



# Pre-Departure Handbook

# **London**



# About FIE



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## About FIE

The Foundation for International Education, FIE, supports U.S. universities and colleges and their faculty who wish to provide a London-based study abroad experience for their students. FIE achieves a high level of quality student support by supplying an innovative curriculum, cutting-edge facilities and high-quality student life services. FIE staff are on hand to help you in every way they can, so please drop by Foundation House during your time abroad and use us as another resource.

## About London

FIE study and housing facilities are located in the attractive Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, one of London's most desirable areas.

### Highlights of the Area

- FIE is located near schools such as Imperial College, the Royal College of Art, and the Royal College of Music.
- Just down the street are some of the world's great cultural institutions, including the Royal Albert Hall, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Natural History Museum.
- Kensington is home to charming residential areas where famous residents of the present (Madonna, Hugh Grant, Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise) mix with the ghosts of those who lived in the area in the past (T.S. Eliot, J.S. Mill and Beatrix Potter).
- Students live and study near some of London's most fashionable streets, including Gloucester Road, where students will find banks, a post office, pubs, restaurants, and grocery stores; and High Street Kensington, one of London's premier shopping streets.

### Accessing the Rest of the City

Getting to the rest of the city is easy and convenient. The area is served by a number of underground (tube) and bus routes, opening up the whole city to the curious visitor.

# Prepare Now

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While it may seem ages away, start thinking about your semester in London now, as your departure date will sneak up on you! We have put together this packet of information to help answer some questions you might already have, as well as questions you may not have considered yet. However, please do not hesitate to be in touch with us if you don't find the details you need. In compiling the following information, we have tried to be as accurate as possible, though the world is a changing place, and some information may no longer be "spot-on." As such, this is meant as a guide, not as irrefutable fact.

## Tips for Preparation

- Be open-minded to the new culture. Expect differences, embrace them, and learn from them. It's not wrong, just different!
- Be prepared to have less space in your residence, less space for walking on the street, and less personal space in a conversation! So don't overpack, and get used to being in close proximity to other people.
- Set goals for yourself. Remember that this experience is only as great as you choose for it to be. What do you want to get out of this experience? What type of events, museums, theater productions and historic locations do you hope to visit?
- Familiarize yourself with what's going on in the U.K. today. Read British newspapers such as the Guardian Online. See the recommended reading list for more options.
- Read works from British authors to give you a better sense of British life and culture. Shakespeare isn't the only British author! See the list here for some ideas.

## Recommended Reading

### Newspapers

#### **"The Guardian"**

[www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk)

#### **"The Times"**

[www.timesonline.co.uk](http://www.timesonline.co.uk)

#### **"The Independent"**

[www.independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk)

#### **"Entertainment Guide"**

[www.thisislondon.co.uk](http://www.thisislondon.co.uk)

### Books

#### ***Notes from a Small Island***

Bryson, B. Doubleday, 1995.

#### ***Living and Working in Britain***

Hampshire, D. Survival Books, 1991.

#### ***Changing Places***

Lodge, D. Penguin Books, 1978.

#### ***Culture Shock: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette***

Tan, T. Kuperard, 1994.

#### ***Brit-Think Ameri-Think: a Transatlantic Survival Guide***

Walmsley, J. Harrap, 1994.

#### ***Let's Go 16th Edition London***

Let's Go Inc.

#### ***Lonely Planet Great Britain***

Lonely Planet Publications Ltd.



# Culture Shock

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This will be an exciting, rewarding and unforgettable semester for you. As you prepare for your term, you are undoubtedly feeling a variety of emotions: excitement, curiosity, anxiety or even bewilderment. While we can prepare you for your arrival, once there, the experience belongs to you, and it is important to have an understanding of the way this experience might affect you. This is where culture shock enters the picture.

Generally speaking, American students going to England do not anticipate feeling culture shock because they speak the same language as the British. Students and travelers going to non-English speaking countries are often better prepared to experience difficulties in communication and interpret cultural clues because of the language barrier. Students studying in English-speaking countries are faced with subtle, more disguised differences that can take them by surprise.

