Pre-arrival Information for Spring 2012 Study Abroad and Exchange Students

We at St Mary’s University College are looking forward to your arrival in January to start your semester abroad. We have prepared a few notes that will hopefully aid your preparation to come to the UK and to settle at Strawberry Hill successfully. These are some basic points only; you will receive a full induction in the days after your arrival at St Mary’s on 11\textsuperscript{th} January, 2012.

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1. UK VISA REGULATIONS

In order to ensure that you follow the right procedure, please read the following message carefully. Based on the information you or your Study Abroad advisor at your home institution provides us with, we will now be issuing and sending you your acceptance letters.

Students coming to the UK for one semester only, not wishing to engage in any kind of employment

(\textit{the following information has been copied here from the UK Border Agency website, 27/05/10})

If you are coming to the United Kingdom as a student visitor, you must genuinely be seeking entry to study here for the limited period you tell us you require. This period must not exceed six months.

Additionally, you must have been accepted on a course of study that will be provided by an organisation which is:

- the holder of a sponsor licence for Tier 4 of the points-based system \textit{(please note St Mary’s University College is a holder of this licence)}

You must also:

- leave the United Kingdom at the end of the visit you told us about;
- support and pay for accommodation for yourself and any dependants, without help from public funds; or
- make sure that you and your dependants will be supported and accommodated by relatives or friends, and not take employment; and
- be able to meet the cost of your return or onward journey.

You must not:

- take employment in the United Kingdom;
- engage in business, produce goods or provide services within the United Kingdom, including selling goods or services direct to members of the public;
- study at a government-funded school;
- be a child under the age of 18;
- undertake part-time or full-time vacation employment;
- undertake a work placement or internship (paid or unpaid) as part of your course of study; or
- extend your stay in the United Kingdom.
Students coming to the UK for one semester, who would like to work (paid, unpaid, voluntary, internship, etc.)

You need to apply for entry clearance as an ‘adult student under Tier 4’, as described below in the case of students coming to the UK for a full academic year. Please read section below carefully.

Students coming to the UK for a full academic year

St Mary’s University College is an approved provider of education for overseas students and the Study Abroad programme meets all the criteria outlined by the UK Border Agency.

In addition, you will need an appropriate acceptance letter [a CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) from St Mary’s, which will form the basis of your application for entry clearance to come to the UK]. What the CAS is, is explained on the UK Border Agency website at http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/studyingintheuk/adult-students/can-you-apply/cas/#

You will also need to meet strict financial requirements: you will need to show that, to cover your living expenses while in the UK, you have in a bank account, in your own name (can be a joint account)

- You must show that you have held the required money for a consecutive 28-day period (finishing on the date of the closing balance) ending no more than one month before your application.

If you are providing evidence of official financial sponsorship, in addition to evidence of your own money, any money paid to you by your official financial sponsor will not be considered as available money. Money cannot be counted twice.

You can use the following documents to show money that is available to you:

- personal bank or building society statements, covering a consecutive 28-day period ending no more than one month before the date of your application;
- a building society pass book, covering a consecutive 28-day period ending no more than one month before the date of your application;
- a letter from a bank confirming that funds have been held for a consecutive 28-day period ending no more than one month before the date of your application;
- a letter from a financial institution confirming that funds have been held for a consecutive 28-day period ending no more than one month before the date of your application;
• a letter from a financial institution confirming a loan, dated no more than six months before the date of your application.

(You do not need to show that you have money for tuition because you will either have paid for your tuition in advance or your tuition fees will be waived as part of St Mary’s agreement with your sending university.)

You will have to produce either a bank statement or a letter from a bank confirming that you meet the financial requirements. The evidence produced from the bank must show that during the 28 days leading up to the date the evidence is generated, the balance has never dropped below the right amount. (Dropping below the right amount even for one day means that you do not meet the financial requirement.)

