



IMPERIAL COLLEGE  
SINGAPORE SOCIETY

# IMPERIAL COLLEGE SINGAPORE SOCIETY SOTONG GUIDE 2011



<http://bit.ly/sotong>

The Singaporean Fresher's Essential Guide  
to Life in London and Imperial College

Feeling lost like a Sotong? Daunted by all the different things

you have to prepare before heading off to a whole new  
experience in London? Do not worry – we are here to help you!

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SINGAPORE SOCIETY

# Imperial College Singapore Society Sotong Guide 2011

THE SINGAPOREAN FRESHER'S ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO LIFE IN LONDON  
AND IMPERIAL COLLEGE

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## FOREWORD

Dear Freshers,

As you embark on your trip to London, you will be beginning a new chapter of your life. We know that the process of getting there is daunting – we've been through this before! As such, we would like to help you out here as much as we can and we have prepared this guide as a resource to guide you along the way.

If you have any additional queries, please feel free to contact us via our website (<http://bit.ly/imperialsingsoc>) or emailing us directly.

For more information regarding our fresher's events, check out our Fresher's Page at [http://bit.ly/icss\\_freshers](http://bit.ly/icss_freshers). For updates to this guide, check out <http://bit.ly/sotong>. Finally, please don't forget to [register](#) with us so that we can contact you.

We hope you find this guide useful and we look forward to seeing you at Imperial College!

29<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee  
Imperial College Singapore Society



## ESSENTIAL TIPS AND INFORMATION

### How to read phone numbers in London

e.g. +44 (0) 7885903765?

- +44 is the country code and 0 is the optional prefix.
- When calling from overseas, you should dial +44 7885903765.
- When calling from within the UK, you can dial 07885903765.

### Daylight Savings Time (DST)

London is on GMT (Greenwich Mean Time), and Singapore is GMT +8.

However, London will be on DST when you arrive, which means London will be on GMT +1 till 30 Oct 2011. DST goes by the following rule: "Spring forward, fall back". Clocks in the UK are adjusted forward on the last Sunday in March (spring) and are adjusted back on the last Sunday in October (fall). Your computer clock will usually tell you when it's time for a time zone change.

### Useful Web Links

- ICSS Website: <http://bit.ly/imperialsingsoc>
  - Register with us: [http://bit.ly/icss\\_freshers\\_2011\\_signup](http://bit.ly/icss_freshers_2011_signup)
- Imperial College: <http://www.imperial.ac.uk>
- UK Visa:
  - <http://www.vfs-uk-sg.com> (Singapore Branch)
  - <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk> (Global)
- Online Application for Visa: <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk>
- London Public Transport: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk> (Plan routes and check delays here)
- Train Services (outside London): <http://www.nationalrail.co.uk> (Fast, sometimes expensive)
- Bus Services:
  - <http://www.nationalexpress.co.uk> (Slower than trains, but usually cheaper)
  - <http://www.megabus.com>
  - <http://www.easybus.co.uk/>

### Exco Contact List

Appointment	Name	Email	Course
President	Joshua Goh	president@ic-singsoc.net	Chemistry
Vice-President	Eileen Ng	vicepresident@ic-singsoc.net	Biomedical Science
Secretary	Luar Shun Ying	secretary@ic-singsoc.net	Biochemistry
Treasurer	Joel Chen	treasurer@ic-singsoc.net	Aeronautical Engineering
Major Event Officer	Shen Yijing	majorerevent@ic-singsoc.net	Chemical Engineering
Events Officer	Tan Huang Hong	eventofficer1@ic-singsoc.net	Mechanical Engineering
Events Officer	Cheong Qin Zheng	eventofficer2@ic-singsoc.net	Aeronautical Engineering
Sports Officer	Lin Yuxiang	sportsofficer@ic-singsoc.net	Mechanical Engineering
Liaisons Officer	Chua Yong Wen	liaisonsofficer@ic-singsoc.net	Information Systems Engineering

## BEFORE LEAVING SINGAPORE

### Medical Matters

1. Go for a medical check-up at SATA, any travellers' clinic at hospitals or private clinics and ask for a **medical report for students going to UK (including a chest x-ray)**. Some clinics will provide a smaller sized chest x-ray upon request.

Get a **meningitis and an MMR** (most people should already have this) vaccination. This is compulsory for Imperial College and you can get it at Tan Tock Seng Hospital's Traveller's Clinic for a fee. Bring your health booklet and ask the nurses if you're not clear what vaccinations you've had before.

Otherwise, you can get it for free at Imperial's NHS branch if you are 24 years old or younger and you enjoy queuing for over an hour as a whole year of students register for NHS. All Imperial students are covered under the NHS system and there is a NHS branch at Southside halls. However, the College recommends that you get the vaccinations before arriving as they can take up to 3 weeks to take effect.

2. Go for a dental check-up as it is expensive in London and the National Health Service (NHS) only subsidises part of it.
3. For people wearing spectacles, get an eye check-up and perhaps a new pair of spectacles as these services are pricey in London. A decent pair of spectacles is at least £50 (excluding the compulsory eye test and prescription fees). Contact lens users are advised to bring their own solutions as these are 1.5 times more expensive. They are available in Boots (equivalent to Singapore's Guardian Pharmacy).

### Visa Application

1. You will be applying under the **Tier 4 (General) Adult Students category** and not "Child Students" category.
2. Your application is considered under a points-based system which means that you will have to accumulate a certain number of points for fulfilling a variety of criteria in order for your visa to be approved. The under-mentioned details specify the criteria. As a Tier 4 (General) student, you must have 40 points in the points assessment system.

30 points for having a valid **Confirmation of Acceptance (CAS)** for studies.

10 points for evidence of sufficient **maintenance funds** to cover your course fees and living costs

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## Application Procedures

### STEP 1

There is an application form online. Fill it up. <http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk>. You may save your online application along the way, so do not worry if you are unable to complete the application form on the spot. Once you are done with your online application, submit it and print it out.

### STEP 2

Print out and fill up the points-based system appendix 8 (April 2011).

<http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/1903073/PBSappendix8generalstudent1>

Provide the following UK address in the form when requested:

Imperial College London  
South Kensington Campus  
London SW7 2AZ

Imperial International Office also has an online interactive guide to completing VAF 9 and Appendix 8. Check it out at [www.imperial.ac.uk/international/visas/studentvisa/immigration/completing](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/international/visas/studentvisa/immigration/completing)

### STEP 3

You will need to schedule an appointment at the visa application centre online. To play safe, print out the appointment letter.

<https://www.vfs.firm.in/sp-apptsystem/appscheduling/appwelcome.aspx>

Take note that you can only approach the visa application office three months prior to your intended departure. Assuming your departure date is the 30th of September, I advise you to fill up all the forms and prepare all the necessary documents before scheduling an appointment for a date around mid-July. Do not go for the application process at end August in glee, thinking that you are finally able to take the visa application issue off your mind. Your visa takes an estimated of 6-10 working days to be processed, so in any case your visa application is rejected, you will be in deep trouble.

### STEP 4

Go for your appointment when the time comes. Bring all the necessary documents along.

The address for the application centre is:

138 Robinson Road  
07-01/02 The Corporate Office  
Singapore 068906

Nearest MRT: Tanjong Pagar

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**Documents to bring along****1. Visa application form VAF9**

Refer to the above-mentioned link in step 1 for the document. You must submit the form online and bring a hard-copy of the document to the application office.