## Stages of Culture Shock

### Stage 1: The Honeymoon Stage

Characterized by exhilaration, anticipation and excitement. The individual is fascinated with everything that is new. An individual in this stage will often demonstrate an eagerness to please, a spirit of cooperation, and an active interest in new things. They will gloss over misunderstandings and frustration. When these emotions build, they often enter stage 2.

### Stage 2: The Hostility Stage

Characterized by frustration, anger, anxiety, and sometimes depression. Following the initial excitement is a frustration with the bureaucracy. Sleeping and eating patterns may be disrupted. Sometimes individuals react to this frustration by rejecting the new environment in which they feel discomfort. The internal reasoning might be, "If I feel bad, it's because of them," thus blaming the external environment for the bad internal feelings.

### Stage 3: The Humor Stage

When the individual of another culture begins to relax in a new situation and begins to laugh at minor mistakes and misunderstandings that previously would have caused major headaches. This more relaxed stage occurs after the individual has made some friends and is able to manage the complexity of the new environment, understand the work, and experience successes.

# Culture Shock, continued

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## Stage 4: The Home Stage

Occurs when the individual not only retains allegiance to his or her home culture, but also 'feels at home' in his or her newly acquired one. This student has successfully adjusted to the norms and standards of the new environment and should be commended for the ability to live successfully in two cultures.

## Reverse Culture Shock

Many students returning from study abroad programs experience what is known as reverse culture shock, meaning they find it difficult to reintegrate into their home country and way of life. Studying abroad and interning will help give you insights into your own way of life and you may have a new perspective into your own culture.

Your experiences with FIE in London will have changed you. You may have new habits, behaviors, values and friends, and find your confidence has increased. Your friends and family may notice personal growth and changes also, and may be unprepared for the new you. This can often lead to feelings of isolation and difficulties in relating to people who have not had the same experiences as you.

Remember reverse culture shock is a phase, and you will soon settle back into a routine. To help alleviate this transitional period, stay in touch with any friends that you made while in London who can relate to your London experiences. Contact your study abroad office for advice and support, and above all, don't worry - these feelings will pass! Don't forget, you can always visit London again, and your study abroad and interning experience will be one you will value for years to come.

## Culture Shock

<noun>

1) A term used to describe the anxiety and feelings (of surprise, disorientation, confusion, etc.) felt when people have to operate within a different cultural or social environment, such as a different country or a different state.

*(Wikipedia)*

2) Occurs "when all the cues and underlying assumptions that we have about how the world works suddenly don't work anymore."

*(International Herald Tribune)*

# Baggage Claim





## What to Pack

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### DO NOT OVERPACK!

We cannot say this enough, and no matter how much this is stressed, some of you will overpack, making your small rooms crowded and making it difficult for you to move around your own belongings. Storage space is limited. Traveling light will make your life easier!

Bring items that wear well with others. Unpredictable weather also makes layering paramount.

#### Items to Consider

- You **SHOULD** bring a good-quality umbrella or waterproof hooded jacket. It rains in all seasons.
- Bath towel: You provide your own.
- Battery powered alarm clock: necessary for getting to class on time.
- Small appliances: British electricity does not match U.S. voltage, though you may purchase a converter or look for dual voltage appliances. It is strongly recommended that you simply buy a hairdryer or shaver once you are in London to avoid electric currency problems. These items can be purchased for £20 - £30. Batteries are the same in both countries.
- Prescriptions and medications: You should bring copies of prescriptions for any medications you may need, including glasses and contacts. Bring medicinal supplies for the entire semester, as some medications are not available abroad. Make sure to keep them in labeled bottles so as not to arouse suspicion at airport customs. Any necessary prescriptions should be packed in your carry-on luggage. We also recommend that you bring your preferred over-the-counter cold medication, so you do not have to search for something that works for you when you are sick.



# Passport and Pre-Entry Clearance

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You must have a valid passport to enter the UK. The pre-entry clearance (PEC) is what most people would call a visa. As a US citizen, you are called a non-visa national so in ordinary circumstances you do not need prior permission to enter the UK.

Most students, however, need a new visa under recent immigration rules.

