Opening a UK Bank Account: A guide for European and International Students

Tips and practical advice about how to open an account

This guide contains information about which documents you need to open a bank account. The banks listed in this guide are local Oxford branches that have agreed to accept signed and stamped copies of the Oxford Enrolment Certificate from Student Self Service as proof of student status. Other local banks may therefore require different documentation from you.

Three useful tips for bank accounts

UK banks are able to open accounts for European and International Students. However, as they need to collect certain information from you to meet UK government financial rules please follow these three useful tips to make the process easier:

1. Gather all the documents needed to open an account:
For all the banks listed in the table on page 5 of this document you will need your passport, visa (or proof of settled/pre-settled status), and an ‘enrolment certificate’ to verify your student and course status. Your enrolment certificate must have your complete student address and postcode.

See page 3 for how to obtain this certificate.

2. Get yourself set up with a bank early:
The banks will be very busy at the start of term, and UK law requires banks to perform detailed identity verification and background checks on new customers which can add sometimes add to the time taken to open an account. It can take 1 to 2 weeks before a new bank account can be opened and you receive your card in the post. Some banks will now ask you to do all of the application online, so you are able to complete some steps before arrival.

3. Talk to your College:
If you are waiting for your account to be opened, or experience delays, have a chat to your College and they may extend the deadline for paying your bills.

Essentials that require a UK bank account:

- A contract UK mobile phone number
  Pay-as-you-go sim cards can be bought with cash, but if you prefer a monthly contract, you can only pay by direct debit from a UK bank account.

- Paying your bills
  Most utility companies (and letting agencies for private accommodation) will expect you to set up a standing order from a UK bank account to pay.

- Salary payments for part-time and vacation work; and scholarships.
  Most employers only pay their workers by BACS into a UK bank account. Scholarship payments can usually only be made into a UK bank account.

Impartial Financial Advice:

Money Helper is sponsored by the Department for Work and Pensions, and offers free and impartial money advice. You can access their dedicated page for Student and graduate bank accounts by visiting: https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/family-and-care/student-and-graduate-money/student-and-graduate-bank-accounts?source=mas#
What services will the banks provide?

The banks vary in the services they provide:

- **All banks provide a cashpoint card to allow you to obtain cash from machines 24 hours a day. Debit cards can be used for shopping and to pay bills and these are provided by all the banks.**

- **Most banks will provide a cheque book to students but you may need to request this; cheques are rarely used in the UK but can still be useful for making some payments.**

- **Contactless payment allows you to make small payments in some shops and supermarkets (less than £45) without having to enter your PIN number.**

- **All banks offer online and telephone banking; you may like to discuss the security arrangements with the bank if you use these services.**

Most banks do not make a charge for depositing money or making payments (cheques, direct debits) but some may charge a monthly fee.

There are also internet bank accounts that you might like to investigate as part of your considerations.

Please bear in mind that although such app-based accounts may offer faster account set-ups and cheaper international fund transfers, not having a physical bank to visit can present other challenges, such as needing to deposit cheques by post, or limits on the number of free ATM transactions that can be made in a month.

Online banks tend to have more limited services and are not regulated in the same way as mainstream high street banks are.

We encourage you to do your own research when deciding whether these types of accounts are the right fit for you.

Common terms about UK bank accounts

**Cash card/ ATM card**

A card that allows you to take money out of your account using a bank machine, referred to as a ‘cash machine’, ‘cashpoint’, ‘hole-in-the-wall’ or ATM. You will be given a Personal Identification Number (PIN) so that you can use the card to withdraw money. Do not allow anyone else to see your PIN number and destroy the letter after you have memorised the number.

You can normally use your cash card at several different banks, without a charge, but in some cases there may be a charge if you use it in a different ‘system’, particularly if you use a non-bank cash machine, for example a cash machine in a shop or at a petrol station. The machine will warn you if there is going to be a charge before you withdraw the money.