Holders of Tier 4 student visa will be able to work part time (max. 20 hours per week term-time and full-time during holidays).

Length of leave for semester-only students: 7 days before and 7 days after the course.

Length of leave for academic year-long students: 1 month before and 2 months after the course.

Entry clearance procedure:

- Use that document for links to
  - Tier 4 policy guidance
  - Form VAF9 plus guidance notes
  - From PBS Appendix 8
- Check www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply for a link to the website relevant to the country where your application will be made.
- Submit the 2 forms, plus supporting documents

At some stage during the process you will be asked to attend an office to give fingerprints and have your photograph taken.

2. SEMESTER TWO 2011-2012 – KEY DATES
3. ARRIVAL INFORMATION

You should arrive in London on Wednesday 11th January. If you are coming directly from overseas, you should aim to arrive at London Heathrow Airport on the morning of Wednesday 11th January. We arrange coach collection from Heathrow for all who can meet at the Arrivals Desk in Terminal 3 by Midday local time.

Once you have been through passport control, picked up your luggage from the baggage hall and have come through customs (follow the ‘Nothing to declare’ sign), you will walk through to the arrivals hall. Look out for a person holding a St Mary’s sign. He or she will direct you to the group meeting point. If you arrive before 10.30am please wait in the area marked ‘Meeting Point’.

If you are arriving earlier than 11th January or later than 12:00am on that day, or you are arriving at another airport (i.e. not Heathrow) you will have to make your own way to St Mary’s Strawberry Hill campus. If you have a lot of luggage, the easiest way may be to take a black cab. Make sure to budget for this and have UK pounds ready to pay for this. From Heathrow to the campus in Waldegrave Road you should expect to pay up to £40 or £50.

Location maps and directions for alternative ways of transport are explained on our website in detail at http://www.smuc.ac.uk/Contact/index.htm. It may be a good idea to look through and print these even if you are planning to arrive to be picked up as delays may be inevitable. Unfortunately, the group will not be able to wait for individuals, so you need to be prepared to make your own arrangements.
Make sure to inform your Study Abroad Co-ordinator at home or the International Office at St Mary’s if you are arriving as an independent student about your exact flight details. The following information must be provided by email to naylorma@smuc.ac.uk by 1st December:

- Departure date, time and departure city/airport
- Airline and flight number
- Destination airport and terminal
- Arrival date and time

As you arrive on campus, you will be allocated your accommodation as previously arranged. See also below for further details on accommodation.

**MODULE CHOICES**

Most of you have already submitted the list of modules that you wish to take while at St Mary’s. The official registration process will take place during the induction process. While our Registry Department will do their best to accommodate your preferences, please be prepared that some changes may be necessary due to unexpected timetable clashes and alterations. You must also be reasonable when working with the Registrar to establish your programme and not expect to have your timetable to accommodate your extra-curricular and weekend plans. Please remember that although you are in the UK and Europe to have some fun as well as study, the primary aim of your stay is academic.

**4. ACCOMMODATION**

**Students in homestay**

Accommodation has been arranged for you on a bed and breakfast basis from January 11th to May 20th.

*Breakfast and kitchen use*

Breakfast will usually be cereal, toast, coffee, juice etc and many landladies will just ask you to make yourself at home and help yourself. If there is anything in particular that you like to have for breakfast just speak to your host and, in most instances, they will be pleased to buy it in for you (within reason). Please ask your host the time you are able to take breakfast.

Please leave the kitchen or dining room in the condition you find it and put your plates etc in the dishwasher or the sink. Most hosts will be happy for you to make a drink or to prepare a snack from food you have bought yourself. Please talk to your landlady to make sure this is acceptable.

*Bathroom*

Many houses only have one bathroom / shower from for the whole family. Please agree an appropriate time with the family for you to bath or shower so there isn’t a queue when everyone is trying to get out of the house, particularly first thing in the morning. Again, please leave the bathroom in the condition you find it in.
**Bedroom**

You may have your own bedroom or sharing it with another student. Try to keep the room clean and tidy. Your landlady will provide bed-linen which will be changed each week. It is courteous to offer to strip and remake the bed.