## You will need to have a visa if you will be:

- Undertaking an unpaid internship, service learning, or volunteer placement as part of the program.
- Studying in the UK for longer than 6 months.
- Undertaking part-time paid work in your free time.

## Cost

At time of press for this booklet, the cost is £99. This is subject to change by the British government.

## Timeline

There isn't a set time for how long the visa will take, so you should apply as soon as possible. We advise that you apply as soon as you hand in your FIE administration form. On receipt of the admin forms in London, students are issued with immigration letters which are sent to the coordinator as soon as we get the forms. You need this letter to apply for PEC.

## Applying

You should make your application online but you will also need to visit a Visa Application Centre in order to provide biometric data (digital photo and fingerprints).

To apply online, go to:  
[www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk](http://www.visa4uk.fco.gov.uk)

On completing this process you will need to provide supporting documents, and you will be directed where to send these based on your home address.

## Non-U.S. Passport Holders

If you are a non-U.S. passport holder, check with the nearest British Embassy or High Commission to see whether you require a visa. Do so immediately, as obtaining a visa can take time. If you require a visa, it must be stamped in your passport before traveling to Britain.



# Money and Finances

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For those of you who are not accustomed to living in a major city, be prepared for an adjustment. The cost of living in London will be significantly higher than many areas of the U.S. In addition, the U.K. currency, pounds sterling, is valued much higher than the U.S. dollar. The exchange rate changes daily, and can be checked at [www.x-rates.com](http://www.x-rates.com). We suggest you begin to familiarize yourself with the currency before you arrive.

## Budgeting for London

Estimated expenses vary widely depending upon the student. How much you spend will depend on your lifestyle, such as how much you eat out and travel during your free time. We recommend you budget for between \$150 and \$200 each week for food and personal expenses. Keep in mind that your purchasing power is directly related to the dollar/sterling exchange rate.

## Cash for Arrival

It is a good idea to carry some British currency with you for arrival, to help you settle in during your first few days. We recommend you exchange this money before you arrive in London - this can be done at some banks or at currency exchange booths in airports - and ask for mixed notes in small denominations.

## Banking

Do NOT plan to keep large amounts of cash in your room. The easiest way to handle your money abroad is often to use the same checking account you have in the U.S., using your debit card as your primary means of payment and cash withdrawal. ATMs are readily available all over Europe.

The largest banks in England are National Westminster, HSBC, Barclays and Lloyds TSB. If your bank has a relationship with any of these banks, they may not charge an ATM fee. Check with your financial institution to see whether they have these relationships, and what kind of charges you will incur on international purchases.

Online banking with your U.S.-based account will help you keep track of how much you are spending in U.S. dollars.

ALWAYS have a backup. If you are using your debit card as your primary means of money abroad, make sure you also bring a credit card (Visa, MasterCard or American Express are recommended) in case your primary card is lost or stolen. Keep the backup card in a different place from your primary card.



# Money and Finances

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You **MUST** inform your bank and credit card companies that you will be abroad so they do not freeze your accounts.

## What Things Cost

As a guide, most British students try to survive on about £80 per week after rent. London is expensive, like most European cities. The following price approximations give you a very rough guide to how much things cost in London.

Hamburger, french fries and a soda	£4.00
Load of laundry, wash and dry	£4.60
Pair of Levi jeans	£40.00
Hairdryer	£20.00
Music CD	£12.00
Chocolate bar	£0.50
Can of soda	£0.50
Shampoo	£3.00
Cinema ticket (w/ student discount)	£5.00
Restaurant meal (modest)	£15.00
Standby theater ticket	£10.00
Haircut	£15.00
Return trip via Eurostar to Paris	£70.00
Rock concert	£10.00 – £50.00

## ISIC Card

The International Student Identity Card, or ISIC, is an internationally recognized form of student identification. Having one of these cards allows students to ask or discounts at hundreds of theatres, restaurants, cinemas and museums, as well as student discounts on plane and rail tickets across Europe. This valuable card can often be obtained through the home university for between \$20 and \$30, but can also be purchased once in London for £8 at an STA travel branch near FIE.

