SOAR Parent/Supporter Q&A Session

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Travelling to the BISC
Passports, Visas and Flights

Q. How do you apply for student visas?

Please see the guidance on OnQ under Module 1 titled “Visa’s and getting to the BISC”, and/or follow the guidance posted on our website under “Admissions, Apply- first year, Step 4” found HERE.

Q. What is the timeline to get CAS number and how long it is taking to get a visa these days?

CAS numbers are assigned to students on a rolling basis as soon as they complete their residence application on eRezLife. We administer CAS letters to QU emails ONLY twice a week. Once students have their CAS letters, they can apply for their visa. Once you have completed the online portion of your VISA application, you will need to set up your biometrics appointment. After the completion of your biometrics appointment, it can take two or more weeks to hear back about the approval of your visa. If you can’t get a biometrics appointment, email the welcome@bisc.queensu.ac.uk email address and we will advise you further.
Q. If we are in the position of making an application for a new passport, do we need to wait for the passport to arrive before making an application for the VISA or can we make an application and just need the passport for the biometrics interview?

We are encouraging students to upload their expired/nearly expired passports to eRezLife as we can issue a CAS letter for them on that one. Some students are finding they need the CAS letter to prove the need to travel to obtain a new passport.

Once they have the new passport the student must email welcome@bisc.queensu.ac.uk to let us know the new passport number and expiry date so we can update their online CAS record. The student will need their new passport for the biometrics appointment.

Q. Does the Irish EU visa require any UK visa?

Please check the UK government site on student visas as rules may have changed as a result of Brexit. For concerns like this, we encourage you to visit HERE and check if you need to apply for a student visa based off your passport.

Q. What happens if the visa does not arrive in time due to delays?

For most cases, you will not have your passport to travel to the UK without your student VISA since you will need to surrender it during the biometrics appointment. If you paid for the option to keep your passport, please do not leave your country of origin until your student VISA arrives. If you enter the UK without your student visa, you will need to re-enter the UK again once you have the VISA. If you are experiencing any issues or anticipate delays to your VISA approval, please email the welcome@bisc.queensu.ac.uk.

Q: What day should we book our return trip to Canada at the end of the fall term? Is there a time?

Last day of classes is Thursday December 15, so please book your flights for December 16 and no earlier than 12pm noon. We will be asking students to submit their departure flight information to eRezLife later in the Fall 2021 semester, which will help to inform the timings for the coach transfers to Heathrow in December.

You can find all sessional dates for the 2021-2022 academic year by following this link.

Q: What do people find that the cheapest way to ship student belongings to the castle ahead of time?
There are a number of shipment options. In the past students and faculty have used these organizations: sendmybag.com and mybaggage.com. Many of the websites are identifying that delivery may be longer than the normal 3-4 days because of COVID-19 restrictions.

Please make sure to include the student’s name in the luggage tag. You should also send an email to welcomes@bisc.queensu.ac.uk letting us know that you will be shipping luggage in advance so that we can arrange for any shipped items to be stored in a safe location.

**Q. If we are accompanying our student to the BISC in September, will we be allowed to see their dorm room, presuming that we have completed or not subject to quarantine.**

Bader Hall will be a closed building to all but residents and essential workers for the month of September to safeguard everyone. Parents and guardians will be asked to drop students off at the front door and will not be allowed into the building until later in the academic year.

**Q. Would transportation and housing accommodation be provided for parents to the castle?**

There is no transportation and accommodation available to visitors and parents/guardians to the BISC at this time.

**Q. Can you suggestion for where parents should stay if they are unable to stay at the Castle?**

There are small bed and breakfast accommodations in Herstmonceux village. If you are looking to check into a hotel, we recommend Eastbourne. Something to consider, you will need to arrange your own transportation to and from the castle. There are many local taxi companies.