**Telephones in homestay**

Please clarify with your host the exact situation with regards to the telephone. Most landladies are happy for you to receive brief incoming calls from your family and to make out-going calls with the use of a card. Local calls are NOT free in the UK.

**Washing machines**

Often landladies will allow the use of the washing machine for a small charge although there are launderette facilities on campus. Some will state ‘light use’ only, i.e. T shirts and underwear as drying space is often at a premium. Jeans and other heavy items should therefore be brought to campus to wash. Your host will show you how to use the washing machine (if she is agreeable) and some lucky students will even get their laundry done for them. Not all households have tumble dryers. If they do, remember that they are expensive to run. Please offer to buy washing powder and softener if there is no charge for using the machine.

**Keys**

Your host will provide you with a set of keys when you arrive which you will be expected to return before you leave. Please check what you need to do to secure the house if you are the last person to arrive home at night.

**Use of the house**

Most hosts will invite you to join them in their ‘family room’ and other parts of the house but please respect the fact that there are times when it may not be convenient for you to join them. Initially wait to be invited. Under no circumstances should you invite anyone to stay overnight or at the weekend without the advance permission of your hosts. If they agree you should offer to pay for your guest to cover the cost of extra laundry, breakfast, etc.

**Smoking**

Most of the accommodation arranged is non-smoking. If you do smoke, please check with your host where this is permissible.

**Adaptors**

If you wish to bring any electrical items with you, make sure to buy an adaptor either before or after arrival as the UK electricity supply system is / may be different from that of your home country.

**Payment for accommodation**
Payment for the duration of your stay will be made directly to your host by St Mary’s. If you need to extend your stay beyond 19 December for any reason you must first ask your host whether this is possible and agree a payment rate directly with them.

Meals on campus

As part of your meal plan, you will be entitled to 7 evening meals and two weekend brunches at the St Mary’s refectory. Unfortunately, the evening meals cannot be swapped for lunches.

Students in halls (On Campus Accommodation is only available to full year Erasmus students).

Accommodation will be arranged in our most modern campus-based hall of residence: Lady Frances De Marillac Hall. Constructed in 2005, De Marillac Hall is situated at the far end of the running track. Resident students will enjoy tastefully furnished, single study bedrooms with en-suite facilities and wireless access. The three-storey building has 180 bedrooms, together with spacious utility kitchen/common rooms. Lift access is available for disabled students. There are two wardens and six senior residents and the total number of bedrooms is 180.

Hall and room entry

You will be given two keys, the outside door key and your room key. Bring a key ring with you and make sure it is easily recognisable (but not named or marked with room location in case it goes missing). If you lose your keys you will be charged for replacements and in some cases replacement locks.

Cleaning

Rooms are cleaned weekly by the university college cleaning staff. You will be advised which day he or she comes and you should tidy up the previous night so that the room is available for cleaning by 9am.

Bedding

Fire retardant duvets and pillows will be provided, together with a duvet cover, pillow cases and sheets. Please bring your own towel(s). You will be responsible for laundering your bed linen and personal clothing. There are launderette facilities on campus.

Furniture

Essential furniture is provided (usually a wardrobe, drawers, desk and chair) and rooms have shelf space and a notice board. Posters or photographs can only be displayed on the designated board. All Study Abroad students who opted for halls will be accommodated in en suite rooms.

Adaptors
If you wish to bring any electrical items with you, make sure to buy an adaptor either before or after arrival as the UK electricity supply system is / may be different from that of your home country.

**Communal kitchen facilities**

These provide snack making facilities e.g. fridge, microwave, kettle and toasters. Each student is responsible for their own washing up and must provide their own crockery or cutlery. The kitchens also have irons and ironing boards.

