

This handbook is for the use of registered students at Imperial College London

Placements Abroad Handbook^(#)

A practical guide for students planning a placement abroad during the academic year 2025-2026 as an element of their degree programme (undergraduate and postgraduate)

or as an approved extra-ECTS undergraduate vacation internship (placement)

Important: It is suggested that this publication is used as a resource: use the contents page, and dip in and out as you need. This Handbook is **not** intended to be consumed in a single reading.

Produced by the Registry at Imperial College London: **Version 2** (December 2025)

Available at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

*Check the above web page for updated versions during the year since content is subject to change. Changes from the original version (version 1) will always be highlighted in **yellow** (including the contents page)*

(#) this handbook is NOT intended to support the following activities:

- Final year undergraduate medicine clinical [placement] electives
(contact the Faculty of Medicine Education Office: feo.electives@imperial.ac.uk)
- Placements with placement providers abroad where the placement is undertaken on a remote basis from outside the country in which the placement provider is located
 - Fieldwork abroad or organised field trips abroad
 - Split PhDs
- Vacation internships (i.e. not part of a degree nor assigned extra-ECTS credit)
 - Activities undertaken during an interruption of studies

The following are not regarded as a "placement" but might form part of a longer study-based or work-based placement: a field trip; research in the field; a site visit

Placements abroad might themselves include preparation for and undertaking of an integral placement that would be managed by the placement provider.

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This publication is intended for internal use only and is updated annually ahead of the new academic year. It is re-issued during the year when significant revisions/amendments are necessary. Sections which are amended during the year as highlighted in the contents page (and throughout) will be in yellow.

Available at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

Green highlights and text in **bold** = important information & actions

*Information and actions highlighted in green and **bold** are not necessarily relevant in all placement situations nor are they meant to be exhaustive. Their main intention is to draw the reader's attention to key text. Our suggestion is that the handbook is not read in its entirety in one sitting rather that it be used as a source of guidance on aspects of planning and undertaking a placement abroad as and when the student seeks support.*

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this handbook at the time of issue. If readers spot errors or inaccuracies please email us: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial College London is not responsible for the content of external websites which are referred to in this publication.

It is available in other formats as required.

Consultations are available.

Contact: Adrian Hawksworth, Assistant Registrar (Placements) a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

PLACEMENTS ABROAD HANDBOOK

Introduction

This handbook focuses on placements which require physical relocation to the country in which the placement provider is located.

Imperial's **definition of a placement** (*activity undertaken by an undergraduate or postgraduate degree student*) is where the university transfers direct day-to-day supervision of a student, as part of their degree programme, to a third-party organisation for a period of 2 weeks or more (*or in the case of undergraduates where extra-ECTS is scheduled to be awarded for a successfully assessed extra-curricular vacation internship*).

The student's academic department is responsible for the management of a placement.

Departments are guided in their management of placements by the university's [Placement Learning Policy](#) (see pages 85-89) and students via <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

Additional **good practice (including roles and responsibilities)** is available to departmental 'placement managers' (*academic or administrative members of staff responsible for individual placements*) at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/> & <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-staff/> (staff login required)

Good preparation is essential if any placement is to be a practical as well as an academic success. This handbook raises many issues which a student is advised to consider carefully.

Rest assured that most **placements abroad** are completed without serious problems and that most students highly rate the experience. **It really is an exciting opportunity.**

Green Highlights and text in **bold** = important information & actions

The information and actions which are highlighted do not imply that they are relevant in all placement situations nor are they meant to be exhaustive. Their main intention is to draw the reader's attention to key text. Our suggestion is that the handbook is not read in its entirety in one sitting rather that it be used as a source of guidance on aspects of planning and undertaking a placement abroad as and when the student seeks support.

*Amendments made to the handbook during the year will be highlighted in **yellow**.*

There is also **checklist guidance** on page 90, **including reference to a template pre-departure checklist & emergency contacts form** (for use if there is no dept equivalent).

Overseas students (*by tuition fee status*) are asked to read the handbook as normal but to also consult the section entitled '**Specific information for UK Student Visa holders**' (page 84).

You can address questions and queries to Adrian Hawksworth, Assistant Registrar (Placements), Registry: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk.

As a student who is considering whether to pursue a placement or, perhaps, is one step further forward and is preparing to undertake a placement (*indeed, maybe already be on placement and looking for guidance*) we suggest that while they should at some stage consult the whole handbook, **they could as a first act glance through the contents page and decide what is important to them at this stage.**

The aim of this handbook is essentially threefold.

- **Firstly**, to assist any student (UG/PGT/PGR) before, during or after an approved “placement” abroad to understand the various issues which may come to prominence when planning, undertaking and completing such a placement.
- **Secondly**, to provide information on logistical matters: for example, acquiring accommodation, considering insurance cover, and assessing immigration and financial issues. **However, the purpose of this handbook is not to act as an A-Z guide to all issues** (*for example, it does not advise on booking travel tickets although it does indicate when it may be sensible to do so; it does not cover driving abroad*) but rather to emphasise those issues which Imperial considers most important and about which most queries are received.
- **Thirdly**, the content aims to help students consider other sources of information, e.g. the placement provider, home department, students who have previously undertaken similar placements and students who have undertaken a placement at the same placement provider.

Exceptions: This handbook is **not** meant to be read by:

- (1) an undergraduate medicine student planning a final year clinical elective abroad. *Specific guidance and support for such students can be obtained from the [Faculty of Medicine Education Office](#).*
- (2) students planning to undertake a placement with a placement provider abroad but where the placement is undertaken on a remote basis from outside the country in which the placement provider is located.

Furthermore, this handbook is **not** intended to cover the following activities abroad: ***field trips, research in the field (fieldwork) and site visits***. However, while these activities are not considered to fit the definition of a placement they may form an element of a placement.

Covid-19 (coronavirus): update (June 2025)

Students undertaking placements abroad in the period since 2022 have reported a more normal experience, however:

- While the pandemic has relented due to vaccination programmes and other actions (by national governments) taking effect, the continuing risks posed by coronavirus and, indeed, other current health emergencies/incidents plus the potential for other pandemics (local, regional and global) to occur and how countries (and as relevant here, host organisations [placement providers]) might react to those circumstances now and in the future ought to remain aspects of undertaking a placement about which any traveller should remain vigilant.
- Some countries may still experience residual (perhaps even significant) impacts on travel and everyday life.
- While normal service might be taken to have resumed in most countries, be aware of any residual or significant impacts that may still affect preparation for a placement abroad and during the mobility itself.
- Regarding travel to and from your host country, this may still be subject to restrictions and to rules, such as providing evidence of vaccinations, the taking of a test before departure/arrival and perhaps even the reimposition of quarantine if coronavirus was to flare up again.
- Another of the on-going impacts of coronavirus may be that some organisations around the world might retain some rules and restrictions, for example, for study abroad the host university might still partly deliver teaching using remote means. There may also be some lingering impact on consular services.
- During the pandemic remote learning from a student's home country in place of when they would ordinarily have expected to be present in the host country was the norm, and so should the pandemic flare up again this might again play a part although we obviously hope not.
- Set your preparation radar to take such eventualities into account now rather than react to them in surprise ahead of or during your placement. In a sense you may have had to do so for the last few years anyway and therefore you may feel well able to handle these possibilities, albeit in a setting/location which may well be new to you.
- **This handbook will continue to reference coronavirus as necessary.**

ARRANGING A PLACEMENT (PART 1)

Section 1: Placement scenarios and options

Placement scenarios

Broadly speaking placements fall into two types:

- Study-based, *including those which may be wholly or partly research focused.*
- Work-based, *including those which may be wholly or partly research focused.*

At Imperial these two types can be encapsulated by the following two scenarios.

Scenario 1: Within undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes opportunities may be available either on a compulsory or optional basis to undertake a placement abroad, including within taught programmes the pursuing of a project module partly or wholly abroad, and within research (doctoral) programmes undertaking part of the work planned to achieve a PhD at a relevant organisation abroad.

Scenario 2: Undergraduate students who undertake a vacation internship for extra-ECTS (*applicable to students of participating departments: eligibility criteria apply.*) More detail on page 11.

A note on placement providers

A placement provider is any organisation (*e.g. an institution of higher education, a research institute, a third sector organisation, a non-governmental organisation or NGO, a company*) which provides a placement and to whom the university transfers day-to-day supervision of the student for the duration of the placement.

A placement provider must have been approved by the home academic department (*see pages 13-15*) before a student can then proceed to having their home department approve their placement.

Placement options

Please note that not all the options referenced below are open to all students of every degree programme so, if you are at all unsure, you should check with, as appropriate, your Director of Undergraduate Studies or Director of Postgraduate Studies or MSc/MRes Course Director (or equivalent).

Options applicable to **Scenario 1**

(A) **Undergraduate Year Abroad:** The Faculty of Engineering (*all departments except the School of Design Engineering and the Dept of Materials*) and the Faculty of Natural Sciences operate year abroad degree programmes. The relevant degree programmes have a range of suffixes: *Year Abroad; Research Abroad; International Programme of Study; Language for Science.*

Admission to a year abroad degree programme is either in Year 1 (UCAS) or by an on-course transfer¹ (depends on the department), with progression to the year containing the year abroad determined by the student's home academic dept during or at the end of the preceding year.

¹ UK Student Visa holders should refer to page 84.

- The year abroad is a full academic year study-based placement at a non-UK university.
- Participation requires a minimum 2:1 academic performance by the end of the year prior to the year abroad. Some academic departments set higher performance targets generally or for specific partner universities.
- Such placements are compulsory and ordinarily operate as part of a student exchange with an approved partner (host) university. Therefore, suggesting alternative locations is not possible.
- The study plan to be pursued at the host university is determined by the student's academic department at Imperial in collaboration with the host university. In some instances, it might incorporate an industrial or research placement managed by the host university.
- Within Europe (except Switzerland) student exchanges operate on bi-lateral terms, although an outgoing student might still follow "erasmus" application routines depending on the approach of the host university.
- For Switzerland Imperial has student exchange agreements with ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne (operating in 2025-26 within the Swiss-European Mobility Programme).
- Language requirements ordinarily exist for undergraduate study placements taking place in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Switzerland and Austria.
- A complete list of undergraduate year abroad exchange links (as they applied in 2024-25 is available at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/student-exchanges/undergraduate-year-abroad/>) (see also the table below for non-European year abroad exchange links)

For further information about the undergraduate year abroad option, contact your **department's study abroad co-ordinator** (table correct as of June 2025). Co-ordinators are supported by the Dept's Student/Education Office.

Aeronautics	Dr Gustavo Quino Quispe	Mechanical Engineering	Dr Nicolas Cinosi
Bioengineering	Dr Dandan Zhang	Chemistry	Dr Rebecca Jones (plus, Dr Luke Delmas)
Chemical Engineering	Dr Andreas Kogelbauer	Life Sciences: Biochemistry/Biotechnology	Dr Gerald Larrouy-Maumus
Civil & Environmental Engineering	Dr Christian Onof	Life Sciences: Biological Sciences	
Computing	Dr Steffen van Bakel	Mathematics	Dr Nicola Gnecco (Europe) Dr Sheehan Olver (for MIT)
Earth Science & Engineering	Professor Gary Hampson	Physics	Professor Marina Galand (plus, Dr Lorenzo Matteini)
Electrical & Electronic Eng	Professor Alessandro Astolfi		

The table below lists undergraduate study abroad exchange partners in countries beyond Europe (valid for 2025-26: correct as of June 2025). *All Year Abroad links except **

Country	Institution	Depts at Imperial involved in the link
Australia	University of Sydney	Chemical Engineering; Mechanical Engineering
	University of Queensland	Chemical Engineering; Civil and Environmental Engineering
	Australian National University	Earth Science and Engineering
	Monash University	Chemistry
Canada	University of British Columbia	Earth Science and Engineering
	University of Toronto	Chemistry

China: Hong Kong	Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Civil & Environmental Engineering
Singapore	National University of Singapore	Aeronautics, Bioengineering, EEE, Mechanical Engineering
	Nanyang Technological University	Chemistry
USA	Carnegie Mellon University	Chemical Engineering
	University of California: via their Education Abroad Program (UCEAP). Campuses <u>include</u> San Diego, Santa Barbara, UCLA, Davis, Irvine, Santa Cruz and Berkeley but the campus a student would be placed at is subject to an application process.	Faculty of Engineering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All engineering departments participate in a faculty-led selection process <u>except</u> the School of Design Engineering and the Dept of Materials. * Dept of Computing undergraduates should see section C below.
	MIT (see also option C below)	Materials* (see section C below), Aeronautics, Chemical Engineering, Computing, Earth Science and Engineering, EEE & Chemistry, Mathematics and Physics.

(B) **Undergraduates**, depending on their degree programme, may be able to access **work-based placement options at a non-UK placement provider**, e.g., Year in Industry degree or a shorter placement (depending on the department offering a shorter option their duration is in the range of 4-6 months.)

Table: Departmental curriculum-based industrial placement contacts (June 2025). Co-ordinators are either part of or supported by the Dept's Student/Education Office

Year in Industry		Shorter work or work-based project placements	
Aeronautics	Dr Kostas Steiros	Computing (MEng only)	Tom Curtin (Education team)
Bioengineering	Robert Ferguson	Computing/Mathematics	Tom Curtin (Education team)
Chemistry	Professor Milo Shaffer	Design Engineering (MEng only)	Jacklyn Ramsaran (Education team)
Life Sciences: Biochemistry/Biotechnology	Dr Laurence Bugeon	Electrical & Electronic Engineering (MEng only)	Kate Farrar (Education team)
Life Sciences: Biological Sciences	Dr Laurence Bugeon	School of Medicine: Medical Biosciences (see next page)	Sarah Fort (Education team)
Mechanical Engineering	Dr Frederic Cegla		

(C) Other undergraduate options

- Undergraduates in the Dept of Materials** can apply for a place to study at MIT in the first term of the final year (MEng): contact the Dept's Student Office.
- An option exists** (not guaranteed to be available each year) **for an undergraduate in the Dept of Computing** to undertake two terms of study in Year 3 (autumn/spring) at the University of California (*not including Berkeley; applicable campuses can change from year to year*) within their registration for the MEng Computing (International Programme of Study). Such students apply via their department and are considered alongside students from other engineering departments who are on a whole year abroad option. A student who participates would then move straight onto the MEng Year 3 industrial placement in April. *To note that the whole year abroad option in the Dept of Computing when undertaken in Year 4 as part of MEng Computing (International Programme of Study) does not have the Uni of California as an option.*

- **Undergraduates in the Dept of Aeronautics** can undertake their MEng final year project abroad in an industrial or university setting: contact the dept's final year project co-ordinator for options.
- **Undergraduates in the Dept of Life Sciences** may be able to undertake their BSc final year project abroad in an industrial or university setting: contact the final year project co-ordinator.

(D) Options in the School of Medicine

- **Undergraduate medicine students on BSc pathways** may be eligible on an exceptional basis to undertake a placement abroad at another location (contact: Faculty of Medicine Education Office).

Note: Undergraduate medicine final year clinical electives are **not** covered by this handbook. Final year medicine electives are subject to specific guidance from the Faculty of Medicine Education Office.

- **Undergraduate students (BSc Medical Biosciences)** may be eligible on an exceptional basis to undertake a placement (one of the final year options) at location abroad.

(E)

- **Postgraduate taught masters students (MSc) & postgraduate research masters students (MRes)** may have access to opportunities to undertake a placement external to Imperial, perhaps abroad (check the programme specification):
 - Some degree programmes have a compulsory or optional work placement integrated into the curriculum (options may be limited to UK-based orgs so a student should check first).
 - A student may be able to undertake part of or an entire project module abroad. Where this is possible, it is either normally available or it is at the discretion of the Course Director. Established connections between a particular degree programme and industry/healthcare will often influence with whom placements can be undertaken. Check the Programme Specification.
 - **Business School:** Global (study exchange) opportunities typically lasting 2-6 weeks (perhaps longer) are available to some programmes. Contact the administration team for the relevant programme. Consult: <https://ibconnect.imperial.ac.uk/ibexchange23/general-outgoing-exchange-resources/>

(F)

- **PhD students** can in principle consider spending part of their registration abroad.
 - They should discuss the idea first with their main supervisor, and it is their main supervisor who must provisionally agree before any planning should be undertaken (*see also the regulations for PhD registration and the procedures for complying with "study leave" for placements normally lasting 2 weeks or more: see the note below*).
 - PhD students in Centres of Doctoral Training are often scheduled as part of their training to spend time on a placement, perhaps abroad.

Note on PhD "study leave": <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/student-records-and-data/for-current-students/research-degrees/administration/>

When a dept agrees to a student undertaking a placement abroad (*commonly at another university or research institute but perhaps in industry*) lasting two weeks or more (as part of their degree registration) the dept will follow Imperial's "study leave" process. For approved "study leave" lasting three months or more a tuition fee remission (reduction) may be agreed at the **discretion** of the home department.

Options applicable to **Scenario 2**: extra-ECTS for eligible undergraduate vacation internships abroad

An undergraduate student may plan to undertake a vacation internship abroad for [extra ECTS credit](#), subject to it being eligible. Check the list of participating departments at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/> (scroll down to relevant item). If your department participates ask the Director of Undergraduate Studies (or equivalent) whether they include external internships abroad (**caution**: *some departments only apply these rules to internal UROPs*).

- As of May 2025, the following departments are involved: Bioengineering, Computing, Electrical & Electronic Engineering, Materials, Mechanical Engineering, Chemistry and Physics.
- The dept must agree to manage the internship abroad as if it were a “placement”.
- The ‘extra’ credit is awarded upon successful completion of the agreed duration (typically in the summer vacation after Year 2, or Year 3 on a 4-year course) and the accompanying assessment.
- While such ‘extra’ credit will not constitute part of a student’s degree programme, it will be detailed on the student’s award transcript (*a document issued upon the successful completion of a student’s degree*).
- **The rationale for these rules** is mainly to allow undergraduate MEng & MSci students whose degree programme does not already provide 270 ECTS, another means to accrue 270 ECTS credit by the end of their degree: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

A reminder that this handbook is **not a source of guidance for the following:**

- ❖ **Undergraduate medicine final year clinical electives.** Contact the Faculty Education Office.
- ❖ **Field trips, research in the field (fieldwork) and site visits:** unless they form part of a longer study-based or work-based placement.
- ❖ Students planning to undertake a placement with a placement provider abroad but where the placement is undertaken on a **remote basis** from outside the country in which the placement provider is located.
- ❖ **Vacation internships abroad for which extra-ECTS credit has not been approved.**
- ❖ **“GAP” years in industry or study elsewhere:** Please note that “gap” years are interruptions of study, i.e. they do not form part of the degree programme. *However, within Engineering – where gap years in industry are accommodated within a department’s approach to undergraduate industrial training – advice and support may be available from the designated departmental contact.*

Section 2: Planning your placement

Imperial has a responsibility to ensure that all placements are well planned and that all three principal parties involved (student, Imperial and the placement provider) **work constructively throughout to ensure good preparation for and effective execution of the placement.**

The student's home academic department is responsible for all aspects of a placement from its planning through to its conclusion, plus your integration back into Imperial upon your return (where this is relevant). However, **every student should expect to and ordinarily wish to contribute to the planning and organisation of their placement.**

First steps

Before you do anything please review the university's [Placement Learning Policy Statement](#) (*reproduced on pages 85-89*) and explained at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

Find out about the placement opportunities available to you and speak to the designated contact in your department (*see pages 7-11*).

Don't forget the role which [Imperial's Careers Service](#) can provide in helping you prepare to secure work-based placement opportunities (prepare/improve your CV; interview skills.)

Whatever your level of degree (bachelor/master/doctoral) **the following sections act as a guide to the types of questions/issues which may be relevant when planning the content of your placement:**

Who approves a placement?
Approval of a placement provider
Hosting arrangements at the placement provider
Academic recognition
Study or work/training plan, <u>including</u> dealing with changes in circumstances during a placement
Plus, other issues:
<i>Supervision ► Assessment ► Projects ► Adapting to a different environment ►</i>
<i>Orientation/training ► Maintaining contact with your home dept ► Your well-being</i>
<i>► ...and finally, feedback/debriefing</i>

Please note that logistical questions (e.g. insurance) are covered in Arranging a Placement (Part 2).

As you read through this section, you should ask yourself which elements of the process you can reasonably take charge of (perhaps working with others to achieve) and those that require to be pursued by your department. **How you and your department go about organising your placement will depend on which department you are in, the type of placement to be undertaken and the location of the placement.**

The timescales might vary, but obviously you should give yourself sufficient time especially if you know you require a visa or permit to enter the host country or that the nature of the placement requires special planning.

There will be differences depending on whether you are dealing with a company (*work-based placement*) or a university (*for a study or work-based placement: perhaps both, when undertaken within an undergraduate year abroad*) as the host organisation (*i.e. the placement provider*).

Who approves a placement?

Since the decision as to whether you may undertake a study-based or work/work-based placement lies with your department, it is worth detailing here what that means.

Your department is responsible for allocating a Placement Manager.

Normally this will be the person mentioned on pages 7-11 for undergraduate, plus Course Directors for postgraduate taught courses and research supervisors for PhD students. That person might not typically use the term Placement Manager but in terms of the university's policy that is what they are.

and deciding:

1. [deciding] **with whom your placement will take place** (*remember that the placement may be a compulsory or non-compulsory element of your degree, or for some undergraduates be for extra-ECTS*) **since:**
 - its **suitability** on academic and non-academic grounds would need to be checked. i.e. **are you academically and linguistically qualified** to undertake a placement and is it in your best interests.
 - *see “approval of a placement provider” (pages 13-15).*
 - a placement provider must be able to provide a placement in which any intended learning outcomes (*formally for undergraduate and postgraduate taught; perhaps informally for postgraduate research*) can be achieved and both the level of knowledge and the level of skill/experience of the student are considered.
 - there may be **competition** for places.
 - competition for university-based study placements or projects may exist at department level as places on a specific exchange or programme may be limited.
 - competition for work/work-based placements at popular/regular placement providers may again be competitive at department level as places may be limited, however, you may also be competing with students at other universities via regular company recruitment processes.
 - however, there may be little or no competition for some opportunities, perhaps because they are self-sourced and not advertised (*e.g. a university-based research placement found by a PhD student using supervisor contacts*) or perhaps some exchanges places are subject to little or no competition.
 - **Don't forget the role** which [Imperial's Careers Service](#) can provide in helping you prepare to secure work-based placement opportunities (prepare/improve your CV; interview skills.)
 - **the placement provider would have the final decision on whether to host you.**
2. [deciding] **whether, after a suitable placement provider has been identified [and possibly secured], you may progress to planning your placement in detail.** *Perhaps for some placements, specific supervision at the placement provider had to be identified beforehand and secured. Perhaps the availability of that supervision has been the driver for the placement to have been made available in the first place.*
3. [deciding] **the study or work plan for your placement.**
4. [deciding] **whether a separate Placement Tutor/Visitor (or supervisor) requires to be identified.**
This would be a member of staff in your home department.

If your intention is to identify a placement provider with whom your department (*or for PhD students your supervisor*) has no established relationship (perhaps has not sent students to that particular organisation before), it is important that you first check if your department/supervisor will allow this. Established

relationships are important when it comes to undergraduate study placements abroad where it is not possible for an undergraduate student to suggest a full year university-based placement at a university with whom there is no existing student exchange agreement.

Caution: when searching on-line for companies, please be warned that fraudulent websites do exist, and be cautious around emails you may receive which purport to come from companies seeking students to take up placements.

For some students, the timetable for determining selection/approval will be a drawn-out process, while for others it will be completed quickly. Certainly, where competition for places does not exist your placement may be approved quickly, subject to satisfying any administrative requirements on the part of the host (*but remember that the administrative requirements of the host may themselves take time*).

The approval by your department of any one placement may be a two-staged process, where you are first accepted as a candidate for a particular placement (*i.e. you have received approval from your department to plan and prepare for the placement*), but where your final participation is not confirmed until nearer to the start date. E.G.: *an undergraduate year abroad student whose final participation on the placement would not be finally confirmed until they have successfully completed the year before the year abroad, but who through necessity had to apply to the host university and have their admission confirmed well in advance.*

Whatever the route by which your placement is confirmed Imperial requires a placement provider to host you appropriately and safely.

Consideration of and approval of a placement provider (as part of the process to approve a placement)

A placement provider must be able to provide a placement in which any intended learning outcomes (*formally for undergraduate and postgraduate taught; perhaps informally for postgraduate research*) can be achieved and both the level of knowledge and the skill/experience of the student are taken into consideration.

All placement providers² must be subject to scrutiny by the student's department prior to a placement being approved. This should normally be achieved using one of the following methods:

1. Student exchange agreements are for 'university'-based placements (*normally study-based, but occasionally for work/research-based or a combination of both*) taking place within such a framework (*the agreement must be valid for the academic year in which your placement takes place*). If you wish to double-check if a valid student exchange agreement exists for your placement, you or your department should email: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk
2. Placement Provider Information form for all other placements.
 - a Placement Provider Information (PPIF) form should ordinarily be sent to the placement provider by your home department and be returned to your home department **before** (ideally, well before) the start of the proposed placement.

² Imperial's [Relationship Policy](#) may also be relevant. Departments who are considering requests for placements in certain industries may need to say "no" or take extra steps to have the activity approved.

- **a PPIF solicits information, which will help the department decide whether the placement provider is suitable** (e.g. up-to-date contact details; persons responsible for the placement; insurance cover; highlight issues which may be important to discuss, such as access by a tutor to a site; confidentiality issues which may impact assessment).
- **handling a PPIF is the responsibility of your “Placement Manager”**. The PPIF is additional to any other documentation, which changes hands between you and the host organisation (placement provider), such as a contract of employment or student trainee agreement.
- **a template PPIF (updated April 2025) is available should your department not already have a version which they use:** <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>
- the use of a PPIF would be equally relevant where the placement is at a university, but for which an exchange agreement is not applicable.

This is a good opportunity to introduce **Imperial’s off-site working policy**.