## Cheap London

Students receive weekly “Cheap London” emails from the student life office, offering them information regarding events happening around the city that week that are cheap or free. This is an excellent resource, and a great way to save some pennies while in London.





# Health and Medical Insurance

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## Insurance

For most programs, FIE has taken out a comprehensive international health insurance package, and for those programs health insurance is included in your fees. All students must have health insurance before your program commences.

## Health Service in the UK

The National Health Service (NHS) is the publicly funded healthcare system in England. The NHS provides healthcare to anyone normally resident in the United Kingdom with most services free at the point of use for the patient though there are charges associated with eye tests, dental care, prescriptions, and many aspects of personal care. Those who are not “ordinarily resident” are liable to charges for services other than that given in Accident and Emergency departments.

Private health care has continued parallel to the NHS, paid for largely by private insurance, but it is used by less than 8% of the population, and generally as a top-up to NHS services. NHS costs are met, via the UK government taxation, thus all UK taxpayers contribute to its funding.

## Pharmacies

Drug stores are most often called Pharmacies or Chemists in the UK. Pharmacists are often the first point-of-contact for patients with health inquiries. This means that pharmacists have large roles in the assessing medication management in the primary care of patients.

There are non-prescribed drugs for several complaints common to the student demographic such as colds, coughs, rashes, etc.

*Detailed information regarding local medical facilities and pharmacies will be distributed and discussed during on-site orientation.*

# FIE Study Center - Foundation House

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FIE is committed to maintaining the highest possible standards in teaching and study facilities. FIE's primary study center, Foundation House, is centrally located on Cromwell Road, one of London's main arteries leading into the heart of the city. The five-story Edwardian mansion stands opposite the Gloucester Road Underground Station in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Foundation House includes eight well-equipped classrooms, a meeting room, faculty offices, a student common room and administrative offices for FIE staff.



## Staying Connected

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### Computers and IT

Each FIE academic and housing facility features wireless internet connections for students who choose to bring a laptop with them. Metrogate, one of FIE's central housing facilities, features a Study Center PC Lab dedicated to open student access and general use on a round-the-clock basis.

FIE provides IT support daily from 9 a.m. until 10 p.m., including weekends and holidays.

### Telephones

Remember the time difference: the UK is 8 hours ahead of Pacific (West Coast) U.S. time and 5 hours ahead of Eastern (East Coast) time. For example, when it is noon in England, it is 4 a.m. in California.

For you to call the U.S. from the U.K., you will dial 001 plus the area code and phone number. For example: 001-321-555-4321.

For friends and family to call you from the U.S. while you are in the U.K., they will need to dial 011 (the international dialing code) then 44 (the U.K. country code) then the eleven digit number. U.K. numbers are written like this: 020 7591 7750. When dialing, friends and family should omit the first zero (0). For example, to dial the U.K. number given above from inside the U.S., dial 011-44-207-591-7750.

Many students purchase mobile phones in the U.K. They are the easiest, cheapest way to communicate locally and abroad. Students will receive detailed information about mobile phones before arrival.





## Student Life

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FIE understands that much of a student's study abroad experience is based outside of the classroom, and that the educational benefits of a well-structured social and cultural program can be as important as in-class activity. Experienced student life staff based at Foundation House work together to support students in fully utilizing the historical, cultural, social and political resources of London in their out-of-class time.

### Opportunities to Experience the City

#### **International Student House (ISH)**

This exciting membership provides all students with many opportunities to engage in student activities in London. There is something for everyone at ISH from sports, music, travel clubs to karaoke.

#### **Imperial College Union 'Associate' Membership\***

Why not join a club or society through Imperial College and take part in activities such as drama, debates, language, film and various intramural sports? In addition, student membership allows participation in social events held by the Union and gain access to the Union pub and café.

#### **FIE's Optional Extra Curricular Calendar**

Events on this subsidized calendar of events vary from local sport games, comedy shows, and theatre to an Adventure Weekend in Wales. Sign-up will occur in the student life office following arrival.

