

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.

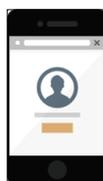
2. Get yourself set up with a bank early:

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

"I have a bank account from my home country, do I need to open a UK bank account?"



Essentials that require a UK bank account:

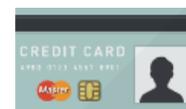


A contract UK mobile phone number

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.

which can 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.

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#>

COVID-19 changes

 As of July 2021, it is **no longer required by law** to wear **face coverings**, however individual businesses can still require customers to wear face coverings, and may request to take your temperature. Most banks now prefer for you to sign up via their apps, but do offer a mix of telephone and face-to-face appointments (pre-booking required).

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.



“What about online-only Internet banks?”



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.

Look for this logo: 

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

	Weekdays	Saturdays
 Barclays 54 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HB	09:00–16:00 (from 10:00 on Wednesdays)	09:00-15:30 (counter closed)
 Lloyds Bank 1-5 High St, Carfax, Oxford OX1 4AA	09:00–17:00	09:00-15:00
 HSBC 65 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HY	09:00–17:00 (from 09:30 on Tuesdays)	Not able to assist with student account opening on Saturdays
 Santander Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB	09:30–16:30	09:30-16:00

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

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

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

	Barclays	Lloyds	HSBC	Santander
Website	barclays.co.uk	lloydsbank.com	hsbc.co.uk	santander.co.uk
Telephone	03457 345345 (switchboard ask for Oxford)	0345 602 1997 (switchboard ask for Oxford)	0345 740 4404 (switchboard ask for Oxford)	08009 123 123
Main branch and best branch to open account	54 Cornmarket Street, OX1 3HB Mobile App — requires a UK mobile number. Online option available	1-5 High Street, OX1 4AA Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch	65 Cornmarket Street. OX1 3HY Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch	Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB Opening an account must be done online; documents provided in branch
Proof of identity and address	Barclays requirements	Lloyds bank requirements	HSBC requirements	Santander requirements
Documents required to open an account	<p>For most banks, you will need some or all of the following documents to open an international bank account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. An in-date passport ii. A valid visa iii. Student Enrolment certificate pdf (see page 3 for information) which must have your full student address and postcode, as well as being signed and stamped by your College. iv. A bank statement from your home bank, from the past 3 months 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. <p><i>NB! This year, banks are requesting that enrolment certificates are signed and stamped by your College; and dated within the last 4 months. Some banks may accept pdf of image files of your documents, but may need to verify some documents in-branch at a booked appointment.</i></p> <p>Students living in private accommodation will need to show a copy of their tenancy agreement.</p>			

Comparison of Oxford banks

	Barclays	Lloyds	HSBC	Santander
Time to receive cards/ cheque book	Cards issued between 2 and 5 days Cheque book on request	Cards issued in 5 days Cheque book on request	Cards issued between 5 and 7 days No Cheque facility	Cards issued between 3 and 5 days. No cheque books but bankers drafts/counter cheques can be provided at branch for a fee
Monthly charge	None	None	None	£1 per month for Essentials account; no charge for Basic account
Overdraft facility	Not offered by any banks			
Debit card	Yes, can use in the UK and abroad for any bank			
Contactless card	Yes	Yes	Yes	Essentials account only
Telephone banking and internet banking	Offered by all banks			
Mobile apps and text alerts	Free app for mobile devices and text alerts offered by all banks			
International transfer fees	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.			

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.