All placements undertaken external to the university are subject to the off-site working policy. **Imperial’s placement learning policy** (and good practice for placements) **dovetails with the off-site working policy**. The main aims for both the good practice for placements and the off-site working policy are essentially threefold:

1. to check that the environment in which you will be undertaking the placement is safe (*identifying necessary adjustments, training and orientation*).
2. that the objectives - *of the whole placement or a specific element of your placement* - are within your ability (identifying necessary adjustments, training and orientation).
3. to ensure feedback is obtained and monitored for the best interests of your placement and any future student who might attend the same placement provider (same location).

See also **health and safety** (pages 56-58).

The placement provider: hosting arrangements

Contacts

- **in a non-exchange setting** (company/organisation, or possibly a university):
 - a completed **Placement Provider Information form** should confirm relevant contact details.
- **study exchange:**
 - for most placements organised within an exchange, the main contact will be a student exchange office (*depending on the institution it may be called the International Office, Student Exchange Office, or another variant on the same theme*) at college or faculty/school level. Contact details for exchanges can be obtained on university websites or you can contact a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk
 - however, the most relevant contact may be a person in the host department or faculty (a supervisor or exchange programme co-ordinator).

If your **Placement Manager** identifies the person you should deal with in the first instance then please do not confuse matters by contacting others however relevant another person may appear, unless you reach a point when the initial contact is not responding, and you need to try someone else.

Do not confuse matters by communicating independently on the same or other issues with another person. If you think it is necessary, COPY any correspondence to both your Placement Manager (and Placement Tutor if relevant) and your host contact. You may not be getting the answers you requested, or answers may

not be forthcoming. The key is to keep people informed and involved while not submerging everyone with a continuous stream of emails.

Although you may be fortunate and deal with an individual who has the experience and knowledge to handle everything, including non-academic matters such as accommodation, you may end up dealing with more than one person or more than one Office.

Hosting arrangements at the placement provider

Your placement provider must host you appropriately. There will be paperwork and email traffic to navigate. In your own interests, keep an independent record of what is decided by all parties.

- **university placements:** while you might expect to be hosted as a student of that institution you should not take it for granted. Your “contact” will be able to advise you. You obviously need to be hosted appropriately so that the host university’s responsibilities towards you are clear.
 - If you are informed that you will be hosted as a student, then ensure that you have completed the host university’s student registration/enrolment procedures. **Ensure you have applied to and been admitted by the host university, including being in receipt of written confirmation before you depart on your placement, remembering to register upon arrival or in advance depending on arrangements at the host** (*see Part 2 of this handbook*).
- for **placements based in companies/organisations**, you need to consider what it is you are agreeing to, as you will normally be hosted as an employee or as a student trainee/intern.
 - **Contracts: Carefully check any contract/agreement that a placement provider requires you to enter in to, since it has been known for onerous requirements to be placed on students. If in doubt discuss with your department.**
 - A company or organisation may also wish to enter into agreement with you and Imperial regarding specific areas, such as intellectual property and confidentiality. If you experience these situations then speak to your Placement Manager, who can liaise with Adrian Hawksworth (a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk) as necessary.
 - If you are expecting to be paid it is extremely important that you understand the rate of pay, what the tax burden is and what the local social security and holiday arrangements etc are.
 - **In France**, for example, it is normal for student internships to be managed within a national bespoke regime for student traineeships (the “stage” system) where bi-lateral contracts between student and company are replaced by tri-partite training agreements, including the student’s home university. A requirement is placed on placement providers by French law to pay student interns a monthly gratuity when an internship lasts 2 months or more (maximum 6 months).
 - Imperial maintains a model Training Agreement for use in such placement circumstances, where the host organisation does not have their own (contact: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk)
 - Occasionally, such agreements have to be entered into for specific lab-placements organised as part of a study placement (ostensibly arranged as part of a student exchange agreement). France is a tricky location to arrange placements, especially when over 6 months in duration, so if you have queries email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

SIGNPOSTING: If you plan to undertake a placement abroad in industry or perhaps even in a university or research institute, then if you or your Placement Manager have queries regarding training agreements or other contractual issues, please feel free to email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk.

- **Use of previous feedback** (where available) **to inform the process:** Placements undertaken regularly by students of your department (at the same placement provider) ought to have yielded feedback, which in turn should influence the approach of the Placement Manager and lend itself to a structured routine

having been developed for the planning/undertaking of such a placement. **On the other hand**, where there is little or no feedback or history of students undertaking a placement at a particular organisation, the routine may not be as slick.

Placements within a placement

Perhaps part of your placement will take place at a location external to the placement provider. You may therefore have further planning to undertake during your principal placement. You will need to be clear as to who is organising this leg of your placement.

Example: an undergraduate engineering student undertaking their Year Abroad at university X and who is required by university X to plan and execute a placement (internship) at an external company as part of their “study plan”. In this case the responsible parties are university X, the student, and the new placement provider, with the home dept at Imperial being aware of those plans and agreeing to them (but not being directly responsible for its planning or management).

Academic recognition

While you will receive academic recognition from Imperial for a placement that forms part of (contributes to) your degree programme or for undergraduates who earn extra-ECTS, you may be unsure how this is organised (*see also page 20 concerning assessment*).

- Undergraduates:
 - (where a placement forms part of their degree) students should consider, for example, whether they understand the weighting for the whole placement and individual parts of the study plan within one particular year and/or against other years. For all scenarios, your home department should be willing to answer your questions (in writing) if they have not already advised you (check your course handbook and VLE, e.g. blackboard, for explanations). For study exchange, do you understand how the transfer of academic credit and marks/grades obtained at the host university is undertaken? Study abroad students should also consult the Registry’s Study Abroad handout.
 - (extra-ECTS credits) upon successful completion of the assessment a student should expect Imperial to include reference to the extra-credit in their award transcript.
- MSc/MRes students should understand how their placement supports delivery of their degree.
- Doctoral level students should refer to the procedures for “study leave” (*below*).

A reminder to PhD students to consult the “study leave” guidance (*page 10*).

However, a PhD student may also need to consider the following:

- **How will they transfer their work to the host?** Do you need to take equipment with you or arrange for it to be available at the host? Are there issues to do with confidentiality or ethics? Are there other constraints, for example, will the placement provider expect payment for consumables, desk space etc.?
- **What about the transition back to Imperial** at the end of the placement?
- **Will funding you rely on still be accessible if you undertake a placement abroad?**

Think about your situation in detail with your supervisor.

Study plan or work placement (training) plan

Your department (Placement Manager) is responsible for formalising the learning content of the placement, with the assistance perhaps of any separate Placement Tutor.

- The learning content should realise both learning outcomes (these would be informal for PhD students, if required at all) and workload which are both achievable and appropriate for the level of study within which the placement resides.
- This should be described/itemised in the form of a **study or work/training plan**. It is appropriate that you should have as much input into this process as possible. **A study or work/training plan is a document or document trail used by your department to detail the component parts of your placement, by indicating the specific courses / projects / work / experiences to be undertaken. It can be as complex or simple as it needs to be.**
- Preparing a study or work/training plan may include one or more people, including the placement student, liaising directly with the placement provider (*and most certainly in the case of many study-based university placements with on-line information, e.g. curriculum; course syllabus*).
- If another student has recently undertaken a similar placement at your chosen placement provider their final study or work/training plan may be relevant.

A note about study plans for undergraduate study abroad

(see also the Registry-issued Study Abroad handout)

Study plans of previous participants and insight into how students found content of courses, assessment formats etc, ought to be available to a department's study abroad co-ordinator (Placement Manager). Insight into what level of courses suited or did not suit an Imperial student is likely to be of value. Also, remember that a study plan (this will depend on the department at Imperial) may include one or both of the following (or neither): (1) technical (degree discipline) project work (undertaken at the host), which may end up taking the form of an internship (*the management of such internships would be a matter for the partner university, and will normally involve a separate training agreement*) and which may be assessed partly or wholly by your department at Imperial; (2) other project work (language/cultural) normally assessed wholly by your dept at Imperial. Please note that continued language tuition (where necessary) does not always contribute towards the study plan (again, depends on the department).

See pages 25-28 regarding curriculum resources which ought to be available and concerning learning agreements (a study plan document, which is compulsory for a study abroad placement).

Dealing with changes in circumstances during a placement

While most placements will take place as planned, a student might be faced with changes in circumstances ranging from the trivial to the very significant.

- **Changes to the formal study or work placement plan:**
 - **Minor changes** may be discussed in passing with the Placement Manager or Tutor and may not require documenting. Caution: *what you consider "minor" may be considered "major" by your academic advisors/supervisors.*
 - However, **significant changes** would require discussion between your Placement Manager and the placement provider before being approved. The changes you are seeking may change the structure of the placement in a way which means that you would be unable to complete the placement as required, i.e. academic recognition could not be guaranteed.

- *An example: a study placement at a university - a student is trying to change one or more courses for which approval had already been received from home and host universities to sit the examinations/assessments. Assuming the level (and credit value) of the “new” course or courses is appropriate (it might not be), is the request being pursued at the right time such as before the “new” course commences and in time for exam registering procedures for the new course at the host university to be completed? Discuss and don’t assume anything.*
- Therefore, act in good time and be prepared not to have changes approved.
- A student and/or their placement may suffer from **serious and unforeseen circumstances** that may adversely affect the student’s ability to complete an assessment task and/or their performance in a piece of assessment.
 - Your department will only become aware of these circumstances if they are told (by you, your family or the placement provider). Sometimes these circumstances will be newsworthy items and the department would reach out. Read the section entitled “maintaining contact with your home dept” on page 21, and the longer section in Part 4 of this handbook (which includes “emergencies”).
 - **Students should make themselves familiar with Imperial’s mitigating circumstances policy and procedure** (and other relevant policies: refer to your dept’s student handbook), but to note that if you are undertaking a study placement at another university a student would also be required to follow the rules/regulations of the other university. Therefore, discussion with your home department is essential if situations arise.
 - **Circumstances might arise which means a student may decide to terminate a placement** (e.g. health reasons) and again the consequences would need to be discussed with the Placement Manager or if the student is indisposed, the Placement Manager (and your home department) would need to make a judgement on the way forward.
 - **While rare, a placement may be subject to termination by the placement provider** (e.g. a company may i. go into administration; ii. have to lay interns off; iii change the work being pursued) **or be terminated due to unforeseen events**, often referred to as “force majeure” (natural disasters; security incidents; loss of facilities due to fire etc). Your Placement Manager (home department) would need to identify a solution through discussion with senior colleagues in the department.

The recent pandemic is both an example of unforeseen circumstances but also once the pandemic became almost the norm a case where placement planning had to take coronavirus into account.

Other issues to consider

Ensure you know how your placement will be supervised:

- All placements must be co-ordinated and supervised (for practical and academic purposes) by your Placement Manager (*perhaps with support from a designated Placement Tutor or Visiting Tutor/Supervisor from amongst the staff in your dept*) **and** by relevant staff at the placement provider.
- The learning content of the placement (i.e. the study plan or training plan) must be supervised by your department **and** the placement provider.
- In an industrial setting or research lab setting in an institute/university, you should expect regular meetings with your host supervisor.
- In a university setting for study purposes regular contact with staff of the host may be limited, except with a supervisor of a project or generally if an Exchange or International Office takes a regular interest in your welfare. **Since not all universities outside the UK provide the same pastoral care and tutorial system you are used to at Imperial you need to be ready for a change in study environment** (see later section below).

Please also read the section entitled “maintaining contact with your home dept” on page 21, and Part 4.

Ensure you know how your academic work will be assessed:

- Who will formally assess (and/or monitor) the academic work you set out to deliver on your placement (courses/modules, projects, research etc.)
- **Undergraduate students: study placements at a university** (see also the Study Abroad handout):
 - Your host university may require you to adopt a significantly different approach to studying than you are used to, including how assessments/exams are undertaken (e.g. oral exams).
 - Will you be required to conduct any formal assessments in the host language?
 - What method will be used to transfer credit and grades/marks back to Imperial?
 - While evidence shows that undergraduates on a year abroad (*where that year is a replacement year for a year at Imperial*) perform better than they would if they had remained at Imperial, the effect a below-par academic performance has on the overall degree performance is an issue which students mention regularly during the planning for such a placement, so we would advise undergraduate students who are concerned about this to discuss this with their department.
- **If you are a PhD student** will undertaking a placement change the normal means by which your progress is monitored/supervised (your milestones)?

Does a project form part of your placement or does it form your entire placement?

- If a project constitutes all or part of your placement discuss the aims and objectives of the project with your Placement Manager before you commence the project.
 - Where the project is the sole purpose of the placement this process ought to be concluded before you arrive at the placement provider.
 - Where a project forms only part of your study or training plan, your Placement Manager and/or the placement provider may require you to choose the specific project after arrival.
 - You may need to do this soon after arriving; perhaps in time for the second term/semester. You might be pursuing your project throughout the time you are at the (normally) host university or you may be planning to start it in the second term/semester.
 - Where the placement provider is a university you may find yourself in competition with local students for internal and external projects. The search for a suitable project, which may be at a location external to the university, may need to start in advance of your actual arrival.
 - How much support might you expect to receive when you have arrived to start your project?
- If feedback exists, check what worked best for other students.

See also the health and safety at your placement provider section (pages 56-58).

Undertaking a placement abroad means you must be open minded about experiencing a different university or industrial/organisational culture:

- Whatever the placement the aim must be to enjoy the experience and to avoid any sense of isolation (whether socially or academically). This is obviously important in the first few weeks whilst you find your feet. Think carefully about how you might avoid isolation:
 - Have you experienced similar activity before or is it completely new to you. **Don't forget the role** which [Imperial's Careers Service](#) can provide in helping you prepare to secure work-based placement opportunities (prepare/improve your CV; interview skills.)
 - How proficient are you with the host language or languages and have you thought about technical vocabulary (*undergraduate study abroad students should review pages 29-30*)? *If you are being hosted in a lab/workplace does it operate bilingually (i.e. host language and English? Are safety notices in English should you not be fluent in the host language?)*
 - Consider your accommodation options carefully.
 - Make a visit beforehand if you have time and it is cost effective.
 - Establish helpful contacts which can be of support/assistance to you during your placement.
 - Investigate how students' study in the host country and/or the working culture. In the context of culture, the information for LGBTQ+ students on page 23 may also be relevant.

- Identify how you might continue the sports/pastimes you most enjoy or identify new experiences to focus your mind on. *See next mini section on “your own well-being”.*
- While the experience can often be challenging, you can help yourself achieve the above by doing some or all of the following:
 - Ask and seek answers to as many questions as you can think of before departure.
 - Speak to academic staff from (or who have experience of) the country you will be visiting. Speak to full degree & visiting students from the country you wish to go to.
 - Obtain useful email contacts of people who know the university or company where you are going (*or who will be there or close by for use during your placement*), so that you can seek assistance if you are at all unsure, especially when you first arrive.
 - Refer to Imperial learning resources as these will remain available to you (speak to your department). Speak to relevant staff at Imperial about how such resources, e.g. the library & the careers service, can be accessed while abroad.

See “maintaining contact with your home department” below.

Your own well-being: emotional & mental health

Undertaking a placement abroad can be a stressful experience and known, or new, emotional and mental health problems can (re-)surface. If in planning your placement you experience any worries about the emotional challenges involved with your placement, please discuss them with your home department (try not to dwell on them; discuss them) or contact the [Imperial College Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service](#) for support.

Please also read the suggestions around **managing your own well-being while on your placement, such as managing culture-shock and homesickness** in the ‘on your placement’ section (pages 76-82).

What can you expect in terms of **orientation** and **training** at the placement provider?

- **The placement provider should provide an appropriate amount of time in which to welcome and induct you** (including initial health and safety training). What may be termed “Day 1 Induction” is extremely important (*see pages 56-58 concerning health and safety at a placement provider.*)

Maintaining contact with your home department

- **This is probably the most important aspect of your placement and is connected quite naturally to the previous notes on supervision and well-being.**
- **Don’t be reluctant to discuss issues/problems (and successes!) with your supervisor/contact at the placement provider and your Placement Manager and/or Placement Tutor. You should not be reluctant to contact your Placement Manager or Placement Tutor during your placement if you have problems,** especially if you think you are not receiving the appropriate level of support at the placement provider. If you are reluctant for some reason, contact the Senior Tutor or Postgraduate Tutor in your dept or contact your Faculty Senior Tutor. **It is very important that your dept are aware of issues which might require some remedial action, perhaps active intervention or which might impact on academic performance.**
- While both your family home and your home academic department are normally an email, a WhatsApp, an Instagram, a teams call or even a traditional phone call away (perhaps even a nice hand-written letter 😊), **you should aim to keep your department** (your Placement Manager or Placement/Visiting Tutor) **well informed as to your progress.** An email every two weeks allows you to get into the rhythm of thinking about your progress and can enable issues, which might otherwise become a problem to be nipped in the bud or resolved in a timely manner. **Imperial’s good practice encourages depts to seek a minimum of one Teams/Zoom style interaction with a student per month.**
- Email and on-line are not the only forms of communication between you and your home dept, so **check with your dept as to whether they plan to visit you whilst on placement** (but please note that it is

not a compulsory action on the part of your department). **If so, will they visit more than once and when? Such visits should not be viewed in isolation, but as part of the normal process of supervision and pastoral care undertaken by your dept.**

If your department does not have an equivalent form or procedure,

please complete the Pre-departure Checklist and Emergency Contacts form available at:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

Retain a copy and hand copies to your departmental Placement Manager and to your supervisor/co-ordinator at the placement provider.

For further guidance on maintaining contact see the section entitled 'On your placement' (pages 76-82).

Ensure you know what **feedback** will be required of you by your home department

- Your dept should wish to learn about your time at the placement provider, about problems encountered and how you overcame them. **Your Placement Manager may debrief students verbally as a group or individually or they may simply request completion of a report form.**
 - Doctoral level students are encouraged to submit a report to their supervisor and the departmental Director of Postgraduate Studies/Postgraduate Tutor.
 - Students on study abroad are encouraged to provide feedback on individual courses/modules.
 - **Imperial's good practice for placement management states that your department should require one piece of written feedback from you at the completion of your placement.**
 - A template feedback form is available on the Placement Learning policy [webpage](#) (scroll down).
- The information you provide is useful to students who may undertake that placement in the future (*see previous sections about how such feedback will hopefully be available to you!!*) Positive feedback helps foster mobility. Indeed, please (if requested) make yourself available to students whilst you are on placement to answer questions and to help them prepare to follow you. *See also 'At the end of your placement' on page 83 which includes a link to a template feedback form.*

Section 3: Information for students with a disability

If you have a disability and are planning on undertaking a placement, then it is a good idea to let your **Placement Manager** know about any access or support needs that you might have. You and your Placements Manager should also contact your **Departmental Disability Officer** to let them know that you're planning a placement. It is recommended that you also contact the **Disability Advisory Service** for advice and guidance. You can then work together to ensure that your placement is a success.

Planning a placement

Imperial works hard to ensure that you are not put at a disadvantage because of disability, and that any adjustments that might be required are in place prior to the start of your placement. It is important that you work with your Placement Manager as early as possible so that this can happen.

In the UK disabled people are protected in law by the **Equality Act 2010**. Even though this might not be the case with some placements abroad, you are still protected as a student of Imperial. Imperial will work with the placement provider to ensure that you are supported.

Before your placement you should check that:

- Study or work practices take into account your specific impairment / disability.
- The site you will be studying or working at is accessible.
- There is healthcare provision available at or nearby your placement provider.
- Any equipment you may need requires modification or installation.
- Accommodation is provided and as to whether or not it needs any modifications.
- Voluntary assistance is provided if required.
- **Reasonable adjustments have been discussed and agreed prior to your placement**

Your Placement Manager in your department will be able to help you with these and any other questions you might have. You can also approach your Departmental Disability Officer or the Disability Advisory Service for advice.

Before starting your placement:

- Make sure you know how your placement is going to be monitored and how you can contact your department should any difficulties arise.
- Ask yourself if your placement and your department have enough information about any support you will need.
- Approach your Placement Manager, your Departmental Disability Officer or the Disability Advisory Service with any concerns you might have.

Further assistance can be found on the Disability Advisory Service website:

- [What support does the Disability Advisory Service offer](#)
- Your Departmental Disability Officer:
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/support-available/departamental-disability-officers/>
- The Disability Advisory Service: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/disability-advisory-service/> or email: disability@imperial.ac.uk

Plus: UK Government website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-travellers>

Section 4: Students with children / dependants

If you are considering a placement and have significant family responsibilities, you are welcome to contact Adrian Hawksworth to discuss further: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk.

When reading the section on Imperial's overseas travel insurance please note that spouses/partners/dependants travelling with students are currently covered. However, the immigration requirements for your host country may or may not allow you to enter with dependents.

Section 5: Information for LGBTQ+ students

This section aims to recognise that, depending on the country which is to be visited, a student may need as part of their preparation to reflect on the situation faced by the LGBTQ+ community in that country, to consider the resources available in order to enable that reflection and to seek further guidance as they think necessary.

LGBTQ+ communities around the world experience differing levels of discrimination and sometimes plain persecution. *Stonewall, a UK organisation with a history of campaigning and lobbying on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community both in the UK and globally*, has worked with the UK higher education sector in the past to improve the support available to and awareness amongst LGBTQ+ students (*whether their home country is the UK or elsewhere*) who wish to consider undertaking a placement abroad or have already made that decision.

Students are therefore advised to research the host country's laws and attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals, and to connect with LGBTQ+ support networks before, during, and after the placement. Imperial wishes to safeguard its students by empowering them through knowledge and understanding.

GOV.UK website as a source of guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice>

Contact Adrian Hawksworth (Assistant Registrar and author of this document) if you wish to discuss any issue.

Incidental note: In work aimed at supporting employers (*and their employees who are mobile or who are looking to be mobile abroad in pursuing jobs and careers*) Stonewall had over a number of years developed a suite of regional and country-specific resources [*global briefings*] which were in many respects of equal use to students (*and have been promoted as such by Stonewall*) in understanding the legal and non-legal factors at play in other countries and how those factors can impact on safety, achievement and experience in the host country. Stonewall had produced “briefings” for many countries including Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, France, Germany Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, the Philippines, Poland, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and the USA. Unfortunately, these resources are no longer available on the Stonewall website. Perhaps they will reappear at some stage in the future.

Section 6: UG year abroad study plans - course catalogues, credit, learning agreements

(relevant students should also refer to the Study Abroad handout)

Most universities in Europe use the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), although not necessarily at doctoral level. *Imperial itself has implemented ECTS as both a credit and accumulation system at undergraduate level and postgraduate taught level.*

ECTS aims to improve the mechanism by which academic recognition is achieved and will be most visible to our undergraduate students who go abroad within Europe on ‘exchange.’

While ECTS is a European-based academic credit system, most of our non-European student exchange partners are also familiar with ECTS. Exchange partners understand the role that a learning agreement contributes to the good management of a study period abroad, including credit transfer from host to home university.

ECTS assists all parties to deliver a programme of study which carries an appropriate workload and allows the level and amount of academic credit awarded to be transparent to all parties.

ECTS is a system based on 3 core elements:

- Information (on study programmes and student achievement)
- Agreement (between the partner institutions and the student)
- Use of ECTS credits (to indicate student workload)

The three core elements are made operational using 4 key documents:

- A **course catalogue** or equivalent (*of the Host Institution*)
- The student application form (*to the Host Institution*)
- The **learning agreement** (*which may also form part of the application pack to the Host*)
- The **transcript of records** (*from the Host Institution*)

An ideal **course catalogue** should provide information on the institution, information on programmes and general information for students. If these are not put together in one document by the faculty/department/institution then an institution might expect to place them together on their website. Information on programmes should be divided into a description of individual units of teaching (e.g. courses/modules; projects etc) and should provide some or all of the following:

• title	• brief or detailed description
• level (also pre-requisites)	• methods of assessment
• teaching and learning methods used	• key learning outcomes (where used)
• ECTS credit value	• local grading system; local distribution of marks

A course catalogue will be of great use to both a student and their home department in deciding what would constitute an appropriate programme of study. This is particularly relevant should you expect to take “courses” and examinations plus project work, rather than just a project. However, such web resources are not always kept up to date (and are dependent on timetables which may not yet have been finalised) and aspects such as pre-requisites can often be found to be inaccurate once you are on campus, so a little caution is warranted.

The learning agreement: The host university should require the completion of a study plan (a proposal) as part of their application process. In the case of European universities, they may require a student to use a specific document. **You should always do as requested by the host university and then use that document to comply with the Imperial's requirement outlined below.** However, Imperial has a template that can be used and sending departments normally have access to it. **Once approved by a host university they are bound by it, subject to any formal modifications which may result** (i.e. changes to the learning agreement document or by some other means).

Requirement

Imperial requires all undergraduate students (as advised by their home department) to use a learning agreement for university-based study periods undertaken abroad during 2025-26.

Some European universities manage use of the learning agreement via a paperless routine using the “erasmus dashboard”. The fact that it refers to “erasmus” can be disregarded by you when complying with a partner university's requirements (*it's just for administrative ease, as their application routines have probably not kept pace with the UK's departure from erasmus*). If you or your home department come across this and don't know what action to take email: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

There are 2 [template] versions of the learning agreement in circulation.

Short style learning agreement: use this template unless the partner university makes use of an alternative document/routine compulsory:

- This version is preferred for all study periods (Europe and beyond Europe).
- A template can be obtained at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>
- It has 2 sections or parts which are easy to follow:
 - Part A is for you to insert your proposed study plan
 - Part B is for subsequent modifications.