**2. Completed Appendix 8**

As mentioned in Step 2. Don't worry if you can't fill in everything perfectly at first, writing on the form is accepted even at the counter.

**3. Your Passport****4. Passport-sized colour photograph (45mm x 35mm) with a white background**

- a. Please take this seriously and take a recent, proper and serious photograph of yourself. According to experience, there are many people whose visas have been rejected because of their photographs.
- b. "Taken with nothing covering the face, without sunglasses or tinted spectacles, or a head covering unless worn for religious or medical reasons. The subject should have their mouth closed (no grinning, frowning or raised eyebrows) and the applicant should be facing forward, looking straight ahead."
- c. Quoted from VFS. For a better understanding of the UK Border Agency's extremely stringent regulations, please refer to their 2 page photograph guidance at <http://www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/12160810/Photoguide>
- d. For the sake of a smooth-sailing visa application, please make the effort to look plain, natural and innocent. Do not grin or laugh or strain your facial muscles during the photo-taking because it will "distort your natural features" as explained by the UKBA. Close your mouth. I know you will look like a corpse, but this will be for the greater good.
- e. Bring along at least 2 of these coloured and unframed photos of yourself.

**5. Your OLD passports**

The high commission would like to check your past travel history.

**6. Confirmation of Acceptance (CAS) number**

Your CAS document now comes in the form of a long serial number. This CAS will be provided by your visa sponsor, Imperial College London. Note that there will be times when you come across the term "sponsor", like for instance, requesting for the name of your sponsor. They are referring to your visa sponsor, not the financial sponsor like your scholarship board or your parents. This CAS number will be given to you by Imperial College via your student e-service account after you have officially accepted your unconditional offer. Imperial will only release your CAS number after you have uploaded a scan of your latest passport (the one you will use for your visa application) onto the e-service so do not procrastinate! You might also have to send a certified true copy of your A/O Level certificates to Imperial College by mail. Look out for this information under your acceptance email – you might have missed it!

7. **Educational Certificates**

Bring along the **ORIGINAL** 'A' Level certificates as well as other educational documents mentioned in the CAS in your student e-service account under the passport/visa section.

8. **Evidence of funds**

- a. If you are on scholarship, produce a sponsorship letter stating that the organisation will sponsor the full course and your living expenses. Make sure the letter is a genuine copy (i.e. not scanned and printed or photocopied) and that there is a stamp from the organization on it with a signature!
- b. If you are self-funded, produce bank statements or simply just your bank book showing the minimum required funds in it. Minimum sum = Course fees for the first year + living expenses (£800 x 9 months = £7200). You are not required to create a foreign currency account just to fulfil this purpose. The exchange rate on the date of the closing balance of that particular account will be used to check the amount in sterling. The official exchange rate on the OANDA website will be used. <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>
- c. Funds can be in your own name; in a joint account where you are one of the account holders and your parent(s)/legal guardian(s) is the other.
- d. If the funds are in your parent's name, you must submit the following:
  - i. Your birth certificate confirming your relationship with your parents.
  - ii. A signed letter from your parents agreeing to fund your studies and confirming your relationship.
- e. If the funds are in your legal guardian's name, you must submit the following:
  - i. Your legal guardianship documents
  - ii. Signed letter from your guardians agreeing to fund your studies and confirming your relationship.
- f. Now, this is important. Take note that this evidence of funds must have been held for a minimum period of 28 consecutive days finishing on the date of closing balance shown on your bank statement. The end of the 28-day period must not be one month before the date of your application.
- g. If you have already paid for your tuition fees, this should be mentioned on your CAS (official receipt of the payment is not required and will take time to obtain) and a bank book displaying the living expenses for 9 months (£7200).

9. **A photocopy of your IC and the original**

10. **Photocopies of EVERYTHING**

Please be reminded to bring at least 1 photocopy of everything as well as their originals.

11. **\$536 in cash** to pay for your visa application

## STEP 5

Track your visa application at

<https://www.vfs.org.in/UKG-PassportTracking/ApplicantTrackStatus.aspx>

After you have received your visa, upload a copy onto your Imperial e-service account.

### Things to Note

1. If your passport is expiring soon, get a new passport before applying for the visa, as the visa is a sticker on your passport. It's troublesome and expensive to transfer to another passport. Remember to upload a scanned copy of the new passport to the e-service and you may need a new CAS number as it is tied to the passport number. Hence, do change your passport early if necessary.
2. Your passport will be taken from you and sent to Kuala Lumpur (along with your original documents + photocopies). You will only receive them back with your brand spanking new visa (that's only if it gets approved) after about 8-10 working days, which translates to about 2 weeks. Do not travel during this period of time.
3. Enter the application centre alone, without your parents.
4. Be on time for your appointment. If you are late, you will be cast to the back of the queue and the queue can be very long.
5. Make sure that you have executed everything flawlessly because you will be allowed to come back on the same day to fix any outstanding problems but you will have to rejoin the queue from the back.
6. If you are unsure of any aspect of your application, do not hesitate to ask the staff at the counter or you will have to pay \$536 again for a second application.

### Exit Permit

- For NSmen, get an exit permit online via <http://www.ns.sg> (you can get this for the full duration of your course). You will receive a notification after your application and either your application is approved immediately or you will randomly be asked to submit evidence of overseas studies. Do apply early as the checks will take approximately 3 weeks if you are selected.
- For some, you may not be granted an exit permit that covers the full duration of your course. "You are only allowed to apply for a three year exit permit even if you are on a four year course. Extend your exit permit in your third year." – the prompt that you might receive. In this case, simply renew your exit permit when it expires.
- For pre-enlisted or disrupted servicemen, check with CMPB or MINDEF for details.
- Call the 24-hour NS Call Centre at 1800-367 6767 if you have any queries.

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## Financial Matters

Get your bank draft/money order/statement ready. These are usually valid for 3-6 months. Depending on your accommodation fees, students will usually spend around **£6500 to £8000 over the course of 9 months**. This amount will be sufficient for you to live comfortably. Non-sponsored students should add school fees of between £21,250 for mathematics and £26,250 for medicine. Check current fees here:

<http://workspace.imperial.ac.uk/registry/Public/Student%20Financial%20Support/Tuition%20Fees%202011-2012%20-%20UG.pdf>

Cash: Bring along an adequate amount to tide you over the first few weeks while you are waiting for your bank draft to clear. A conservative estimate is about £40 a day (which amounts to **£500 for the first fortnight**) inclusive of necessities.

Remember to pay the first installment of your accommodation payment, especially for those who are arriving on the day the halls open, please pay before you come as the payment is usually due on the day of your arrival. Alternatively, you can pay in cash at the Student hub but this will involve bringing much cash around.

Most Singaporeans in Imperial will go open an account with Lloyds TSB Bank, Natwest Bank or HSBC. It takes up to 3 to 4 weeks for the account to be set up due to compliance checks. Lloyds TSB usually offers a greater interest rate but takes a much longer time to set up the account as compared to the others. In addition you can check out their website for more info. See a later section in this guide on "Banking".

