, monuments, museums, and shopping streets than a student could hope to explore in a lifetime, let alone a semester. As the famed 18th century writer, Dr. Samuel Johnson, put it, “[W]hen a man is tired of London he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford.”

London has been inhabited since before the invasion by Julius Caesar and his Roman army (in approximately 55 B.C.). The story of its physical growth and development is told in the diversity of its architecture, with fine examples of all styles represented. The Great Fire of 1666 eradicated most medieval buildings, but at the same time provided new opportunities for architects to rebuild the city. Today, Georgian town houses jostle for space with Victorian office buildings. The stone of Westminster Abbey contrasts sharply with the red brick of St. James’s Palace, and the stucco of fashionable Kensington provides relief from the glass skyscrapers in the City.

London is renowned for its theater, including Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, the National Theatre on the South Bank of the Thames, and the famed West End productions. Resident opera companies perform at the Royal Opera House (Covent Garden) and the English National Opera. The Royal Ballet, the Sadler-Wells Ballet, and touring international companies provide many opportunities to attend classical and modern dance performances. Concerts at the Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Royal Albert Hall are complemented by church music and recitals all over the city. Students can enjoy the treasures of the National Gallery, the Tate Britain and Tate Modern Galleries, the Queen’s Gallery at Buckingham Palace, the British Museum, the Museum of London, and innumerable other art galleries and museums.

The diversity of London provides unparalleled shopping (and window-shopping) opportunities – exciting Oxford Street, elegant Mayfair, the smart shops of Bond Street, and the street markets of Portobello Road and Camden Town. The great department stores of Harrods, Liberty’s, Harvey Nichols, and Selfridges, and the boutiques of Kensington and Chelsea, offer the latest in fashion.

In January, London’s climate is generally mild, but changeable. So be sure to bring a hat and gloves, as well as waterproof shoes or boots, a raincoat, and an umbrella! The best way to be prepared for the weather is to wear a series of light layers.

The British legal and political traditions are rich in history. Our program therefore includes a visit to the Old Bailey and the UK Supreme Court, the House of Commons and House of Lords,
and meetings with British barristers and solicitors. Our course in London enables American law students to glimpse the history and institutions of the country where our common law tradition was born, and thereby broaden their understanding of the comparative legal systems of the United States and the United Kingdom.

Bloomsbury

The London Law Program is located at the FSU Study Centre in the heart of London’s Bloomsbury district. The development of Bloomsbury began in the early 1660s. It soon became one of London’s most fashionable districts and a place of residence for rich merchants and aristocrats, known for its elegant squares. Bloomsbury is now dominated by two great institutions of learning and scholarship – the British Museum and the University of London, all within easy walking distance of us. The British Museum comprises one of the largest and finest collections of antiquities in the world.

During the 19th century, Bloomsbury became a favorite haunt of artists and writers, the most famous of these being Charles Dickens. In the early part of the 20th century, the “Bloomsbury Group,” an association of artists and writers, including E. M. Forster, Roger Fry, John Maynard Keynes, and Virginia and Leonard Woolf, re-established the area’s literary reputation, which lives on today in its many specialist bookshops. The “father” of modern communism, Karl Marx, when an obscure and impoverished refugee, wrote “Das Kapital” under the great beehive dome of the British Museum Reading Room, which is now on display in the British Museum’s Great Court.

The FSU Study Centre

The FSU Study Centre, which opened in 1993, consists of adjacent buildings dating from the 17th century, which have been completely renovated to include all modern amenities and facilities for education and housing. The reception area is notable for its recently restored, 300-year-old painted ceiling. Six floors contain classrooms of varying sizes, faculty and program offices, a general reference and video library, 24-hour computer labs and study room, student lounge, lecture/theater complex, and student housing facilities. The Centre also contains a classroom strictly devoted to the London Law Program. Students from several American colleges and universities make use of the Study Centre, creating a diverse and collegial student body. The building is wheelchair accessible in certain sections and there is an elevator for access to certain parts. Students with concerns about accessibility should contact the program director as soon as possible before enrolling.