Longer style (often erasmus-labelled) learning agreement for studies

- This version might still be being used by some ex-erasmus [European] partner universities who continue to host our students, i.e. their admin systems have not caught up.
- If the host university insist on you using their erasmus-branded learning agreement then do so.
- The first part of the document allows the three parties to be identified.
- It then has 3 sections which could be viewed as being quite complicated and you may need our guidance below to truly understand them. **However, their function is clear:**
 - The **‘before the mobility’** section: for you to insert your proposed study plan.
 - *Table A is where you list your study plan.*
 - *In theory, the table (B) to be completed by the home university should indicate what courses at the home university are being replaced by those at the host, however, this will be almost impossible for your home academic department to complete and therefore **you should insert something along the lines of “the recognised component of studies at the home university is a ‘mobility window’”**.*
 - The **‘during the mobility’** section for subsequent modifications (if any).
 - The **‘after the mobility’** section: assisting academic recognition of your study period.
 - *In theory the table (C) to be completed by the host university should act as the “transcript”, although it is unlikely that a university would utilise it as such, i.e. it ought not to be used as a replacement for a properly authenticated transcript document of the type a student ought to be familiar with. It may take until after any “exam/assessment” marks have been released by the host university, for the host university to*

complete their table (if they do at all, ***and don't be concerned if you do not complete the "after" part of the process***).

- In theory, the table (D) to be completed by the *home* university should indicate what courses at the home university are being replaced by those at the host, however, again, this will be almost impossible for your home academic department to complete and therefore (regardless of how much of your study plan the host university was/is responsible for marking) your home academic department are again able to write something along the lines of "the recognised component of studies at the home university is a 'mobility window' (if they do at all, ***and don't be concerned if you do not complete this part of the process***).

Hopefully, you now understand the format of these learning agreements and their purpose.

You can probably draw the conclusion that (1) **the short-style learning agreement for ALL study periods is straight forward to use**, but (2) if you have to use the erasmus-branded long-style version, because the host university insist you do, it is the "before" and "during" sections which are the most important (and most practical) to complete (*and you can ignore for all intents and purposes the "after section"*).

Here are a few pointers and deadlines for their timely completion.

- Your dept will obviously need to advise you as to what is acceptable to write in Part **A** (short-style) or the **Before Section** (long-style) of the relevant learning agreement.
- Serious work must take place at an early stage in your planning to investigate the options which are open to you (use of the Course Catalogue provided by the host university); discussion with home study abroad co-ordinator, discussion with the host co-ordinator as to non-standard requests, for example, an extended project) before Part A or the Before Section can be completed.
- Once signed by all three parties, the host university is bound by the contents which have been laid down in Part A or the Before Section, and as necessary modified in Part B or the During Section.

Requirement:

- **Part A or the BEFORE section should be completed at the very latest within 30 days of your study period at the host university commencing** (*signed by all three parties and a copy lodged with all three parties*). While it would be preferable for your study plan to be approved before your study period commences it is realistic given timetabling constraints at universities to wait until you arrive to confirm the study plan in the learning agreement. However, you and your advisors should be 90% of the way there with regards to your study plan (including possible alternatives) when you first arrive at the host university. It is not sensible, realistic nor reasonable for a student to arrive at the host university without a draft study plan to finalise (and approved in the learning agreement).
- **Part B or the DURING section** should be used as many times as is necessary. Common sense might dictate that you do these in advance of modifications becoming active, but it may be more reasonable to time them so that if you have more than one modification that you are having them approved as fewer times as possible. **If a modification means that a Part B or a During section your projected end date (at the host university) will change** beyond a matter of a few days then you should ensure that you have that change confirmed in writing (by email) between your home and host academic departments. Extending a stay beyond the expectation set prior to your arrival normally only occurs in the case of projects.
- **The AFTER section (long-style erasmus-branded only):** Imperial has no requirement to complete this section so you can safely ignore.

Requirement: Every time a section of your learning agreement is completed (all signatures) you should retain a copy (naturally) of the whole document and ensure that both your home and host departments also have a copy of the whole document.

The transcript of records: If you undertake formal assessments at the host university, the host university should issue you with a transcript (a grade report or equivalent document) as a formal record of your achievement (check the host university's orientation information for guidance on the issuing of transcripts).

- Before your study period commences, your department at Imperial should inform you as to how any credit and grades earned at the host university will be transferred back to your degree at Imperial (a credit and grade transfer statement). Consult your student handbooks and if unsure consult your departmental study abroad co-ordinator.
- A transcript will:
 - list the **local marks** you have achieved in any assessments undertaken under the auspices of the host university, and will often accord an ECTS grade to each, or, if the host university only uses ECTS just the ECTS grade.
 - **not** list marks/grades for elements of your study plan which are only marked (in entirety) by your home department at Imperial.

Remember: sometimes project work undertaken at the host university is subject to formal assessment by the host university and either the home department at Imperial will transfer the grade as they would for courses/modules marks, or they will take that "local" mark into account when allocating a moderated mark for the purposes of your degree programme at Imperial. Where the host university does not formally assess a project they have supervised (i.e. it has been agreed to leave it entirely down to Imperial) the home department at Imperial would normally still rely on a contribution from the host supervisor to help inform their own marking.

- The transcript document will usually include a grade distribution table. **It is important that academic staff at Imperial understand the meaning and value of the local ECTS and/or local mark.**
- A "transcript" may be known by another name/title at your host university (grade report perhaps).
- A "transcript" may be issued by a variety of means, including IT platforms (similar to My Imperial/DCWeb), but less so these days by hard copy. **The host university should indicate the method by which a transcript is issued.** Check whether it is your responsibility to communicate a copy to your home academic department at Imperial or whether the host university will send a copy to Imperial (perhaps requiring Imperial to pass on a copy to you)? Routines differ so check that situation is with your host university.
- Essentially you want a copy, and your home academic department wants a copy. Departments at Imperial must receive a transcript no later than 1 September, but of course most students will achieve this goal much earlier than that. If the timeline for issuing a transcript is a problem (and such scenarios ought not to come as a surprise to your home department), especially if you are in your final year, then speak to your dept's study abroad co-ordinator (if it is a known problem, then normally the issue will get an airing before you start your placement, especially if you are due to graduate at the end of the placement).
- The issuing of a transcript is normally free of charge. However, there are partners in the USA who will charge the student for the issuing of a transcript, and it is not uncommon for copies beyond the first one (whether hard copy or digital) to incur a charge.
- If the timing of the release of the transcript is unfavourable to your home academic department please check with your study abroad co-ordinator whether unofficial grades/results can be communicated in another format once they have been released to you.

Guidance: If you have need for guidance on any of the above matters then please email the Assistant Registrar (Placements): a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Section 7: Language preparation (undergraduate year abroad only)

This section mainly addresses undergraduate students who are planning a year abroad in Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and who have not been recorded by their department as a fluent speaker in the relevant language.

Please note that the specific requirements of “language for science” students are **not** addressed.

Some of the guidance around language courses in the host country will also be applicable to students going to Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.

The role which language proficiency contributes to the successful completion of a study placement abroad (the studying; the living) should not be underestimated.

- The volume of language training a student ought to undertake to achieve the level of attainment (proficiency) set by their department will depend on the student's starting point.
- **Naturally, the higher a student's proficiency the easier it should be for them to adapt to residence abroad.**

The way in which language training is aligned with a student's study/year abroad degree programme depends on the approach of their academic dept but should conform to one of the following three scenarios:

1. Degree Credit: Language tuition provided by Imperial Horizons in one or more years prior to the Year Abroad **as part of the student's degree programme (see the relevant programme specification)**. In any one academic year this amounts to tuition across the autumn and spring term as part of Horizons with an additional one hour per week tuition provided – normally Friday lunchtime - by the Centre for Languages, Communication and Culture (CLCC).
2. Extra Credit: Language tuition provided by Imperial Horizons in one or more years prior to the Year Abroad is recommended. In any one academic year this amounts to tuition across the autumn and spring term as part of Horizons with an additional one hour per week tuition provided – normally Friday lunchtime - by CLCC.
3. Where degree credit is not available, a department might also allow a student to obtain the necessary language tuition via an external provider although the cost of such tuition would fall on the student to pay (no ECTS credit would be available). The departmental study abroad co-ordinator would have the option to liaise with CLCC to check that the [language] level of attainment has been achieved.

The **minimum recommended level of attainment** (proficiency) in an official language of the host country whatever the make-up of the study plan at the host university **is normally B1 (CEFR³), equivalent to having completed level 3 of Imperial Horizons. However, and very importantly, your dept may set a higher threshold (in the interests of the student) AND also a host university is at liberty to set a higher**

³ Common European Framework for Languages: <https://www.ecctis.com/CEFR/Default.aspx>

threshold and the latter would naturally trump Imperial's view. To reaffirm that the specific requirements of "language for science" students are not addressed in this section.

Therefore:

- A student should ensure they know the (language) level (*CLCC/Horizons level of course; CEFR equivalent*) they are aiming for and always try to achieve as high a level as possible.
- A student should find out what procedure is applied by their home department for assessing whether you have reached an acceptable level of proficiency. **The department will make the decision, in consultation with CLCC as necessary.**
- **In addition to the departmental study abroad co-ordinator a student can consult:**
 - the relevant [CLCC language coordinator](#) if they have any questions about language preparation and proficiency required.
 - View the CLCC website for details on how language tuition is delivered: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/languages/year-in-europe/>

Further points to consider:

- The Centre for Languages, Communication and Culture operates a [Language Exchange scheme](#). This is an informal scheme, intended to improve the spoken language, and is not a substitute for language classes, rather it is a supporting/enhancement activity. Further information: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/languages/clcc-language-exchange/>
- **Language courses provided by a host university immediately prior to or at the start of the study period or during the study period are often free of charge but can sometimes incur a charge.**
- Find out about other funding for language courses from organisations such as, for Germany, DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst). There are often reductions for UK students wishing to take a course at the Goethe Institute on Exhibition Road.
- Occasionally a student, who perhaps has concerns about how they initially tackle everyday use of the language and want to be as well prepared for life in general, will organise to work in the host country in the summer prior to their placement or attend a summer school or further language training. It would though be a personal decision which a student would need to plan and bear all financial responsibility for.

ARRANGING A PLACEMENT (PART 2)

Logistics

The purpose of this section is not to act as an A-Z guide to all issues but to emphasise those issues which Imperial considers most important and about which we receive most questions. This section, for example, covers neither the moving of possessions to another country nor driving in another country. It does not advise on booking travel tickets although it does indicate when it may be sensible to do so.

Section 1	Immigration formalities for the <u>host country</u> <i>Imperial students who are in attendance in the UK on a Student Visa should also remember to refer to page 84.</i>
Section 2	Registration procedures <i>at Imperial; in the host country</i> <i>also includes short sections on the International Student Identity Card <u>and</u> the Erasmus Student Network Card.</i>
Section 3	Housing
Section 4	Insurance and Liability <i>includes a detailed section about Imperial's overseas travel insurance</i>
Section 5	Health and safety at your placement provider <i>includes reference to Imperial's policy on off-site working</i>
Section 6	Health care in the host country <i>includes health insurance</i>

The information and support provided should certainly not be taken in isolation, and you should refer to other sources of information as appropriate, **especially information provided by the placement provider and feedback from previous participants.**

Once a "placement" has been approved by the department **when should a student start booking travel?** Imperial advises that if you book travel tickets before any visa/permit that might be required for entry to the host country has been issued that you are at the very least conversant with the cancellation policy for the travel tickets purchased. Ideally, where this is applicable, you should await the receipt of said visa/permit, but we understand that the cost of travel especially to long-haul destinations can only get more expensive in the meantime if one does this. At the end of the day **the student is responsible for when they book their travel and the cost.** The cancellation cover in Imperial's overseas travel insurance policy (*see later section*) would not apply where the student is not in receipt of the relevant visa/permit prior to travel.

While we have your attention!
Imperial students who are in attendance in the UK on a Student Visa
should also remember to refer to page 84

Section 1: Immigration formalities for the host country

This section:

- **focuses on placements which require physical relocation to the country in which the placement provider is located.**
- does **not** cover placements abroad undertaken remotely from outside the country in which the placement provider is located (albeit which may still require some mobility to the placement provider itself.) For those follow the guidance of the placement provider, assuming that your department has approved such a mode of placement.

The information that follows does not constitute advice. It is provided as guidance to help a student better understand the process. The student should always follow the instructions provided by the host country's diplomatic representation (*in the UK or the student's home country, depending on where the student elects to apply for a visa/permit*) for applying for a visa/permit, and to other sources in the host country for actions to take, if any, after arrival. **The student is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the correct immigration status in the host country for the duration of the placement. Imperial does not assist with visa/permit applications.**

Mobility practitioners across the UK higher education sector (under the auspices of Universities UK International) have produced the following resource that may help those of you (**planning study abroad**) who perhaps have not applied for a visa before. There are also some country profiles for a limited number of countries: <https://globalopportunities.my.canva.site/visa-considerations>. However, it is not a replacement for information provided by consulates and host organisations.

Firstly, a note about any UK Government travel restrictions that may be in force at the time of planning/undertaking a placement: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

The following may be relevant depending on your placement arrangements:

- should travel restrictions to your destination placement country be put in place by the UK Government (or indeed, for international students by their home government) you should discuss with your department and be guided by your department as to whether your placement can go ahead (*your department should follow Imperial's travel guidance on off-site work/study, which itself is based on UK Gov/Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office travel advice.*)
- Imperial's travel insurance cover (see later section) might also be impacted if you book tickets for travel to a country where there are travel restrictions in place, or you actually travel to a country where there are travel restrictions in place.
- consider any associated restrictions or requirements (both UK Gov outbound; host country inbound), including requirements to have proof of vaccinations (although such requirements may be considered normal for some destinations).
- consular services around the globe can be impacted by staff shortages and other factors when events occur that have changed the stance of the UK government (or a student's home country, where different) with regards to travel guidance. These matters are outside the control of Imperial.
- keep close attention to communications from your host organisation; keep close attention to the webpages of the relevant diplomatic representation (embassy/consulate); if delays are expected then ensure you continue to engage with your host organisation in order to obtain the necessary document(s) for any visa/permit application (*whatever the process by which you must obtain the visa/permit*); consider with your dept whether the start date can be changed; be prepared to act quickly in terms of interaction with the embassy/consulate or host organisation **and** be prepared to make alternative plans should consular or other relevant services be disrupted for any reason including discussing with your department the possibility of the placement **not** going ahead.

The obvious first question is: Do you require entry clearance (*typically a visa, but perhaps some other device, e.g. a student permit or residence permit*) **to enter the host country for the purpose of undertaking your particular placement, or can you undertake the necessary actions after arrival?**
Perhaps a combination of both such actions.

Part A: Nationals of the EU, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland can move freely for work or study in one another's countries.

- **No visa required. Job done?** Well not quite, you should still ensure you possess a valid passport or national identity card upon entry to the host country (*also, it is wise to double-check whether your passport or national identity card requires to be valid for a certain duration after your arrival in the host country*) **and** meet any requirement to register with the local authorities (*which may include obtaining a residence permit for a prolonged stay*) **plus** it is always a good idea to possess a letter from your host organisation confirming the particulars of your placement if you are asked for it.

Part B: for countries where pre-arrival entry clearance (visa/permit) may be required (by the student concerned). One of the following should apply to you:

- **UK nationals undertaking a placement in the EU (except Ireland) or in Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, Iceland, Andorra, Monaco, San Marino or Vatican City:** a pre-departure visa/permit **may** be required for “new” travel - for placements - to these countries. **Often the duration of the placement and the type of placement will dictate what is required.**
 - There will be instances where a UK national pursuing a placement lasting more than 90 days would follow a post-arrival process, such as a study placement to Switzerland; or where there is more than one option such as study exchanges to Germany and Spain where you could do it before travel or after arrival, although our (strong) suggestion is that one should always obtain before travel.
 - Check whether your passport requires to be valid for a certain duration after your placement is due to conclude; AND whether it needs to have been issued by your home country no earlier than a certain date. *UK nationals can check the [validity of their UK passport for travel to other countries](#) (external site; click on country and then “entry requirements” and there is usually a section entitled “passport validity requirements”).*
 - When applying for a Student-Visa/permit obtain a Student-GHIC in advance (see later section on health insurance).
- **All other placement scenarios** **Often the duration of the placement and the type of placement will dictate what is required:**
 - **If you know that you would be classified as a non-visa national by the host country and you know you can travel to the host country without a visa**, check whether you need to be in possession of a valid passport or national identity card upon entry to the host country (*but also check whether your passport or national identity card requires to be valid for a certain duration after your placement is due to conclude; AND whether it needs to have been issued by your home country no earlier than a certain date*) **plus** ensure you have the letter/contract from your host organisation confirming the particulars of your placement. Your status would normally be checked at port-of-entry to the host country. *UK nationals can check the [validity of their UK passport for travel to other countries](#) (external site; click on country and then “entry requirements” and there is usually a section entitled “passport validity requirements”).*
 - **...or you know that you would be classified as a visa-national by the host country, but you also know that you can undertake the process of obtaining a visa/permit at the port of entry to the host country** (*i.e. you will undertake paperwork upon arrival at the port of entry or in collaboration with the host university/organisation once you have been admitted*). As a bare

minimum you would require to have with you when going through immigration to the host country a valid passport or national identity card upon entry to the host country (*but check whether your passport or national identity card requires to be valid for a certain duration after your placement is due to conclude; AND whether it needs to have been issued by your home country no earlier than a certain date*) plus a letter from your host organisation confirming the particulars of our placement. Other documents may be required. *UK nationals can check the [validity of their UK passport for travel to other countries](#) (external site; click on country and then “entry requirements” and there is usually a section entitled “passport validity requirements”).*

○ **...or you know that you would be classified as a visa-national by the host country and need to apply for a relevant visa/permit in advance of travelling to the host country:**

- If you must apply for a visa/permit before departure to the host country it will depend on where you apply for that visa/permit as to the exact process you need to follow. You can normally apply from the UK but do check for the country concerned.
- Certainly, if you need to apply for a visa/permit before travelling to the host country then you will require a “document” from the host organisation (in a format specified by the host country; perhaps paper-based; perhaps electronic-based) to insert into your visa/permit application.
- Ensure your passport is valid before starting to apply for a visa/permit: *Do you need to have it valid for a specific length of time when applying for the visa/permit? Does the host country require a passport to be valid for a certain period after your placement is due to finish? Does it need to have been issued by your home country no earlier than a certain date. UK nationals can check the [validity of their UK passport for travel to other countries](#) (external site; click on country and then “entry requirements” and there is usually a section entitled “passport validity requirements”).*
- Think about any travel plans in the period before the placement. **Any application for a visa/permit that you require to be in your possession in advance of departure for the host country normally requires you to relinquish possession of your passport for a period.**
- **The time required to process a visa/permit application varies widely from country to country.** The pandemic meant that some countries restricted and/or closed some of their consular services worldwide and they have not all necessarily resumed or might now be operating on a restricted basis which can mean continued slower processing times. Equally, in-person interviews may have been replaced permanently by other means of checking the validity of the application, including the increased use of third-party companies (so the “office” you go to is not always at the consulate building). Be ready to be flexible to meet the requirements of the host country.
 - Peak periods may exist when many people are applying, and if a consulate/embassy does not input resource into processing visas/permits then the knock-on effect is that you may be waiting a long time.....**so obviously apply at the very earliest opportunity.**
 - Your nationality may have a bearing on how long it takes for a visa to be processed.
 - Unexpected events can occur such as (May 2025) the US authorities suspending the availability of interviews for F-1 and J-1 visas.

● **Further points to consider:**

- **IMPORTANT:** Does the type of visa/permit you think you need to obtain tally with the expectation of the placement provider? **Investigate now.** The visa/permit must conform to what you are going to undertake in the host country. Naturally for a placement in industry you must obtain a visa/permit which allows you to work full-time. Likewise, an undergraduate on a study year abroad who has the option to pursue an internship as part of their study plan and wants to undertake it at a company in the host country should check that their visa/permit for studying in the host country allows them to work. **You should also consult the web site of your host organisation where information for students or interns from a non-EU country may be available.** **When in correspondence with the host organisation make your nationality clear so they can advise you appropriately.** In some countries it may be possible, where there are good grounds to do so, for you to change the type of

visa/permit you hold when already on your placement, perhaps even to extend the visa/permit if for some good academic reason your placement is extended. **However, don't assume. Keep these issues in mind.**

- **Where do you plan to apply for your visa/permit?** In London or elsewhere (are there rules for deciding which consulate you must use)? Are you required to apply in your home country, **or** can you apply from another location?
 - The first steps of the application process might be handled directly by the placement provider (e.g. universities in Australia and the Netherlands).
 - **There is usually a specific fee (and process for paying) when applying for a visa/permit.**
 - **Other costs** associated with collating the documents required for any visa/permit application.
 - A few examples (not exhaustive):
 - for entry to the USA there is also an immigration fee (SEVIS) payable alongside (in addition to) the fee for the visa application.
 - for some countries, e.g. Australia, you may need to purchase acceptable (mandatory) health insurance as part of the visa process. Perhaps there is a health-insurance waiver scheme for when an individual has private health insurance cover already in place, but these are rare, and often even where they exist it can prove difficult to meet their terms.
 - visa/permits for Austria and Spain often require documents to be translated and notarised (bear an Apostille), the costs of which can add up to something substantial (several hundred GBP). In the UK review this webpage for getting documents legalised: <https://www.gov.uk/get-document-legalised>.
 - You may be required to provide a Criminal Records check for the countries you have been resident in (for a set period prior to the visa/permit application). In the UK approach the UK Criminal Records Office: <https://www.gov.uk/copy-of-police-records> (scroll to "Police certificates for visa applications").
 - you may be required to undertake a medical or provide a health certificate (e.g. Spain) or perhaps provide certified proof of vaccinations (e.g. USA).
 - USA: Perhaps there are third party fees to pay IF your placement provider is unable to administer directly the paperwork you need for your visa application.
 - **As alluded to above, a host country usually needs to know that you will be covered by health insurance** and sometimes they may be very clear as to the product you need to purchase and for that to be embedded in the visa process in some way. **Please remember, Imperial's overseas travel insurance while containing cover for emergency medical expenses is not health insurance.** See the section in this handbook on health insurance (p. 59-63).
 - **The host country may also need to know that you will be covered by travel insurance.** Check with the [travel insurance webpage](#) to ensure that your chosen country destination is covered for (Imperial's) travel insurance purposes. **A very limited number of countries require approval by Imperial (for travel to that country on university business) and this ought to be flagged by a student's dept during the planning of a placement.**
- For full details on insurance, including the free cover provided by Imperial (travel insurance) see pages 48-55.** The Travel Certificate – which you can download – **might satisfy any visa/permit requirement for proof of insurance cover.** However, the policy wording may be required (again, see pages 48-55).
- **[coronavirus] Your travel requirements may impact on the cover available via Imperial's travel insurance policy (see pages 48-55) or another policy you have or are considering purchasing.** See also the section on Imperial's health clearance (may be relevant).
 - **The student is responsible for obtaining and maintaining the correct immigration status in the host country for the duration of the placement. Imperial does not assist with visa/permit applications.**
 - **The cost of visas and other associated permits** will of course be affected by exchange rate fluctuations which can increase/decrease these costs depending on your home currency.

- **IMPORTANT:** The visa/permit you obtain to enter the host country may have a fixed shelf life (a few weeks rather than the whole of your stay) and has been issued on the basis that before it expires you have a requirement to comply with further instructions upon arrival (obtain a residence permit OR register at an Office for Foreigners for example.)
- If you are specifically applying for a visa is it a single or multiple entry visa? Naturally, a multiple entry visa is what you would prefer, but these might be available only if you can confirm that you are to be in the host country for your placement beyond a certain length of time.
- All students should think about if their passport is due to expire soon or during the placement or shortly afterwards, regardless of whether they require a visa/permit to the host country.
- If you plan to undertake a period outside the host country as an integral part of your placement abroad then you may have further visa/permit issues to sort out. If you know in advance that this is planned and that a further visa/permit will be necessary then while it is likely you would pursue this once you are resident in the principal host country you might wish to check if this second entry clearance (visa/permit) can be done in advance of arrival in the principal host country (*it will depend on the length of your whole placement and the timing of any further portion of placement in a "third" country*). In such circumstances re-register your trip with Imperial to ensure continued coverage under Imperial's Overseas Travel Insurance (see pages 48-55).

○ **If you are at Imperial on a UK student visa then don't forget to read page 84.**

- **Further information for selected countries**

This list is not exhaustive. Check the processes issued by the host country for full information.

Mobility practitioners across the UK higher education sector (under the auspices of Universities UK International) have produced the following resource that may help those of you (**planning study abroad**) who perhaps have not applied for a visa before. There are also some country profiles for a limited number of countries, including Australia: <https://globalopportunities.my.canva.site/visa-considerations>. However, it is not a replacement for information provided by consulates and host organisations.

Australia

- If you are undertaking a placement in Australia consult the <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-finder/study> **plus** the information provided by the placement provider. Information provided by the Australian government is very detailed (many types of visas) and placement providers (especially universities) will know what visa applies to the placement you are offered. This would not necessarily be a student-type visa for research/internship periods (including if undertaken at a university) so read the guidance from the placement provider very carefully and don't assume anything.
- If you are an undergraduate attending a university for a year abroad then the host university will contribute to the groundwork in order for you to engage with the visa application routine. There will be a mandatory health insurance to pay through the host university (if you can't provide proof of an acceptable policy), plus an on-line visa application (which can on occasion yield very quick results!) requiring payment of an application fee.

United States of America

Your placement provider should be able to advise you as to what "non-immigrant" visa you require:

- "[Exchange Visitor](#)" **leading to a J-1 visa** although the "exchange" label is mis-leading. Normally used for an undergraduate planning their year abroad or for short university-based research periods.
- "[Students](#)" **leading to an F-1 Visa** (very rare: but has been used for exchange students attending Carnegie Mellon University). An F-1 visa is normally used for full-degree students.
- **For visas for placements at organisations approved by your department who are unable to "sponsor" your visa directly** (i.e. are unable to provide the necessary documentation demanded

by the relevant visa application procedure) you need a third-party sponsor. InterExchange is an organisation that you may wish to investigate (we are not able to recommend) but they will charge **a fee** in order that you can obtain the necessary document to support a visa application.

- During 2025, the US authorities initiated changes to the way US Consulates process visa applications which has meant delays to appointments being made available and applicants with certain nationalities having their visa applications delayed, although in truth the latter has always been the case (June 2025). Hopefully, those delays proved to be temporary.