#### **Volunteering**

FIE has a relationship with Kensington & Chelsea Volunteer Centre (K&CVC) for all students studying on a semester programme for three months or more. Students will receive information on volunteering prior to arrival.

#### **Host UK**

A unique opportunity offering international students on semester programs for three months or more the chance to be a guest for a weekend in a British home. For a small administration fee and the cost of travel, students can experience the differences and similarities of British cultures.

\*Please note that clubs/societies will most likely not be running outside of term time. Also, not all FIE programs include membership to Imperial College.

# Student Housing

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FIE offers student accommodations based in historic and charming Kensington, just a few minutes walk from Foundation House. Student residential buildings in the Kensington area are usually mid- to late-nineteenth century converted townhouses.

## Size and Space

Since most housing in London has had to be adapted to modern standards, expect your rooms to differ in size, shape and furnishings. Bedrooms are furnished with single beds for one to four people, desks and dressers. Storage space is at a premium - realize that England is a very small island crowded with more than 60 million people. The roads, houses, and your rooms will be smaller than what you are used to.

## Kitchens and Laundry

Common kitchens in each residence hall are equipped with utensils such as cookware, silverware and dishes. Coin-operated laundry facilities are available at Metrogate for use by FIE residents. There is also a launderette within 5 minutes walking distance from each residence hall. Generally, machines are smaller and take longer. Heavy clothes and large, fluffy towels can become burdensome to care for. You may want to think twice about packing them! FIE will supply irons and ironing boards.

## Housecleaning

Rooms are cleaned once a week, and linens are changed once a week as well.

## Luggage Storage

Though we do not recommend it, students may send additional luggage to themselves care of the Metrogate address. Any mailed items should arrive after the start of your program. FIE cannot be responsible for luggage that arrives early. FIE does not have adequate storage space for your luggage if you choose to travel after the program. There are storage facilities in the area that charge a small fee per week per bag.

## Visitors

Due university tenancy agreement policies in London, and because having guests compromises the comfort of the people you live with, overnight guests are not allowed. If students are expecting friends or relatives, the office in London can suggest hotels or hostels in the area.

## Housing FAQs

### ***What is my mailing address?***

All students will receive mail at:  
Metrogate  
3 - 7 Queen's Gate Terrace;  
London SW7 5PE

### ***When will I find out about my housing placement?***

You will be notified of your housing allocation approximately 30 days prior to arrival.

### ***Can I move into housing early?***

Your housing is available for the duration of your program only and FIE cannot cater for early arrivals or late check outs.

### ***Where is my residence?***

All of the residences are located in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Each residence is within 10-15 minutes walk to Foundation House and at least one of the following tube stations: Gloucester Road, High Street Kensington, South Kensington, or Earl's Court.

### ***Is bed linen provided?***

Yes. Bed linen is provided and you may choose to have your sheets changed once a week.

### ***Where can I buy towels?***

High Street Kensington (a 10 minute walk) offers a number of shops, Marks and Spencer's and Argos being two of the best for towels. Bring one towel for the first couple of days.



# Arrival

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If your school makes group arrangements in coordination with FIE, please follow your group's instructions for arrival in London. If you are arriving independently, you must check in at Metrogate Residence upon your arrival.

Metrogate's address is:

*3 - 7 Queen's Gate Terrace*

*London SW7 5PE*

More detailed instructions will be sent to you approximately two weeks before the start date of your program.

You are required to inform FIE of your flight arrangements prior to your program. If your scheduled flight is delayed, please contact FIE at:

Foundation House:

011-44-207-591-7750

Metrogate:

011-44-207-823-7440

24-hour emergency number:

011-44-207-808-0131.

## From Heathrow Airport

### Tube

The least expensive and easiest route is to take the tube directly from the airport. Follow the signs in the terminal to the Underground and take the Piccadilly Line (dark blue) to Gloucester Road. This costs £3.60. From the Gloucester Road stop, walk or take a taxi to your residence. This is very easy if you are not carrying too many bags - another reason to pack light!