## Tips for Packing

### Main Luggage

1. SIA does allow 30/25kg instead of the usual 20kg for the case of students travelling to London (For non-scholars, depending on the type of ticket you've purchased, sometimes you might need to 'negotiate' for that extra 10/5kg, but they usually give in after a few phone calls) and you can check in two sets of luggage. Do email/call them to confirm!
2. If your luggages exceed the allowance by a few kg, you can try checking in earlier: the ground staff might just 'close one eye'.
3. Do weigh your luggage beforehand!
4. Daiso sells various sizes of vacuum bags (up to the really huge) at \$2. Measure the inside of your luggage before you make your purchase in order to maximise space occupied in your luggage.
5. Try not to have 2 trolley bags; it'll be inconvenient for you.
6. Music enthusiasts who want to bring their instruments over can check-in your instruments as fragile items.

### Hand Carry

1. Due to security checks, laptops have to be taken out during at the hand-carry inspection area. Pack your luggage such that it is easy to take out your laptop.
2. Fluids must be contained in bottles and each bottle must not exceed 100ml.

3. The 7kg limit is easily flouted and should be maximised. As long as your hand carry is compact, airport officers will just allow you to pass.
4. For racket game players, you can bring a small racket bag as a second piece of hand carry.
5. Make sure that you are able to handle your entire luggage by yourself.

### Shipping

1. You may want to ship things over if you cannot fit them into your luggage. Some of the companies you can consider are Singpost, DHL and Fedex.

### Other Issues

1. If, among your Sojourn friends, most of them have received their offer of accommodation and you still have not received yours after a few days, call/email the accommodation office to confirm. The telephone number is +44 (0) 207 594 9444. You can also send an e-mail to: [accommodation@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@imperial.ac.uk)
2. For those considering insurance, some options you can consider are NTUC income (<http://www.income.com.sg/insurance/ospa/index.asp>) and Chartis Insurance ([http://www.chartisinsurance.com/Student-Assist\\_1030\\_229156.html](http://www.chartisinsurance.com/Student-Assist_1030_229156.html)), which have policies specific for overseas students. Alternatively, check with your insurers if you can add an overseas component to your policy. Bring your policy card with you so that you contact your insurers in cases of emergency.
3. Remember to register online as a student at your Imperial Student e-services account.
4. If you arrive before term starts (i.e. before 1<sup>st</sup> Oct), try asking the ICSS Exco members or seniors if they can put you up or show you around the area.

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## RECOMMENDED THINGS TO BUY/BRING

### For Yourself

There is always a great temptation to lug over your entire closet of clothes from Singapore, but it is not practical as most of the clothes you wear in Singapore are probably not going to last you through autumn and winter! Moreover, shopping in London is not as expensive as you think it would be, if you shop at the right time (look out for the post-Christmas sales period) or through the online channel (E.g. [www.asos.com](http://www.asos.com)). Do not worry about not bringing enough clothes over, and leave that extra space in your luggage for more essential items.

If you are thinking of buying any of the items in London, the approximate cost of items in pounds is indicated in [ ]:

#### CASUAL CLOTHING

- Lots of T-Shirts [£10 - £30]
- Long Sleeved Shirts [£15 - £30]
- Blouses [£15 - £30]
- Pullovers / Cardigans [£15 - £35]
- Jeans / Long pants [£20 - £50]
- Bermudas / Shorts (for summer wear) [£15 - £30]

Basically, just follow your usual dress sense while bearing in mind the different climates in London. You will need light clothes in spring and warm clothes in autumn and winter, and it is probably also a good idea to have a waterproof jacket (see below). Layering is the way to go during winter, as it would help keep you warm outdoors while allowing you to adapt to changing temperatures in and out of buildings. Keep a look out for the Boxing Day sales (start on 26 Dec): you can stock up your closet with clothes at amazingly cheap prices.

#### Formal Wear

- One formal suit, a couple of long sleeved shirts and ties for the gentlemen
- A couple of evening dresses for the ladies

Although there are not a lot of occasions for formal wear, it is still better to be prepared as it might be difficult to find affordable formal wear on a short notice. Some occasions that require formal wear include Freshers' ball, various boat parties, Hwa Chong/Raffles/Anglo-Chinese alumni nights, or internship interviews. However, you can also look out for a wider selection available in London, especially during the Boxing Day sales.

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## Warm Clothing

### Sweaters / Wool jumpers [£15 – £40]

Wool jumpers are useful for the cold outdoors, while cotton ones are good for indoor wearing. We advise buying the bulk of your sweaters in London for the variety, suitability and quality.

### Jackets

Shower-proof and wind-proof jackets are advisable as it rains sometimes and is windy all the time. It would be good to invest in a good leather jacket as it is lighter to wear during slightly warmer weathers (like autumn) and can keep the wind out sufficiently well.

### Winter coat

Like sweaters, we advise buying your winter coat in London. There's no need to buy thick puffy winter coats from Winter Time in Singapore, especially when there is a greater (and more fashionable) range of winter coats over in London.

### Thermal undergarments / Long-johns

Not necessary as the weather in London is not that cold! For those who might be more sensitive to the chill, do not fret. There will be a wide variety of Heat Tech thermal undergarments at affordable prices from Uniqlo once you're in London too. They would probably come in more useful for winter ski trips.

### Nylon tights (for ladies who would like to wear skirts and dresses)

### Scarves

A pair of gloves will come in handy.

## Sports clothing

You can buy sports clothing and equipment in London, but you may want to bring your own running shoes (known as trainers in the UK) and short trousers. They are also available at reasonable prices at sports stores such as Lillywhites in Piccadilly Circus.

If you enjoy swimming, bring your swimwear. There are public swimming pools in the Imperial College gym or St. Mary's Hospital gym (for those staying in Wilson House). In London, you can usually choose if you want to wear goggles and swimming hats in a pool, but it is still advisable to bring them along. Swimming in the sea is not common (the water is usually quite cold).

## Footwear

- Track shoes / Casual shoes

You should probably wear them over in your flight from Singapore to London. Make sure that these shoes are sturdy enough for regular walking (you have no idea how much you could when you are in London). Also take note that the first few months in London tend to be quite wet, so your shoes need to be able to withstand the weather!

- Leather shoes / Ladies Dress shoes (1 pair)
- Sports shoes / Cross trainers / Soccer boots
- Leather boots

These are advisable to buy in London for the variety and price. They would come in handy for the wet months and keep your feet warm during winter.

- Slippers / Sandals

- Bring a couple of slippers or sandals along as the variety is limited in London. Slippers are handy when moving about in halls. You can also wear them out during spring!

### Toiletries

It is recommended for most of the toiletries to be bought in London, as they are pretty bulky and take up a lot of your baggage weight/space! Prices of these items (except contact lens solutions) are quite reasonable, so just leave the extra space for more important things.

- Shampoo / soaps / shower foam / toothbrush / toothpaste: All readily available from supermarket or convenient stores in London (E.g. Boots, Sainsbury's, Tesco)
- Face and body moisturiser: Definitely a must, especially during winter. They are available at affordable prices in London.
- Lip balm: To prevent cracked lips during winter. It is easily available in London but cheaper in Singapore.
- Nail clipper
- **Contact lenses:** Try to bring an entire year's supply of your contact lenses as storage and saline solutions are unreasonably priced in London.
- Spare spectacles / Spectacle screwdrivers
- Sanitary napkins: For the ladies, sanitary pads in London are of low quality so do bring enough over if possible.

### Bags

- A reasonable school bag: For files, notes and the occasional textbook.
- Backpack (~60 litres): Useful for holiday trips around the UK and Europe. Bags in London are not cheap so try to get this in Singapore.