Schengen area visa

The Schengen area: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. There are normally no border controls on land borders between countries within this group. *Ireland and Cyprus are **not part of the Schengen area***. The UK was **never** in the Schengen area.

A student preparing to enter a country within the Schengen area for a study or work placement (**who thinks they would require a visa or permit prior to travel**) need to pay even closer attention to the guidance provided by the host organisation. Host organisation websites when referencing immigration matters often direct the reader to either an internal or external Schengen site. This does not necessarily mean a Schengen visa is correct for your “study” or “work” requirements, and as discussed earlier in this section your nationality may mean a pre-arrival or post-arrival residence-type permit is what you need. **If in doubt double-check with your host organisation if you are at all unsure as to what visa/permit you need**, since a specific ‘Schengen Visa’ will normally only be applicable if:

- the country [part of the Schengen Area] in which your placement is taking place indicate that a stay of no more than X days is covered by a Schengen Visa.
- while you are on your placement, you seek to be a tourist in another country within the Schengen Area for which you need entry clearance.
- you are on a placement at a company which requires you to visit a country within the Schengen Area for a short visit, e.g. another Office of the company, for a conference.

Further information on Schengen Visas at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/international-students/visas-and-immigration/schengen-visas/>. If a Schengen visa is not the type you need, the visa requirements of the host country may still require adherence to the [Schengen area passport requirements](#) (i.e. your passport must meet certain requirements).

Unsure about the procedures, including for countries not listed above?

Contact the Assistant Registrar (Placements) to discuss the situation: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Imperial students in attendance in the UK on a Student Visa should also refer to page 84.

!!!!!! THINK ABOUT VISAS/PERMITS EARLY: DO NOT LEAVE IT TOO LATE !!!!!

Once a “placement” has been approved by a student’s department **when should a student start booking travel?** Imperial advises you that if you book travel tickets before any visa/permit required by the host country for entry to the country has been issued that you are at the very least conversant with the cancellation policy for the travel tickets purchased. Ideally you should await the receipt of any visa/permit, but we understand that the cost of travel especially to long-haul destinations can rocket upwards in the meantime if one does this. At the end of the day **the student is responsible for when they book their travel and the cost**. The cancellation cover in Imperial’s overseas travel insurance policy (*see later section*) would not apply where the student has failed to obtain the relevant visa/permit prior to travel.

Section 2: Registration procedures at Imperial and in the host country

Plus, a prompt about the International Student Identity Card and the Erasmus Student Network Card

Registering at Imperial: You remain a registered student of Imperial throughout the whole of your “placement”. Students undertaking a placement which requires them to be away from Imperial at the start of the academic year should remember to register with Imperial via their My Imperial account. **A student should normally receive an email prompt from Imperial ahead of the start of the new academic year so there is no excuse for not remembering!** You can do this (*and all the normal functions, e.g. recording changes to term-time addresses etc*), until you are informed otherwise, online using your My Imperial account. UK Student Visa holders should read the section on page 84.

Registration formalities at the host organisation and in the host country (*normally for universities, but also any host organisation*). Registration/enrolment might be a pre-arrival on-line process (perhaps concluded in person when you arrive) or a post-arrival (first day) in-person process. The act of registration/enrolment/arrival at the host university or organisation will involve tasks, some of which may require a payment (see miscellaneous university fees: pages 66), while the outcome often provides/confirms access to a student ID number or employee/intern work-number, email address; services etc (*if these have not been provided at an earlier stage of your interactions with the host organisation*).

Your placement provider should inform students of the paperwork they will be expected to take with them to satisfy their own and any local/national civil registration procedures (including but not limited to post-arrival residence “permits”, police registration or health insurance registration). If you do not receive information or the information you have at hand is unclear, email the appropriate staff at the placement provider to clarify what is required.

- **Registering as a student at a host university:** The most requested documents (perhaps in electronic form) for university registration are listed below and **you may need some or all of them**. **This is intended as a guide only** as procedures can vary.

- Identification: Passport (*or national identity cards if you possess one*).
- Proof of acceptance at your host university.
- Proof of any immigration clearance for the host country (visa etc).
- Passport-size colour photos (8 would be advisable); electronic equivalent (appropriate format).
- Health insurance documents: *health care on pages 59-63*.
- Travel insurance documents: see *Insurance section on pages 48-55*
- Miscellaneous payments: While such transactions are more likely to be electronic we suggest having some cash in the local currency to cover possible charges upon arrival. For example, a taxi might be cash only. You may be asked to make a compulsory non-tuition payment (see miscellaneous fees on page 63), which all local students pay upon enrolment, per semester perhaps, to cover such things as site visits, local travel concessions, social events/activities and additional insurance for housing and sports.
- **Print from My Imperial: proof of enrolment for the academic year you will be away.**
- You can request a certificate from the Assistant Registrar (Placements) confirming your placement. This is sometimes required by the host university. Email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Just to note that some host universities require a student to formally de-register at the end of their stay. Read those guidance notes from the host university carefully. This can be important if you are not a national of the host country (even more so if you are present on a student visa/permit) because it might impact on you obtaining a visa/permit in the future.

- **Civil registration in the host country:** This may be a mandatory post-arrival student permit, residence permit, police registration or some other form of registration. Such actions normally need to be

concluded within a set period of arrival and may be linked to a visa that has been issued which itself may have a fixed period of validity. The most requested documents (perhaps in electronic form) for civil registration (in addition to an application form provided by the relevant “office”) are listed below.

A guide only. Procedures will vary.

- **Documents: You may not need all of the below and indeed you may need others.** By taking all the documents listed and by reading carefully the info sent to you by your host organisation you might avoid the time-consuming situation of having the information sent to you:
 - Identification: passport and/or national identity card.
 - original of your full-length birth certificate. *We know you might be reticent to take this document with you, so at the least take a shorter version if you know a birth certificate is required, plus a copy of the longer version.*
 - Proof of acceptance and/or registration/contract at the placement provider.
 - Passport-size colour photos (8 would be advisable); electronic equivalent (appropriate format).
 - **Proof that you have sufficient financial support for your stay in the host country in the form of a letter from parents or bank statement** or grants or sponsorship documentation. You may have had to collate these for any pre-arrival visa/permit application.
 - Travel insurance documents: see *pages 48-55*. Health insurance certificate: see *pages 59-63*.
- **Translations:** While **not usually required**, the main exceptions can be **Spain** for post-arrival residence permits (the TIE) and in **France** where in some (very few these days) prefectures (admin districts) an official translation of your full-length birth certificate is required for the residence permit. **Read the information provided by the placement provider!** Don't be caught out if a translation is required.
- If you are not a national/citizen of the host country you may be required to formally declare your departure at the end of your stay. Read the guidance notes from the host organisation and the issuing office of any permit very carefully. A failure to do so might impact on accessing the country in the future.

Miscellaneous

- **Health service registration:** See *pages 59-63 on health care in the host country*.
- **ISIC:** **International Student Identity Card.** Another good idea if you do not already have one is to purchase an International Student Identity Card, available from STA Travel. This will be useful, for example for proof of age and student discounts in your host country. Cost (UK) is £12 for a Virtual ISIC and an additional £4.99 for a card (physical) version (June 2025). *The ISIC website is an external website and Imperial is not responsible for its content.*
- **ESN Card (Erasmus Student Network Card):** If a host European university has an Erasmus Society/Club affiliated to the Erasmus Student Network you might wish to purchase an ESN card from them. Not only is ESN a great place to meet other students but the ESN card offers access to ESN activities and international, national, and local discounts. Discounts have included the following companies: Ryanair, Airbnb, Hostelling International, Interrail, Brussels Airlines and The Economist. Information can be found at <http://esncard.org/>. *The ESN website is an external website and Imperial is not responsible for its content.*

Section 3: Housing

While many of you will experience very few, if any problems, there is no doubting that securing appropriate accommodation should not be taken for granted nor the work involved taken lightly. You must be prepared for all eventualities, as on your arrival and especially during the first few weeks of your placement you will need to be concentrating on getting to grips with your academic programme of study, project or work placement, and it really helps if you are not being distracted unnecessarily by other events, such as securing housing.

Give the whole process careful thought. You will find yourself much better prepared to manage the process to your best advantage. Should events not go according to plan you need to be prepared to deal with the situation and make alternative arrangements.

While for university-based placements the hall of residence and student-flat options provided directly by universities or by associated agents might offer the best solution, all students may wish to consider private sector options.

For country/city specific information we recommend that you 1.) speak to students who have previously undertaken placements in the same location or to students/staff who are familiar with the place you are going to, and 2.) review the guidance and/or assistance provided by the host placement provider.

CAUTION: Always be wary of websites which purport to provide accommodation options. There are many organisations, companies, start-ups run by ex-students as well as commercial set-ups targeting students generally and mobile students in particular so be cautious about engaging with on-line sites offering accommodation options (they maybe too good to be true; or run by people who are not necessarily experts in housing). **Plus, of course, there are scam operators out there.**

Finally, and especially for whole year placements, you may also need to consider how you might continue to handle any housing or housing needs you have in London:

- **ahead of the placement**, such as when to depart/stop paying (if you can, subject to any existing lease) for any existing London housing, and if you are concerned as to whether you will actually meet the grades to go on placement whether you still need to keep an eye on obtaining or retaining housing in London for the year ahead should you not in the end go on the placement.
- **while you are on your placement**, including being in a position to obtain housing for the following year (where relevant).

ERASMUS STUDENT NETWORK: If you are planning to be mobile within Europe, the [pan-European Erasmus Student Network \(ESN\)](#) provides a portal for [reviewing testimonials of students who have been mobile](#). Always consider the information and guidance which such platforms offer alongside the guidance provided by your placement provider (university for study placements; companies/organisations for work-based placements).

The ESN website is an external website and Imperial is not responsible for its content.

Perhaps you are one of a group of Imperial undergraduates going to the same university for their study/year abroad. If so, perhaps you can benefit from each other's experiences and support each other as much as possible. If you want to check if another Imperial student is going to your host university (or whether we have someone there currently) email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk. **However, such contacts are not always available.**

There are three parts to the remainder of this section:

- Part A: accommodation provided or facilitated by a university (pages 41-44).
- Part B: finding private sector accommodation (pages 45-46).
- Part C (page 47): retaining/off-loading London accommodation (if applicable).

All students will find the information on private sector accommodation useful, at least as a starting point, because if you already have experience of dealing with agents/landlords you will have the background to deal with the process in a different location. **However**, it is important to stress that there may be significant differences in the process due to local practice (including legal requirements) and should the local language be an issue.

Part A: accommodation provided by or facilitated by a university.

Ordinarily, this section will apply to students on placements abroad facilitated by exchange agreements; however, it might also be relevant to other students who happen to arrange a placement (research project/internship) at a university.

In the case of placements which take place within the framework of an exchange agreement it is the responsibility of your department to advise you on accommodation options provided by the host university, for example by referring you to feedback or providing contacts.

Most students apply for, accept and are happy with the accommodation provided by a host university. However, take note of the following and do not necessarily feel constrained by this one option. Research the options as thoroughly as possible.

Here is a summary of what you could do:

- Think clearly about when your placement commences, and whether it includes any preparatory language/cultural/orientation courses/sessions at the host university or in the host country. Are there separate accommodation arrangements for these courses/sessions?
- Ensure you research the options beyond the sources/information provided by the university. If possible consult with students who are currently at the host university or who have recently studied there for insight on the overall options available to visiting students.
- Unless directed otherwise by your department **APPLY** for the accommodation provided by the host university. Make sure you are not ruling out being offered a room even if subsequently you opt to obtain private or another form of accommodation (in which case, be also wary of cancellation rules).
- **Ensure that you meet all deadlines for returning accommodation application forms, payment of deposits or fees and any additional or subsequent paperwork.** Increasingly the housing market for university-managed accommodation in some cities is becoming more challenging and our partner universities are setting earlier deadlines for housing applications and fee payments. Missing deadlines can now mean no way back in terms of accessing university-managed accommodation (i.e. Imperial will find it very difficult to intervene on your behalf). **The answer: Don't miss deadlines.** If you have a problem with making a required payment contact Adrian Hawksworth (a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk) to discuss further and don't leave it until the last minute.
- Make sure you know whether, should you find alternative accommodation, you are able to withdraw your accommodation application made through the host university and whether there is a deadline for doing so and/or a financial penalty.
- Keep copies or electronic records of everything you send.

- If you are keeping your options open, i.e. you are also considering accommodation in the private sector, think clearly about how much time you might need to be in the host town/city in order to obtain private accommodation, if, as is often the case (*because you need to be very wary about securing housing via the internet*), you cannot secure such accommodation from here in the UK.
- Are you linguistically prepared for the questions you may need to ask when securing any type of accommodation, especially if you want to wait until you arrive in the host town/city? You can't bank on being able to use English and perhaps your knowledge of the host language for technical conversations has its limits.
- **If you end up occupying accommodation provided (or facilitated) by the university be sure to check at the contract stage whether you can extract yourself from the contract, if after a few weeks or months you consider the accommodation to be inappropriate, or you have a better option (perhaps an option which improves your integration).** Normally this is possible but only if you or the accommodation service you are dealing with has someone lined up to take your place. Obviously, do not give up your accommodation unless you have an alternative secured!
- If you are at all unsure about anything regarding accommodation feel free to contact the Assistant Registrar (Placements): a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Exploring the options provided by a university: Once you have confirmed the university at which you will be studying you should consider the following:

- When are you expected to start at the university?
- Does the start date include any intensive language/cultural preparation courses you are required or wish to attend at the university, and will you need separate accommodation for such a course?
- **Seek out the web-based information intended for exchange students** going to the relevant university. This is a task you should be undertaking in any event. **Read it thoroughly but do not rely wholly on this.**

What might the options be? They may include one or more of the following:

- university halls of residence (e.g. single/shared study rooms; shared flats; ensuite/shared facilities).
- privately managed halls of residence (i.e. access organised by the university).
- halls of residence within one town/city that are pooled together and managed centrally for the benefit of all students in that town/city.
- access/knowledge of private sector accommodation (lodgings; flat-share; sole-occupancy).

When investigating halls of residence, you could consider (*not an exhaustive list*):

- Where are the halls located? Is the information provided accurate or a sales pitch? Is a hall on campus, adjacent to a campus, in the centre of town or the suburbs? Are some halls located next to main roads (noise); non-residential areas (access to amenities) and so on.
- Which campus will you be studying at? How accessible will your normal study location be from a hall of residence?
- How much is local transport going to cost you? Can you obtain multiple tickets or make student savings? Some universities provide cheap or "free" access to local transport networks as part of the "deal" when you pay a local semester or trimester fee.
- Is a hall reserved for either males or females?
- How much does living in a particular hall cost? What are you paying for? What facilities do they offer? Does cost equate to standards and is this an issue for you? In Australia, and also in some instances in the USA, specific "college" systems exist where the cost is much higher but of course you are paying for a higher level of service/experience.
- How quiet will the hall be at a weekend? Do most residents go home at a weekend or are they normally occupied by international students (indeed, other exchange students)?

- Are there any history/problems concerning a particular hall of residence (e.g. noise by occupants or a nearby train line or its record on thefts)? Would previous Imperial students have some insight?
- Do you want to live with other exchange students?; How easy is it to arrange to live alongside local students in halls (quite difficult in many cases). Does the university make it difficult to live alongside anyone other than international students (which might impact developing language skills)?

Check with your departmental study abroad co-ordinator. Ask to see previous feedback notes.

Making applications for accommodation through (or facilitated by) the host university.

Some thoughts to ponder:

- First of all, remember that the study application (*which may have already been submitted before a student starts thinking in more detail about where they will live*) may have doubled as an accommodation application. It is usually obvious that this is the case but do check.
- Do you have the right deadline if it is a separate application routine for housing? Accommodation application deadlines are often aligned to semester entry points, but housing should also be available for a full academic year if you require it.
- Has an accommodation application deadline been set by the exchange office at the host university as part of an integrated procedure for exchange students or are you required to react to a separate deadline set and managed by the host university's accommodation services? Does one routine discuss the other to a sufficient degree for you to know what is happening/when?
- Is the deadline an accommodation application form deadline or is it a deadline for the receipt of a housing fee in order to be considered for housing? Perhaps there are multiple deadlines you must meet in order to retain the ability to be considered for university-facilitated accommodation. Universities with limited accommodation for exchange students may use such tactics to rule out students who do not keep up with deadlines.
- Are you being asked to express one or more accommodation preferences? You might just be offered accommodation without being given any preferences. Are the preferences generic types of housing or are they specific halls of residence?
- Are you able to locate information about the available residences? Imperial's hall information on the web is very good, however, do not necessarily expect the same for the university you are applying to (it may be better; it may be rather more limited).
- Does the accommodation application form also refer to private sector options? If so, will they send you information about private sector accommodation regardless? Some universities do not provide the wealth of housing info which Imperial does, indeed, sometimes it is very limited, and you need to know who to contact for any semblance of detail.
- Does the university indicate what will happen if demand for rooms in university-managed housing outstrips availability? Again, some universities in certain locations may struggle to house everyone and there will be varying levels of service when it comes to private sector options. This is particularly an issue in the Netherlands.
- In some towns/cities, especially in France, a lot of university accommodation is pooled and handled on behalf of two or more institutions by an agent. **Check the information provided by the host university.** **For example**, in France (and the [Campus France website](#) is a good starting point) the main agent is CROUS so google "official CROUS Facebook" plus the name of city.
- Keep a record of who you have sent the accommodation application form to. Is it the host university who is processing your application or is it an agent of the host? If it is the host, remember to be aware about which office is processing your accommodation application.
- How are you going to chase the application, if required? You will hopefully receive an acknowledgement that it has been received and is being processed.
- How long do you have to wait to receive a decision? Were you told this in the information provided? Do not forget about the application. Agree a date with yourself as to when you will chase it up.

If you receive an offer of accommodation from the host university or an agent of theirs, what should you do next? After giving a sigh of relief, think about:

- What type of accommodation have you been offered a room in? Is it your first, second, third choice? Is it none of your choices? Did you have a choice!
- Do the dates of occupancy relate to your study period as required by your department? Do they include any language/cultural/orientation course at the host university scheduled for prior to the study period proper?
- When do you need to accept the offer? How long do you have, i.e. is there another deadline?
- What is it that you are agreeing to at this stage? Are you now being required to complete further documentation or are you simply being asked to send an email? Are you being asked to sign a contract and pay a deposit? What are the terms of any deposit. Can you back out of it nearer the time or at the time of occupancy without financial penalty? Deposit systems like those deployed in the UK may exist for your host location, but they might not.
- What additional documentation, if any, are you being requested to return.

If you do confirm your acceptance, seek an acknowledgement that it has been received.

If you are undecided about taking the accommodation offered to you by the host university at the time confirmation is required (*especially if you will be contractually held to it if you accept*) is it best to consider seeking private sector accommodation?

If you decide to accept the accommodation offered to you by the host university or their agent, find out **what you will be required to do upon arrival**. Which Office do you need to present yourself at? What are the opening hours of that Office? Is there an after-hours service? What documents will you need to present? Hopefully you will receive an email or on-line induction for when you arrive.

Remember: If you are attending a language/cultural event at the host university or in the same locality in the run-up to your study period are you clear about accommodation arrangements for that period?

Perhaps you are one of a group of Imperial students going to the same destination. If so, benefit from each other's experiences and support each other as much as possible.

If, come your **date of departure to the host country**, you have applied for a room in a hall of residence, but you are unsure (despite your efforts) whether arrangements have been confirmed, it is essential you make one last effort to gain confirmation before you depart for the host town/city.

Ensure you have access to your accommodation correspondence and be prepared to argue your case if when you arrive a room has not been reserved for you, or you have been placed in a hall which you had not expressed a preference for. **In these circumstances it is a good idea (although not always possible) to have a local contact, a friend or family member with you for support as you will probably need to discuss issues in the host language and, of course, you have only just arrived. Your host university might provide a buddy to help.**

This is where liaising with other Imperial students going to your particular university, or you have made the effort to contact a student from your particular host university (*who happened to have been at Imperial as an exchange student themselves during the run-up to your placement*) can prove invaluable.

Arriving a few days early (and booking into affordable student hostel-type accommodation) may prove a useful option if you are at all unsure about whether accommodation has been secured or that you want in the end to take it up. Budget for this extra period to make your first few days in the host city/town feel comfortable and safe.

Even if you think all is OK - be prepared for the unexpected when you present yourself at the relevant housing office. For example, there have been rare instances of applications which have been lost/ignored or indeed your confirmed place has been given to another student. Take copies of applications made and have with you ALL correspondence with the host regarding housing.

Part B: **Finding private sector accommodation.**

Many students find themselves coping with this without any prior knowledge of the location, nor perhaps of obtaining private sector housing previously.

- **Check feedback sheets in your own department provided by previous students to the same placement provider** (if there are any).
- Students undertaking work (industrial) placements might be assisted in obtaining company or private sector accommodation.
- Every town/city will have its own favoured means by which private-apartments/flat-shares/lodgings are advertised. While agencies will exist, you may be drawn towards the universally popular methods of free/local newspapers, notice boards on campus or around town, specific web-listings (remember that you might be viewing these from home) & word of mouth. *'Airbnb' and equivalents for short-term rental is referenced further down.*
- **However, it is best to work through a reputable agency** (remain cautious) **rather than with landlords directly:** preferably an agent who has experience of dealing with students, especially international students, and perhaps is endorsed by the placement provider.
- **Sign a contract** (a proper one which upholds your rights as much as the landlords...perhaps easier in some countries than others.)
- **Don't view flats on your own. Go with someone you know or an agent.**
- **If you do deal with landlords directly be cautious of people who might well not be the landlord, rather a tenant seeking to sub-let,** who might not be following local rental rules/laws as they should.
- **CAUTION: Always be wary of websites which purport to provide accommodation options, and - as you should be aware from looking for private accommodation in London - be aware of the signs of fraud.** For example, **be very wary of** the following website: erasmusu.com which is just a social network/on-line community which is not related in any way to the EU programme.

Here are a few pointers. This does not claim to cover everything, rather its intention is to raise your awareness (perhaps remind you) of the practical issues involved.

- Can you come to an agreement with other Imperial students (going to the same location) to look for accommodation together?
- Should you arrive one or two weeks early to allow more time to find something appropriate? If so, where are you going to live? At least book yourself into one/two nights at an affordable hotel/hostel. Budget for this extra period to make your first few days in the host city/town feel comfortable and safe.
- Please note that if you are attending a language/cultural/orientation course (presuming you have had separate accommodation arranged for you for that period) will you have time to look properly for a permanent solution? Perhaps you need to consider arriving in advance of that language/cultural/orientation course.
- (university based placements) Perhaps, if you are starting at the beginning of a regular academic year or semester/trimester you need to arrive much earlier than you first thought and therefore you need to think about any summer work (or other activities) you have lined up in the UK or elsewhere. Are they going to start to overlap?
- **Investigate what the most common means by which private rented accommodation is advertised in the city/town you are going to? This could still be paper adverts at town vantage**

points or particular agencies providing you with lists of vacancies (please note that these listings – whatever their provenance – may struggle to remain up to date if demand is high).

- As with London, a high proportion of room/flats, especially for longer term rental, will be snapped up before you arrive, perhaps not available to foreign students and not be of a particularly high standard.
- What you see on-line is not necessarily what you see in reality.
- **'Airbnb' or equivalents may be an option for shorter stays** (depending on cost) since there may be limits on a length of stay stipulated by a host or like with London, city-wide restrictions on length of stay. Tenant regulations and local taxes would kick-in at some stage so regardless of what a "host" says on 'Airbnb' or equivalents be sure that you are meeting local laws/regulations.
- Ensure you know what to ask when you see a property. As we have suggested it is best to work through an established high street agency or other "agent" (perhaps on-line) suggested by a placement provider.
- When you view a room/property check the things that you take for granted in London, for example electric sockets in your room, accessibility to basic facilities, any restrictions on use of facilities.
- Is the property furnished or not? If it is furnished will you need to buy anything? If it is shared do you need to purchase anything because perhaps items in the flat belong to another person and you will not be able to use it?
- **What if a room/flat is offered to you?** What do you do? Accept straight away or run the risk of that room/flat not being available the following day?

At the point you have to decide, take the stance that:

- If you are dealing with the landlord directly then they are **very likely** to rip you off for your deposit (*deposit management schemes like we have in the UK are not always in existence elsewhere*). However, if the rent is considerably cheaper than in London for similar accommodation you may think it a risk worth taking. Your risk. Another reason for working through an established agency.
- You might feel pressured into making a decision; to take it when it is offered to you although it is far preferable if you have the chance to think it over overnight. **Weigh up the pros and cons quickly and be prepared to decide at the time the landlord/agent offers the accommodation to you.** It is often helpful to consider whether you can see yourself getting used to the accommodation (first impressions can sometimes mask the merits of the place, especially the location). If you have secured private housing in London then you might feel more confident about making a decision.
- **If you wish to accept**, how does the landlord/agent wish you to secure the property/room?
 - If this is by cash, you will need to have it on you **although frankly you may wish to walk away at that point**. Cash for housing, in the modern age, should trigger alarm bells.
 - If you do hand over cash how is the landlord going to confirm receipt.
 - Is the landlord requesting a deposit plus one or two-months' rent? Again, alarm bells.
 - **As always it is best to work through an agency (while remaining cautious) which is more likely to be following local rental rules/laws.**
 - If you said yes at the time you were viewing the room/flat, will the landlord/agent produce a contract there and then for you to sign? Whenever you are confronted by a contract, check what you are signing. How long are you signing for (crucial, as in London)? Can you get out of it (is there a cooling off period?) or are you liable for the whole period should you wish to move, possibly because you are returning early to the UK for some reason? Do you understand the local/national rules governing tenancy agreements? **A reputable agent would presumably help you understand the process.**
 - Is the landlord/agent asking for a guarantor? The best course of action here may be to obtain a guarantor's letter from a parent/guardian/bank.
 - What if you are not asked to sign a contract? The answer we hope is obvious! Walk away.
- Finally, (where relevant) do you feel confident about using your language in what can be a testing situation? If you have been on the language course at the host, try to get someone who speaks the language to come along with you. **In these circumstances it is a good idea (although not always possible) to have a friend or family member with you for support as you will probably need to discuss issues in the host language and of course, you may have only just arrived.**

Part C: What to do with your **London accommodation** during a placement (if applicable)

In preparation for your placement, you will naturally conclude as to whether you are able to retain your London accommodation or whether you need to off-load it, either permanently or temporarily. If you are currently in private accommodation in London then you may also have other responsibilities and liabilities such as Council Tax. Therefore, it is important to make sure your assets and responsibilities are covered back in the UK during your period abroad. If you wish to rent your room while you are abroad, speak to your landlord or read your contract about your options. You may need to think about storage options. There will be incoming exchange students who will be looking for accommodation for their period of study at Imperial so contact the Student Accommodation Office about advertising room availability (subject to your own housing contract).