**Q. When is resumption date and when do students travel?**

The Fall 2021 arrival date is September 9 with classes starting on September 13. The departure date is on December 16, after which the BISC will be closed for winter break. Arrival date in the UK for the second semester is January 7, 2022 with classes beginning on January 10

For more information about the 2021-2022 sessional dates, please click [HERE](#).

**Q. Do we need to quarantine after 2 vaccines completed??**

Please see the current UK Quarantine guidelines [here](#).

We will be updating our quarantine policies in accordance with these policies and regulations.
Q. When might we know if they will be coming home for winter break?

We currently have departure day on December 16th, 2021. We are monitoring government guidance for departing the UK and going to different countries and will be continuing to update parents/guardians and students as the COVID situation evolves.

Q. Would you suggest that students buy return tickets as it is assumed they will be coming home for winter break?

Yes, we have departure day set for December 16th. The BISC is typically closed during the winter break. We are continuing to monitor the situation. We strongly recommend you buy travel insurance or a ticket with flexible options in case of any changes.

Q. Is BISC closed over the winter break

In a normal year, the BISC would close over the break. This year, we are mindful that there may be students who may not be able to return home. We will be monitoring the situation and providing updates on a regular basis.

Q. What’s the next step from here onwards?

For general next steps, please visit our Next Steps Checklist webpage.

For next steps regarding VISA applications, students must submit the required information on eRezLife. Each student has received instructions to log on to eRezLife via their email. Once this has been done the student will receive their CAS letter, which will allow them to apply for a student VISA and their biometrics appointment. For a detailed guide on your VISA application, please refer to our Student Visa Application Guide.

Students will have the opportunity to meet for a 15-minute individual time slot with academic advisors during SOAR to discuss course selection.
Academics at the BISC

Fees, Enrolment and classes

Q. Is payment one time or by instalments?

The Office of the Registrar at Queen’s handles all enquiries related to tuition fees. Please visit the 2021-2022 Guide to Registration and Fees to learn more about how and when to pay for fees.

Q. When do you start making payments?

Payments are made through your student’s SOLUS Student Centre page. For more information on payment schedule please visit the following guide.

Q. What are the exact cost implications for year 1 at the castle and the payment schedule.

The fee schedule available on SOLUS and on the Queen’s Registrar’s Office found HERE. Travelling and activities as part of the academic program (ELO’S and Midterm Trips) are already factored into the cost. Money for extra things will be if you want to go on other trips outside of school, to buy souvenirs, private transportation, etc.

Students should not require a lot of cash because the BISC is cashless.

Q. What day do classes resume in winter term

Arrival date in the UK is January 7, 2022 with classes beginning on January 10

For more information about the 2021-2022 sessional dates, please visit HERE.
Term Life at the BISC

Q. Do the students need to bring their own hangers or are they provided?
Student’s do not need to bring their own hangers; they are provided in the closets.

Q. What is the best phone plan that students can get?
The UK has several phone providers that offer different services. Most students get a Pay as you go plan using pre-paid SIM card during their time at the BISC as this is the most cost-effective route for most students. We recommend looking into pay as you go plans that includes international calling to Canada so that they can connect with friends and family back home. To learn more about network providers, please visit this webpage.

Q. From a previous meeting our understanding is that the BISC is going cashless, how does this impact the students’ ability to access cash weekly through the BISC or is this no longer an option?
Students will no longer be able to access cash through the BISC, however there are ATMs and banks in local towns such as Eastbourne. The minibus does daily trips into town so students will have ample opportunity to withdraw cash if needed.

Q. Does cashless mean there are no ATMs on campus?
There is no ATM on campus.

Q. Can under 18-year-old student be able to open a UK bank account?
There are many banks that are available in Canada and the UK. We encourage students to speak to your current back for exchange rates and using a credit card while abroad. There are often international cards that you can get from your Canadian bank.

Students often open online bank accounts such as Wise, that allows for easy currency conversions and can carry multiple currencies in one card.

Opening a bank account in the UK can take a significant amount of time and often requires proof of residence (the BISC can provide this) It is often easier to just transfer funds across or put a travel advisory on your current card so you can use it internationally!
Q. Will the students have roommates in the Fall term?

