

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 pdf copies of the Oxford Enrolment Certificate from Student Self Service and your University of Oxford Student card as proof of student status. Other local banks may therefore require different documentation from you.

Three useful tips for bank accounts



UK banks are keen 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 or EU identity card, visa (if you need one), your student card, 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.

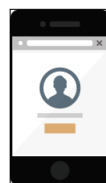
2. Get yourself set up with a bank early:

The banks will be very busy at the start of term, and UK law requires banks to perform 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 your bills.



Salary payments for part-time and vacation work.

Most employers only pay their workers by BACS into a UK bank account.

As a result, it can sometimes 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, talk to your College and they may extend the deadline for paying your bills.


Impartial Financial Advice:

Money Advice Service 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.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/student-and-graduate-bank-accounts>



COVID-19 changes

 As of July 2020, it is now [required by law](#) to wear [face coverings](#) in shops, banks and on public transit.

Most banks now offer a mix of telephone and face-to-face appointments. If you need to bring someone with you to an appointment, you should let them know in advance, so that they can plan to safely accommodate you.

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 being used less frequently 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 for 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 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 pdf 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.

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 (note—opening hours reduced due to Covid-19)



BARCLAYS



LLOYDS BANK



Santander



	Weekdays	Saturdays
Barclays 54 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HB	09:00—1400 (from 10:00 on Wednesdays)	09:00-13:00 (counter closed)
Lloyds Bank 1-5 High St, Carfax, Oxford OX1 4AA	09:30—15:30	Closed
NatWest 43 Cornmarket St, Oxford OX1 3HA	10:00—15:00	Closed
Santander Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB	10:00—15:00	10:00-14:00
TSB 17 George St, Oxford OX1 2AB	10:00—15:30	Closed

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.

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	NatWest	Santander	TSB
Website	barclays.co.uk	lloydsbank.com	natwest.com	santander.co.uk	tsb.co.uk
Telephone	03457 345345 (switchboard ask for Oxford)	0845 300 0000 (switchboard ask for Oxford)	03457 888444	08009 123 123	01865 244551 (Oxford) 01865 774808 (Cowley)
Main branch and best branch to open account	54 Cornmarket Street, OX1 3HB Mobile App to open an account will be launched soon – requires a UK mobile number; may not require an appointment	1-5 High Street, OX1 4AA Opening an account must be done online. The bank may need to check your identity at an appointment	43 Cornmarket Street Opening an account must be done online	Santander House, Oxford OX1 1HB Essentials account can be opened online, including identity checks. Basic account must be opened in-branch	17 George Street, Oxford, OX1 2AB You will need to apply by email to open an account. Appointments will be part phone and part face-to-face
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 3 and 4 days Cheque book on request	Cards issued between 3 and 5 days. No cheque books but bankers drafts/counter cheques can be provided at branch	Cheque book and card issued in 5 days
Visa requirements (for Non-EU students only)	Valid visa	Tier 4 visa only (can accept 90 day visa vignette on passport if BRP card not ready)	Valid visa	Valid visa (can accept 90 day visa vignette on passport if BRP card not ready)	Minimum 12 month visa or student visa
Documents required to open an account (pdf or image files are accepted)	<p>i. valid passport and visa (or EU identity card) ii. Your University student card (for visa and student card, you can take a photo with your phone and save as an image file) iii. Student Enrolment certificate pdf (see page 3 for information) which must have your full student address and postcode (Santander will accept student card and passport without the Enrolment Certificate but will need further proof of address). iv. For most banks you will need a UK mobile number</p> <p><i>NB! In previous years, Enrolment certificates also needed to be stamped and signed by your College, but due to social distancing measures from COVID-19, the banks above have waived this requirement this academic year.</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	NatWest	Santander	TSB
Monthly charge	None	None	£10 per month	£1 per month for Essentials account; no charge for Basic account	None
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	Yes
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				
Other benefits	Instant access Savings Accounts	Sort code and account number, IBAN number issued on same day. Instant access savings accounts available.	Gives international students National Express Coachcard, Taste card and Amazon Prime student membership for one year with a £10 Amazon gift card.	Cashback of up to 15% at a range of major retailers when using Santander debit card.	Student Insurance; Instant Access Savings Account; Classic Plus Account; Pick & Protect Insurance for Students; Instant Access Savings Accounts

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 as proof of student status: image files of students' university cards and Oxford Student Enrolment Certificate pdfs from Student Self Service (without a College stamp and signature, which was mandatory in previous years). There are other banks in the city which may require different documentation from you to set up an account.