### General Advice

- Do not try and over pack your suitcases with huge quantities of personal effects. Think about what's reasonable and practical. There's not much of a point (and a waste on limited baggage allowance) in bringing huge quantities of them to London, only to not use them!
- One way to economise your packing is to consider vacuum packing your stuff, as mentioned previously.

### For College

#### Stationery

1. Stationery is generally more expensive in London. Bring a reasonable amount of pens, refills, mechanical pencils and pencil leads, long rulers (for graph drawing) etc. A point to note would be to bring your favourite Asian-brand stationery as they are probably either significantly more expensive, or you may not even find them in London! Don't bring any post-its because there are always tons of free pads given out at events. You may consider bringing foolscap pads too (more expensive in London, but prices aren't too unreasonable), though they may add considerably to your luggage weight. To check what's available here, or for comparison of prices, you can check out the website of leading stationery chain-store, Ryman's Stationery.

2. Some departments like Civil, Mechanical and Aeronautical Engineering require drawing equipment like T-squares, flexi curves, scaled rulers. It is not necessary to buy these as you can borrow them from your seniors. But it may consider bringing a set of drawing pencils as those sold here are mainly European brands and can be pricey.
3. Frequent users of correction tapes/fluids should consider bringing their own supplies as these seemingly unpopular stationery can cost a few times more!
4. An average student uses approximately 4 foolscap pads, 5 pens, 2 case of pencil lead and 2 erasers a year, so try not to over-estimate!
5. There's no need to bring big empty files over to London. Buy them either from the College Bookstore or at Ryman's. You'll get a 10% discount if you flash your Imperial College card. You can also get them cheap online.

### Electronics

1. Scientific calculators: Each department uses a **specific calculator** during exams. Do check with your department seniors for specific details. You might want to buy your department's standard calculator for your own convenience.
2. Laptops / Desktops: All accommodation halls come with internet connection. However you will need to bring your **own LAN cable**. Laptops are preferred for easier transportation.
3. Bring thumb drives / hard disks.
4. Computer Peripherals like printers, scanners and monitors can be easily purchased in London at reasonable prices. Printing and scanning services are also available at a small cost in the school's library.
5. Adaptors will be useful for your travels around Europe.

### Textbooks

1. Textbooks are more expensive in London, but the library allows up to 20 renewals (which can span the entire year) for books, so check with your course reps what you should buy
2. Some departments also have 2nd hand book sales in the first few weeks of school. Again, check with your respective academic reps on this.
3. You may want to bring your 'A' levels notes over if you think they will be useful and relevant to your course.

### For Daily Living:

#### Bedding

1. Bring along / buy your own bed sheets and pillow cases as halls do not provide them. The other bedding necessities can be bought in London
2. Duvet sets usually come with pillows (pathetically unsupportive ones), and you can get sets with matching duvet covers, sheets, pillowcases and mattress protectors at Argos or M&S.

3. Pillows [£4 - £25]
4. Duvets (warmth measured from 4-15 togs. 10.5-13.5 is what you need.) [£7-£25]
5. Bolsters are a rarity though. (Some students stuff a thin pillow into a bolster case). Bring a bolster if you need one.

### Cooking Utensils and Cutlery

1. Rice cookers are available at £25 for a decent model in Argos (or £10 for the cheapest one which works fine too). Many seniors will sell (unused) ones to you cheaply too so don't bother bringing them!
2. Either bring a set of cutlery (i.e. spoon, fork, knife, chopsticks, plate, bowl and mug) or buy a 16-24 piece cutlery set at Argos (approx. £4 - £12) and a 12-16 piece dinner set (from £8) to share with about four people.
3. Saucepans / Woks / Pot [prices start from £10] can be easily purchased in London (at Argos or Sainsbury's) so there's no need to bring any from Singapore. Don't buy the cheapest ones you find as they don't last for very long and you'll soon find yourself shopping for another one.
4. You might want to bring some of your favourite seasonings or foodstuffs such as chilli, instant pastes or spices. These tend to be pricey and can only be found in Chinatown. However, things like oyster sauce, dark sauce and light sauce (from the Lee Kum Kee range of products) can be found in London at affordable prices, so don't bring them!

### Medication

1. Most medicines are available at Boots Pharmacy (similar to Guardian Pharmacy) without a prescription. All students get free medical consultation from the National Health Service (medicine will have to be bought from pharmacies) but the service and waiting time at NHS clinics can be long, and it is not particularly enjoyable if you are sick.
2. Bring your Chinese herbs (if necessary) from Singapore. In a pinch, there are a few Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners in the area and they are VERY EXPENSIVE.
3. Bring basic medication such as Panadol, flu tablets, charcoal pills (for diarrhoea and food poisoning), plasters etc.
4. It would also be good to bring along some Vitamins to help you stay healthy and tide through the 'Freshers' flu' during your first winter in London.
5. When trying to treat the inevitable cough, avoid at all costs, however tempting it may seem, the affordably priced but thoroughly useless Boots' own brand of cough syrup. If you need cough syrup, use Robitussin. Share a bottle of Robitussin among your 5 other sick Singaporean friends. Just don't get Boots.

### Food

1. Bring along your supplies of Milo, kaya, chicken essence and Singaporean snacks because they can only be found at Chinatown and tend to be twice the price in Singapore.

2. Try to learn to cook your favourite Singaporean dishes from your mum because it will gain you much popularity and fame among your friends!

### Miscellaneous

1. ISIC (International Student Identification Card) [OPTIONAL]: A S\$20 ID card for students although your college card always works. Unless you think you'll need a student ID before school starts, your college ID should suffice and get you student rates on your travels in the UK and in Europe.

IYHF (International Youth Hostel Federation) [OPTIONAL]: For cheap hostel accommodation during travel.

The above cards can be obtained from STA Travel (at North Bridge Road or NUS).

[http://www.statravel.com.sg/cps/rde/xchg/sg\\_division\\_web\\_live/hs.xsl/isic.htm](http://www.statravel.com.sg/cps/rde/xchg/sg_division_web_live/hs.xsl/isic.htm)

2. Bring 1-2 small locks over as some of you will need to lock your cabinet in the kitchen.

### Passport Sized Photos

If you must, bring a maximum of 1-2 to London as there are very few occasions when you will need actual photos. A scanned image of your passport-sized photo is handy and will prove useful for at least the college ID card online application.



IMPERIAL COLLEGE  
SINGAPORE SOCIETY

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS TO BRING

Put the following in your **hand-carried luggage**.

1. Passport and visa
  - a. Ensure that the validity is longer than your intended staying time.
2. At least 02 x passport-size photos
3. Letter of acceptance from Imperial College and the UCAS letter confirming your place.
  - a. An official email/fax from the college or relevant pages about your course and registration from e-service would suffice. Knowing your CAS number will be useful too.
4. Evidence of funds / Letter of sponsorship
  - a. You may need to show evidence of your funds. For people who are self-financed, this may take the form of bank statements, photocopy of your bank book, along with the letter from your parents, consenting to sponsor your studies and confirming your relationship. (Refer to the visa section for more information).
  - b. For scholars, produce your letter of sponsorship from your scholarship board.
5. O and A Level certificates
  - a. Bring the originals. You do not really need photocopies of these but just to play safe and be happy, bring 01 x photocopy just in case.
6. Health Certificate
  - a. Bring along a health certificate from a proper travel clinic showing that you are healthy. Bring along the vaccination certificates as well.
7. A Chest x-ray
  - a. Bring along a recent chest x-ray. A pocket A4 sized x-ray is enough, but do remember the x-ray report as well.
8. Address and directions to your halls of residences.