The Study Centre is located one block west of the British Museum, and less than two blocks from the Tottenham Court Road Underground Station. The “Tube” provides convenient transportation, along with links to many bus lines. You’ll find London’s West End theater district, Covent Garden, and bustling Oxford Street within walking distance. The area is brimming with restaurants, recreation facilities, and shops.
Part I.
Preparing for London

Checklist

As you plan for your time in London, use this checklist to help you track essential items and necessary preparations for your trip.

- Obtain Passport (and Visa if required)
- Determine Arrival and Departure Dates
- Purchase Airline Ticket
- Order Textbooks
- Money Matters:
  - Notify ATM/Credit Card providers
  - Obtain Initial/Emergency cash
- Plan Transportation from the Airport
- Pack Baggage
- Pack Documents in carry-on luggage:
  - Immigration Letter certifying participation in the program (you will receive this in December)
  - Directions to FSU Center and Phone Number of program director

Passports and Visas

Passports are required to travel to the United Kingdom. As soon as you are accepted into the program, please turn your attention to this issue!! If you have a valid passport already, please make sure your passport will be valid for six months after your return from the UK. Please apply for a passport right away if you do not have a valid one. If you are an American citizen, passport applications can be obtained at the nearest Post Office. British law does not permit the London Law Program to give specific advice concerning immigration matters to individual students. Hence, all students are responsible not only for obtaining their own passports, but also for fulfilling any visa requirements that may be imposed, and determining other travel restrictions that may apply.

If you are a U.S. citizen participating in our intersession program you will not need to obtain a visa. But, you will need to travel with documents showing the purpose of your trip to the UK to present to Border Agency officials when you enter the country. The program director will provide a letter to each student confirming their participation in our program. This letter must be hand carried (not in your checked luggage) with your passport and presented to UK immigration authorities when you go through passport control. If you are not a U.S. citizen (i.e., if you are a national of another country) you may need to obtain other permissions from UK authorities.

Please finalize your passport and visa details before purchasing your ticket!! We have had students lose their nonrefundable, non-changeable tickets to London because they did not meet the
extra visa requirements for their nationality, and thus could not fly on the date indicated for travel.

**Tip:** Plan to arrive in London a few days before the start of the program. Many students discover they need to adjust to the time change.

**Flight Information**

Airfares to London vary greatly. Booking early will generally help you obtain both the lowest fare and the best selection of travel dates. Booking at least a month or two in advance is recommended and will lower stress levels dramatically. Winter fares to London can be quite good, but airfares fluctuate dramatically over time, so it’s difficult to predict what travel will cost. Students typically fly into either Heathrow or Gatwick airport (both discussed in further detail below). Heathrow is closer to central London and offers more transportation options (the Tube, London’s underground railway/subway, runs from Heathrow to central London but does NOT run from Gatwick to central London).

Before booking your flight please consider both your arrival date in London and your departure date at the end of the program in light of your personal needs. Remember, local orientation at the FSU Center on Sunday January 1, 2017, is mandatory. Prices may vary widely over the course of just a few days for the same flight on the same airline, so explore your options. Determining your arrival date and final departure date may save you expensive ticket change fees at the end of your trip, so plan accordingly.

Excellent deals can be found on websites like Kayak, Student Universe, STA Travel, Priceline, Orbitz, Travelocity, and Expedia. Two websites that list many discount ticket brokers are http://travel2rp.com/consolidators.shtml and http://www.lowestairfareshomepage.com. In addition, many budget travel agencies cater to students and offer lower airfares than commercial airlines or travel agents. When you call to make reservations with a student travel agency, the agency may need your International Student Identification Card (ISIC) number to secure a student discount. You can obtain a card from your university study abroad office. It will take several weeks after you are accepted into the program before your card arrives. If you call for a reservation before you receive your ISIC card, ask if they can hold the reservation until you get your card.

**Health Insurance**

All London Program students will be covered by the health and evacuation insurance provided by the UI International Programs Study Abroad Office. Information about the coverage is available at http://international.uiowa.edu/study-abroad/health-insurance-information. If you currently are covered by a health and medical policy, you may also wish to check with your insurer to determine whether and the extent to which it will cover you during your travels abroad, and procedures for reimbursement or payment.
Money

CASH & ATMs:
You will find ATM machines (referred to locally as “Cashpoints” or “Hole in the Wall”) in both airports, as well as throughout London. By far, the easiest way to get English currency is through ATMs. They are everywhere and easily accessible in London. Most ATMs in London accept Plus, Visa, and MasterCard. You will also probably get the best exchange rate using the ATM, provided you use ATMs of major banks or building societies such as Barclays, HSBC, Lloyds, Natwest, Halifax, Abbey National, Nationwide, rather than “independent” machines at corner shops (bodegas), airports, and other tourist-heavy locales.

