

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



Moving to Oxford

This guide has been prepared using the experience of past visitors to the University. The information in it is accurate as far as we are aware, however, it is intended to give you starting points for planning rather than a definitive guide to moving to the UK and it is in no way an 'official' document. Please do feel free to send us your thoughts and comments, which might be of use to future visitors, and please do let us know of any inaccuracies.

General info

At your interview you will have discussed **work permits**, please also see the link below to the University's helpful page on work permit procedure.

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/personnel/permits/>

Once your appointment has been secured, you may find <http://www.dailyinfo.co.uk/> a useful starting point to Oxford life, as it has links to accommodation sites, children's activity sites and to travel information for your arrival in Oxford too. If you have children, the book "Oxford for the Under Eights" is a fantastic publication offering a guide to all of the services in the city for children, including schools and nurseries. It is currently available on Amazon.

Finding accommodation

There are, of course, a number of estate agents who will help you to find rented accommodation. We have found "Finders Keepers" particularly helpful with overseas visitors at <http://www.finders.co.uk/>

The University Accommodation Office may also be able to assist you in finding permanent rented accommodation and has some university owned property for rent to staff at <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/accommodation/>.

Many visitors ask about the different areas of Oxford, and which areas are most convenient for work. The list at the end of this guide offers our homemade guide to the different parts of the city, as well as useful links to accommodation options.

Homemaking in advance

Bikes

Second hand bikes are easy to buy in Oxford, where there are a lot of cyclists – and a lot of bike theft too, unfortunately. (Crime in the rest of the city is not a major problem, but if you are bringing good bikes, bring even better locks.)

Banking

As it can be difficult to open a bank account without proof of residence documentation, you can take advantage of the University's arrangement with Barclays Bank. If you will be employed by the University (rather than being a visitor to the Department) we can arrange an appointment for you to open a bank account once you arrive.

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



Internet and telephone connections

If possible you should also try to arrange telephone and internet connections in advance. It can take time to be implemented so the sooner the better.

Electrical items

Remember that you will need to bring a converter, or buy one here, for any essential electrical items you are bringing from overseas as in most cases the voltage is different. You will also need to obtain adapters, which are easily available, but not cheap if you are bringing a lot of electrical items with you.

Kitchen equipment

It is also useful to obtain an exact inventory list of what your house will be providing. One visitor wrote recently 'Our flat had all the basics for cooking, but there are certain gadgets I left at home that I miss a lot and that are too expensive to merit purchasing here since we'll only be here for a year or two.' However, UK homes tend to be much smaller than American ones, so you may need to be selective.

Public Holidays

This website link will give you the details of the forthcoming public holidays (called Bank Holidays) in the UK. Some shops can be closed or have reduced hours on these days, banks and official offices will also usually be closed- <https://www.gov.uk/bank-holidays>

Children in the UK

Finding schools and applying for places

Local education authorities must find a free school place for all children who are 'of compulsory school age'

http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/england/education_e/education_school_education_ew/access_to_education.htm

Children have to start full time schooling in Oxford during the term after their fifth birthday, although many schools offer full time places a term earlier than this, and part-time places even earlier than that.

Applications for a place in September now have to be submitted in the previous November. If you apply after this, you can apply for a 'late place', but you may find that some schools have already allocated all of their places. Details of the application procedure can be found at <http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/public-site/starting-school>

You can apply to send your child to your local school or to a school in a different catchment area from the one you live in, provided, of course, that the school has a place available. The council will have to find your child a place at a school within the city, if your local school is full. State schools, on the whole, are good in Oxford. One colleague recently remarked at the end of her visit, that she would not have worried so much over the choice of school, had she realised that for 12 months, her child would have benefitted from being in almost any school in the city.

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



Special education for students with special needs.

One colleague mentioned that parents with children needing any kind of extra help have to start negotiating it earlier and hard, since it is not “institutionalized” as in the US and maybe other countries. In the UK, special provision for students is provided in many mainstream schools, and some specialist units, but usually first requires a child to be “statemented” (formally assessed) by education psychologists or other relevant experts. You can either apply directly to the Local Authority (Oxfordshire) for them to find you a school place to meet your needs, or you can apply to the school of your choice. Do let us know if you need further details or assistance.