Cards can also be used in other countries to withdraw money from your UK bank account but you will pay extra bank charges.

**Debit card/ chip and pin**

A card issued by a bank (usually a combined cash/debit card) that you use to pay for your shopping. The money is usually taken from your account immediately so you must have the funds available in your bank account when you make purchases. The UK uses a chip and pin system where you can use your card to pay for purchases in shops by entering your PIN number.
Common terms about UK bank accounts continued...

Cash-back
Some supermarkets or shops allow you to get cash-back when you buy your groceries. They will give you cash from the till by adding the amount to your total shopping bill paid by debit card.

Contactless cards
A number of banks now offer contactless cards which allow you to pay for small purchases (usually up to £45) by tapping the machine in the shop without needing to enter a PIN number or sign for the purchase.

Cheque book
Cheques are becoming a less common method of payment and nearly all shops have stopped accepting them. There may be times when you need to write a cheque e.g. when joining a sport or social club to pay the fees. Cheque books are not available for all types of account. Always keep your cheque book in a safe place. If you lose your cheque book, or want to cancel a cheque you have written, contact your bank immediately.

Direct debit or Standing order
A method of paying bills from your bank account. You sign a form allowing the company you are paying to take the money directly from your account each month. If you go over your agreed limit, there are usually penalties.

Overdraft
A facility allowing you to spend more money from your account than you have in it. The bank will usually charge you interest if this happens, and other fees.

Warning:
There are a number of quite sophisticated scams circulating by email and text and sometimes on the phone.

You should never confirm your password, or account details, by email or text message.

If you receive a suspicious message either visit your bank in person or use the telephone number from their website or printed on your bank statement/card to call them to check if it is genuine.

How to obtain and print your student enrolment certificate

The enrolment certificate will be accepted as proof of your student status at all the local banks listed in the guide.

Follow these steps to get your certificate:

Step 1: When your offer is complete (academic and financial conditions) IT Services will email you your ‘Single Sign-On’ login details. Single Sign-On is the system used at Oxford to access a wide range of IT services at the University by using only one log-in and password.

Step 2: In early September, Student Information will email you asking you to complete your university student registration online. Complete this process as soon as you can. This is done in an online portal called ‘Student Self Service’.

Step 3: After completing Step 2, your college will contact you to finalise your registration. They will ask for electronic copies of documents such as your passport and visa (BRP) if you have a visa, and to complete other paperwork.

Step 4: Your college will then confirm on the Oxford student database that you have completed the registration process. You are now enrolled on your course.

Step 5: You can now generate and download* your student enrolment certificate from Student Self Service.

*At busy periods, you may have to wait a few hours for the IT system to update that your college has completed your registration before you can generate the certificate.

Remember:
Your enrolment certificate must have your complete student address and postcode, and be signed and stamped by your College.

For more information about student registration and the Student Self Service portal see:
www.ox.ac.uk/students/studentselfservice/
Local Bank opening times and locations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barclays</strong></td>
<td>54 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HB</td>
<td>09:00—16:00 (from 10:00 on Wednesdays)</td>
<td>09:00-15:30 (counter closed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lloyds Bank</strong></td>
<td>1-5 High St, Carfax, Oxford OX1 4AA</td>
<td>09:00—17:00</td>
<td>09:00-15:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HSBC</strong></td>
<td>65 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HY</td>
<td>09:00—17:00 (from 09:30 on Tuesdays)</td>
<td>Not able to assist with student account opening on Saturdays</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Santander</strong></td>
<td>Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB</td>
<td>09:30—16:30</td>
<td>09:30-16:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The addresses listed above are for the local Oxford branches closest to the city centre. You can check their locations via this link to Google Maps to see which would be most convenient for you.

**What about other banks in Oxford?**
Each year, we approach local banks in Oxford to confirm accepted documentation. The banks included in this guide are those that responded and agreed to accept the enrolment certificate as proof of student status.
Unlike previous years, we were unable to confirm this arrangement with NatWest or TSB. There are other banks in Oxford who may still open accounts for international students, but likely require different documentation.