You may want to exchange some US dollars for English pounds before you leave for London. Doing so will make initial travel to the study center and purchasing your first meal much easier. Few banks now stock foreign currencies so call your branch before arriving to determine whether they exchange currency and what type of lead time they need to meet your currency needs.

Before you leave for London, look into your bank’s policies on ATM access abroad. Be sure to ask what surcharges or conversion fees will be applied to international transactions. Many banks charge 1% of the total ATM withdrawal for each foreign transaction. That is important to keep in mind as these costs can add up, particularly if you are using the ATM for your rent payments. Ask about any cost-saving travel benefits for which you may be eligible. For example, Bank of America runs an exchange program with Barclays that allows free withdrawals from Barclays-owned ATMs. As Barclays ATMs are prevalent in London, this can save a lot of money. Don’t forget to ask about your maximum daily withdrawal. Some banks will raise the daily limit upon your request, and most have a higher limit for purchases.

CREDIT CARDS:
As in the US, Visa and MasterCard are accepted at most grocery stores, restaurants, and many other retail outlets. You can also use credit cards at most Tube stops. The fees charged by different banks for foreign transactions and the exchange rates themselves may vary. You may want to try both your ATM and a credit card or two to determine which method gets you the best exchange rate. Most credit card companies will charge 1% of the cost of the purchase as a foreign transaction fee. On top of this, VISA and MasterCard will charge an additional 2% of the purchase. This added cost can become quite expensive when making many or large purchases. Some card companies, such as CITI and Chase, offer cards with no extra fees for foreign transactions. This may be an option worth looking into before you travel.

Tip: An English pound is also known as a “quid.” Thus if something costs 5 quid, it costs 5 pounds. You may also be told it will cost you “a fiver.” Likewise, 10 pounds is 10 quid or a “tenner.” “Pence” is the equivalent of our plural “pennies.” You may be told something costs “50p,” which means 50 pence.
Notify your credit card company and bank that you will be traveling abroad before you leave. Several students have experienced having their credit cards denied when their credit card company puts fraud alerts on their cards due to “unusual” foreign activity. For this reason, you may also want to have credit cards, and possibly ATM cards, from at least two different banks for your trip. Also, in case of theft, be sure to keep in a safe place in your papers at your apartment a list of your credit cards, account numbers, any special identifying or authorizing codes, and the phone numbers to report theft of each card.

**Tip:** British credit cards rely on chip technology where as many American cards still use swipe technology. Most places will be able to swipe your card, but some places that you frequent (like tube ticket machines and self-checkout grocery stores) may have difficulty reading your card. Many students find themselves relying on cash far more than in the States.

TRAVELER’S CHECKS:

In general, traveler’s checks are not very convenient to use in London or elsewhere in Europe. You may have to pay a fee to obtain traveler’s checks from your US bank, and the exchange rate may not be as good as the rate you will get on ATM withdrawals and credit card purchases in London. In addition, you may have to pay a fee to “cash” your traveler’s checks in London.

**Transportation from Airports**

**TAXIS:**

Most students fly into Heathrow or Gatwick Airport. In either case, you will need transportation into central London. Taxis are the easiest and most expensive option. One of London’s famous “black taxis” will cost £55-£105 (check the current conversion rates to determine the amount in dollars), depending upon the time of day, how far you are traveling, and the amount of luggage you have. Minicabs are less expensive, but they tend to be smaller cars and may not provide enough space for heavy travelers (see below for more discussion on minicabs). Some minicab companies use minivans or trailers to transport several people with large amounts of luggage. You must telephone ahead for minicab service. NEVER accept a ride from someone who approaches you in the airport uninvited. For additional information and a searchable list of providers, visit Transport for London’s Taxis and Minicabs page at [http://www.tfl.gov.uk/modalpages/2680.aspx](http://www.tfl.gov.uk/modalpages/2680.aspx). There are several good alternatives to an expensive cab ride into central London.