IMPERIAL COLLEGE  
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## GETTING TO IMPERIAL COLLEGE

Assuming you have all your documents in order, it will take about 2 hours to clear customs (including waiting time). If you get into trouble (unheard of), don't panic but try to explain your situation to them.

Do not leave your luggage unattended because it will either trigger a security alert or get stolen. London isn't as safe as Singapore.

### Tube (London Underground)

1. The most economical way. A trip from Heathrow to Central London is £2.40 during off-peak and £4.20 during peak hours (weekdays 0630-0930 and 1600-1900).
2. SIA lands in Terminal 3 at Heathrow. There is a short 10 min walk to the tube station.
3. In order to take the tube, **purchase an Oyster card** (£5 refundable deposit) from the counter. It works just like an EZ-link card. For added security, you may want to later register your Oyster Card online at <http://www.tfl.gov.uk>.
4. The Tube system is divided into 9 different zones, with Zone 9 being the furthest from Central London. Heathrow is in Zone 6, while South Kensington (the nearest station to Imperial College) is in Zone 1.
5. If you want to travel to Gloucester Road or South Kensington, take the **Piccadilly Line**. The ride will be about 45 minutes. Make any calls you want before Hammersmith (first station underground) because there is no mobile coverage in the tunnels and stations.
6. Do note that the tube stations are filled with stairs and escalators so do not bring bulky luggage.
7. Do note that the London Underground Workers may go on strike (although it is uncommon, like twice a year), or the Tube service may undergo maintenance (about half the 11 lines are affected in some way every weekend). Check the service announcement boards or ask tube staff (in orange reflective vests) for more details. The Piccadilly line is usually unaffected, so this applies more to people staying in Pемbridge Gardens or Wilson House.

### Heathrow Express

1. This is a train service leaving Heathrow straight to Paddington Station (near Wilson House). It costs about £16.50 if booked online.
2. Not recommended for people staying in Halls near Imperial or at Evelyn Gardens.  
<http://www.heathrowexpress.com/Home>

### Taxi

1. The most expensive, but the fastest way to travel straight to your halls.
2. There is a £2.40 charge when you take a black cab from Heathrow Airport. A trip would cost around £50-60. London cabs are huge though and can fit about 3 to 4 people with luggage, so this option is decent if the cost is split.
3. **Be careful of unlicensed minicabs** which cannot pick up passengers on the street. Licensed black cabs have a light on the front displaying the word 'TAXI'

## Travelling to Halls of Residences

*\*Halls of residence arranged by distance from college (nearest first)*

- More information found at <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/hq/residences/ug.html>
- Seniors' reviews can be viewed at [http://bit.ly/icss\\_accom](http://bit.ly/icss_accom)
- Note that fees per week may range from £55.30 (non-ensuite, triple room) to £227.36 (ensuite, deluxe single room)

### Prince's Gardens: Southside / Eastside / Weeks / Garden / Beit

1. If you are going to any of these halls in / near Prince's Gardens, take the Piccadilly line to **South Kensington Station**.
2. Upon leaving the tube station, look for Subway, the sandwich shop along Thurloe Street. Make a left turn and walk straight all the way, along Exhibition Road, passing the Science Museum on the way.
3. After about 5-10 mins, you will see Imperial College to your left and the halls of residence across the road (Beit Hall is around the corner on Prince Consort Road, next to Royal Albert Hall).
4. There is a locality map at each tube station and bus stop, so you shouldn't get lost.

### Evelyn Gardens: Fisher / Holbein / Willis Jackson / Bernard Sunley / Southwell

1. The nearest tube station is **Gloucester Road Station**, though it is still about a 10 minute walk away.
2. When you exit from the tube station, you will see a KFC and Tesco Express across the road.
3. Turn right into Gloucester Road and walk straight all the way into Cranley Gardens. Along the road, you should be able to see Evelyn Gardens.

### Pembridge Gardens

1. A relatively new hall, it is situated next to Notting Hill Gate area of movie fame.
2. To reach this hall, take the Piccadilly (dark blue) Line to Earl's Court, then change to the District (green) Line (towards Edgware Road) till you reach **Notting Hill Gate Station**. Other possible lines are the Central (red) and Circle (yellow).
3. There are no escalators or lifts in this station so get someone to help you with your luggage.
4. Exit the station following the signage to Portobello Road Market. Emerging from the tube station, Pembridge Gardens Road is behind you, perpendicular to the main road. Walk along the road until you hit No. 30, where the hall is located.

### Wilson House

1. Take the tube to **Edgware Road Station** (note that this is different from Edgware tube station). This station is served by the Circle Line (yellow), District Line (green), and Hammersmith & City Line (pink). (Do not go to the station on the Bakerloo line)

2. Upon exiting from the side of the tube station towards Edgware Road, you will see a statue of a man with a ladder.
3. Continue walking past the statue until you see the main road i.e. the big cross junction where you see Hilton Hotel. (To reconfirm your position, Marks and Spencer should be on your right and behind you).
4. Do a double crossing at this junction to continue down Edgware Road until you come to the next cross junction where you will see Somerfield supermarket on the left across the road.
5. Turn right here to continue down the road, Sussex Gardens.
6. Look out for the Imperial College hall sign at the entrance to a row of houses along the right (just after you pass a road called Sale Place).
7. Alternatively, you can take the Heathrow Express (costs around £16.50 if booked online) which brings you from Heathrow airport to Paddington tube station.



# IMPERIAL COLLEGE SINGAPORE SOCIETY

## BANKING

### Applying for a Bank Account in London

1. Most people take this option (as its free-of-charge, though it involves slightly more hassle).
2. The banks will set up stalls next to the Senior Common Room (SCR) on the 2nd level of Sherfield building during Freshers' Week. The most common banks are Natwest, HSBC, Barclays and Lloyds. There is a Santander Branch on campus as well.
3. In UK, you can withdraw money from any bank, from any ATM (ATMs in school have free withdrawal, like most other ATMs). Natwest has a branch near South Kensington tube station, while HSBC and Barclays both have a branch near Gloucester Road tube station (10 minutes walk from school). You can pop by at these branches to set up an account. You can also apply for a bank account online if you are sure of your choice. Bring your documents: **bank drafts, passport, college acceptance letter and a statement of attendance specific to the bank you are going to (it has to be obtained from the student hub at the Sherfield Building and find out the address of the branch you are going to beforehand).**
4. Banking hours are typically 0930-1700 hours on weekdays and most banks are closed on weekends and bank holidays. Refer to the individual bank's website for details on branch opening hours.
5. A bank account may take up to 3 weeks to process, so prepare enough cash to tide you over the first month before you receive your debit card.

### Starting Part of the Application of a HSBC bank account in Singapore

This can save you some trouble when you arrive in London. However, the only bank that does this is HSBC, and you must pay a monthly fee of £8 for an initial fixed term of 12 months. Student accounts by the other banks are free, but need to be opened after you reach London so do weigh the pros and cons before committing to the HSBC passport account. If you wish to apply, the steps to do so are as follows:

1. Go to <http://www.hsbc.co.uk/1/2/personal/current-accounts/passport> to find out more about the account
2. Sign up online
3. You will receive a hardcopy letter by snail mail approximately 2 weeks after you submit your application. This letter will contain information on how you can activate your account once you reach the UK.