The school system

All state schools are inspected by Ofsted inspectors, who provide reports on the strengths and weaknesses of the schools. The reports can usually be seen on the school website. We can also put you in touch with parents at many of the city schools for a less formal view.

UK schools use the following system of naming years. A child who is a ‘rising 5 – i.e aged 4 but due to be 5 during this academic year, will go into a class known as ‘reception’. A rising 6 will go into year one, etc – see table below.

Areas of learning are prescribed by a National Curriculum, which is divided into four ‘Key Stages’. All state schools must follow the National Curriculum. Independent schools do not have to, although many choose to do so.

The key examinations taken by students are GCSEs, usually at the end of year 11, and A levels at the end of the Upper Sixth. Some schools are now choosing to offer the International Baccalaureate instead of A levels.

Child's age	School Year	National Curriculum area
3/4	Nursery or foundation minus1	Preschool
5	Reception or foundation year	Keystage 1
6	Year 1	Keystage 1
7	Year 2	Keystage 1
8	Year 3	Keystage 2
9	Year 4	Keystage 2
10	Year 5	Keystage 2
11	Year 6	Keystage 2
12	Year 7	Keystage 3
13	Year 8	Keystage 3
14	Year 9	Keystage 3
15	Year 10	Keystage 4
16	Year 11	Keystage 4
17	Lower Sixth	Sixth Form
18	Upper Sixth	Sixth Form

Independent (fee paying) schools

There are also many good independent schools in Oxford, probably best located via the web.

Holiday care

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



There is a growing range of camps and daytime activities in Oxford that are available providing childcare in the school holidays. You can find details in the “Oxford for the Under Eights” book.

Childcare for under fives

All children, from the term after their third birthday, are entitled to five half-day sessions of free childcare (ie. 5 x 2.5 hrs). Many schools also run nurseries on the same site, so it is possible to enrol younger children in school nurseries, starting around their third birthday – whether or not they have siblings in the school.

Alternatively, there are many playgroups (less formal than schools, often asking for an element of parental help – once a month or so) or private nurseries, which will allow you to use your free childcare, but also to buy extra hours. Oxford has a network of Montessori nurseries and one Montessori school for students aged 5-16, for those who are interested.

The University offers a comprehensive range of childcare services at affordable prices and works closely with various professional bodies to continue to enhance its provision <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare/>

Children’s clothing

American visitors have commented that shoes are much more expensive here than in the US, so we suggest you buy the next size up that your kids will be needing. You may want to think about winter gear and raincoats as well.

Winter!

In December in the UK, it gets dark around 4pm so indoor activities for the children are crucial. There are toy libraries that you can use – details again in the “Oxford for the Under Eights”. Second hand shops (or charity shops) are also very useful for second hand books/toys/clothing – Headington is a wonderful area to visit for second hand shops.

Arriving in the UK

Travelling to Oxford

For overseas visitors arriving at the London Heathrow or Gatwick, a very effective bus service runs from the airport (every 30 minutes during the daytime or hourly at night) to Oxford. Details can be found at http://www.oxfordbus.co.uk/main.php?page_id=23. Connections by bus from other London airports, such as Stansted take a lot longer and involve a change of bus in London.

You may prefer to get a taxi, from Heathrow, of course. These cost around £80 if booked in advance. The journey usually takes between 1 hour and 90 minutes depending on the traffic.

There are regular trains from Heathrow to London Paddington, and then from Paddington to Oxford. Trains from Gatwick airport arrive at London Victoria station and you then need to cross the city to Paddington for your connection to Oxford.

Settling in

Visitors from some countries are required to register with the police once they are in Oxford. The main police station is on St Aldates, one of the main roads leading out of the centre of the city. This was, according to one recent visitor, “not a complicated matter, but time consuming, and

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



financially costly, if I remember it correctly.”