**CAR SERVICES:**

A cost-efficient method to get from the airport to your new flat is to share a car service with other Consortium students living in your building, or area, and arriving at the same airport on the same day. These car services can also be more cost-efficient than a taxi for a single traveler and offer the convenience of not struggling with heavy luggage on and off trains or the Tube (London’s underground railway). FSU and past Consortium students recommend using Expressways to book private cabs to your flat from the airport. Mention the FSU to receive a discounted rate.
FROM HEATHROW:

The quickest way to reach central London from Heathrow is the “Heathrow Express” train. This train will take you to Paddington Railway Station in about 20 minutes. Trains leave the airport about every 15 minutes. You may want to purchase a railcard, which will save you money immediately on the Gatwick or Heathrow Express. This is described in Part II, below. The Heathrow Express typically costs £22 for a single (one-way) ticket or £36 for a return ticket if you purchase your tickets before boarding the train (you can also purchase tickets on board for an increased price). You can then take a cab or the Tube to your final destination. You cannot take a luggage cart onto the platform to wait for the Heathrow Express or onto the train, so you need to be able to carry your luggage by yourself if you take the Heathrow Express. There is also a train, “Heathrow Connect,” which runs on the Heathrow Express rail lines, but stops more often, and is therefore more modestly priced at approximately £10.20 for a one-way ticket or £20.40 return.

A less expensive, but more time-consuming, and potentially back breaking option is to take the Tube from Heathrow airport. Many students find this option can be exhausting with heavy luggage after an overnight flight. However, taking the tube is by far the least expensive option at about £5. A tube ride to most locations in central London will take about 45 minutes. In the airport terminal, look for signs with a horizontal line through a circle; this is the symbol for public transportation in London. Follow the signs until you come to the Tube station. Large maps of London’s tube will be posted near the ticket booths and turnstiles. The Piccadilly line (dark blue) runs from Heathrow to a number of stations in central London, including Leicester Square, Piccadilly Circus, and Knightsbridge. Consult a tube map to see which stop is most convenient and whether you need to switch lines to reach your final destination. Be aware that on many weekends, portions of the London Underground and various stations may be closed for scheduled maintenance. You can find service updates at http://www.tfl.gov.uk/ to confirm the availability of your route, or ask one of the helpful attendants at the Travel Information Centers located in each of Heathrow’s four terminals. They open at 7:15am and close at 10:15 p.m. The Tube hours of service run from about 5:30am until 11:45 p.m. (later on weekends).

Tip: There are options for checking your luggage at one of Heathrow’s four terminals. This allows one to get familiar with London transport without the burden of luggage. It costs about £8 per day per piece of luggage, and the storage facilities are open from about 6am to 10:00pm (hours vary by terminal). Commercial services include Excess Baggage Company with locations at Heathrow terminals as well as various central London train stations including Paddington and King’s Cross.

Free luggage carts are available in the terminal, however, you can’t take luggage carts on the Tube, so be prepared to carry your luggage. Only a few Tube stations are equipped with elevators, so be prepared to carry your luggage up and down stairs, on escalators, and across platforms. Those stations with elevators are marked with a handicap accessible icon on the Tube map. Most Tube stations involve walking some distance to make connecting lines or access the street and you are unlikely to find anyone to assist you in the Tube station with your luggage. Depending on the time of day, the Tube can be quite crowded with people, making it even more
difficult to move around with your luggage or fit into a train. Never leave your luggage unattended in a Tube station or in any other public place in London.

National Express runs a coach service (bus) from Heathrow Airport to Victoria Coach Station in central London. Fares typically cost less than £10. Victoria Coach Station is a short walk from Victoria Tube Station or you can take a cab to your final destination.

You may also take one of London’s red double-decker buses. This is probably the least convenient way to get to central London from the airport. At Heathrow simply walk straight out of the international terminal. To the right of the doors leading outside is a store devoted to selling bus tickets to central London. Tell the staff your destination, and they will sell you a ticket and tell you which bus to take. The buses arrive less than 25 yards from the store’s exit. For the FSU Study Center, ask for the bus going to Russell Square. From Russell Square, take a black taxi to 99 Great Russell Street.

