

Opening a bank account

Last modified: 30 August 2023

There are a number of factors you should consider when choosing, and opening, a bank account or building society account as an international student in the UK. We cannot advise you on which account, and bank / building society, you should choose.

There are also a number of UK-based consumer websites which provide recommendations about accounts offered by UK banks.

Read [our blog article on Student banking in 2018](#), which looks at whether you really need to open a UK bank account and what is involved in doing it.

Types of account

Most 'high street' banks will offer customers the option to open a 'basic bank account'. A 'basic bank account' is different to a standard 'current account'. It offers limited facilities, is usually fee-free, and allows you to receive money and pay bills but does not allow you to have an 'overdraft' facility.

A large number of banks will also offer an account specifically designed for international students. This will often be, or will be similar to, a basic bank account. However, it may also offer limited overdraft facilities.

Some banks offer accounts and services that meet Sharia principles, also known as Sharia-compliant accounts. There are also a few specialist banks that operate in accordance with Sharia principles. See [information from moneyhelper.org.uk on Sharia-compliant savings](#).

If you open an account which pays interest on your money, as a student you might be able to stop tax being deducted from that interest. Ask your bank / building society for the appropriate form when you open your account.

Changing your address or other personal details

You should let your bank / building society know as soon as possible if you change your address or any other personal details. Try to keep copies of any correspondence you have with your bank / building society. If you are leaving the UK for a long break, for example for the summer vacation, you should let your bank know, in case they treat your account as 'dormant' and close it.

Proving your identity and immigration status

Any person wishing to open a bank / building society account must provide proof of identity to that institution. Banks and building societies must make a status check on all new applicants for a current account. They must not open a current account for a person who requires immigration permission to be in the UK but who does not have it (that means, someone who is in the UK as an overstayer). The UK Home Office publishes guidance on this requirement, and refers to such

applicants as 'disqualified person(s)'; see page 4 of [Guidance for banks and building societies on carrying out immigration status checks on current account holders and applicants](#).

Since 2018, banks and building societies have also been required to check the immigration status of existing current account holders. They are required to inform the Home Office if they believe that one of their current holders does not have permission to be in the UK. The Home Office will then decide whether to investigate further - it may consider whether to order the bank or building society to close an account, or whether to apply to court for an order to 'freeze' the funds in an account. See [information on gov.uk about 'freezing orders'](#).

Money Helper has [comprehensive information on the identity requirements needed for basic bank accounts](#).

The Joint Money Laundering Steering Group (JMLSG) published [guidance for bank staff who are responsible for their bank's compliance with anti-money laundering legislation](#) (revised in 2017). The JMLSG guidance acknowledges that students "will have a passport, and possibly a driving licence". However, where a student cannot provide this, other appropriate confirmation could be a letter from the "applicant's workplace, school, college, university or care institution". The guidance advises that such a letter should contain the customer's full name, residential address, and date of birth. Your education institution should give you, or have already given you, an enrolment letter. You should keep the original enrolment letter in a safe place; you can use it when opening a bank account. If you have yet to enrol, but are already in the UK and are preparing to enrol, your institution may decide to give you a 'letter of introduction (to UK banking facilities)'. JMLSG provides a template for such an introduction letter in Part II of the guidance (above).

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