### Applying for a UK Bank Account from Singapore

By far the most expensive option. Firstly, make sure you have a HSBC Singapore account. Next, bring along your passport, IC and student visa to set up a HSBC UK account. However, there is a one-time administrative fee of S\$300 for this method, unless you are a HSBC Premier customer, for which this method is free (but you need to maintain S\$150 000 in your account!)

\* Note: Not all HSBC branches offer this exclusive service so be sure to call up your local branch for more details!

## More Information on Banking

1. Bank branches are smaller than in Singapore so expect horrendous queues.
2. Make sure you set up **Internet banking**. Natwest has a key-generating token just like Singapore banks so make sure this is sent to your UK address because addresses can take a while to change and mess-ups do happen. HSBC requires a 'secret number' instead of a token.
3. Just to show you your options after you open your account, a typical HSBC international student account comes with a current account (ATM, debit card, cheque access but no interest) and a flexi-saver account (small interest earnings, no restrictions). You can also set up a regular savers account, where you get paid higher interest for putting in a fixed amount every month. For instance, Lloyds has a Vantage account that you can add to your classic account. This pays up to 3% interest for balances up to £5,000 if you pay in £1,000 a month or more. For more details on such accounts, check with the bank managers when you are setting up your bank account.
4. The Lloyds Vantage account has proven to be quite a popular choice amongst Singaporeans with interest rates as high as 3%! To circumvent the monthly £1,000 deposit requirement, pair up with a buddy and transfer the stipulated amount into each other's bank accounts every month. Works like a charm.
5. Internet banking lets you shuffle money without fuss between these accounts, as your inevitably pages-long statements will soon indicate.
6. If you like certainty, high-interest deposit bonds which are like Singapore fixed deposits are also available. Just don't put too much in them or you will pay early exit penalties if contingencies arise.
7. Interest rates are relatively low now but still higher than in Singapore. The rates for the various accounts can be found on the individual banks' websites.



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## MOBILE PHONES

### UK calls

- All mobile phones have free incoming calls (when you are in the UK) and cheaper calls to other numbers owned by the same operator. Majority of your seniors are using O2 but quite a number have switched to [Giffgaff](#).
- Plans and prices change often, but prepaid cards are widely available and you can transfer your number easily by requesting for a PAC code.
- Many of us use the O<sub>2</sub> Unlimited Prepaid Sim, which gives, when you top up £15, unlimited free SMSes and calls to other O<sub>2</sub> subscribers or free unlimited internet for a month. (You only need to top up £10 if you just want the free SMSes). Deductions from your credits will only be made if you SMS or call friends on other networks. Alternatively, try O<sub>2</sub> Simplicity Prepaid Sim, where you get unlimited free SMSes and 100 minutes call time to any operator for £10. Useful if many of your friends are not on O<sub>2</sub>.
- More info on O<sub>2</sub> mobile plans can be found on [www.O2.co.uk](http://www.O2.co.uk)
- As for Giffgaff, they share the same network as O<sub>2</sub> and offer a more competitive package which includes 250 minutes of talk time, unlimited texts and unlimited Internet for £10. If you are interested in signing up for Giffgaff, approach a senior to ask them to recommend you. In this way, both of you will get a free £5 credit!
- If you are a heavy user of mobile internet, consider signing up for Giffgaff or use the O<sub>2</sub> Simplicity Prepaid Sims. Both have options for unlimited Mobile Internet.
- Vodafone removed extra European charges on all its lines. This means that when in Europe with a Vodafone SIM card, you pay the same charges as you would in the UK.
- Blyk offers free SMS and calls in return for receiving advertising. A low-cost, low-volume option.
- Whatever you choose, please turn off your voicemail or you risk the wrath and fury of those you used to call friends. O<sub>2</sub> customers call 1760 (free!) to do this. Giffgaff users can simply change their call divert options.
- To conclude, the phone market here is all about price competition. A major difference to keep in the back of your head: phones from UK plans are locked to the network you got them but you could always request the provider to unlock your phone for free saying that you are going to use the phone back in Singapore.

### Overseas Calls

- Calling overseas can be done even more cheaply with SkypeOut or [pfingo](#). 3Mobile has a plan with free roaming, so with Skype installed on your phone (if yours is compatible with Skype Mobile, not all are) every call is a SkypeOut (read: cheap) call. Sadly, 3Mobile has had lots of complaints about disappearing SMSes and spotty actual mobile network coverage.

- Pfingo allows you to setup a free Singapore VOIP number (3xxxxxxx) that you can use to divert calls to your UK number. In this manner, your friends in Singapore can call you directly while paying Singapore call charges and you will pay the overseas call fee.
- For those who wish to call home often, Skype offers unlimited calls to Singapore mobile lines and landlines for £3.99 per month. When combined with a 3Mobile compatible phone with Skype installed, you will effectively possess a mobile phone capable of calling any Singapore number for £3.99 per month, anywhere you want in the UK. Sounds too good to be true? Check out these websites:
  - <http://www.skype.com/intl/en-gb/prices/pay-monthly/#SG>
  - <http://threestore.three.co.uk/payg/default.aspx>
- For more information regarding the technical details of VOIP, do not hesitate to contact us.



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## THINGS TO DO IN COLLEGE

1. Pick up your welcome pack in Hall. It should have (among other things) your college card (if you registered online), your hall keys and various documents you should read including NHS registration forms.
2. If you haven't already registered online, you need to register with the college as a student on e-service. If you need more assistance, you can go to the Student Hub at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Sherfield Building.
3. **Register with the NHS** at Selkirk Hall, Southside.
4. **Settle your bank account.** Get a statement of attendance from student hub and arrange an appointment with the bank at their branches. See 'Banking'.
5. **Register with the Singapore High Commission** if you are a Singaporean. The website is <http://www.mfa.gov.sg>, under the link "e-register". If you are not a Singaporean, register with your High Commission/Consulate/Embassy.
6. **Register to be an overseas elector** if you are above 21 years old. Check out more at [http://www.elections.gov.sg/voters\\_register.html](http://www.elections.gov.sg/voters_register.html)
7. Buy a 18+ oyster card if you are going to travel frequently, e.g. medicine/biomedical students who need to travel to hospitals for lessons. The student oyster card will save you 30% on concession tickets (1 month/1 week/1 day)
8. Humanities/language evening/lunchtime classes are available, and some are free for application. The application process can be completed online or in school in the first 2 weeks. Some of these programs are extremely popular, so if you are very interested, sign up for them early to avoid disappointment.
9. Sign up for gym membership at Ethos (Prince's Garden) and attend the orientation. The £20 membership will last you for the 3-4 years you will be at Imperial and the orientation will only last 15-30 minutes so do not procrastinate.
10. **Join ICSS!** Visit our booth during the Freshers' Fair in your first week.