FROM GATWICK:

The easiest way to reach London from Gatwick is the Gatwick Express train to Victoria Station. Trains run every 15 minutes and the journey lasts approximately 30 minutes. Baggage carts cannot be taken out of the airport. There is also a less expensive regional train from Gatwick which takes about the same amount of time, though it may be slower at peak times. You may want to avoid rush hour travel on this line, especially if traveling with lots of luggage. There is no Tube service direct from Gatwick. However, if you have taken the Gatwick Express train to Victoria Station, there are Tube connections and you can purchase a one-way tube ticket to your destination Tube stop. You may also choose to take a black taxi from Victoria Station.

Baggage

Pay attention to your airline luggage weight limits when packing. Most airlines impose a limit of one piece of luggage weighing a maximum of 50 pounds (23 kg) each. Regulations change somewhat frequently, so confirm the luggage quantity and weight limits with your airline. Textbooks are very heavy and may need to be put in your carry on in order to avoid exceeding the weight limits. Airlines charge expensive fees for exceeding luggage weight limitations. You should avoid bringing unnecessary heavy items and will want to weigh your luggage before heading to the airport. A bathroom scale works well for getting an approximate weight for each piece of luggage. London has many inexpensive options to purchase items you do not have adequate space to bring.

Tip: London’s climate will fluctuate daily (and sometimes hourly) over the course of your stay. While you may need one or two pieces of heavy winter clothes, lighter clothes that can be worn in layers will help you to adapt to weather changes more quickly and may help reduce baggage weight.
Part II.  
Living in London

Weather

The weather during January is typically cool (near freezing, but typically not below) with little sunlight. You will want a hat, scarf, and gloves or mittens. You may see a few snow flurries, but snowfall rarely accumulates in London and you are more likely to experience the ubiquitous rain! Check BBC Weather for further weather details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tip: A quick refresher on conversion:</th>
<th>°C x 1.8) + 32 = °F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0° Celsius is 32° Fahrenheit</td>
<td>15° Celsius is 59° Fahrenheit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5° Celsius is 41° Fahrenheit</td>
<td>20° Celsius is 68° Fahrenheit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10° Celsius is 50° Fahrenheit</td>
<td>25° Celsius is 77° Fahrenheit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Getting Around London

While there are many transportation options available for getting around, London is also a great place to walk. Central London is very compact and you may sometimes find it quicker and more interesting to walk from one place to the next than it is to take the Tube or bus.

If you plan to explore, we recommend buying a copy of London A-Z or another detailed map upon or before your arrival. You can find styles from the most detailed paperback including every nook and cranny of London, to the less intricate fold up maps. Maps are available at most news agents and bookstores in London. We recommend a color version (easier to read) and a

| Tip: The Tube runs until about midnight, (later on Friday and Saturday nights) and some buses run a little later. In fact, some buses (“Night Buses”) run 24-hours. Look for an ‘N’ prior to the route number. Keep this in mind when arranging outings on the town, as taxis are can be very expensive. | |
| Tip: Weekly and monthly Tube passes include free bus fare on all London bus routes within the zones included in the pass. | |
pocket-sized edition (convenience). (Google maps also works well, assuming you are happy to pay the roaming charges for your mobile device.)

THE TUBE:

Transport for London’s (“TfL”) website, www.tfl.gov.uk, is essential for figuring out how to get anywhere in London by public transport. In addition to information on fares and maps, the “Journey Planner” feature is similar to MapQuest and will explain how to get to wherever you need to go, with any combination of public transportation. You may want to download the (free) Citymapper app on your smart phone, which allows you to check directions and plan a walking, driving or public transport route using wi-fi, and then access that information later off-line.

We will provide you with an Oyster Card to use for public transportation during your stay. Oyster cards are more convenient than paper tickets and provide the best fare. Oyster cards are “prepaid;” and the cards provided by the Program will have a set value (about £20.00). Each time you use the card, the current fare is deducted from the card. Once you hit the daily pricing “cap,” which is the price of a one-day travel card (currently £4.40), your travel is free for the rest of the day on your Oyster card. The price-capping works interchangeably on buses and the Tube. Oyster cards are good for travel on the Tube, buses, Tramlink, DLR, Thameslink ferries, and most National Rail services within Greater London. The DLR (Docklands Light Rail) is essentially an extension of the Tube into the Greenwich and Docklands area (east and south of central London). Tube tickets and Oyster Cards work on the DLR.