Once a "placement" has been approved by the home academic department **when should a student start booking travel?** Imperial advises that if you book travel tickets before any visa/permit required by the host country for entry to the country has been issued that you are at the very least conversant with the cancellation policy for the travel tickets purchased. Ideally you should await the receipt of any visa/permit, but we understand that the cost of travel especially to long-haul destinations can rocket upwards in the meantime if one does this. At the end of the day **the student is responsible for when they book their travel and the cost.** The cancellation cover in Imperial's overseas travel insurance policy (*see later section*) would not apply where the student has failed to obtain the relevant visa/permit prior to travel.

Section 4: Insurance and Liability

For any trip abroad it is essential that you have enough insurance to cover you and your possessions for the duration of your stay. Please consider the information provided here as well as your own personal circumstances and placement location and ask yourself whether all possible circumstances will be covered by one form of insurance or another?

Take note: Imperial makes provision for its own students to benefit from insurance policies (subject to some actions on the part of the student; subject to policy wordings) which cover travel (including personal liability), personal accident and public liability.

This section covers:

A. Imperial's overseas travel insurance, including cover, exclusions and how to claim	E: Housing insurance
B. Imperial's personal accident cover	F: Industrial placements: insurance in the workplace
C. Imperial's liability cover.	G: Health (refers the reader to pages 56-60 on health insurance)
D: Contact sports	H: Separate cover

A: Imperial's overseas travel insurance policy

Please note that what is included here is a guide only and not a legally binding statement. Any claims made under Imperial's insurance policies will be governed by the relevant policy wording, available from the Imperial website (see below). Changes in cover will be updated in this Handbook when practical to do so.

VERY IMPORTANT: It is important that students understand that while travel insurance includes cover for emergency medical expenses it is **not** a replacement for a health insurance (see later sections).

Imperial's travel insurance policy:

- is provided by American International Group, Inc (AIG). **Policy number 0010016145.**
- is brokered by Arthur J Gallagher.
- is defined by the travel advice from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO): <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- is broadly in line with package travel insurances generally available.
- provides **travel and personal property (and other) cover**. The benefits/cover are also listed in the **Travel Certificate** available on Imperial's staff webpages: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/travel-insurance/>.
The Travel certificate is an important document which is also referenced later in this section (**note:** the previous set of insurance webpages which were accessible to students are subject to an update and this Handbook will be updated in due course.)
- the policy wording can also be downloaded [here](#).
- **has been renewed until 31 July 2025 (inclusive)** and will be renewed on substantially the same terms for a further 12-month period until 31 July 2026, and then again until 31 July 2027.
- covers any student travelling on university/Imperial business abroad, **subject to their travel arrangements being registered with Imperial's Insurance Manager** (see below for detailed actions) for a period of up to 12 months.
 - the policy covers students on placement as part of their degree or for extra-ECTS credit.

- However, all students should take note of the exceptions listed later in this section, including if they are travelling to undertake a placement in their country of domicile (*or they will travel through their home country enroute to and from the placement*) or plan to be away for more than 12 months or plan to undertake weekend/holiday trips to other countries within your placement period.
- Emergency medical expenses are covered regardless of the UK FCDO Office travel advice **and** a commentary on the policy for a placement audience is provided later in this section.
- While it is not mandatory to use Imperial's travel insurance it is mandatory to complete the travel insurance register, even if you have additional cover (Imperial's travel insurance is provided free of charge after all!)

Important Stuff!!!! What you need to do:

FOUR Key Actions

whether you travel from the UK or your country of domicile to your placement

1. ACTION: Research your destination before you travel and work with your dept to have your placement approved.

- As referenced in earlier sections of the Handbook your dept should undertake a risk-based assessment of your placement ahead of approving the placement and travel itself including (when advised by Imperial's Safety Dept & Faculty Safety Team), but not limited to, any pandemic related liaison with AIG Travel Assistance through the AIG Business Travel Assistance app or website.
- **Check the travel advice for your destination on the [UK FCDO website](#).**
 - Full cover under Imperial's travel insurance policy will only be available for travel to countries the FCDO have not advised against travelling to, i.e. if at the time of booking your flights and accommodation the FCDO advise against all but "essential" travel to your destination, and this might include advising against travelling because there has been an outbreak of covid-19 or other pandemic. If you travel to a country the FCDO has advised you should not travel to the full policy will not apply if you subsequently decide to cancel your placement or if you are required to return early.
- Check to determine whether the host country has any travel restrictions in place for travellers from the UK (or from your home country/domicile if different), as these may not be covered by travel insurance if you need to make a claim for any travel delays or cancellations which occur because of such non-UK government laws and regulations.

2. ACTION: Register your trip by completing the on-line travel registration form available via:

[Travel insurance | Administration and support services | Imperial College London](#) (these are staff pages but you can use the link)

- **This is mandatory** on the part of any staff or student. Don't forget!
- **You need only do this once for your whole trip** (i.e. if you travel to the UK or to your home country during your placement there is no need to register those specific journeys), **although if your original placement is extended please complete and additional travel registration**. Please also take note of the guidance below about visits which last more than 12 months, and where your placement requires attendance in one or more countries.
- Always remember to register your travel/trip as close to your intended departure date as possible so that you obtain the most up-to-date guidance (including travel certificate).
- **Failure to register your trip may result in you not being covered by Imperial's travel insurance policy.**
- **Visits to other countries for holidaying purposes made during your trip** (other than stopovers within the travel element to/from the UK or your country of domicile) **are NOT covered by the policy.**
- You do not need to inform the Insurance Manager if you terminate your trip early or do not go.

- **IMPORTANT: when completing the on-line travel registration form**
 - answer the questions as a student as the current form has been designed more with employees/staff in mind than students. However, it does reference for the most part where students should consider matters differently to staff.
 - your Dept is responsible for managing your placement. Therefore, references to risk assessments (risk-based assessments in the case of placements) are the responsibility of your academic dept to undertake & you should assume for the purpose of registering your travel that they have.

- 3. **ACTION: (1) DOWNLOAD the [AIG Business Travel Assistance APP](#) (select “mobile”) from Google Play or the Apple Store to give you a wealth of information about the country you are visiting as well as immediate access to the insurers 24/7 help line.** You will need the policy number **[0010016145]** to access the app. **(2)** Students can download the free [SafeZone App](#) [external website/product] if they want to pre-plan for an unexpected but serious event that might compromise their safety.

- 4. **ACTION:** It is advisable to **also download and print the Travel Certificate:** by using the version on the [Staff Travel pages](#).
 - **Add your name, destination, and the whole period of travel:** *Please note the guidance below about period of travel beyond 12 months, and where your placement requires attendance in countries other than the principal/first host country: obtain advice from Imperial’s Insurance Manager as necessary/if you are in doubt.*
 - **It explains what you or someone acting on your behalf should do in a real emergency** (the same helpline available using the app).
 - **You should consider always carrying the Travel Certificate with you and have a spare copy available where it might be found in case of your own incapacity.**
 - **Print a new Travel Certificate from 1 August 2025 or 1 August 2026 if you remain on an approved placement abroad after those dates.**
 - Make yourself familiar with **Imperial’s own emergency procedure for placements** (page 79).
 - Read: [Managing an emergency incident](#) (this is a staff-facing page but students can follow as well).

Notes: (use this space to note important points for your placement)

The next part of this section on the Imperial's overseas travel insurance will focus on:

- **Summary of benefits** as they apply until 31 July 2025*
- **Important points**
- **Exclusions**
- **How to claim on Imperial's overseas travel insurance**

The complete policy wording can be downloaded from [here](#)

* Imperial's overseas travel insurance will be renewed from 1 August 2025 for a further 12 months (until 31 July 2026) so always check the aforementioned [webpage](#) for the most up-to-date information and travel certificate. **Register your travel as close to the intended departure date as possible.**

Summary of benefits:

Please refer to the following webpage for the **Summary of Benefits**:

<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/travel-insurance/travel-and-personal-property-insurance-policy/>

For **“lost personal property” AND “money and tickets”** ensure you read the relevant guidance document via the links in the ‘summary of cover’ table at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/travel-insurance/travel-and-personal-property-insurance-policy/>):

The current policy is applicable for travel abroad undertaken 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025 but will be renewed on substantially the same terms for the 12-month period from 1 August 2025, and again from 1 August 2026.

Important points

(read also the guidance on **“key exclusions”** to the policy on pages 52-53).

- **You have a duty of care regarding personal possessions (i.e. to take reasonable precautions).**
- For longer periods of residence (*certainly study abroad periods; a year in industry*) you should possess valid health insurance for the country concerned (this will often be a condition of the host country's immigration requirements). Travel insurance and health insurance are not the same.
- You are advised to consider carefully when you need to purchase air/rail tickets (and to make yourself aware as to the cancellation conditions used by the travel carrier) and to try where at all possible to confirm travel arrangements only when you know the outcome of any application for a pre-travel visa/permit. *See also the note at the beginning of this section: “when should a student start to book travel”.*
- **Loss of Personal Possessions/Money:** In the event of losses for which you claim you **MUST** notify the police (or the transport carrier if enroute) immediately and obtain an official report (perhaps a crime number).
- **Travel to Remote Regions:** For a placement involving travel to remote regions Imperial's Insurance Manager must have been consulted by a student's home department [perhaps in association with the Faculty Safety Team] prior to a placement being approved (i.e. well before a student travels). If problems were to arise in a remote region then search and rescue operations may become necessary and may prove difficult or extremely expensive to arrange. This could be a reason why a placement is **not** approved.
- **Travel to Disturbed Areas:** (this list may change) Departments considering organising a placement in or via **Colombia, Iraq, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Somalia, Venezuela or Yemen should contact insurance@imperial.ac.uk for details.** There could be grounds for a placement **not** to be approved.

- **Travel to Sanctioned Countries/Regions:** Checks should be made in respect of placements to sanctioned countries such as Ukraine (Crimea and Sevastopol), Russia, Iran, Syria, North Korea, Cuba or Sudan see <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff-travel-and-expenses/planning-a-trip/country-guidance/>. There may be grounds for a placement **not** to be approved.

For general advice on travel to other countries PLUS further info on travel warnings to certain countries and sanctioned countries refer to: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

- **Travelling with dependents:** Any partner/spouse/dependent-child accompanying a student who is travelling on Imperial business is also covered by the travel insurance policy (must complete the travel insurance register).
- **Where a single placement is undertaken in more than one country, other than the UK** you should contact Imperial's [Insurance Manager](#) to ensure your travel is appropriately registered.
- **Holiday travel:** See a sliding scale of insured private days: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/travel-insurance/incidental-holiday-to-a-business-trip/>.

A (maximum) allowance of up to 28 days holiday travel insurance cover is normally available:

- So long as such travel is incidental to university business and that the holiday takes place in the same country as the placement or enroute within the first outward and final homeward journey such as a day in Dubai awaiting a connection and you go sightseeing (*i.e. the allowance and therefore the insurance cover cannot be used for incidental holidaying to other countries during the placement period, other than travel to and from the UK or your country of domicile*).
- If your placement lasts more than 365 days it must have been pre-approved by the Insurance Manager. See key exclusions below.
- **To reaffirm that a student is not covered by Imperial's overseas travel insurance if they take a visit or a holiday to another country during the placement, unless they are travelling back directly to the UK or their normal country of domicile** (it is to be expected that a student will not necessarily remain in the placement country throughout the whole placement and will have cause to return to the UK or their country of domicile).
- Check whether you possess other insurances which more adequately cover certain scenarios e.g. health insurance or perhaps parental household insurance for personal belongings.
- Check whether your placement provider has a mandatory requirement for a student to purchase health insurance from them or an approved provider. For example, this is often the case in the USA where the placement provider is a university. Even if you purchase mandatory health insurance you may still be eligible to claim under Imperial's overseas travel insurance policy for costs not met by that mandatory health insurance policy.
- Check whether you must pay additional housing insurance for the accommodation you occupy and what is the cover provided.

Key exclusions: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/travel-insurance/travel-and-personal-property-insurance-policy/>

What follows is a commentary on some of the key exclusions under the policy (review the [full policy wording](#)).

- There is no cover under the policy for Cancellation, Curtailment, Rearrangement, Replacement, Missed Departure & travel delay **where**:
 - a) the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office advise against all or all, but essential travel **and** the advice was in force at the time the original trip was booked.
 - and/or.**
 - b) a regulation in your permanent country of residence (i.e. departure country), **or** in your destination country, **and** the advice was in force at the time the original trip was booked.
- You are **not** covered by Imperial's overseas travel insurance for medical expenses, repatriation and political evacuation should you be a national of **or** are normally domiciled in the country in which the situation occurs. Such students may be covered by other travel benefits: travel cancellation, loss of personal possessions, personal accident, personal liability to 3rd parties whilst you are in the host country.
- **Travel exceeding one year in duration – contact the Insurance Manager to make arrangements.** This may affect some undergraduate students on “year abroad” (*especially if a pre-sessional language course in*

the host country is part of the approved placement) or “year in industry” degree programmes or PhD students on long-term placements. Individuals who think they will be abroad for the purpose of undertaking their whole placement for more than 12 months must email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk & insurance@imperial.ac.uk to discuss alternative arrangements BEFORE they depart on their placement. The additional holiday time might not apply. **After discussion with the Insurance Manager a student must be prepared in such circumstances to obtain private travel insurance for their whole placement.**

- **Failure to take reasonable precautions to avoid loss** (**includes** non-refundable costs incurred prior to visa applications).
- Travelling against the advice of a medical practitioner.
- Disinclination to travel, unless for unforeseen and documented personal or health reasons.
- Non-emergency medical costs (e.g. check-ups, ongoing prescriptions and vaccinations)
- Third party liability arising from motorised vehicles.
- Default (insolvency) of any provider of transport or accommodation. *Other avenues may exist if this occurs.*
- Suicide, intentional self-injury or use of non-prescribed drugs.
- Dental or optical expenses (other than in exceptional circumstances).
- Travel to “disturbed areas” or those with “sanctions” : *see above note and for fuller guidance see: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice> and (mandatory) contact the [Imperial's Insurance Manager](#).*
- For travel cancellation/rearrangement claims; loss arising from events which were known about, or the possibility of which existed, at the time trip booking was made.

How to make a claim on Imperial's overseas travel insurance

For emergency medical treatment or emergency assistance:

- **contact +44 (0) 1273 456 463 quoting policy number 0010016145**

For **non**-emergency medical situations:

- UK residents on placements within the EU should first claim medical expenses using their UK-issued Global Health Insurance Card. For UK nationals then this also applies to Switzerland.
- EU/EEA/Swiss nationals on placements within the EU/EAA/Switzerland (noting limitations if undertaking a placement in their country of origin) should first claim medical expenses using (depending on their individual circumstances) their European Health Insurance Card (issued by the relevant EU/EEA country or Switzerland; or perhaps a UK-issued EHIC).

OR: For all non-medical claims use the claims filing tool on the AIG Travel Assistance mobile app, available for Apple and Android devices. You will need the policy number [0010016145] to access the app. Once you have completed the claim, you will receive an automated email acknowledgment, which will include a reference number and an email address for the claims team should you need to get in contact. **Very important: For any claim: Do not claim twice for the same costs.**

B: Imperial's personal accident cover

What is included here is a guide only and not a legally binding statement. Any claims made under Imperial's insurance policies will be governed by the relevant [policy wording](#).

- **Sitting within Imperial's travel insurance is cover for personal accidents.** Covers any student of Imperial who is normally resident in the UK or enrolled in a course of study with Imperial. **The operative time is whilst participating in official activities organised by Imperial, including abroad.** *Incidentally, similar cover is provided by Imperial for when a student is on or off campus in UK.*
- The benefits under the policy are accidental death, losses of eye(s), limb(s), speech or hearing, permanent total or partial disablement. There is no cover for temporary disablement.
- Potential claims must be notified by the student or family to the Insurance Manager.

C: **Imperial's Liability Insurance Cover** (whole section updated December 2025)

- Imperial College maintains a [Combined Liability Insurance policy through HDI Global SE – UK, which includes Public Liability and Products Liability cover](#). This policy provides indemnity for students undertaking university-related activities, including placements, subject to the terms and exclusions of the policy.
 - **Indemnity to Students:** Students are covered under the policy for liability arising out of and in the course of university-related business. This includes approved placements, provided the activity is part of the student's academic programme and has been risk-assessed and approved by the department. However, this indemnity does not extend to medical malpractice or healthcare provision by students, nor does it apply where other valid insurance is in place.
 - **Public Liability vs Civil Liability:** While Imperial's Public Liability cover may satisfy some placement providers' requirements, it is not equivalent to civil liability insurance (*responsabilité civile*), which is a legal requirement in countries like France. Civil liability refers to personal legal responsibility for harm caused to others and is often expected to be held by the individual (i.e. the student). Imperial's policy does not explicitly provide this form of personal cover.
- Some countries and individual placement providers may require you to provide evidence of the insurance cover you have for **public liability**. This evidence ("[confirmation of cover](#)") can be obtained at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/finance/financial-services/insurance/liability-insurance/public-liability/>
- You ought not to have to pay for additional cover, however, if the cover suggested by the placement provider is of low cost (and to ensure that the placement provider approves of the insurance cover in place) you might think it more convenient to purchase their recommended policy rather than attempting to explain Imperial's cover.
- While insurance cover is in place for you to the extent described above, you should not assume that Imperial's insurers will always deal favourably with a claim of whatever type, especially if it is seen as proper that the placement provider or another party is liable, that other valid insurance is in place, or you were held to be criminally responsible.
- If you plan to drive abroad, you will need to arrange insurance with the hire company to cover any legal liability arising from your use of the vehicle. Imperial **does not** have a policy that extends to driving overseas.

D: **Contact sports**

Imperial's overseas travel insurance **does** cover you for sports (e.g. skiing) subject to the policy wording but that may not be sufficient in some circumstances. If you play certain contact sports your host university may request you to take out additional, mandatory compulsory insurance. The cost of this additional insurance may not amount to much.

E: **Housing insurance**

Does your housing contract (host country) require you to obtain separate housing insurance? Where your host requires you to take out a separate housing insurance. We would recommend that you check with your existing home insurer to see if they will extend cover whilst you are overseas. Your host may also have a provider that they would recommend.

F: **Industrial placements: Insurance in the workplace**

Scenario 1: A standalone industrial placement abroad

(e.g. UG Year in Industry; some UG Year Abroad where undertaken as “research abroad”; PGT industry-based projects; PGR placements)

- Your home academic department should check in advance what administrative arrangements are in place at the placement provider for hosting a student undertaking a placement and what the specific insurance arrangements are for the study or work-based element of your stay (i.e. as opposed to your personal time). *See page 14: the Placement Provider Information Form asks the pertinent questions.*
- If the placement provider does not have the equivalent of UK Employers’ Liability Insurance or indicates that they will not apply (in your case) the equivalent of UK Employers’ Liability Insurance then the home academic department should as part of their [placement] approval process be satisfied that the placement provider is demonstrating an intention to fulfil its health, safety, and training responsibilities. If this is sufficiently demonstrated then a placement may be approved by the home academic department based on insurance cover for the student provided by Imperial’s Liability Insurance. *See section C above.*
- **Industrial placements in France:**
 - In France, student placements in industry are normally managed within a national bespoke regime (the “stage” system) where bi-lateral contracts between student and company are replaced by tri-partite training agreements (a convention de stage).
 - French companies presume that students have personal liability insurance (*what is termed civile responsabilité: as it is a condition of being registered at a French HEI*).
 - An appropriately approved placement (by your home dept) in France would be subject to the personal liability cover of both Imperial’s Overseas Travel Insurance (for your free time away from your “placement”) and Imperial’s liability insurance (for your time at the placement provider.) See section C.
 - Imperial maintains a template training agreement for use where the placement provider does not have their own version (*nb: French companies expect the student’s home university to provide an agreement*).
 - Depts can email a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk to access the template training agreement.
- **You are expected to always act responsibly and therefore you should not assume** that Imperial’s insurers will always deal favourably with any claim if it is seen as proper that the placement provider or you were criminally negligent.

Scenario 2: a placement as part of an undergraduate year abroad (at a university):

- Where a placement is organised by the hosting university as part of the study plan (learning agreement) the host university assumes responsibility for ensuring you have adequate insurance cover so ensure you follow their guidance/instructions and understand the insurance situation.

Any queries: contact the Assistant Registrar (Placements) in the first instance on a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk
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G: **Health insurance**

See pages 59-63 **including Imperial’s Health Clearance.**

H: **Separate cover**

Of course, you could take out a policy which covers you for everything regardless of that cover provided by the means described above.

Section 5: Health and safety at your placement provider

Covid-19 may continue to play a part in how some placements are arranged and undertaken during 2025-26, regardless of a student's own situation vis-a-vis vaccinations. This should include but not be limited to developing awareness ahead of travel and during your placement of the possible local/regional impact of a new or further wave of Covid-19 (new variants perhaps) and the placement provider's own response plan to Covid-19. Consider as best you can an emergency evacuation plan to your home country and be more familiar perhaps than you might be otherwise with details of medical centres and hospitals around your placement location, and (as they are re-published) of testing centres. Country-specific advice can be obtained using the AIG Travel Assistance app (page 50).

All placements (whether study-based or work/work-based) undertaken external to the Imperial estate are subject to Imperial's Off-site Working Policy. **The Good Practice for Placements** - *which academic departments should be taking into account in the way they manage a placement* - **dovetails with the Off-Site Working Policy** (see also pages 15 and 85-89).

The Good Practice for Placements is available on the [Placements](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/) website:
<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/placements/information-for-imperial-college-students/>

The sector Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) has produced guidance (2018) which can be viewed at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

The main aims for both the Good Practice for Placements & the Off-Site Working Policy are essentially threefold: **(1)** to check that the environment in which you will be undertaking the placement is safe (identifying necessary adjustments, training and orientation); **(2)** the means by which you will aim to achieve the objectives - of the whole placement or any particular element of your placement - are within your ability (identifying necessary adjustments, training and orientation) and **(3)** to ensure feedback is obtained and monitored for the best interests of your placement and any future student.

You should ensure that the objectives of the placement can be fulfilled. To achieve this, your home department must obviously liaise with the placement provider to ensure that the content of the placement is appropriate and achievable and how you are to be assessed is also achievable. Additionally, your department should follow Imperial's guidance (good practice) on managing placements.

Assessing risk: Your home department, as necessary (with the home department's Safety Officer) should ensure that the risk factors (*associated with, for example, covid-19, your personal circumstances, your attendance in a particular location, the activities you will pursue*) have been considered.

The main aims are twofold:

- (1) to check that the environment in which you will be undertaking the placement is safe (identifying necessary training and orientation).
- (2) to check that how you will aim to achieve the objectives of your placement are within your ability (identifying necessary training and orientation).

The level of risk might be presumed to be higher for industrial placements, projects in industry and projects undertaken in a university than it is for any lecture-based element of a placement where the "working/studying" environment is, perhaps, more of a known quantity. **Therefore**, your home department is advised to consider the following before approving a placement (and any changes to a placement once you have commenced it):

- a) that the placement provider:
- can provide appropriate supervision and training.
 - has disclosed its insurance arrangements for students on placement (*to the student's home academic department*) and considered any limitations. **It should be assumed that in case of universities with whom Imperial has official student exchange agreements that the insurance issue has been resolved.** See **Approval of a Placement Provider** (p.15) & **Insurance in the Workplace** (p.55).
 - has appropriate safety/emergency procedures in place (*including an ability to report accidents to your home dept*); an ability to ensure you are made familiar with them; provide extra training/induction.
- b) where necessary a full risk-assessment is completed for any element of a placement (perhaps the whole placement) which is not considered low-risk (*e.g. regular university teaching: lectures, seminars, tutorials, supervised site visits, supervised field trips, timetabled lessons in on-site supervised laboratories and workshops; office-based industrial placement work might be considered low-risk, although the location may warrant a full risk assessment*). A department should have a routine in place for assessing risk, whether a placement involves undergraduate or postgraduate students. This might be based around the tools on offer as part of the good practice for placement management and/or it might be based on well-founded arrangements using the tools on offer for good health and safety management provided by the Safety Dept. Either way a proportional and efficient means of assessing risk should be in place within all departments.
- c) that both the student and the home department establish the ground rules for:
- maintaining contact during a placement in order to reflect on the experience, review the effectiveness of supervision; to discuss changes which might be required.
 - providing and discussing formal feedback at the end of the placement. Feedback is important to guide and inform the process in future years.

Please note that the principles above apply even if, for example, part of your placement is organised by a placement provider (e.g. a host university offers an internship at an external company; a company relocates you to another office for a period of time). It is very important that the process undertaken by the placement provider is known to the home department. However, allowances may need to be observed since the local health and safety legislation may be different to that which is applicable in the United Kingdom. In the case of student exchange agreements these bring with them a level of trust that the host university will act responsibly.

While other persons are very important in organising and confirming your placement (the Placement Manager; Dept Safety Officer), **you too have a role:**

- you have a responsibility to make sure you are well informed and work with your home department and the placement provider to ensure your placement is well organised and is safe.
- therefore, you too are strongly advised to make yourself familiar with the placement provider's health and safety policy and procedures (especially for non-university settings).
- you can obviously apply the principles of health and safety which you have learnt at Imperial.
- **this is especially important if:**
 - you are the first student (Imperial or perhaps any student) to be seeking a placement at a particular placement provider.
 - you are the first foreign student to be hosted by a particular placement provider.
 - there may have been a gap since a student (of Imperial; any student) was last hosted by a particular placement provider and knowledge of that placement provider is not current.