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## SECURITY

### General Advice

- Security in the UK and Europe in general isn't good. Stuff gets stolen in halls if left unattended so make sure you **lock your room** or cupboards, even if you are just going to the kitchen. Lock your windows if you are out or asleep.
- Do keep copies of all important documents, and leave copies with friends in UK and family in Singapore. They will come in useful if you need to replace them.
- When travelling overseas, do bring copies of your passport and other important documents in your luggage, separate from your bag you bring out every day. Record the hotlines of your banks and embassy in case your documents go missing.
- When dining out or travelling, **don't leave bags lying around**. They will simply disappear. Always keep your wallets with you. Thieves in UK and Europe are efficient and can easily spoil your day if you are not alert. You should always leave your bags in front of you even if it's inconvenient.
- **Do cover your PIN fully when you are using ATMs**. Beware of the slot where you put your card in, especially of protruding card slots as they could be card readers. Do not assume that you can block the PIN with your body, as there have been cases where pinhole cameras were fitted in the ATM itself. ATMs located in school should be safe.
- When travelling, do keep your passport on your body. Do not put it into your bag. For guys, don't keep your wallet in your back pocket.
- When in continental Europe, look out for people with folded cardboard, gypsies with garish clothing and jewellery, and people who try to show you magic tricks. Bigoted as this sounds, these tend to be pickpockets or conmen who will be quite happy to relieve you of anything they can lay their hands on. If confronted by their victims, they usually drop whatever they've taken on the floor and act innocent. Always assess the situation for danger before deciding to challenge anyone.
- In some countries, especially Spain, the robbers are known to stalk tourists in Metro(MRT) transit areas. They usually target small groups of Asian tourists and their mode of operation is highly similar. In groups of three, the robbers will force their way into crowded trains and isolated a person. After which they will simply put their hands into the pockets of that person who will be unable to retaliate. The locals will just ignore your call for help. It is thus advisable to keep your money and passport in a body pouch when travelling.

### Stolen/Lost Passport

If your passport does get stolen/lost, DON'T PANIC. Do the following:

- Make a police report at the nearest police station and get a copy of the police report.
- Ask where the nearest Singapore High Commission/Consulate/Embassy is. Arrange and travel to the Singapore High Commission/Consulate/Embassy.

- The Consulate will collect an administration fee and give you a document of identity. This document enables you to travel back home only.
- If you are travelling around (out of London), make sure the document says you can go back to Singapore via London.
- Also, prepare to face the customs who will give you a bit of a tough time.
- Be nice and polite, but confident, and you'll be fine.
- If you are going home in less than 4 weeks time, just use the Document of Identity, go back to Singapore, and apply for a new passport and visa.
- If you are going home later than 4 weeks time, apply for a new passport at the Singapore High Commission in London. The address is: 9 Wilson Crescent, Belgravia, London SW1X 8SP (Tel no: +44 (0) 207 235 8315).
  - Check out <http://app.mfa.gov.sg/generator/asppages/london/passport.asp> for more details.
  - Be prepared to pay the necessary fees as stated on the above website (£35 passport fee and £22 administrative fee for the first replacement of a lost passport).
- After you get your passport in London, if you have less than 6 weeks before you return to Singapore, just go back to Singapore to apply for a new visa. You will need a new CAS number from Imperial.
- If you have more than 6 weeks before returning to Singapore, you can replace your visa in London. Go to <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/while-in-uk/transfer-visa-to-passport/> and use form TOC. It costs £216 and you get your passport 5 to 6 weeks later assuming all goes well.
- If you need a visa fast, download, print and fill in the TOC form, go to the UK Border Agency public enquiry office at Croydon, pay £648(!) and you can get your visa & passport back in 1 week.
- In total, you should need 2 passport photos for the Document of Identity (to travel back to London/Singapore), 3 for the passport application, and 2 for TOC.
- In any case, check with the person-in-charge regarding the validity of all documents before using them to prevent confusion.

### General Advice in London

- The South Kensington area which you will be spending most of your time in is a relatively safe place to live and travel around in.
- It's always safer to travel in groups, especially late at night. If you do have to walk alone, stick to well-lit areas where other people are around, or close to main roads.
- When you're out with friends, be sure to look out for one another and that nobody goes missing.
- In all situations, exercise discretion and caution and don't be afraid to walk away from situations or places that make you feel uncomfortable. Robbers and conmen are always thinking up new tactics and ploys to get you into unpleasant situations (such as the infamous suit guy from Milan).

- Do remember that Hyde Park closes at sunset, which can be surprisingly early in the day during winter time. Don't worry, if you're inside and the gates close, you can still leave through the main exits, but there may be unsavoury types hanging around in the park.
- For students staying further away from school, do try to go home in groups, or inform your friends when to expect you back.



# IMPERIAL COLLEGE SINGAPORE SOCIETY

## ODDS AND ENDS

### Fresher's Walkabout

ICSS has a Fresher's Walkabout on **1<sup>st</sup> October 2011** (Saturday) where your seniors will introduce you to the area, including dropping by some of the shops like Argos and O<sub>2</sub> for you to get the essential items. More details will be given closer to departure date. **It is recommended that you attend these walkabouts.**

### Initial Shopping in London

- It is paramount and essential that you get **hoodies, sweaters or jackets**, if you don't have any. It will get much colder in winter and if these past two years weather will persist again this year, it WILL snow!
- You do not have to spend too much money on overly-expensive jackets – remember you can wear multiple layers. Generally, above your shirt, you will wear a sweater and then another jacket outside. The jacket in the outer-most layer should be able to protect you against the wind and the occasional rain (or snow) i.e. waterproof!
- It makes sense to invest in a good set of sweater (Marks & Spencer sells inexpensive and durable ones. If you have the cash to burn, a cashmere one is the best choice though it is expensive: ~£60!) For the outermost layer, it is recommended that you buy one of the better ones from Timberland or The North Face, for example. You can get them at cheaper prices on EBay, Amazon or you could go to Bicester Village, which is 1 hour by train from London to get discounted branded clothes to last you for your 4 years in London (ICSS organises an annual trip to Bicester in November. Do watch out for that!) If you are thrifty and don't mind wearing more layers, you can buy from a cheaper brand called "Karrimor" on Amazon or at Lilly White at Piccadilly Circus tube station.
- **Duvet, duvet covers, bedsheets, pillows and pillow cases.** Buy a heavier duvet (higher tog rating) as you can make your room cooler by opening the window if necessary. Duvets are NECESSARY in winter! Be warned that everyone will be grabbing them off the shelves during the period when you guys arrive in London, so be quick to get them (at Argos, Sainsbury's etc). The halls have heating facilities so there is no need to get portable heaters.
- Water filters. Cold tap water (not always including shower water) in London is potable. However, you may prefer to filter it first as water there is harder than Singapore's water and lots of deposits settle on the bottom of cups and kettles.
- Cutlery / Cooking utensils. Do invest in a good Tefal non-stick pan as they can save you a lot of time and trouble when you cook!

### Grocery Shopping

- Dining out usually costs about £3-10 per meal (and even more at the more *atas* places). The cheapest way to eat is to buy groceries from the supermarkets and cook.
- The main supermarket chains are **Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose**. Wilson House people will be more familiar with Somerfield.