BUSES:

Using the bus system is a good way to save money and get to know the city. Transport for London’s (“TfL”) website, www.tfl.gov.uk is also the place to plan bus journeys. Bus travel can be cheaper than the Tube and may help you better understand the layout of London. One drawback is that it can be slower than taking the Tube. Also beware that during rush hour, buses can be crowded and may stop to pick up new passengers even when they are at capacity. Since the buses run much later than the Tube and there are more of them, this mode of travel offers more flexibility than the Underground.

It is important to know the bus schedule when staying out late at night. While the Tube shuts down around 12:30am, many night buses run 24 hours a day. Routes can be difficult to figure out from the bus terminals themselves, so make sure you know how to get home before heading out.

Paying bus fare with your Oyster Card deducts £1.40 from your balance whereas the fare is £2.40 when paid in cash. Bus fares are not capped if you don’t have a prepaid pass or an Oyster Card. Therefore, if you have to take three different buses without an Oyster Card to get to your destination, you would pay £6.00. This can make the bus more expensive than the Tube for long journeys.

CABS & MINICABS:

Use only LICENSED cabs or minicabs. NEVER take a ride from someone who stops you on the street to offer transportation.

Every year articles appear on the front page of newspapers about the sometimes tragic fates of victims who use unlicensed minicabs. There are two ways to avoid such problems: (1) use
London’s famous and well regulated “black taxis” or (2) text Cabwise, a service of Transport for London. Simply Text HOME to 60835 to get the numbers of one taxi and two licensed minicab firms, in the area you are texting from. The call costs 35p. You can also call Cabwise at 020 7222 1234. Alternatively, if you have internet access, you can consult www.tfl.gov.uk, and the TFL website will provide a listing of licensed minicabs in your area.

Traveling in the UK

Many students choose to travel in the UK before the start of the formal program. Traveling by train within the United Kingdom is quite expensive compared to continental European countries. A good way to save money if you are 25 years old or younger is to purchase a 16-25 Railcard. Even if you are over age 25, you may be able to get the rail card by showing proof that you are a full-time student. It generally saves you one-third of the standard train ticket cost. It may be wise to purchase the rail card if you plan to do more than two or three trips within the UK or to Stansted Airport. The 16-25 Railcard can be purchased at the ticket counter in any of the rail stations in London. You must bring a passport photo and ID along with you when purchasing the card. Make sure you allow several minutes of extra time to fill out the paperwork before your first journey. If you travel with your family, consider getting a Family & Friends Railcard. Another option is to purchase a BritRail pass. There are a variety of types of passes that allow you to travel via train within England at considerable savings. Fares may vary depending on what time of year you buy it and which months you plan to travel. Check both National Rail and BritRail.com for deals and special offers on fares. Check well in advance to get the best deal.

Other Travel

The Eurostar high speed train can take you from London’s St. Pancras station to Paris in 2 hours and 15 minutes or to Brussels in just one hour and 50 minutes. The train travels at speeds of almost 200 miles per hour. Search the website for deals and remember that the train drops you into Paris or Brussels, whereas the airport requires additional transportation to get into the cities.

The Eurostar also offers many high speed connections to other European cities from Brussels and Paris. For example, a train to Amsterdam with a high speed connection in Brussels takes the same amount of time as a direct flight. One advantage of traveling by train is the convenience of arriving near the center of your destination city as opposed to many airports which require additional travel from the outskirts of town. Trains also offer much more generous baggage restrictions compared to the extremely strict regulations of discount airlines students often use.

Another great option for travel over longer distances are budget airlines such as easyJet and Ryanair. These fares are cheaper if you can plan ahead.
Telephone and Mail Services

**Tip:** While you can opt to bring your cell phone from home, be aware that mobile phone sellers in London are plentiful and relatively inexpensive. Be sure that your US phone uses SIM card technology and that the phone is “unlocked.” You may be able to get your current US cellular carrier to “unlock” your cell phone so you can purchase a SIM card from a UK carrier and use your existing phone on a new plan overseas.

Using the telephone in London is relatively expensive. There are charges even for local calls. Students living in program housing need a calling card to make any calls from the landline in their flats. (These cards are available online from a variety of vendors or from local corner shops (bodegas).)