- the onus was on you to find an industrial placement or where you preferred to find your own industrial placement (under departmental guidance/guidelines).
- In any of these situations **you could assist the process** by requesting pertinent details when you are in the process of having a placement confirmed (e.g. when you are sent a contract of employment, a student traineeship agreement or a letter offering admission as a student).

You should respect the rules and regulations of the placement provider; you should fully acquaint yourself with any policies and procedures which are relevant to you; you should respect the persons in charge of you or who are supervising/advising you; you should respect your colleagues/peers; you should always act responsibly. **Remember, that you are representing Imperial and remain registered with Imperial and as such are bound by Imperial's student regulations.**

In preparation for your placement (or a particular element of your placement) and/or at the beginning of your placement (or at the beginning of a particular element of your placement). This is **not** a full list of everything you need to be aware of but should serve to point you in the right direction:

- Have you been notified that a **Day 1 Induction/Orientation** will take place (it obviously should)? As you progress through your placement are induction/orientation sessions taking place ahead of using facilities which are new to you?
- Are there factors (e.g. health or disability related, materials to be used, accessibility to study areas/workplaces etc) which might hinder your progress or make it unfeasible to start with? **If you have a disability please read the Section earlier in this Handbook (see contents page).**
- Will you or have you received training for any equipment and/or materials you will be expected to use during your placement (or scenarios, such as a project module you'll undertake if on a study placement)?
- Do you know of any other hazards you might be exposed to, e.g. noise or other hazards?
- Are you aware of the procedures for reporting incidents and injuries at the placement provider, especially in a laboratory or workplace? Who is responsible for first-aid?
- **Are you familiar with the procedure for reporting incidents (what is termed as a near-miss) and injuries to Imperial?** <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/safety/safety-by-topic/accidents-incidents/>
- If you are studying/working outside normal (buildings/campus access) hours does this restrict what you can do? Are you allowed to study/work outside normal hours on site/on-campus?
- Do you know the means of escape (emergency evacuation procedures) for your workplace, for your main study environment, your accommodation etc.? What are the escape routes?
- Have you received such advice/information/procedures in writing?
- **Have you acquainted yourself with the Imperial's own procedure for handling emergencies (affecting students whilst on placement) which are brought to its attention:** <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

You might have read the above and thought it is all obvious stuff but try and ensure that your mindset throughout the placement is one of engagement on such issues.

Section 6: Health care in the host country

Covid-19 continues to have relevance for some locations but in reading this section bear in mind that medical care, health insurance and travel insurance are overarching topics within which the treatment of and the cost of treatment [of an illness], e.g. Covid-19, can be considered.

This section covers:

A. Health clearance from Imperial
B. Medical care in the European Union and Switzerland
C. Medical care outside the European Union and Switzerland

A. Important: Health clearance from Imperial

Students undertaking a placement abroad lasting more than 3 months should be signposted by their home department (as part of the risk-based assessment) to seek approval to travel ('fitness to travel') from Imperial's Occupational Health Service.

All students who undertake a placement of any duration to a tropical country or a country where malaria is endemic must seek approval to travel ('fitness to travel') from Imperial's Occupational Health Service.

Obtaining health clearance is a policy of Imperial College London.

For more information⁴: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/occupational-health/travel/>

For the avoidance of doubt, your dept remains responsible for giving you the green light to proceed to your placement AND for signposting you (if necessary) to Occupational Health (OH) for health clearance. When directed to do so you should contact OH at least 6 weeks before you travel. For most students, fitness to travel will be approved quickly and you and your dept informed by email⁵ (**it should form part of your dept's procedures for managing a placement**). Obviously, on the rare occasion a student may be declined approval to travel. If you are unsure about whether you should be signposted to contact Occupational Health email occhealth@imperial.ac.uk for advice.

This is an important routine as you may not be aware until advised otherwise that there are remedial actions you need to take to visit a particular country. The most obvious are vaccinations but it can also include preventative measures to reduce the risk of exposure to illness. **Take it seriously.**

Caveat: Health Clearance from Imperial is **not** a substitute for interaction with your own doctor.

⁴ When advised by your home academic department to complete the **Travel Health Questionnaire** please ensure that you provide full details of your vaccination history (without which it is very difficult for Occupational Health to make recommendations) **and to quote the name of your departmental placement manager to whom the decision will be copied.** Please note that clearance in most cases can be given by email. All students must obtain clearance before proceeding to their placement and should be prepared to act on the guidance OH provide, however, if you have already departed to your host country ahead of your placement commencing please still complete and submit the questionnaire.

⁵ When reading your approval email, please note that this is normally a template email which is only partly amended to address your circumstances. You will therefore possibly read about some pre-travel and post-departure preventative actions that may not appear entirely relevant to your particular circumstances, e.g. Malaria when you are going to a non-malaria country. Please respond to the Occupational Health Service if you have any queries about your fitness to travel email notification.

Host organisations/universities may also require a student to complete a health questionnaire as part of their admission/hosting process (often aligned with immigration/visa requirements), to provide proof that a student has valid vaccinations for certain diseases (including perhaps currently covid-19); to have a medical (again sometimes part of a country's visa process) including an X-ray and blood tests; to purchase mandatory health insurance that meets with the requirements of the host country. **Read any information you are sent by a placement provider; check out visa processes etc.** Seek guidance from OH if you are unsure.

B. Medical care in the European Union and Switzerland

To reiterate that travel insurance is not in itself health insurance.

IMPORTANT: The UK's exit from the Brexit transition period on 1 January 2021 impacted on the reciprocal healthcare arrangements for UK residents undertaking travel to, in particular, the European Union and Switzerland.

Work Placements: working for an overseas employer.

If your placement is a work placement in an EU country or Switzerland and you are being paid a salary by your placement provider (*work placement*) you may be required to pay insurance contributions to that country's social security scheme. That means the relevant GHIC or EHIC system (which are noted below) may not be important for accessing health care in the host country. Read the guidance from the placement provider. If you have a query about your eligibility then contact the GHIC helpdesk.

Moving on:

What follows is a summary of the main points as they are relevant to **study or research placements** in the EU and Switzerland.

Information on the UK's Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) and the continued relevance of UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards for EU nationals can be read at: <https://www.gov.uk/global-health-insurance-card>

You are advised to read the aforementioned webpage and come to your own conclusion. The different cards and eligibility can be complicated for some students. If you are normally a resident in the EU/EEA/Switzerland then obtain a EHIC from your home country for a placement in another country within the EU and Switzerland (and for EHICs the EEA).

- **Study or research placements at a university in the EU:** If you are a **UK resident** and your placement is taking place **in the EU** then you are advised to obtain a (UK-issued) **Student Global Health Insurance Card (Student-GHIC)** in advance of travel (or, if relevant, a UK-issued Student-EHIC). **As well as UK nationals normally resident in the UK the Student-GHIC is also accessible to students in the UK on a Student Route visa paying the NHS surcharge.** Once a student has applied for a Student-GHIC (or, if relevant, a UK-issued Student-EHIC) the NHS will contact the student for further documentation. This is normally a letter from the host university that provides an address and dates of attendance. The NHS also normally require details of your degree programme in the UK (so, print off an enrolment statement from My Imperial) and proof of your UK permanent address (a utility bill; SLC letter). Try and send as a single PDF. Sometimes a letter from Imperial which provides all these details in one document might be acceptable so contact Adrian Hawksworth (Registry) if the NHS indicate that this is acceptable: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk.

NOTE: The Student-GHIC (UK residents) does **not** cover Norway, Iceland, Lichtenstein (the three countries that make up alongside the EU the wider EEA), San Marino, Andorra, Monaco or the Vatican City. For those countries a UK resident would need to satisfy the health insurance requirements (immigration) of the country concerned. See section C below.

- **Study or research placements at a university in Switzerland:** If you are a **UK national** (also a refugee or stateless person) and your placement is taking place **in Switzerland** then you are advised to obtain a (UK-issued) Student-Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) in advance of travel (or, if relevant, a UK-issued Student-EHIC). Once a student has applied for a Student-GHIC (or, if relevant, a UK-issued Student-EHIC) the NHS will contact the student for further documentation. This is normally a letter from the host university that provides an address and dates of attendance. The NHS also normally require details of your degree programme in the UK (so, print off an enrolment statement from My Imperial) and proof of your UK permanent address (a utility bill; SLC letter). Try and send as a single PDF. Sometimes a letter from Imperial which provides all these details in one document might be acceptable so contact Adrian Hawksworth in Registry for assistance if the NHS indicate that this is acceptable: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk. **However**, if a student (UK national) is going to Switzerland for more than 90 days and needs to obtain the residence permit it is not guaranteed that the Student-GHIC or the UK-issued Student-EHIC will meet with the local requirements (depends on the canton) for the residence permit, and therefore a student may need to purchase local health insurance in order to comply.

NOTE: Students in the UK on a Student Route visa paying the NHS surcharge are NOT eligible for the Student-GHIC when going to Switzerland. For those countries a student would need to satisfy the health insurance requirements (immigration) for Switzerland.

To reaffirm that UK-issued European Health Insurance Cards remain part of the picture for eligible EU nationals (these are arrangements which form part of the UK's withdrawal agreement with the EU). They cover the EU, Switzerland and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. If you think this impacts you please refer to the UK Government's [website](#) for guidance.

Reminder: Register your trip with Imperial (see p.48-55) to ensure you are covered by Imperial's overseas travel insurance. Receipt of a valid and appropriate GHIC (issued in the UK for UK residents for use in EU countries) **or an EHIC** (whether issued in the UK or elsewhere for use in EU/Switzerland) **is normally a pre-requisite when making a claim on Imperial's insurance.**

Once you have the appropriate GHIC or EHIC (depending on your circumstances):

- Retain your GHIC or EHIC card (*as well as other insurances: Imperial's/private*) on your person. *Always* keep a photo of the card somewhere off your person (*know how to obtain a [replacement](#) should you lose it*).
- UK residents refer to <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/> for country specific information.
- Refer to information from the placement provider: find out the names of local doctor and dental practices, as well as the location of the local public hospital. **However, not all providers of treatment will be available to holders of a GHIC/EHIC as only necessary treatment provided under the relevant state scheme is covered:**
 - e.g., a student attending a German university with a (Student) GHIC or an (Student) EHIC would normally present it to a local sickness insurance office/company in the host city where they would discover what local health services they were entitled to access (and be provided with a certificate, paper or electronic, to give to their host university as part of enrolment processes).

- **Caution:** Access to **dentists** may be limited or excluded & may involve a non-fundable payment, plus remember that dental (and indeed optical) expenses are not covered by Imperial's travel insurance other than in exceptional circumstances.
- **Caution:** In some countries you may find upfront costs (prior to a claim) expensive.
- Remember: keep all original receipts, bills, prescriptions & labels (take copies for yourself).
- Should you need to make a claim for a refund under a GHIC/EHIC you should do so whilst you are still in the host country, although there are countries and scenarios where this is not possible. Ensure you know what you cannot claim for on your GHIC/EHIC. This will allow you to consider what you are able to claim on Imperial's overseas travel insurance policy although this would normally be only for emergency medical treatment received whilst on your placement.
- **Pre-existing Conditions:** If you need treatment, regular medication, injections or blood tests for pre-existing conditions while abroad, a GHIC/EHIC normally covers you in the relevant countries. In the case of medications, it will be necessary to check that the medicines you require are available in the host country. Consider taking supplies with you but do check beforehand that there are no restrictions on their entry into the host country. If you have special dietary requirements you will need to check the availability of foodstuffs, etc., in the host country and be prepared to take supplies with you, again if this allowed. Are you being prescribed special foodstuffs by your GP (how will this continue?) Such matters probably need to be addressed before a placement is accepted.

Of course, **when relying on private health insurance you should naturally review the policy and contact the insurer for advice** as to who you are authorised to use in a particular country/city.

DOWNLOAD the AIG Travel Assistance app from Google Play or the Apple Store (see pages 48-55) to give you a wealth of information about the country you are visiting as well as immediate access to Imperial's overseas travel insurance 24/7 help line.

C. Medical care outside the European Union/Switzerland.

This section covers

- **Medical care for countries outside the scope of a GHIC (UK residents)**, i.e. beyond the EU and Switzerland (but including Switzerland where the student is a student route UK visa holder).
- **Medical care for countries outside the scope of an EU-issued EHIC (EU residents)**, i.e. beyond EU/EEA/Switzerland.
- **Medical care for countries outside the scope of a UK-issued Student-EHIC (eligible EU nationals)**, i.e. beyond EU/EEA/Switzerland.

To reiterate that travel insurance is not in itself health insurance

Students are advised to check whether Imperial's travel insurance (*or any private travel insurance a student might hold*) satisfies the host country's health insurance requirements for visitors (often linked to visa and other permit requirements where those are applicable). The duration of the placement may be relevant here, with travel insurance not being satisfactory for longer placements.

The most common outcome for longer stays (*often stays of over 90 days*) will be that travel insurance does not meet the host country's health insurance requirements. Therefore, for longer stays you would need to obtain appropriate private health insurance, perhaps from designated in-country insurance providers (*or if*

you already have private health insurance is it sufficient and if so do you have to obtain a waiver from purchasing in-country health insurance, and is such a routine available).

- All students should consult the information provided by the placement provider.
- **All students should consider the cost implications as these are borne by the student.**
 - Home UK students: consult p.68-69 on means-tested financial support for insurance costs from UK Student Finance.
 - The Turing Scheme might also be relevant here to students who are in receipt of a Turing mobility grant (criteria apply).
- For information on the health systems in other countries UK residents (includes students on student route visas) consult the UK Government website: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>
- **International students** should consult their own government's health website (*check also whether there are reciprocal healthcare arrangements in place between your country of residence and your placement country*).

Pre-existing Conditions: If you need treatment, regular medication, injections or blood tests for pre-existing conditions while abroad ensure your health insurance provides adequate cover. In the case of medications, it will be necessary to check that the medicines you require are available in the host country. Consider taking supplies with you but do check beforehand that there are no restrictions on their entry into the host country. If you have special dietary requirements you will need to check the availability of foodstuffs, etc., in the host country and be prepared to take supplies with you, again if this allowed. Are you being prescribed special foodstuffs by your GP, if so how will this continue? Such matters probably need to be addressed before you decide which partners you can apply for a place at

Guidance (selected countries/scenarios only) **for students planning to undertake university-based study placements in the following countries** (*however, this info might change from year to year so do double-check*):

- **Australia:** If you require a student visa to enter Australia you will be required to purchase compulsory health insurance (Overseas Health Cover: OSHC) from the host university as part of the process by which the host university issues the document for inclusion in your visa application. This will provide easy access to health service providers. UK nationals can access A&E services for free. Obtain vaccinations (if you plan to travel in south-east Asia) in the UK as they are expensive in Australia (and don't forget that you need your own travel insurance for those "holidays" outside the host country).
- **Singapore:** a student attending a university would pay on arrival a health insurance policy from the host university as part of a miscellaneous student services fee. This amounts to c.160-250GBP for a full year.
- **USA:** a university will require you to purchase health insurance to comply with immigration requirements.
 - **The cost of such health plans is normally very expensive (c2-4K US\$, perhaps higher) and you need to factor the cost into your budget.** If you choose to purchase a suitable policy from those recommended by the host university then also check when you would need to pay (*is payment by instalment per term or semester available?*)
 - Home UK students should consult pages 68-69 on means-tested financial support for insurance costs from UK Student Finance.
 - The Turing Scheme might also be relevant here to all students (criteria apply).
 - US universities may have waiver procedures in place should you be able to identify an acceptable private insurance plan. Please note that Imperial's overseas travel insurance does not meet with waiver requirements because it is not a health insurance.

ARRANGING A PLACEMENT (PART 3)

PLANNING YOUR BUDGET, and OTHER FINANCIAL ASPECTS/ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED WHEN UNDERTAKING A PLACEMENT ABROAD

Section 1: Planning your budget
Section 2: Providing evidence of financial resources (when a visa is required for the host country)
Section 3: Tuition fees payable <u>to</u> a host university
Section 4: Other non-tuition charges levied by a host university
Section 5: Tuition fees (payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26) - undergraduate year abroad
Section 6: Tuition fees (payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26) - undergraduate year in industry
Section 7: Tuition fees (payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26) for other UG or PG placements abroad
Section 8: The Imperial Bursary <u>and</u> UK Government financial support (Home undergraduate students)
Section 9: UK Government financial support (EU undergraduate students)
Section 10: Experiencing financial difficulties
Section 11: Managing and accessing money whilst abroad
Section 12: The Turing Scheme
Section 13: Departmental support
Section 14: Other awards
Section 15: Miscellaneous financial information

This part of the handbook aims to provide insight into various financial aspects of undertaking a placement abroad which will hopefully assist you **to plan your budget** and gauge when funds you may be accessing will be available. However, again it does not claim to be an a-z guide.

Section 1: Planning your budget

In the context of your whole degree, undertaking a placement abroad does not necessarily mean that your overall costs will increase, although for some students they may.

You would continue to be responsible for all costs associated with undertaking the placement, including:

- accommodation and living expenses (e.g. meals, clothing, personal needs),
- travel and other transportation costs (**important**: consider a contingency fund for emergencies) plus visa and visa-related costs.
- in the context of a study placement at a university: cost of textbooks and other course materials which are not made available as part of tuition and any non-academic and non-obligatory charges for facilities, services or activities which are not made available as part of tuition.

Therefore, when planning your budget, you should always discuss as necessary with others (your bank, your family and other financial sponsors such as providers of grants, scholarships and loans).

A key aim for you would be to identify:

1. Whether undertaking a placement will impact on the tuition fee you pay to Imperial for the year in which your placement takes place. *See later sections.*
2. If access to your normal sources of funding (tuition and/or living costs) will vary because of undertaking a placement. *Note: The sections below on UK government financial support are only relevant to Home (fee status) students as referenced. Other students who access funding from their own country of residence may need to investigate the impact of undertaking a placement abroad with the relevant source, especially if the placement is a paid work placement.*
3. If any existing costs may vary because of undertaking your placement; *for example, some placements may be sufficiently long enough for you to dispense with the cost of accommodation in London for the duration of your placement, and while there are exceptions housing elsewhere will often be cheaper than in London.*
4. What additional costs you expect to incur while undertaking your placement, *e.g., travel & visa costs, or perhaps new accommodation costs due to having to continue to pay for existing housing in London.*
5. Whether there are any new sources of funding which may be applicable to your placement. *Note: if the purpose of your placement is to study check if any visa or residence permit has restrictions on working (while studying) in the host country, i.e. can you or can you not expect to supplement your income through working part-time.*
6. While you can't control exchange rates, try, and be prepared should some costs (accommodation perhaps) increase unexpectedly. *For example, are you able to move your accommodation in the placement country to something cheaper should the need arise (the answers to these questions may be easier to fathom once you are there rather than beforehand)?*

Section 2: Providing evidence of financial resources

(where a visa or permit is required by the host country)

For most visa applications, applicants must provide proof of financial support.

This will either be:

- requested at the time of your application for enrolment to a host university (*especially the case in the USA, Australia and the Netherlands*) or during contractual discussions with a company/organisation (with the end product normally being a document issued by the placement provider for adding to a visa or permit application.)

OR

- solely as part of the visa or permit application itself.

The amount of financial support which you are required to prove you have access to will vary country to country. Should you know you require a visa or permit read the information from the placement provider to find out what the visa/immigration process is; what documents are acceptable (and what are not) as proof of your financial resources (e.g. bank statements; letters of guarantor, perhaps from family; sponsorship letters; UK student finance payment schedules for the year in question); whether translations, legally certified copies and/or sworn statements are required; stamps on documents etc; whether amounts have to be documented in the currency of the host country. These are crucial processes to get right so if you need to discuss it feel free to contact a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk. Any evidence (perhaps multiple sources) would need to show a current balance that reflects the requirements of the process you are seeking to fulfil, and not simply indicate that once upon a time the bank account (for example) you are using as evidence had X in it.

However, the amount that you must prove you have access to is NOT necessarily the amount of money you will end up spending, nor are the sources of that evidenced funding need to be sources you use. You may spend more or less depending on your personal lifestyle of shopping, travel, going out, etc.

Section 3: Tuition fees payable to a host university

For a study-based or work-based placement arranged within the framework of a bilateral student exchange agreement a student is **not** required to pay any tuition fees **to the host university**, except for further language training where a tuition fee is required as governed by the rules of the host university and/or where the language course is not accepted by the host university as part of the study plan.

Note: If you are an exchange student then you should not be charged anything termed a tuition or application fee. If you are then you should contact: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

Otherwise, non-exchange students should be prepared to pay a fee to the host university.

Undergraduate year abroad students in our Department of Life Sciences who are given the opportunity to apply to other approved institutions (*but with whom no bi-lateral student exchange agreement exists*) may also need to pay a fee to the receiving university. Such students should check with the Study/Year Abroad Co-ordinator in the Department of Life Sciences whether a tuition or other fee is applicable.

Section 4: other non-tuition charges at a host university (exchange students ONLY)

To reaffirm that if you are an exchange student then you should not be charged anything termed a tuition or application fee. Equally, no exchange student should be charged to use library, computer and laboratory facilities. If you are then you should contact a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk.

Depending on the study plan a student pursues at the host university, there may be **specific non-tuition charges for participating in additional language training or specific modules/courses**:

- The most obvious one is field trips where a payment is required to cover travel and accommodation and other pertinent costs. This ought to mirror the payment situation for local degree students.
- Other modules/courses may have miscellaneous (non-tuition) fees associated with them so always check all the information provided by the host university.

Information provided by the host university to exchange students should explain the purpose of the fee and when it is mandatory or optional or perhaps not required. Some exchange students will be charged a **semester or registration fee** at the beginning of each university semester/term, especially in Germany and USA. This is legitimate if degree students at the host university normally pay them. Check what it is you get for the “fee”: perhaps printing allowances, subsidised access to services, including local transport.

Other **service-related payments** levied by universities may be optional or mandatory. Again, if degree students at the university concerned normally pay them they are legitimate, e.g. compulsory medical insurance, housing insurance or sports insurance, and again items such as local transport concessions, printing costs, perhaps local taxes levied by universities (e.g. stamp tax in Italy).

If in doubt, please contact Adrian Hawksworth (a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk) who can check the agreement with the university and ask questions on a student’s behalf if required.

Section 5: Tuition fees payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26 by undergraduate year abroad students

Undergraduate study abroad students should consult the Study Abroad handout.

For the situation in your Faculty the normal source of information is:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/tuition-fees/>

Click on your faculty for 2025-26, scroll down to “Year Abroad” item.

Queries to Imperial’s tuition fee team: tuition.fees@imperial.ac.uk

If you are eligible to apply for a UK Student Finance loan to cover your tuition fees then remember to apply for a reduced amount referenced on the above webpages.

Section 6: Tuition fees payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26 by undergraduate year in industry students

For the situation in your Faculty the normal source of information is:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/tuition-fees/>

Click on your faculty for 2025-26, scroll down to “Year in Industry” item.

Queries to Imperial’s tuition fee team: tuition.fees@imperial.ac.uk

If you are eligible to apply for a UK Student Finance loan to cover your tuition fees then remember to apply for the reduced amount referenced on the above webpages.

Section 7: Tuition fees (payable to Imperial College London in 2025-26) for any other undergraduate or postgraduate placement

Undergraduate students continue to pay the appropriate tuition fee at the full rate to Imperial for the year in which the placement takes place.

Postgraduate students will also continue to pay the appropriate tuition fee at the full rate to Imperial for the year in which the placement takes place EXCEPT PhD students who if they spend 3 months or more abroad under study leave procedures (see also page 10) might be eligible for a tuition fee remission (reduction) at the discretion of the home department.

Section 8: the Imperial Bursary and UK student finance

(Information for Home – by fee status - **undergraduate** students only: work & study-based placements abroad. Would usually cover students who have settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme).

“Home” undergraduate students spending a year or part of a year away from Imperial in 2025-26 **remain eligible to be assessed for the following sources of student support:**

- **The Imperial Bursary:** A “Home” student will be assessed by Imperial’s Student Financial Support team for their eligibility for the bursary: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/undergraduate-funding/bursaries-and-scholarships/imperial-bursary/>
 - A Year Aboard student will receive 15% of their bursary.
 - A Year in Industry student will be assessed on a case by case basis.
 - **UK Student Finance:** A “home” student can apply as usual for 2025-26 UK student finance using their student finance account: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/continuing-fulltime-students>
 - The application form for continued funding will ask a student planning to be on a placement to provide details of when and where they plan to study or work abroad. **Ensure you answer.**
 - If you are entitled to a tuition fee reduction (*see section 5 or 6 above*) for the year in which your placement takes place, and should you wish to apply for a tuition fee loan, you will need to request a smaller tuition fee loan from your Student Finance Authority (SFE, SFW etc).
 - Be aware that the maximum level of maintenance loan differs depending on when a student commenced their degree.
 - If you have or expect to apply to Imperial for a Turing grant you should always tick “no” when asked on the SLC application as to whether you are a Turing scheme student or not; unless you know the outcome of the application.
 - If your plans change and having applied with reference to a work or study placement abroad you do not actually take up the placement then you can record this via the portal (and, for SFE/SFW, tell [Adrian Hawksworth](#) who can contact SFE/SFW), and, if your circumstances change during the placement then of course this can be communicated via the SLC portal using a CO1 Form (*plus naturally if this results in any change of degree programme and/or an interruption of studies Imperial would also communicate changes to SLC*). Such actions will enable SLC to undertake any necessary reassessments to loans.
 - **Home students who undertake a Year Abroad (study abroad) should also be aware that:**
 - the maximum level of maintenance loan available is that for when “*you spend a year of a UK course studying abroad*” and is lower than that available when you are in London.
 - the maximum level of maintenance loans available for a year abroad are also lower if the year abroad takes place in the final year of a degree.
- if you are planning on undertaking a year abroad (of study) which commences in July or August (e.g. in Australia, Singapore or to some partner universities in the USA) then apply to renew your financial support at the very earliest opportunity.
- **[your loan schedule: number of instalments/date of first instalment]:** any loans you are scheduled to receive will be disbursed as normal as if you were at Imperial throughout the year unless your placement details are verified with your Student Finance Authority. The rescheduling of disbursement dates and whether or not you qualify to receive any loan in two rather than three instalments are tightly controlled by the Student Finance Authorities (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales).
 - Imperial’s Registry (Adrian Hawksworth) will communicate (verify) the dates and location of a [SFE & SFW] student’s study abroad placement to **Student Finance England** and **Student Finance Wales** in early June (to meet a deadline set by SFE and SFW).