### Taxi

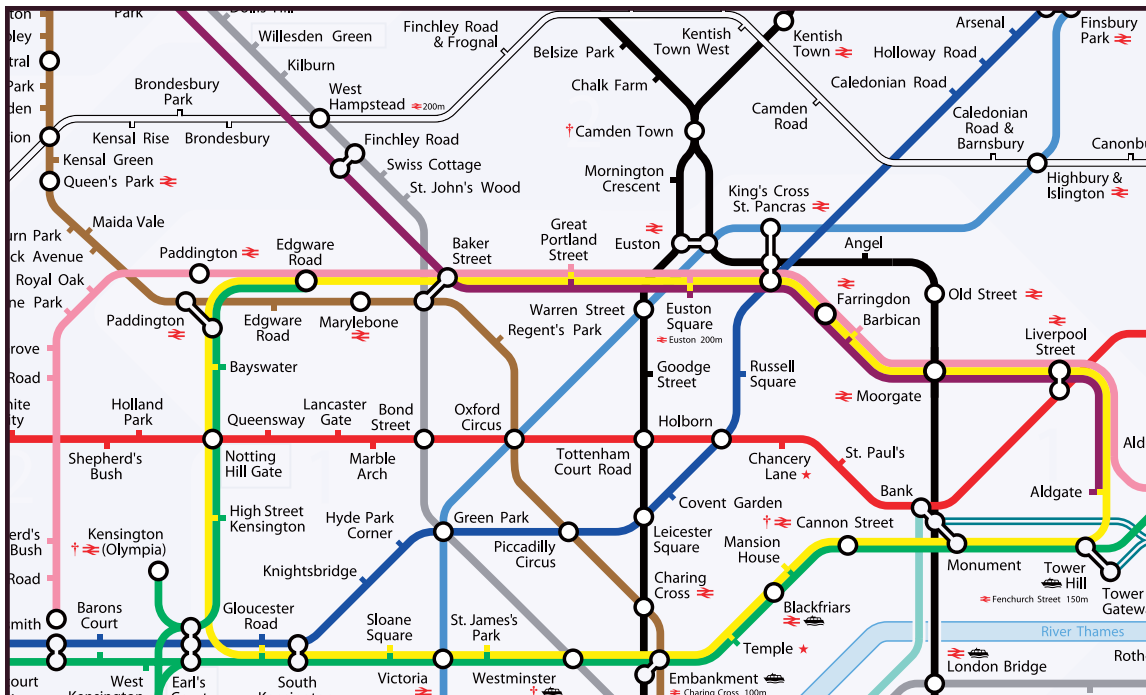
The most expensive route is to take a cab from Heathrow. A licensed black cab will cost between £30 and £40, depending on traffic. This is costly, but if you are sharing a cab with another student and have heavy luggage, you may find it worth it. Don't take a cab without a meter.

### Other Options

The Heathrow Express train runs every 15 minutes from the airport to Paddington Station. It costs £12 one-way.

The Airbus (A2 bus) leaves Heathrow every 15 minutes and stops at many central London Underground stations. The Airbus costs £3 one-way for students with valid student ID.





## Heathrow Information

[http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/heathrow/getting\\_here\\_frame.html](http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/heathrow/getting_here_frame.html)

## From Gatwick airport

Follow signs at the airport to the trains. Take the Gatwick Express train from the airport to Victoria train/tube station. A second-class one-way ticket costs £10.50. Trains leave every 15 minutes. It is advisable to ask which platform you need to wait on, as Gatwick is a mainline station with trains to other destinations.

From Victoria, take a cab to your residence. This will cost approximately £10. Although Gatwick is farther out than Heathrow, it is a very simple process to get into town. Do not take a cab from Gatwick unless you want to spend a fortune!

## Gatwick Information

[http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/gatwick/getting\\_here\\_frame.html](http://www.baa.co.uk/main/airports/gatwick/getting_here_frame.html)

**For information regarding arrival at other London airports such as Luton and Stanstead, please contact FIE's student life office.**

### Disclaimer

FIE reserves the right to change the policies, fees, curricula, or any other matter in this publication without prior notice and to cancel programs and courses. This publication is to be read neither as part of a contractual agreement nor as a guarantee of classes, courses or programs described herein.



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