- Sainsbury's and Tesco give free loyalty cards, so pick one up in store on your first purchase to save about 1%.
- They also have delivery services, free if you spend £50-70. Great if you're sharing groceries among a pool of friends.
- Street markets (North End Market) are the cheapest option. You can get stuff at crazy prices, such as 21 bananas for £1. However, it is recommended that you visit them only later in the year, due to them being a little inconvenient.
- For Asian food shopping, go to Chinatown (Loon Fung and See Woo) or Bayswater (Imperial Supermarket and Oriental City). The former is accessible via Bus 14 (found at South Kensington, Evelyn Gardens), while the latter is better accessed via walking/tube.
- Examples of things you can buy in London (Location, Cost) (You can get just about anything, don't worry!)
- Black bean sauce and other Asian sauces (Bayswater, £1.70 for a small bottle)
  - On a side note, the Oyster Sauce at Essentials, the convenience store at Princes Gardens, has cheaper Oyster sauce.
- Cheap (relatively!) fresh seafood (Billingsgate fish market near Canary Wharf, early mornings only)
- Instant noodles (Chinatown, Bayswater)
- Thai jasmine rice (Chinatown, Bayswater)
- Basmati, Thai and Long Grain rice can also be found at Sainsbury's

## Tax

- The UK imposes tax on all credit interest accrued.
- Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (including students on a course 4 years or less) are exempt from this tax if your bank offers this option (may change every year). Fill in form R105 at your bank to apply. The exemption is retroactive to the start of the tax year in April regardless of when you apply.
- If this fails, try the Minimum Income without Tax scheme with form R85, which states that you can earn £5408 a year without tax. More information here: <http://www.hmcr.eu/tlsi/key-info.htm>

## Cheap Eats

- **Sandwich Shop, Gloucester Road**  
Found opposite Imperial as you head along Queen's Gate Terrace. You can grab a range of baguettes that cost between £2 and £2.50, or pasta from £2.50 and up. It's about the cheapest thing you can get without cooking that can fill your stomach. Some of the highly recommended flavours are the Chicken Tikka and Chicken Mushroom baguettes.
- **Subway, South Kensington Tube Station**  
Subway is found 10 minutes away from school. It offers a 6 inch Sub-of-the-day, which changes daily, at £1.99, so take note of the day your favourite is on the menu!
- **Oriental Canteen, Beside South Kensington Tube Station**

For the nearest fix of decent Chinese food, OC is the solution for you. The cheapest filling dish is the 'Yang Zhou Fried Rice' costing £3, with prawns and char siew. Main dishes, albeit more expensive, come with free flow of rice for students.

- **McDonalds, Earls Court/Knightsbridge**

For £3.70, one can get a Big Mac meal. Students are also entitled to a free cheeseburger or McFlurry as long as they remember to request them from the staff.

- **GBK, Pizza Express, Zizzi, Dim T, ASK**

These 5 great restaurants offer 2 for 1 main courses for a large part of the year as long as you print out the voucher found on the following site: <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com> and [www.studentbeans.com](http://www.studentbeans.com). As long as you are willing to trouble yourself with printing, a great meal awaits you for a great price!

GBK → Junction of Old Brompton Road & Queen's Gate & Bayswater

Zizzi, Pizza Express → Earl's Court, Notting Hill Gate

Dim T → Gloucester Road

ASK → Junction of Gloucester Road and Cromwell Road

- **Bosphorus Kebabs, Thurloe St**

Touted as selling some of the best kebabs in London, Bosphorus Kebabs is a popular pit stop for hungry Imperial students studying late into the night. For a reasonable price of £6.50, the "Mixed" kebab meal is sufficient to satisfy any hunger pangs with a variety of meats, including shish kebabs, spicy lamb kebabs and chicken kebabs all on one plate.

- **Bonda Cafe**

Usually more popular with the students from Wilson House, Bonda Café serves up authentic Malaysian dishes for a bargain price. An average meal costs between £4.50-£5.50, and the crowd favourites are Nasi Lemak and Nasi Goreng.

- **Tuk Tuk Thai Noodle Bar, Bayswater (opposite Queensway Tube Station)**

Found along the same stretch of road as Gold Mine, Tuk Tuk offers reasonably priced Thai food when you've had your fill of Chinese food for a while. A decent meal usually costs between £4-£5, and Tuk Tuk serves classic Thai dishes such as Tom Yam soup noodles, Thai green curry and Pad Thai.

## Good Eats

- **Gold Mine, Bayswater Road (Near Bayswater Tube)**

Any Singaporean who arrives in London cannot miss out on roasted duck and the best place to have it is none other than Gold Mine. The fried calamari and honey roasted pork cutlets are also to die for. Apart from the great food, ICSS members also enjoy a discount if you show the ICSS card before ordering.

- **Misato Japanese Restaurant, Chinatown**

For the ravenous, the place offers decent Japanese bentos or curry with a mountain of rice for about £6 per main course. It tends to have an immensely long queue during dinner time however.

- **Rasa Sayang, Chinatown**

If Singapore food is what you crave, these are the places for you (Although exorbitant, at about £6 - £7, in comparison to our hawker fare back home).

- **ASSA (Korean Food), Tottenham Court Road/Frith Street (off Shaftesbury Avenue)**

Fans of Korean culture and drama shows can enjoy a slice of the republic at ASSA, a small restaurant chain with branches in Tottenham Court Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. Although slightly pricey, the Seafood Kimchi pancakes and Pork Spicy Hot Pots are to die for.

- **Wafflemeister**

For quality desserts, Wafflemeister (located 10 min walking distance from College) serves freshly-made, exquisite Belgian waffles, reputed to be made from waffle mix imported straight from Belgium. The waffles are served with a variety of toppings, and can range in price from £3 to £5.

Check out the following websites for discounts and deals:

[www.studentbeans.com](http://www.studentbeans.com)

Offers 2-for-1 student discounts for movies at Cineworld on Mondays to Thursdays and other deals in restaurants etc.

[www.tastelondon.com](http://www.tastelondon.com)

Apply for a month-long trial card which allows you to get 50% discount or 2-for-1 deals at selected restaurants. Rotate among your group of friends to make full use of the free trial!



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## POSTSCRIPT

We do hope that you'll find this guide useful. While we have made every step to provide as much information to make your transition to life in London easier, it is inevitable that you will have to learn and discover a lot of things yourself. After all, this is what makes studying overseas so much fun.

There seems to be a lot to buy and do and you may not be able to bring all your things along (there goes your favourite soft toys!). The amounts you are allowed is usually only 30kg so do not make the mistake of carrying too much and paying the excess baggage charges. Do prioritise whatever stuff you may want to bring over and weigh your baggage at home before going to the airport!

If you are travelling alone, make sure you're able to carry all your things without leaving a trail of items behind. A reasonable number of bags that one can manage relatively comfortably would consist of a backpack, a laptop bag and one large trolley bag. Do note that Tube stations usually lack elevators, hence travelling light would spare one the pain of dragging huge suitcases up the stairs. However, as far as possible, travel in a group so you can help each other.

Do note that a lot of things can be bought in London so you'll just need to bring the essentials. You may even end up saving more if you buy them in London. Wherever possible, check with seniors on what to bring as they would have the clearest idea of the do's and don'ts.

Lastly, should you have any problems, feel free to contact the members of the ICSS Exco. They will be able to provide you with an even more extensive account of life in London, and pass on to you some essential survival tips! Besides, what's better than having some good references for the tons of reports (not to mention the past year papers accumulated since the beginning of time) that you will churn out during your education there! Anyway, be assured that you're in good company and we guarantee that your stay in London will be the time of your life!

If you have any further queries, do not hesitate to contact us. Watch our website for updates on events and updated versions of this guide. Finally, please don't forget to [register](#) with us so that we can contact you.



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