- *Start dates of verified placements abroad which are more than 25 days before the scheduled start of the academic year at Imperial will normally be brought forward automatically and the student informed by Student Finance England or Student Finance Wales.*
- *Even earlier first instalment disbursement dates are available with Student Finance England and Student Finance Wales managed loans for students planning to be in Australia (from July), Singapore/Canada (from August) and HK/USA (from mid-August) and again the verification process referenced above allows this to occur, and students are informed by Student Finance England or Student Finance Wales.*
- *For placements taking place in certain countries (USA mainly for Imperial) loans can be disbursed in two rather than three instalments (second one in January commonly) and again the verification process referenced above would take care of and the student informed by Student Finance England or Student Finance Wales.*
- *Imperial assumes that students are happy for this request to be submitted on their behalf.*
- Imperial's Registry will communicate the detail of study abroad placements to **Student Finance Northern Ireland** upon request from a student or from the finance authority (perhaps using a Course Abroad Form, so if you receive one please send the PDF version to Adrian Hawksworth at a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk).
- Imperial's Registry will normally communicate a student's attendance (programme changes) to **Students Awards Agency Scotland**, and, with regards to placement details upon request from a student or from Students Awards Agency Scotland (*perhaps using a Course Abroad Form: if you receive a Course Abroad Form please send the PDF version to Adrian Hawksworth at a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk*).

Means-tested financial support for travel, insurance and visas is normally also available to Home students:

- Student Finance England: <https://www.gov.uk/travel-grants-students-england>
- Student Finance Wales: <https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/undergraduate-finance/full-time/welsh-student/what-s-available/extra-help-for-students-studying-abroad/>
- Scotland: <https://www.saas.gov.uk/guides/guide-to-undergraduate-funding>
- Northern Ireland: <https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk/types-of-finance/undergraduate/full-time/northern-ireland-student/extra-help/travel-grant/what-is-it/>

A Student Finance Authority issued "Course Abroad Form" may be given electronically to the student to pass to Imperial to have completed: send the PDF version to Adrian Hawksworth at a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk (or your Student Finance Authority might ask us to provide a letter with the relevant details).

Important: A student can receive, where eligible (and subject to an application), a Turing mobility grant (see later section) with no impact on their access to normal UK student financial support, except, that they cannot receive exceptional travel and other costs under the Turing Scheme AND receive funding for the same costs from their UK Student Finance Authority.

Further information and contacts

For general advice please contact Imperial's Student Financial Support team:

- <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/undergraduate-funding/>
- <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/undergraduate-funding/loans-and-grants/funding-for-placements/>
- e-mail: student.funding@imperial.ac.uk

For full information regarding UK student finance:

- Students living in England (Student Finance England) : <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance>
- Students living in Northern Ireland: www.studentfinancenir.co.uk
- Students living in Scotland: www.saas.gov.uk
- Students living in Wales: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

For full details on student loans, including repayment information visit www.slc.co.uk

Section 9: UK Student Finance

(Information for EU – by fee status - undergraduate students only: work & study-based placements abroad)

“EU” undergraduate students who will be spending a year or part of a year away from Imperial in 2025-26 (and will have commenced their degree programme in 2020-21 or earlier) **remain eligible to be assessed for UK student finance for tuition fees**. Such an “EU” student can apply as usual for 2025-26 UK student finance using their student finance account. Check if you are entitled to a tuition fee reduction (see sections 5 or 6 above) for the year in which your study abroad placement takes place and modify your loan request as appropriate.

Section 10: Experiencing financial difficulties

If you are experiencing financial difficulties at any stage before, during or after your placement abroad please discuss with your home department **AND** review the information at: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/financial-assistance/student-support-fund/>

If this occurs during your placement also seek advice from the host organisation.

For Home students, see previous references to UK Student Finance (England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland) and possible access to means-tested financial support for travel, insurance, visas costs when undertaking a study placement abroad.

Section 11: Managing and accessing money whilst abroad

**Please note the information here is open to change.
Seek up-to-date guidance from your own bank.**

General: There are three things you will need to do well before leaving the UK:

1. **Draw up a budget for the year.** What items are new (such as travel), what items costs less (perhaps housing) and what items cost more? Do some calculations and consider your sources of finance (such as student loan or a mobility grant) and any savings (such as tuition fees).
2. Then **talk to your existing bank about how to manage your bank account while away**, as the guidance which follows maybe open to local variation depending on your personal situation.
3. **Consider opening an account in the host country. Will you benefit?** How easy is it?

A good relationship with your bank is important because you will not be on hand to check things on a day-to-day basis. It is certainly worthwhile making an appointment with your branch to discuss items such as *(an indicative list of items that may be relevant):*

- **Internet banking:** A generally more convenient approach if you’ve been relying on telephone banking for example. All banks now offer it, normally free of charge with a relevant Mobile Banking App associated with access. Banks are naturally able to provide cautionary advice around watching out for fraudulent activity and unusual transactions and monitoring your account. Very helpful for reporting lost and stolen cards. Tell your bank that you will be abroad for a prolonged period.

- **Change of address:** make sure the bank knows where you are and when. If you have credit cards, make sure they know your new address. If you are not confident about security in your host country, amend your address to 'care of' family or a reliable contact. Think about how you would access your bank statements especially for the purpose of checking if money sent to you has been received.
- **Overdraft facilities:** banks ought to encourage you to plan your finances in advance and will normally look for a rough budget planner for the whole year to substantiate your requests. If you make a realistic, albeit slightly exaggerated (always be prepared for an emergency) estimate of your needs, an overdraft limit sufficient to keep you liquid while away would normally be considered favourably.
- **Cards and cheque books:** most UK debit cards work under the Maestro/Cirrus system abroad. This provides access to a vast network of ATMs abroad to obtain local currency direct from your current account at home. However, while the exchange rates used by a UK bank are better than at a Bureaux de Change, transaction charges apply so perhaps this is mostly convenient as a way of getting cash in an emergency. Of growing relevance is the fact that your card can be used as a debit card at retailers and banks abroad. Your bank should be able to tell you how you can use your card and the degree of availability of such services in your host country. If you have a sterling cheque book this cannot be used abroad but take it with you so you can mail cheques to cover any bills at home as they fall due.
- **Prepaid Currency Cards:** It can be an option to obtain a prepaid currency card or cash passport. The card can be pre-loaded by purchasing currency online and then used in the same way as a debit card in shops and at cash machines. You can manage the card online and see your balance. The card is also separate to your bank account which can reduce the risk of identity theft. Cards are available from several companies such as Travelex, the Post Office and the AA. Further source of information is (updated June 2025; external website) <http://www.which.co.uk/money/credit-cards-and-loans/guides/prepaid-cards/>
- **Debit cards (ATM cash withdrawals):** Avoid accepting the rate (of exchange) that the ATM provider offers as it is normally a better bet that your bank will have at least no worse a rate.
- **Travellers' cheques:** While declining in use these are normally commission-free to students, although notice is normally required when ordering. American Express, for example, normally issue them on the spot but always compare at least two issuers to make sure you are getting a good exchange rate. Travellers' cheques are a secure way of taking funds abroad as they are insured against loss. They can either be deposited in an account or cashed at a bank or Bureaux de Change. You can also use travellers' cheques to spend in shops but keep them somewhere other than your wallet/purse in case of loss. **Please note: Banks are increasingly not issuing Travellers Cheques.**
- **Credit cards:** these are both convenient and cost effective to use, as well as giving you access to an additional borrowing source if need be.
 - For purchases they offer the safest and most efficient option. In general, if goods or services bought by credit card are not received as contracted and a refund is not given by the retailer, your credit card company will honour the commitment.
 - Credit cards can also be used to obtain money from ATMs but do this as a last resort. It is better to keep track of your spending by using your debit card than by borrowing money on your credit card. If the balance on a credit card is not repaid in full when due, cash advances attract a higher rate of interest than purchases. With some credit cards interest is applied automatically upon using the card for a cash withdrawal and will be charged on the bill regardless of whether the repayment is made in full or not. This may be important if you plan on using your credit card to

make regular cash withdrawals, as you could end up incurring fees/interest charges every transaction.

- **Settling a Credit Card Bill:** You also need to think a month or so ahead to when the credit card bill will arrive. It may be best to set up a direct debit to repay the full balance every month direct from your current account. If you pay as a single on-line bank transfer payment use the “faster payment” mechanism if you have access. Alternatively, you can post a cheque back to Britain, although if this arrives late you might be charged a late payment fee as well as interest. If possible, increase your interest free/reduced rate overdraft rather than paying the higher rates on outstanding credit card balances.
- **Telephone banking:** UK banks use local call rates for their automated telephone banking, so this is not an option to keep track of your account while away. Of course, you could arrange fortnightly bank statements to be sent if you wished.
- **SWIFT:** in an emergency, friends/relatives could wire funds using SWIFT. If you provide the sender with the name, postal address of the bank most convenient to you and that branch’s SWIFT number (each bank branch has a SWIFT number also called a **BIC code**, a ‘routing’ or ‘ABA’ number), money can be urgently wired to you. This will cost the person sending the money about £20-£30 and they will have to arrange it through their bank. The sender can also have your bank charges paid from their own bank account to save you that money. Alternatively, an International Bank Account Number (**IBAN**) may assist with this type of transaction & your UK bank will be able to provide it.

Opening a bank account in the host country

Remember, banks are profit-making institutions and unless they charge fees for account holders, they are not likely to make a profit out of a student wanting an account for less than a whole year. So, they may not be too receptive to your enquiries.

However, goodwill is a different thing altogether. Some banks are prepared to open limited loss-making accounts to retain a good international reputation or to satisfy educational institutions which bank with them. Always carefully check the benefits of opening an account compared with banking direct from the UK, as services vary and what might be the norm in the UK may be different elsewhere. In Germany for example, payment of rent by direct debit can save you money. In France overdrafts are frowned upon and not normally available to students. In Italy the post office (La Posta) has been recommended as a good alternative, whilst in Spain, accounts are relatively easy to open. The best advice, if you are not sure, is to consult the largest “high street” bank.

To open an account, you will probably need: identification (passport or international driving license), address and proof of university registration/employee/student trainee status; a reference from your UK bank or six months' bank statements and proof of income.

There may be delays in the actual account being ready for use. You should not expect to be offered any credit facilities (e.g. credit cards) so you would be advised to take your UK ones with you for emergencies and purchase protection (see above). Trying to open an account in your host country by post before you leave the UK is in most cases impossible and it is often better to get a ‘feel’ for a bank in person rather than trusting correspondence.

The following countries (2025) use the Euro: France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Ireland, Austria, Slovakia, Estonia, Slovenia, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia, Finland.

Section 12: The Turing Scheme

TURING

SCHEME

Funded by the UK's global
programme to study and work abroad

The Turing Scheme provides funding to UK higher education providers for international opportunities in education and training undertaken around the world which form part of or support a student's degree programme. This scheme is generously funded by the UK's Department for Education (DfE) and supports students to take up opportunities to gain international experience that will be both personally and academically beneficial. The Turing Scheme recognises that students from less advantaged backgrounds are less likely to spend a period of their degree overseas than students from more advantaged backgrounds, and therefore the mobility grants that Turing provides access to seek to address and prioritise this.

Imperial has applied to the UK-wide Turing Scheme for funding to help support a variety of activities during 2025-26. **The application outcome will be communicated by the DfE to Imperial by summer 2025.**

When reviewing the notes below, please bear in mind that Imperial received far less than what it applied for and therefore it has chosen to prioritise provision of grants that support the "enhanced" criteria referenced below.

The grant rates for 2025-26 and further information, including deadlines as they are set can be viewed on Imperial's Student Financial Support website: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/fees-and-funding/undergraduate-funding/loans-and-grants/funding-for-placements/turing-scheme/>

Some notes about the grant:

- The expectation is that a proportion of any funds Imperial receives will be allocated to help support undergraduate study abroad and work/work-based placements abroad at UG & PG level.
- While Imperial is unlikely to be able to fund all applicants, **all students who think they would be eligible are greatly encouraged to apply, whatever their background.**
- Students DO NOT apply directly to the Turing scheme. **Students would apply to Imperial.**
- The basic/standard "grant" that all students would be applying for is a flat rate (daily) award.
- **An approved basic/standard grant would be based only on the period a student is due to be abroad within the window 1 September 2025 and 31 August 2026,** even if the placement commenced before 1 September 2025 or ended after 31 August 2026.
- **Important:** If a student meets certain criteria then they might also be eligible for an enhanced monthly grant rate (again only applicable to the window described above), plus exceptional financial support towards items of expenditure (depending on where they are studying abroad) such as travel, health insurance and visa costs. However, "exceptional" costs can be incurred before or after the window referenced above.
 - **Please note:** a Home student cannot receive exceptional travel, insurance and visa costs under the Turing Scheme AND receive funding from UK Student Finance for the same costs. The Turing Scheme application routine will investigate such matters during the application process so that eligible students can benefit as extensively as possible from funding which is available. Further queries to student.funding@imperial.ac.uk (write Turing Scheme in the subject line).
- **Important:** There is also specific financial assistance to support students who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND.) If you think this is relevant to your situation please discuss with your Departments Disabilities Officer (DDO) in the first instance. The Disability Advisory Service can support the DDO with regards to Turing.

Section 13: Departmental support

Where there are no third-party sources of funding OR a student has been unsuccessful with any application for a grant then it is possible that a student's department may provide support for travel or have knowledge of other funding that can be applied for. Ask your department (*Senior Tutor or Director of UG Studies; PG Tutor or Director of PG Studies or Research*). However, please note that your home department is **not** obliged to assist you.

Section 14: Other awards

- **Mobility grants for official exchange placements** (ordinarily study-based undergraduate year abroad **at ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne**):
 - Imperial has signed Swiss-European Mobility Programme (SEMP) exchange agreements with **ETH Zurich and EPF Lausanne for 2025-26**.
 - Imperial students mobile under these SEMP arrangements to either ETH or EPFL will be considered for a SEMP mobility grant by the host university. The funds are kindly provided by the Swiss Government.
 - A separate application for this grant is **NOT** required, and the host university will inform students about their eligibility for such a grant once their admission has been confirmed. Therefore, while it cannot be guaranteed it is highly likely.
 - [Details about the SEMP grant](#). There are 3 grant types and normally a UG year abroad study period under SEMP exchange arrangements would fall into the "yearly" SEMP grant type. Payment is made in Swiss Francs. A year abroad student, for example, will normally be paid in two instalments (autumn and spring) and the current value of the "yearly" grant [2024-25] is **3900 CHF**.
 - These arrangements are open to change.
 - **Important:** a student considering attending either ETHZ or EPFL may also consider applying for a mobility grant from the Turing scheme BUT a student may not receive both Awards. For some students the value of the Turing grant (where it is awarded) may exceed the value of a SEMP grant.
- **A scholarship opportunity for undergraduate year abroad students undertaking a study placement as part of an exchange programme at ETH Zurich or EPF Lausanne**
 - The Heyning-Roelli Foundation: http://www.heyning-roelli-stiftung.ch/zweck_zielgruppe_en_page3.html
 - The Foundation provides financial support for travel and accommodation costs to talented students in need of financial aid who take part in exchange programmes with a Swiss university. Applications are carefully evaluated, and support will be granted to the most suitable candidates. Application deadline: see website. Please note that their website does not mention the value of any financial support, since this is only referenced if an application is successful.
- **DUO-Singapore Exchange Fellowship Award:**
 - This is relevant to undergraduate students spending a full academic year at the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU). Successful candidates will receive a maximum of €4000.
 - NUS: The application window for the DUO Awards at NUS is set by NUS. Students for whom this is relevant can be expected to be reminded about the process by NUS.
 - NTU do not have an application routine, rather they would consider offering such an award at their disposal to an Imperial exchange student should Imperial be hosting an exchange student from NTU in the same academic year. Imperial would only seek to identify a candidate following guidance issued by NTU.

Section 15: Miscellaneous financial information

- **Aide au logement in France**

- Students occupying certain types of accommodation (normally with a long-term visa) can normally apply for housing allowance (or benefit) which is commonly called **Aide au logement** (managed within the Caisse d'Allocations Familiales process). There is an introduction to CAF at the very end of this [Campus France webpage](#).
- Read very carefully the general guidance for exchange students provided by the host university to find out if you would be eligible and how to apply. It is normally worth the effort to secure this allowance.

- **Taxe d'habitation in France**

- (equivalent to UK Council tax) is due from an individual who on 1 January is registered as officially renting a flat (furnished or unfurnished) or living in property that they own. Therefore, this does not normally apply to university-managed halls of residence.
- The liability for the *taxe d'habitation* is not related to the amount a person earns or to whether they pay income tax. This means that international students are liable as much as any other French citizen in France.
- The French authorities issue bills for the *taxe d'habitation* in October. However, avoid admin complications as far as possible (and the possibility of being charged interest), by settling any account you find yourself responsible for before leaving France. **Please Note:** The French authorities are often extremely late in issuing the demand notice which may well reach you after your return to the UK, even a year later. Should you rely on the tax office to catch up with you after your departure, you must at least ensure that you pay promptly when they do, or you will be charged as much as 10% interest on each subsequent bill. Bear in mind that once you return to your studies, you might find it much harder to pay than you would at the end of your placement. If you persist in refusing to pay, you run the risk of court action or ending up an international credit blacklist.

ON YOUR PLACEMENT (PART 4)

With reference to previous sections: including 'planning your placement' on pages 12-22 and the health and safety section on pages 56-58.

Section 1: Keeping in contact with your dept at Imperial and maintaining your study plan
Section 2: Dealing with emergencies
Section 3: Consider yourself: a few thoughts around your own well-being
Section 4: Arranging accommodation for the next academic year (if relevant)
Section 5: Thinking beyond the placement – planning your career

Your home academic department is responsible for managing your placement:

- for informing you prior to your placement (and keeping you informed during the placement) as to what the academic requirements are for successful completion.
- what deadlines exist for reporting progress on and for the submission of academic work.
- how contact will be maintained and whether you will be visited.
- and where relevant, for explaining the arrangements for transferring marks and credit for academic work undertaken at a host university (and for handling any problems you may encounter in relation to achieving your study plan).

You remain registered with Imperial throughout a “placement” and are therefore subject to Imperial’s academic regulations.

If you are on exchange at a university then you are subject to their rules and regulations as well as Imperial’s. Likewise, if you are being hosted by a company or other type of organisation. Spare some time to become familiar with those rules and regulations, and indeed some may be compulsory as part of induction/orientation.

Reminder:

Before departing on your placement, you ought to have completed a:

Pre-departure Checklist and Emergency Contacts form (or a departmental equivalent):

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>
(click on placement learning and scroll down to “forms”).

It is advisable to:

- hand a copy to your departmental Placement Manager, and Placement Tutor if applicable.
- hand a copy to your supervisor/co-ordinator at the Placement Provider upon your arrival.
- retain a copy on your person throughout your placement.

Students should appreciate that there are differences in the way universities, research institutes and companies operate from country to country. Finding your footing and adapting to these differences is all part of the placement abroad experience. **Finding out, before you depart on your placement, about how your host institution/company functions will help you be better prepared for these differences.** For example, a personal tutor system might not exist at a university and, amongst European universities, it is often the culture for students to be left to discover for themselves what they are required to do at the start of term,

such as registering for examinations. However, if you are an exchange student you ought to expect to receive help with orientation from the relevant Office.

However, if you believe you are being treated in a way which runs contrary to that experienced by the local students/staff at the placement provider, you should discuss this immediately with your home department. This covers issues related directly to the placement itself, but it also covers issues related to basic equal opportunities in the host environment. Most placement providers should have statements on equal opportunities, and these should be applicable to you whilst you are on placement (however, differences, perhaps significantly so, may exist in some countries so it may depend on the country in which your placement is taking place).

Section 1: Keeping in contact with your dept at Imperial and maintaining your placement (study or placement training) plan

Maintaining contact

- Before you arrive at your placement provider ensure you have an appointment arranged to see your supervisor/contact at the placement provider (or at the very least know what the welcome routine is, in terms of an office to report to).
- Email your home department at Imperial as soon as you have arrived. *Please note that a placement provider, especially a university, may not be as quick as you might wish for in giving you working access to computer workstations and wi-fi access, so if you do not have private wi-fi access, make safe use of free-to-access on-campus provision to begin with.*

Your department should indicate to you how they plan to stay in contact with you.

- Ideally, your Placement Manager/Tutor should provide you with at least two, preferably three, reliable **email contacts** that are open to being contacted in the routine course of events and in an emergency (*although obviously you will be aware that staff would normally be only available in office hours*) and a monthly Skype/Teams/Zoom meeting with your Placement Manager or Tutor would also be a constructive means of maintaining contact (and is the minimum as advised by Imperial).
- It is also recommended that you advise your home department about any unscheduled/irregular absences from your placement provider, especially if you are undertaking a study-based placement at a university and need to be absent during term/semester/exams. For example, prolonged illness and accidents, and trips home which impact on attendance at the placement provider. **But not holidays or weekend trips home or in the host country.**
- If you return to London during your placement and have time to come back to Imperial, then that would be another opportunity to keep in contact with your Placement Manager or Tutor.
- See “visits from your dept” below.
- Students in attendance at Imperial on a UK Student Visa should also see page 84.

Email obviously makes keeping in contact much quicker, but only if all parties are aware of each other's obligations in this respect, i.e. who is taking the lead to message; ensuring prompt responses.

VERY IMPORTANT: Please remember that Imperial's overseas travel insurance does **not** cover incidental weekend/holiday trips/visits made to countries other than your host country (for the purpose of undertaking your placement) and other than any travel to and from the UK or your normal country of domicile. **Be prepared to purchase additional travel insurance (and be responsible for the cost) for such incidental weekend/holiday trips/visits.**

Organise yourself:

- Subsequently, you may also benefit from sending regular bulletins to your department, rather than waiting for problems to arise. This way you might find assistance and advice being offered which stop niggling issues, both academic and non-academic, evolving into major problems.
- Perhaps your home department requires you to keep a log of your activities at the placement provider (in particular if the placement is an industrial placement module), and even if they do not, you may find it a useful way of reflecting on your experiences, come the end of the placement.

Your “study or placement/training plan”

Whatever your type of placement, you will need to confirm at some stage its content. All departments should indicate at what stage the content needs to be finally approved. Ideally this will be before your placement commences. Subsequent modifications should be agreed to by all three parties. Always refer to guidance from your department on this subject.

For undergraduate study placements see also pages 12-22 and 25-28 (Learning Agreements)

(Study placements) Failing courses/modules abroad

(those courses/modules which are wholly assessed by a host university)

You should immediately notify your home academic dept if you fail any modules/courses during the study period. Please remember that Imperial’s Mitigating Circumstances policy/procedure still applies as you remain enrolled at Imperial throughout your placement.

Visits from your department

If you are an undergraduate year abroad student on placement in Europe your department at Imperial may undertake one or more visits to see you. Check with the departmental study abroad co-ordinator if such information has not been volunteered. However, Imperial does not consider it compulsory if contact is being satisfactorily maintained by other means.

If you are undertaking another type of placement you should ask if your department intends to undertake any supervisory/pastoral visits.

You may wish to have input into when such visits take place. Any visits should not be seen in isolation, but as part of the normal process of supervisory action and pastoral care undertaken by your department (online, phone, email or by personal visit, including should you come back to London during your placement).

To confirm: Imperial does not consider visits by your home department to see you whilst on placement to be mandatory.

Give careful thought about your return to Imperial at the end of your placement (as appropriate)

- If you are an undergraduate undertaking study/year abroad or a year in industry in your penultimate year you will wish to ensure that your department are keeping you abreast of the normal routine for deciding upon final year options/projects. Indeed, you might need to think about this as early as your second year, as study abroad options may be influenced by what you might envisage doing in your final year.
- PhD students: *brief reference on page 17.*

Section 2: Dealing with emergencies

VERY IMPORTANT:

Read the earlier sections about Imperial's overseas travel insurance, register your travel with Imperial's Insurance Manager, complete/print a Travel Certificate AND then **DOWNLOAD the AIG Business Travel Assistance APP from Google Play or the Apple Store to give you a wealth of information about the country you are visiting, as well as immediate access to the insurers 24/7 help line.**

Students can download the free [SafeZone App](#) [external website/product] if they want to pre-plan for an unexpected but serious event that might compromise their safety.

Emergencies

What individuals (and family and friends) consider as emergencies can differ, but when you or family/friends decide it is an emergency (i.e. something has happened to you; you are caught up in an incident) please first note the following:

- **When in the EU:** It is important to note that the phone number 112 is the single emergency telephone number for the European Union. Persons in distress situations should call 112 and they will get through to the emergency services for that member state.
- **Other countries:** check and note (on your mobile) what the emergency number is.

We suggest reviewing the following staff-facing webpage which is also relevant to students: [Managing an emergency incident](#).

Then, at some stage, someone (yourself or family/friends) may wish to notify Imperial of said emergency. We will seek to help you and those who have notified us all we can. Therefore, note that **the 24 hours telephone number of Imperial's Security Office is +44 (0)20 7589 1000**. Make sure your family has this, especially in case of an out of office hours emergency.

Emergency contact numbers (all Imperial campuses): <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/security/contact-us/>

When an emergency is not an emergency: Of course, some "emergencies" can wait until "the morning" so to speak, in which case you might just prefer to contact your department to inform them and seek guidance.