The Oxford University Newcomers' Club is run by volunteers. Their aim is to help newly-arrived visiting scholars, wives, husbands or partners of members of the University to settle down and to give them the opportunity to meet people in Oxford. They run a range of social activities, hold meetings for wives/ husbands/partners each Wednesday morning during term time, and have a parent and baby/toddler group too. <https://sites.google.com/site/oxforduniversitynewcomersclub/>

University Club

Depending on your status with the Department, you may be eligible to join the University Club (after which you could have access to the gym for just £55 a year). Please see the following link for more information. <http://www.club.ox.ac.uk/membership>. There is also an email address on the website for membership enquires that you may wish to use - members@club.ox.ac.uk

Time difference

You may or may not be aware that British Summer Time still exists. In late March clocks in the UK, move forward one hour and in late October they go back one hour, returning to Greenwich Mean Time. This means an hour less sleep in March (unless you have small children, in which case you wake at the same time anyway!) and an hour more in October for the child-free!

Finding a doctor/dentist

The UK provides free healthcare for everyone. Just pop into your local doctor's surgery once you have found a permanent address, to fill out a registration form. One colleague advised that you need to do this shortly after arrival, as they were refused NHS care, having failed to register on arrival in Oxford. You don't need to take anything with you, although they will ask you for a brief medical history. For a list of local doctors

<http://www.nhs.uk/servicedirectories/Pages/ServiceSearch.aspx?ServiceType=GP>

Finding a dentist is more of a challenge. There are some dentists who offer care under the National Health Service, but this is still not free. You have to pay 60% of the charges, and may not be offered the same level of service as private patients.

Starting work

Before you arrive: organising your University Card

We will send you the application form for your University Card via email before your arrival. You will need to return the signed form along with an electronic passport sized photograph (jpg/bmp). Your University Card will allow you to access the building and is also linked to the provision of your university email address (if you are eligible).

Getting to the Department of Chemistry

The Department of Chemistry is spread across three main buildings - Physical & Theoretical Chemistry Laboratory and Inorganic Chemistry Laboratory, South Parks Road and Chemistry Research Laboratory, Mansfield Road.

http://www.ox.ac.uk/visitors_friends/maps_and_directions/science_area.html

If you are hoping to drive to work, it's best to rethink. The Department has very limited visitor parking places, for which you can apply, for occasional visits, but they are usually full and

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



regular parking is difficult. For visitor spaces, ask at reception for a permit. The nearest pay parking is Pay and Display on Mansfield Road (maximum 2 hours) or Keble Road (maximum 3 hours)

There are buses which arrive fairly near – see <http://www.oxfordbus.co.uk> or Stagecoach for details (<http://www.stagecoachbus.com/localdefault.aspx?Tag=Oxfordshire>) or you can walk from the bus/rail stations. It takes 20/30 minutes to reach South Parks Road from the bus or rail station through the centre of Oxford.

There are other options for reaching the Department: bikes, “Park and Ride” (for those coming to Oxford by car and wanting to park on the outskirts, taking the bus the rest of the way), taxi or car hire.

National Insurance Numbers

Once you are in the UK, if you are a non-UK national, you will also need to obtain a National Insurance Number. Non-UK nationals need to make an appointment to be interviewed at their local Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) offices. Details of the application can be found at the [direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk) website:

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/Taxes/BeginnersGuideToTax/NationalInsurance/IntroductiontoNationalInsurance/DG_190057

The Oxford office is at Jobcentre plus, 7 Worcester Street, Oxford Tel: +44 (0)1865 445060. At the interview you will need to prove your identity with several different papers: e.g. a passport, Home Office documents, Work Permit, letter from employers, payslip, rental agreement, marriage/birth certificate, student loan documentation. The details of other documents accepted can be found on the website.

Your number will then be issued some weeks later on a plastic National Insurance number card. Please note that the Tax Office may give you a personal reference that looks similar to a National Insurance number, but it is not the same thing.

Accommodation

1. NORTH OXFORD OVERSEAS CENTRE

<http://www.nooc.org.uk/>

117 Banbury Road, Oxford OX2 6JX
+44 (0)1865 311277
Email: administrator@nooc.org.uk

Their charges depend on the length of stay - they are cheaper if the accommodation is booked for over 12 weeks. They are very popular - so you should book a room as soon as possible if you are interested.