Prepaid (“Pay As You Go” or “PAYG”) mobile phones are far more popular in the UK than in the US. Most former students of the semester-long program bought pay-as-you-go mobile phones. You can buy such a phone in London from a high street retailer, if you wish to purchase a phone for the duration of the program. If you purchase a pay-as-you go phone, you can buy “top-up” (phone credit) at most grocery stores or newsstands or via a bank ATM. Shop around for the best rates on your service provider. Orange, Vodafone, O2 and Virgin offer sales and service plans and most of these mainstream providers can be found on Oxford Street near the FSU Center. Other dealers like Car Phone Warehouse carry a variety of service providers and can help you compare according to your needs.

Many students found that their UK phone was good for receiving calls, and for texting, and for calling UK numbers. For students with iphones and blackberries or other internet accessible phones, the main cellular carriers have internet options that should be explored to prevent huge international roaming or data charges.

Many companies offer international plans, so ask about rates to the US. If you plan to travel outside of the UK and want your mobile to work, inquire as to whether you will get service in foreign countries. Also check to see what it costs to send text messages. Many students use this as the sole form of communication from their mobiles because it is much less expensive than making a phone call. It is also possible to send text messages to US cellular phone numbers, although these are much more expensive than local text messages.

**Tip:** The international calling code for the United States is **001** (then dial the area code and phone number). The international calling code for those calling London from the US is **011**, country code **44**, and drop the first 0 from the number. Example: if your number in London is 0207 439 3651, then people calling from the US would dial 011 44 207 439 3651.
Most students rely on Skype, Google Talk, Yahoo Messenger, MSN Instant Messenger, or other services to communicate with friends and family in the US over a broadband connection. The wi-fi access in the FSU Study Centre is generally good.

Shipping

Shipping packages back to the US can be expensive and unreliable. Check with international shipping companies before going to a post office in London. Students have had good luck using Mail Boxes Etc. on Great Russell Street. Some of the companies run specials from time to time. One way to avoid most shipping charges is to leave plenty of room in the luggage you bring to London for things you want to bring home.

Tip: To receive packages and/or mail while in London, send them to:
FSU Study Center
99 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LA
England
Staff will be available to sign for packages at all times. A list of all packages is recorded in a book available at the front desk as you enter. However, the FSU Centre does NOT accept Federal Express packages for students.

Computers & Studying

The FSU Study Center has good computer facilities. Two rooms are devoted solely to computer use and are available on a 24-hour basis. Additional computers are located within the library (during regular library hours). Word processing and web access are included in your program fee. FSU has wireless internet service available in all rooms in the Center, so you can access the internet with your own laptop computer anywhere in the building. Wireless access was good in 2014, though a good connection is not always available in every part of the building. The lab computers are connected to printers/scanners, and each student is allowed unlimited printing. The FSU library sells copy cards as well.

If you decide to bring a laptop, include your computer in your carry-on bag. Also keep in mind that you do not have lockers or storage space at the FSU Centre, so you will have to carry your laptop at all times. In the past few years, students have had laptops stolen, so always keep your laptop with you, and frequently back up your notes on a thumb drive or the internet. Also, for those who rely on your computers for class notes, be aware that desktop space in the classroom may be limited in some classes. Note: For your required short papers and final exam you may use laptop computers.
Converters

British appliances run on a different electric voltage (240) than we use in the US (110). Converters and adapter plugs are needed to operate electrical appliances from the States. US stores like Radio Shack, Office Depot, Wal-Mart, Target, Best Buy, and travel or luggage stores have adapters to suit your needs. Try to find an “all-in-one” converter that adapts to all the world’s outlets. This will make it easier to travel in continental Europe, as they have different outlets than in England. You can also wait to purchase adapter plugs after you arrive in London. You will find inexpensive adapters available at the airport and many places in London, such as Angel market. Many high voltage electric appliances like blow dryers and curling irons will blow out even when proper adapters are used. It is probably advisable to leave these types of appliances at home, or to buy dual-voltage appliances.

Tip: Most modern laptop computers only require an adapter plug because they automatically convert to the change in voltage, but you should check the input specifications printed on your laptop’s power supply (100-240v is an acceptable range). You may purchase a UK style plug end cord segment for your laptop’s power cord online or upon arrival at any electronics store on nearby Tottenham Court Rd for 3-5 pounds. Check to see if you require a 3 pin or 2 pin model.