When Imperial becomes aware itself to a situation: Some emergencies may be related to "news", and if Imperial becomes aware of such situations (for example, a natural disaster, a security incident), it will consider what steps it ought to take to support students (and it is the same for Imperial staff who are abroad too) who are caught up in the event. Make yourself familiar with **Imperial's own emergency procedure for placements**, which explains how Imperial will respond to emergency situations communicated to Imperial (by you, by friends and family, by emergency services, by the placement provider), including when received out of office hours or concerning situations, which Imperial itself becomes aware of (e.g. natural disasters): <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

Section 3: Your own well-being

We all want your placement to be a success. Alongside all the practical detail that comes with planning anything and the expectations you are probably experiencing that a great time is to be had (albeit a challenging time as well), you might also be experiencing a few moments of trepidation. Therefore, in advance of your placement (as referenced earlier in this handbook) and throughout your placement, do give yourself a few moments to reflect on your own well-being so that you are best prepared for handling any moments when you might be doubting yourself. Here are a few pointers, reminders and suggestions that might help you cope with any moments of doubt.

Sources: Thank you to the University of East Anglia for their considered comments in their study abroad handbooks for informing the following, and about home sickness and culture shock to www.studentsabroad.com

Your emotional & mental well-being: undertaking a placement abroad can be a stressful experience for some and known, or new, emotional and mental health problems can (re-)surface (*including international students at Imperial for whom a placement abroad may be just yet another globe-trotting experience*). Whenever they might arise (before or during your placement), if you experience any worries about the emotional challenges involved with your placement, please discuss them with family, friends and your home department and/or your host placement provider (try not to dwell on them; **discuss them**). Staying in regular contact with family/friends and with your home dept is part and parcel of this approach. Don't go off radar!

and/or

(*since, of course, you remain registered at Imperial throughout your placement*) you are free to contact the [Imperial College Student Counselling and Mental Health Advice Service](#) for support (they also provide a resources and useful links page [here](#)). **Additionally, if your placement is at a university then familiarise yourself with the services they provide enrolled students as they might be more convenient/accessible to you.**

Homesickness can happen to anyone, even the most resilient and well-travelled of people (*including international students at Imperial*), so it is normal that you may on occasion (regardless of the length of the placement) feel a bit under the weather and miss your friends and family back home.

Here are a few tips (*obvious perhaps but vital nonetheless*) to help you cope with any feelings of homesickness you may have:

- **Be patient with yourself as you adjust to the unexpected realities of being in the host country**, and how abroad is not always like home. *See also some insight into "culture shock" below.*
- **Try your best to make friends with locals (students or staff: depends on your placement)** and invite them to spend time with you. Creating such a support network can really help to alleviate any homesickness while creating lasting friendships. Yes, you might be a shy person, but heck you've organised a placement so you can do anything!! Hopefully, others (perhaps other students in the same situation as you) will reach out to you.
- **Get involved in stuff: by seeking out opportunities that keep you busy and occupied so that you won't think about home.** You could try to work locally, volunteer, or travel within your host country. Alternatively, how about joining a sports team, club, gym, etc. Think about what you do now and seek to do likewise. Equally, it's an opportunity to do different stuff.
- **You'll think of home occasionally – that's natural - so as well as keeping in contact with family and friends by way of all those social media tools, remember to bring a few reminders of home along with you.** Each to their own, but perhaps a photo of family/friends or that great book you've had laying by your bed for months (it's going to get read!); a family recipe to cook while abroad. Keeping in contact with home is a good thing, not a bad thing (there may be people missing you at the other end so do keep in contact). If

you are feeling homesick and getting home for a short visit is practical then discuss it with family/friends first, since you will obviously need to get back to your placement.

- **If you get homesick and it starts to get to you, don't wait for it to go away by itself. Confront your feelings by talking to someone** (such as a counsellor, family member, roommate, or another student.)

Culture Shock: Find out as much as you can about the country or countries that you are visiting. Read the orientation information provided by the placement provider (don't assume you know it all!) Research the cultural, religious and political beliefs to avoid misunderstandings and potentially causing offence. Naturally, ensure language is not going to be a barrier or at least minimise the potential for it to be so (*your dept should have considered this where relevant in agreeing to the placement*). Talk to returning students to find out how they coped with difference and difficulties. Perhaps there are staff/students in your dept who are from the country you plan to visit that could provide some valuable insight. We think that most students will be happy to share their experiences with you!

Here are a couple of quotes from www.studentsabroad.com to help articulate culture shock in the host country, but also for you to think about coming back to your home country and/or the UK afterwards (reverse culture shock). It will depend to some extent on what country you are visiting; your knowledge of it beforehand; the duration of your stay and the extent to which you immersed yourself in the culture of the host country. Something to get you thinking so that you might recognise situations as perhaps they occur to you.

- *"Riding the roller coaster of culture shock a student actually follows a natural pattern of hitting peaks and valleys. The high points of excitement and interest are [often, but not always] succeeded by lower points of depression, disorientation, or frustration. Each student will experience these ups and downs in different degrees of intensity and for different lengths of time. The process is necessary in order to make the transition from one culture to another; it helps a student or traveller to balance out and adjust."*

Source (USA): <http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/adjustments-and-culture-shock.php?country=general> (external website).

- *"As a student becomes integrated to the ways of the [host country's] culture, the more difficult it may be to re-adapt to the [home country] upon return home. The [home country] just won't look the same way it did before leaving; a student may see home with new eyes and may also be more critical of [home country] cultural traditions once thought to be "normal". This is called reverse culture shock. Fear of experiencing reverse culture shock should not deter students from trying to integrate as fully as possible while in the [host] country. No matter how integrated a student becomes while abroad, he or she will probably still be "shocked" by differences noted at home after so much time spent in the country of your choice and the other countries to which you will be traveling. However, over time, a student will learn to re-adapt and reintegrate into his or her home culture."* Source (USA): <http://www.studentsabroad.com/handbook/adjustments-and-culture-shock.php?country=general> (external website).

There is a useful student blog provided by the UK based charity **Student Minds** for study abroad at <http://studentmindsorg.blogspot.com/search/label/Year%20Abroad> (scroll)..., and when the author last referred to it there was a very interesting blog (posted Jan2025) from a student from Manchester studying in Lyon.

Section 4: Arranging accommodation for the next academic year (if relevant)

If you expect to remain a registered student of Imperial at the conclusion of your placement then some or all of the reminders below may be important to you.

Undergraduate halls of residence at Imperial

Imperial provides continuing undergraduates an opportunity to apply for a room in a hall of residence: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/continuing-students/>

Private accommodation (undergraduates and postgraduates)

- If you need assistance with finding suitable private accommodation maybe your friends who are staying in London can help you while you are away.

- Imperial's Student Accommodation Office should not be overlooked especially if you have not had cause to use their facilities in the past, so check this out before you leave to see if they can help you while you are away: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/private-accommodation>
- A key weblink: **Imperial Home Solutions**
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/private-accommodation/private-accommodation/>

Imperial Home Solutions is a property searching website exclusive to Imperial students. It's a one-stop-shop for finding the perfect place to live and allows you to:

- Search for properties advertised by private landlords and other students
- **Post messages about the kind of room (or roommate) you're looking for**
- Create your own property shortlist
- Find advice on private housing - and lots more!

To view Imperial Home Solutions: <https://www.imperialhomesolutions.co.uk/Accommodation>

(note: if you are due to graduate at the end of your placement but still want to view the Imperial Home Solutions tool, please note that at some stage your login may cease to work)

Other useful tools are:

- **Online contract checking guide & guidance on letting agencies:**
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/private-accommodation/support-services/>
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/private-accommodation/additional-support/>
- **Private Halls:** <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/accommodation/private-accommodation/support-services/listings/private-halls/list-of-private-halls/>

Section 5: Thinking beyond the placement – planning your career

Being away from Imperial on a placement does not mean you need to be isolated or miss out on career opportunities and support. Whether you are considering your graduate career options or thinking about how to make the most of your vacations while you're still studying, the Careers Service is available to help you make career decisions at every stage. Getting support and guidance now will give you a head start on your career planning, and you can access many services while away from Imperial on placement as well as during vacation periods.

- The Careers Service provides advice/support on exploring options, finding opportunities, making applications.
- Appointments are available (*currently on campus and on-line*) to see Careers Consultants and Placement & Internship Advisers. Appointments are bookable via JobsLive (<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/about/jobslive/>), which is also the platform that the Careers Service uses to advertise opportunities with a range of organisations and employers. Make sure to set up email alerts for JobsLive, to ensure you don't miss any relevant opportunities.
- Visit the Careers Service website (www.imperial.ac.uk/careers) for further information, and you can contact careers@imperial.ac.uk with any queries you may have, or have a look at the "[Imperial Careers Service: A Guide to Services](#)".

Applying for a Ph.D. at Imperial while you are abroad: If you are thinking of this route after you have completed your undergraduate or postgraduate taught degree, do not forget to speak to the Director of (Post) Graduate Studies in the departments which interest you before you depart on your placement, so that you are aware of presentations, research funding deadlines etc.

Looking for internships and graduate roles while you are abroad: Make sure you are aware of relevant timelines and recruitment dates for the sectors you are interested in - these may be different for the UK than in the country in which you undertake your placement. The Careers Service webpage on planning a career (<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/careers/plan-your-career/>) is a good place to start.

AT THE END OF YOUR PLACEMENT (PART 5)

Please take note of the following:

- With your Placement Manager and, of course, the Placement Provider, you should be clear as to when your placement is expected to end.
- Ensure you meet all deadlines for reporting on and completing any academic work/assessments and, of course, do not leave it until the last minute. *A reminder to ensure that before you depart on your placement, you know for sure how your placement is to be assessed (and, for study placements at exchange universities, how any transfer of credit and grades/marks will be made and when and how this process will be undertaken).*
- **Study placements at a university:** ensure you **obtain a transcript** (grade report) from the host university (or know how to once you have left the country).
 - **Ensure you submit it to your home academic department as soon as possible but normally no later than 1 September.** Grades not considered in July alongside the normal Imperial cohort are normally handled in a similar fashion during early September.
 - If you are in your final year, every effort is made by your home academic department to finalise your degree in order for you to attend the autumn graduation ceremony (if in doubt – before, during or after your placement - speak to your home undergraduate office).
- Have you completed/returned all “grant” paperwork (as necessary) to the relevant person?
- **Feedback:** Your department should require you to provide one piece of formal feedback: find out what form this will take (in person, electronic or paper-based). Specifically, your home academic department should be keen to obtain a report from you on the non-academic aspects of your placement, basically gleaned from you any information, which will be of interest to the department and future students undertaking that placement. **Please provide a report even if for some reason you are not asked.** See also page 20. [A generic template feedback sheet is available](#)
- Your home academic department may also require you to participate in a debriefing meeting to discuss the feedback. If you have any issues to raise then the feedback mechanism obviously assists, but please raise issues as soon as possible during the placement and do not wait necessarily until any debriefing. **You can of course follow-up anything you are dissatisfied with, and you should do so initially with your home academic department.**
- If you are back in your home department the following year (especially undergraduates): a.) please volunteer to speak to students who may be planning to undertake the same placement or a similar placement in the future and b.) volunteer for the **Erasmus Club** as it cannot survive without your input.
- If you are due to graduate immediately after the end of your placement, PLEASE leave a contact email address with your department (specifically, the academic in charge of the placement opportunity) to indicate a willingness to be contacted by students who might pursue such a placement in the future. If you become a PhD student at Imperial, please do not disappear off the radar 😊.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR UK STUDENT VISA HOLDERS

This section contains information specifically for students **who are present in the UK on a Student Visa**.

However, it should be read in conjunction with the rest of the handbook.

VISAS: Are you a student studying at Imperial on a UK Student Visa?

Students who are studying at Imperial on a UK Student Visa have a responsibility to double-check before commencing a placement abroad as part of their degree that their visa:

- allows provision to be able to undertake a placement; and
- will remain valid throughout their placement abroad and allow re-entry into the UK during the placement and after the conclusion of the placement. Remember that you remain enrolled at Imperial for the whole duration of your placement and must be able to travel freely in to and out of the UK during the whole of your degree.

Should your UK Student Visa be scheduled to expire before the end of your placement abroad then contact the International Student Support (ISS) team **now** to discuss your options: international@imperial.ac.uk.

[View the ISS website for information on course changes](#)

Whilst you are studying in the UK on a Student Visa Imperial is required to monitor your attendance when you are undertaking a placement abroad.

Please also ensure you report to your home department (at Imperial) any unscheduled/irregular absences from the placement provider, *e.g. prolonged illness and accidents, prolonged visits to the UK or to your home country which impact on attendance at the placement provider, but not formally scheduled holidays or weekend trips*. **This is in addition to the regular monitoring of your attendance by your home department.**

Please refer to the International Student Support website at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/students/international-students/visas-and-immigration/> for further details on protecting your immigration status in the UK.

For advice on obtaining visas/permits for the country in which the placement will take place see pages 32-37.

Queries on these issues can be addressed to Imperial's Registry at the usual address: a.hawksworth@imperial.ac.uk

IMPERIAL

APPENDIX 1: PLACEMENT LEARNING POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document outlines the University's policy towards placement learning at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. It includes Imperial's Placement Learning Policy Statement, an explanation of the responsibilities of the University, the rights and responsibilities of students and what is expected from placement providers.
- 1.2 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education considers placement learning to be "*a planned period of learning external to the institution, where the learning outcomes are an intended part of a programme of study*".
- 1.3 Imperial defines a placement at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including PhD study leave, as follows:

Work experience, assessed project work, a period of course-based study or a period of research (*for which academic credit is awarded and/or where the student remains subject to the University's academic regulations during the relevant period*) **where there is a transfer of direct supervision of the student to a third party** (i.e. where a member of staff at the third party acts as the day-to-day supervisor/manager) **for a period of 2 weeks or more.**

The third party would normally be external to the University's estate, however, Imperial may itself serve as a "third party" by providing a placement. Placements may themselves incorporate a further "placement" elsewhere; in such cases it would be the responsibility of the original placement provider to act as the primary supervisor/manager of the further placement, unless such supervision is formally ceded back to Imperial.

- 1.4 This policy⁷ **covers** placements undertaken at all levels of study which are a.) approved components of Imperial degree programmes or b.) approved for extra ECTS credit.

In line with the UK Quality Code, this policy **excludes** student activities for which academic credit is not awarded, such as purely extracurricular part-time, term-time and vacation work which students have arranged for themselves.

Nor does it cover field trips and site visits.

- 1.5 This policy is supported by a framework of Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements available at: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/placement-learning/>

Imperial provides support and guidance for all staff who are involved in the management of such placements. Questions and queries can be addressed to student.placement@imperial.ac.uk.

⁶ The UK Quality Code (Chapter B10) does not define placement learning. Therefore, the definition provided in the QAA Code of Practice (Section 9: Work-based and Placement Learning, 2007) is quoted here.

⁷ This policy includes clinical placements which form part of the undergraduate medicine course (except final year clinical electives), although it is noted that as an exception such placements are subject to School of Medicine protocols and not the university's Good Practice for external curriculum-based placements.

2. Placement learning policy statement

Imperial is committed to:

1. providing placement learning opportunities of the highest quality which meet the aims and intended learning outcomes set, and provide added value within the whole learning experience;
2. providing well managed placements by making available to academic departments the administrative guidance and financial support that enables Imperial to meet its obligations and responsibilities as the placement organiser, including coherent staff development;
3. providing high quality student support and information for students planning, undertaking and returning from placements;
4. ensuring that, wherever possible, students with disabilities have access to placements;
5. placing students at placement providers who understand their role in providing an appropriate learning opportunity and who can meet all their obligations when hosting a student, especially regarding insurance and health and safety;
6. evolving manageable means of supporting, monitoring and evaluating placement learning opportunities;
7. extending the range of placement opportunities available to students. Departments are encouraged to develop placement learning opportunities.

Imperial has introduced a framework of [Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements](#) to help support and deliver on its commitments at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including PhD study leave.

3. Responsibilities of Imperial College London

- 3.1 To promote placement opportunities at the pre-admissions stage by ensuring that all relevant paper and web-based literature clearly identifies placement opportunities.
- 3.2 To ensure that if access to a particular placement opportunity requires admission to a particular degree programme (especially where transfer to such a degree programme is not guaranteed after registration) that candidates are provided with clear guidance, for example in relevant paper and web-based literature, at open days, at interviews and in correspondence.
- 3.3 To ensure that for each placement learning opportunity the relevant learning outcomes and added value are identified and made clear in relevant programme descriptions.
- 3.4 To ensure that placements only take place in settings where the intended learning outcomes can be achieved.
- 3.5 That as a minimum requirement a risk-based assessment is undertaken by the responsible department for each placement or group of placements at the same Placement Provider. This

enables Imperial to demonstrate that it has taken into account statutory requirements and shown duty of care in placing a student.

- 3.6 To ensure that only appropriately qualified students are able to progress to undertake the placement, and that each placement will be approved in writing by the student's department and communicated in writing to both the student and the Placement Provider.
- 3.7 To ensure that each student who participates in a placement receives appropriate guidance and support (before, during, and as appropriate, after the placement) from a designated departmental Placement Manager. Specifically, provision should be made for each student:
- to receive detailed information as to how study/work undertaken on placement will be supervised (including the scheduling of any visits by the Placement Manager and/or Placement Supervisor/Tutor) and assessed/marked, and how those assessments will be moderated (including for placements undertaken abroad in a university setting, the transfer of credit);
 - to partake in relevant briefing and training before and during the placement, including general health and safety advice and being made aware of the University's emergency procedure.
 - to engage with the Placement Manager to discuss features of the placement, feedback from the Placement Provider and to raise issues of concern.
 - to receive continuing support from their academic department which should include, as far as is practicable, a visit or visits from a member of academic staff.
 - to receive specialist advice and guidance if they have additional support needs.
 - to provide formal feedback to the Placement Manager, and wherever possible discuss this with them.
- 3.8 To ensure that Imperial monitors the attendance of all students on a placement, with particular reference to those who Imperial has sponsored for a student visa.
- 3.9 To ensure that adequate provision is provided for the development of academic and administrative staff involved in placement learning.
- 3.10 To ensure that appropriate internal review mechanisms (at all levels and involving all parties) are in place to monitor and evaluate placement learning opportunities.

Imperial has introduced a framework of [Good Practice for External curriculum-based placements](#) to help support and deliver on its responsibilities.

4 Rights and responsibilities of a student of Imperial College London

- 4.1 Each student of Imperial who undertakes a placement should expect:
- to have access to appropriate and relevant information and support with which to plan, organise and execute their placement;
 - to receive effective supervision;
 - to be placed in a safe environment;
 - to be treated in accordance with applicable legislation of the host country (statutory work-place legislation or statutory legislation applicable to a safe university learning environment);

- the results of the placement to be assessed within a timeframe laid down by the home academic department.

4.2 Imperial itself expects each participant:

- to abide by the requirements of their home academic department and continue to observe the University's regulations;
- to act with increased self-responsibility whilst preparing for and undertaking their placement, especially when they are being physically hosted by the Placement Provider; to be mindful of their role as a representative of Imperial College London;
- to attend advertised briefing sessions/meetings and to have accessed all information which has been brought to their attention;
- to inform the University of any personal factors (e.g. health, disability, linguistic or cultural) that may affect the level of risk associated with undertaking the placement or may require adjustment on the part of the Placement Provider; to inform the Placement Provider of any access or support needs that may require adjustments;
- to complete the [Student Placements Pre-departure Checklist and Emergency Contacts Form](#) prior to departure, to retain it throughout their placement and to be familiar with the procedure to be followed when confronted by an emergency; to alert relevant parties to "problems" as soon as is practical;
- to follow with due care all requirements made of them by the Placement Provider, especially with reference to health and safety;
- to maintain good and prompt communication with their home academic department by responding promptly to emails/letters, completing all reports and other requests for information etc and by maintaining regular contact with their home department and the host supervisor;
- to consult with their home academic department prior to seeking any changes in the terms and duration of the placement;
- to provide access to all records maintained during the placement to their host supervisor. Access should also be provided to the Imperial Placement Manager or Tutor except where there is an issue of commercial secrecy or national security;
- To report all accidents, they are involved in using the appropriate university procedure, and to provide feedback on any health and safety concerns that are not addressed by their Placement Provider;
- To complete at least one piece of formal feedback.

5. What is expected of the Placement Provider

- 5.1 It is assumed that a Placement Provider will assess the suitability of any student who is nominated by Imperial College London or puts themselves forward for consideration.
- 5.2 A Placement Provider reserves the right to refuse to appoint or admit any student.
- 5.3 It is assumed that the Placement Provider is prepared to enter into any relevant correspondence related to the planning and undertaking of a placement by a student of Imperial, including completion of the [Placement Provider Information Form](#) where appropriate.

5.4 When agreeing to host a student of Imperial College London the Placement Provider will be confirming that:

- It can offer an appropriate study/work programme or project and will nominate a placement supervisor who will be responsible for making arrangements for day-to-day supervision of the student;
- It is able to contribute as requested by the student's home department to the assessment of the work/study undertaken by the student and that it will indicate in advance of the placement commencing whether the agreed means of assessment might be affected by, for example, confidentiality issues;
- It has the means to enter into correspondence with an individual student in order to formalise the hosting arrangements and to consider questions the student may have in advance of arrival. In the context of this interaction that it will also indicate to the student what, if any, financial support (or that given in kind) is available to the student, and how this is administered;
- It allows visit(s) by a designated member of staff from the student's home department;
- It has discussed a.) insurance arrangements and b.) health & safety arrangements with Imperial, with specific reference to the following:
 - It has provided contact details for a person with responsibility for health and safety;
 - It can provide health and safety guidance and training upon the student's arrival (preferably on the first day) and throughout the placement (e.g. fire precautions and emergency evacuation arrangements, instruction about any potential hazards and how to report accidents, incidents and unsafe conditions).
 - In cases of a.) serious accidents or incidents involving the student or b.) breaches of discipline by the student that it will advise and consult the home academic department.
 - Should it be made aware by the home academic department or the student of any personal factors which may impact on the placement that it will observe relevant national legislation (statutory legal requirements) when discussing any reasonable adjustment to the working environment and/or relevant hazards.

CHECKLIST: A FEW IMPORTANT REMINDERS BEFORE DEPARTURE (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)

When your placement is approved it is assumed that your department have ensured that Imperial's policy on placement learning has been referred to during the choice and approval of placement location and provider, construction and approval of your study or work/work-based placement plan and other arrangements.

IMPORTANT: Have you registered your trip (for travel insurance) on Imperial's finance (staff facing) [website](#) (having read the relevant section of this Handbook carefully beforehand), downloaded the [AIG Business Travel Assistance App](#) and printed off 2 copies (or at least saved a copy) of Imperial's overseas travel insurance certificate. You may need to do this again if your travel for the placement takes you over the 31 July 2025 or 31 July 2026). Retain access to this [link](#) for updates to this handbook during the year (e.g. insurance).

- Have you completed the **Pre-departure Checklist & Emergency Contacts form** (or dept equivalent) and handed a completed copy to your Placement Manager? Read the brief section on handling emergencies (p.79).
- Have you completed all administrative arrangements with your placement provider (company/university/research-institute)? **Read, understood and acted upon information sent to you by your placement provider?** Will you have other local administrative arrangements to conclude after arrival (e.g. civil registration; health insurance registration).
- **Do you require a visa/permit to enter the host country?** If you do, have you obtained said visa/permit? Perhaps you are required to undertake immigration formalities (perhaps additional immigration formalities) after arrival in the host country? Be clear as to the requirements for your host country.
- Have you agreed a final or provisional (study or work/training) **placement plan** with your Placement Manager and do you understand how any assessments (or associated milestones for postgraduate research) are managed for the placement noting any deadlines and other requirements which apply to you (before, during, after the placement) and who is responsible for setting/monitoring them (home or host)? Specifically, for a study placement, a student should ensure that they understood how the credit and grades earned at the partner university are transferred into their degree programme?
- Have you discussed with your Placement Manager (your dept) the **supervision** you will receive whilst on placement, including how contact will be maintained and whether someone will visit you? If you are an international student with a UK visa do you know how your dept will continue to record your attendance.
- If you are already on your placement at the start of Imperial's academic year remember to register with the Imperial by the usual method (you will be prompted).
- Have you a plan for securing **accommodation** upon arrival IF you have not already organised housing?
- Have you considered your own **well-being** while abroad (consult pages 80-81 as a starting point.)
- Have you **obtained health clearance from Imperial's Occupational Health Service, if relevant** (page 59).
- (as a UK resident) Have you reviewed the [UK Gov Dept for Health "Health Care Abroad" webpages](#) and secured **health insurance** (this includes a Student-GHIC for eligible European destinations). Consult pages 59-63. If you are relying on existing private health insurance is it adequate to access everyday (as opposed to emergency) health care in the host country?
- If you are planning incidental weekend/holiday trips to countries other than the country hosting the placement you **will** require separate travel insurance.
- **Have you considered money matters for while you are away?** Have you drawn up a budget that takes into account additional costs? Referred to your bank about managing your finance (e.g. transferring money, accessing cash, using your cards, overdraft etc) while abroad? If you have access to UK student loans have you pursued all actions necessary to ensure you are receiving the correct amounts etc.
- **Have you all necessary information easily at hand for when you first arrive** (e.g. documentation for entering the host country, accessing health care and registering with the placement provider/local authorities?)

A few random items which may be relevant:

- If you are a **PhD student** has your department completed [study leave](#) formalities?
- Curriculum-based placements: Have you understood the level of tuition fee you will be required to pay Imperial for the year in which your placement takes place?
- Penultimate year undergraduate students: Have you thought about final year course/module options and do you know what you need to do and by when?
- Have you considered how Imperial's Careers Service might assist you whilst you are abroad?

Finally: are there any issues which still concern you? Have you spoken to your Placement Manager about any issues you are unsure about? Can the [Assistant Registrar \(Placements\)](#) ([email link](#)) assist?