**Lost or stolen cards:**
Notify your bank immediately, if your card is lost or stolen, to avoid any fraudulent transactions.

**Making a complaint:**
If you wish to make a complaint about a bank, see the Financial Ombudsman Service where you can submit a response online: [www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.financial-ombudsman.org.uk)

**Still having problems?**
If you have any difficulties opening a bank account, please talk to the Customer Services department at the Bank directly, first.

If you still have problems let your College Office and Student Information know
[student.information@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:student.information@admin.ox.ac.uk)

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Is online banking safe?

Yes, it is generally very safe in the UK, but take the usual precautions with your password and log-in details and it is better to use your own personal computer and not a computer in a public space.

Many banks will offer additional security measures such as a password generator device which you keep at home and generate a unique password each time you use internet banking.

Banks will also provide demonstrations of such facilities online to new customers.
## Comparison of Oxford banks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th><strong>HSBC</strong></th>
<th><strong>Santander</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td>barclays.co.uk</td>
<td>lloydsbank.com</td>
<td>hsbc.co.uk</td>
<td>santander.co.uk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone</strong></td>
<td>03457 345345 (switchboard ask for Oxford)</td>
<td>0345 602 1997 (switchboard ask for Oxford)</td>
<td>0345 740 4404 (switchboard ask for Oxford)</td>
<td>08009 123 123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main branch</strong></td>
<td>54 Cornmarket Street, OX1 3HB</td>
<td>1-5 High Street, OX1 4AA</td>
<td>65 Cornmarket Street, OX1 3HY</td>
<td>Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile App</td>
<td><strong>Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch</strong></td>
<td>Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch</td>
<td>Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proof of identity and address</strong></td>
<td><strong>Barclys requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Lloyds bank requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>HSBC requirements</strong></td>
<td><strong>Santander requirements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Documents required to open an account</strong></td>
<td>For most banks, you will need some or all of the following documents to open an international bank account:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. An in-date passport</td>
<td>i. A valid visa</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ii. A valid visa</td>
<td>iii. Student Enrolment certificate pdf (see page 3 for information) which <strong>must</strong> have your full student address and postcode, as well as being signed and stamped by your College.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. A bank statement from your home bank, from the past 3 months</td>
<td>iv. For most banks you will need a UK mobile number to open an account online or via their app. You can buy a pay-as-you-go sim card with cash at any mobile phone store.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students living in private accommodation will need to show a copy of their tenancy agreement.</td>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time to receive cards/cheque book</strong></td>
<td>Cards issued between 2 and 5 days Cheque book on request</td>
<td>Cards issued in 5 days Cheque book on request</td>
<td>Cards issued between 5 and 7 days No Cheque facility</td>
<td>Cards issued between 3 and 5 days. No cheque books but bankers drafts/counter cheques can be provided at branch for a fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monthly charge</strong></td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>£1 per month for Essentials account; no charge for Basic account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overdraft facility</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Not offered by any banks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Debit card</strong></td>
<td>Yes, can use in the UK and abroad for any bank</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contactless card</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Essentials account only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone banking and internet banking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Offered by all banks</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mobile apps and text alerts</strong></td>
<td>Free app for mobile devices and text alerts offered by all banks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International transfer fees</strong></td>
<td>If you are planning on frequently sending or receiving money from home, you will need to consider international transfer fees. Sometimes banks take a commission fee (4%-6%) for converting currency, in addition to the fee for sending money.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** This information was correct at the time of printing but services or facilities offered by the banks are subject to change.

We do not recommend any bank in particular, and the banks chosen for this guide are local Oxford branches that agreed to accept the Oxford Enrolment Certificate from Student Self Service as proof of student status.

There are other banks in the city which may require different documentation from you to set up an account.