**Personal possessions insurance**

You are advised to take out possessions insurance if you are not covered by another policy.

**Candles / naked flames**

The use of these is strictly prohibited due to the potential fire risk.

**No-smoking policy**

Students are asked to note that smoking is not permitted in halls and all university college buildings have been designated smoke-free since July 2007.

**Visitors**

No staying over visitors are allowed in halls.

**Security**

We have 24-hour security near the main reception where students can go for assistance. The Security phone number is 020 8240 4335.

**Support services in halls**

Senior residents are usually 2nd or 3rd year students who have lived on campus during their first year and their role is to assist and support you during your time on campus. You can seek their advice any time, but they are also there specifically to help new students settle in to campus life.

Hall wardens are members of staff who reside in the halls of residence. Their role is to support, guide and assist students living on campus. For example, should a student fall ill and need assistance, the warden should be called. Wardens can also issue disciplinary action against students who breach the hall rules. You will also be required to attend regular hall meetings as advertised. There will also be a briefing relating to fire, health and safety and personal safety during the first few days.

**Meal Plan**

As part of this scheme, you will receive 14 meals per week during term time only, which are taken as seven evening meals, five breakfasts and brunch at the weekend at the St Mary’s refectory.
Payment

For some of you, your home institutions will be covering the costs. Those who are paying St Mary’s directly will be notified about payment arrangements in due course.

5. MEDICAL HELP

The York Medical Practice at St Mary’s offers a daily medical service on-site within the University College Medical Centre. The College Practice Nurse is present every weekday. It is free of charge to see the nurse but you need to pay a fee to see a doctor. Emergencies can be seen at the main surgery in the afternoon if necessary.

Please also note that antibiotics cannot be purchased over the counter in the UK. They need to be prescribed by a doctor. If you are on regular medication, it may be a good idea to bring sufficient supplies with you.

6. DISCIPLINE AND STUDENT CHARTER

Study Abroad students are subject to the same rules and regulations as St Mary’s home students. You will be given further information relating to these at induction, including a copy of the St Mary’s Student Charter.

7. MONEY

Debit cards – probably the easiest way to manage your money while in the UK. Make sure to check with your bank that your card will be recognised here. You should also notify them that you will be using it abroad so that they do not put a hold on your account due to suspected fraud. Cash deposits can be made directly into your US bank account if this should prove necessary. The small ATMs often found in corner shops will not accept US cards. However, there are several larger banks and ATMs in the centre of Twickenham, a 10-15 minute walk away from campus.

Other alternatives to think about are wiring funds via Western Union or American Express, credit cards or postal money orders.

8. MOBILE PHONES

Most Study Abroad students opt to purchase simple mobile phones in one of the local phone shops. You can opt for a ‘pay-as-you-go’ scheme. If you are used to carrying a mobile phone with you this may be a good idea.

Upon arrival, we will provide you with a free SIM card that you can place into your existing hand set and will be able to use to call home. In the long run, you can decide whether you wish to stay with the same provider or sign up for another scheme.

9. PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN LONDON

The ‘Oyster Card’ scheme offers the best rates on London-wide travel on buses and on the underground. You can charge it up with different types of travel cards or just opt for a ‘top-up’ version whereby you top it up when you need to. Most local shops as well as public
transport offices are able to do this for you. You may want to visit the Transport for London website at http://www.tfl.gov.uk/ for further information on Oyster and travel in London in general.

10. CONTACTS FOR PRE-ARRIVAL ADVICE

Matt Naylor, International Officer
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8240 2342
Email: naylorma@smuc.ac.uk

Dave Roberts, Accommodation Officer
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8240 4034
Email: accommodation@smuc.ac.uk

Sue Whitham, Student Services Manager
Tel: +44 (0) 20 8240 4189
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Thank you for choosing St Mary’s University College as your Study Abroad destination. We look forward to welcoming you to Strawberry Hill.

Best wishes

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