2. COMMONWEALTH HOUSE

Since 1965, Commonwealth House (situated in Oxford city centre, within ten minutes' walk of libraries and laboratories) has welcomed students and academic visitors for both short and long stays. They provide study bedrooms, with own washbasin and refrigerator. Kitchens, shower

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



rooms and toilets are shared. Breakfast on weekdays is provided at no additional cost.

Website www.comhouse.org

Email commonwealthhouse@gmail.com

Phone +44 1865 793132

3. Ms Philippa Redman – a landlady in Oxford (house near St. Clements)

philippa.redman@tesco.net

4. Nicola Hobday

Many overseas students and postdocs have stayed with Nicola Hobday and she is well used to welcoming overseas guests to Oxford. Please feel free to contact her directly if you would like to know more about what she may be able to offer.

nicola.hobday@oup.com

5. University Accommodation Office

<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/accommodation/>

You could probably apply for accommodation in Private Housing.

6. Also:

<https://www.airbnb.co.uk/s/Oxford--United-Kingdom>

<http://oxford.gumtree.com/>

<http://www.oxfordbedbreakfast.co.uk/book/default.aspx>

<http://www.conference-oxford.co.uk/>

<http://www.oxfordrooms.co.uk/> online booking service for Bed and Breakfast accommodation in Oxford colleges

<http://budgetstayuk.com/> - online booking service in college accommodation for visitors to Oxford.

www.visitoxford.org online booking service

Brief Guide to Oxford Areas

Note: getting into Oxford city centre by car is a problem from 8-9am and out again from 5-6pm. If you can cycle, take the bus or vary your hours of work to avoid rush hour, you do not have to limit yourself to city centre housing which can be very expensive.

Abingdon Road, Botley Road, Cowley Road, Iffley Road. There will be a lot of properties advertised near to these roads. They are four long main roads to the South and West of the city. Together with the smaller roads which branch off them, they provide rented accommodation for many thousands of students and many academics too. All offer easy access to the city, though with heavy traffic bikes are generally quicker than buses at peak times. Access to local shops, nurseries, parks etc varies enormously, so a visit/viewing is essential to give you an indication of local facilities.

Headington is a small town in its own right but a short bus ride (20 mins) and a 20 minute bike

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

Guidance on moving to Oxford



ride from the city centre, involving one steep hill. It's a mixed area, with some very nice housing but some less so, dominated by three large hospitals, so you are in competition with the medics for housing. It can take a while to get to the city centre from there through the traffic, say 30 minutes on the bus at rush hour but you can get larger and generally nicer properties for your money than in some of the city centre areas.

Kidlington is also a small town in its own right – a little further out but only 3 miles from the city centre, with easy access to buses (30 mins ride – 45 at peak times), and a range of properties regularly advertised here. Again, you get a lot more for your money here than in the city centre.

St Clements is a small but very interesting area - as close to the city as you can get. It is at the city end of the Cowley Road and very popular/lively - lots of cafes and several lovely large parks for the children.

Jericho is an interesting city area too. It's close to the city and full of cafes and an independent cinema. There are quite a few houses which appear for rent there. There aren't any playgrounds for children but there is easy access to Port Meadow, a large and popular flood meadow on the edge of the city.

Summertown is a very popular area with more senior academics as property prices tend to be rather higher there than other areas. There are a lot of families there and some excellent schools.

Temple Cowley is a busy area on a main route into Oxford. It is at the far end of East Oxford, one of the most popular areas for students and academics to live but is also (very) full of real people too!

Wolvercote, Iffley and Old Marston are popular villages on the outskirts of the city with plenty of countryside around, but a straightforward 20/30 minute bus journey from the city centre.

Other Useful Links

<http://www.internationalstaff.ac.uk/>

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/new/Global/Euraxess/EURAXESS-UK-guide-for-researchers-moving-to-uk.pdf>

<http://listentotaxman.com/>

<http://www.move-to-england.com/find-accommodation.html>

<http://www.1stcontact.com.au/moving-to-the-uk/about-uk.aspx>

http://www.avatar-moving.com/gh_showarticle.asp?hid=47