Health Care

As the UK is a National Health Service country, medical care is very inexpensive for British taxpayers. Generally American students will have to pay for medical care, which may be only slightly less than what they would pay in the United States. If you have a bona fide medical emergency, generally the “Accident and Emergency Department” of a hospital (sometimes called “A&E” and sometimes called “Casualty”) (the Emergency Room in U.S. hospitals) will treat you without charge. However, it has to be a genuine emergency, or you will be turned away and told to go to a regular physician.

Students have recommended trying to locate a NHS (National Health Service) doctors’ surgery or practice medical centre rather than visit a hospital Accident and Emergency Department. The consultation and any tests that need to be done at NHS general practitioners’ surgeries are free of charge. However, if the doctor prescribes a medication, then you will usually need to pay a “prescription charge” fee (currently £8.40 per item) to collect the medication from the chemist (pharmacist).

There are many walk-in medical clinics (“surgeries”) in London. Nearest the FSU Center is The Museum Practice (58 Great Russell Street, 020-7405-2739, walk-in hours Monday-Friday 9am -11am). You will receive additional medical providers’ contact information at orientation. Also, pharmacists in London offer more extensive services than in the US. If you feel ill, you may want to consult with one of them, who will recommend a medication for you. You can obtain many
medications from the chemist without a prescription. Take note that it may be difficult to find your favorite medications (such as Advil, Nyquil, or your ideal decongestant or allergy medication), so stock up before you leave.

**Note on Crime and Safety**

Terrorism remains a worldwide potential problem, and there is currently a US State Department global worldwide caution for all Americans, as well as a travel alert for Europe.

For up-to-date information about travel and security conditions in the UK, consult the [State Department website](https://travel.state.gov). If the State Department issues an alert or warning applicable before or during the program, the program will notify all participants. If a student withdraws prior to the commencement of the program due to an alert or warning, the student will receive a full refund of all monies advanced within twenty days of their withdrawal. If a student withdraws during the course of the program due to an alert or warning, or if the program is terminated, students will be refunded fees paid.

Most Americans are amazed to note the large number of security cameras all over London on virtually every street corner and covering almost all door entrances. There are many unseen cameras as well. Nevertheless, please be aware of your surroundings. As in any big city, purse and wallet snatchers are everywhere and looking for the right opportunity. Several years ago, one student’s wife had her purse stolen at a restaurant the first night they were in London. Over $400 was taken and they had to resolve over $4000 worth of charges on their stolen credit cards. The process of getting new cards and dealing with the charges took nearly two months.

Thieves are likely to target people in pubs and clubs, because drinking tends to make people more careless and less aware of what is going on. Caution: if you spend time in pubs, be very careful with your belongings. One student had his back pack stolen while in a pub in plain sight of other program students. He lost his computer containing all three years of his class notes, research papers, photos, etc. Although police were able to review tapes in the pub and see the actual theft, they were not able to track down the culprit!

Purses and wallets should always be carried close to your person. Some students purchase a pacsafe bag, which is slashproof. For safety, keep additional copies of your passport and credit card information available in a separate place so they may be cancelled and/or replaced promptly. The program director will keep an extra copy of your passport in the LLC office if you provide her with a copy. Additionally, it might not be wise to carry your passport on your person unless you are traveling outside of the UK or need to go to the US Embassy. It is a good idea to keep your passport, extra credit cards or debit cards and some cash hidden away in a safe place at home. That way, if you do get robbed, you will have something to fall back on.

At home, keep valuables locked in a cabinet or hidden from plain view. PLEASE LEAVE VALUABLE JEWELRY IN THE US!!! The International Student ID card will reimburse you for certain lost passport expenses. Look at [www.isiccard.com](http://www.isiccard.com) for further information.

Personal security items such as mace or pepper spray are illegal in London and the UK. Many pocket knives are also illegal (one student almost got arrested for carrying a 1 1/2 inch keychain
pocket knife in London because it had a locking blade and was therefore classified as an “illegal offensive weapon”). Also, check carefully the current very restrictive airport security rules, so that your trip will not be complicated or delayed by inappropriate carry-on objects.