Students who wish to have a roommate in the Fall term can opt-in to have a roommate. Students may wish to have a roommate if they are travelling with friends or are looking forward to the classic university dorm experience! Students’ can opt-in to this via eRez.

Q. During the holiday break, do students do not need to move out of their room, will they have the same room? Do, the students have to be completely out for the entire time with their belongings?

No, the student will not need to move their belongings out of their residence room over the winter break. However, during the winter closure students would be unable to access their room as the campus is closed.

Q. Can we mail birthday gifts to the castle?

Yes! Students love receiving mail! In the past parents have also ordered flowers, cake, etc, from local companies and had these delivered!

Q. How do we submit dietary restrictions?

We work with the Catering team to cater for dietary request. Please ensure that you submit your request on the eRezLife application, and we will pass this information to the catering staff.

Q. How will we share washrooms during quarantine and are they going to be cleaned properly?

Common areas including washrooms, Common Rooms, and kitchenettes are cleaned by Housekeeping daily. Bader Hall’s Housekeeping staff will provide an increased service, but we expect all students in the BISC Bubble to play their part in keeping their residence clean. Hand sanitiser dispensers will be located throughout the building for students to use, as well as cleaning supplies for students to wipe down high touch points and surfaces.

Q. What is the security like at Bader Hall (rules, curfew...)

There is no curfew, however there are quiet hours and courtesy hours that students are expected to follow. There is 24/7 security as well as a member of Student Services on call 24/7. Both security and Student Services do rounds of the property and residence building.
Entrances at Bader Hall can only be accessed with a room card provided to students at the beginning of term. Any guests will have to enter through the reception area and check in for safety purposes.

Lampposts are located around the estate that have emergency help buttons on them. The emergency help buttons are easily identified on campus by their yellow boxes with a large red button. They are located on frequently travelled routes to create better access to emergency services along those areas. When the red button is pushed, the security team is alerted and will respond to the location where the button is activated.

Q. Are there any part time work opportunities for students?

Students on student VISAs are legally able to work 20 hours a week. We currently do not offer part time paid positions for students on-site, so students will need to go offsite to find positions. There is a big transition into first year university and studying abroad. We encourage students to make the most of their experience in England and adjust to the new academic expectations. When students are not in class they will be travelling to experiential learning opportunities and having a consistent day free of commitments can not be guaranteed.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions part-time work may be unavailable locally so we advise students not to expect that they will be able to find employment.

Q. Do you have any suggestions for power needs for laptops/equipment e.g. would residence rooms have power bars, need converters, etc.

Most laptops are built with their own converters, but students will need a UK outlet adapter. When students arrive at the BISC, they participate in “PAT” testing. This means the maintenance department will need to check electronics that students bring with them to ensure that they will not pose a fire hazard. Items that do not pass PAT testing will be held by the BISC and returned to students on departure day.

Students should bring an ethernet cable with them to use in Bader Hall in order to ensure the best access to the internet.
Health at the BISC

Q. Is there a doctor who attends the BISC to see students (for medication renewals) and is there a pharmacy nearby that would accept AMS health drug plan?

Students will be registered with the Herstmonceux Integrative Health Clinic. There is a pharmacy at the clinic and we provide weekly minibus trips there. In addition, a doctor comes on site to the Bader Hall doctors surgery once a week. Whilst the pharmacy would not accept the AMS Health Plan directly, you can send in a claim to the AMS Healthcare Plan to get reimbursed. More details of what is covered under travel in the AMS healthcare plan can be found here.

Q. What does the AMS insurance consist of and how expensive is it?

Full details of the AMS Health and Dental coverage and costs can be found here.

Q. Will there be any anti-COVID measures put in place at the Castle?

We are strongly encouraging students to be vaccinated. Students will be given assistance with receiving their vaccine in the UK, if required. There will be a robust cleaning protocol in Bader Hall and elsewhere in all BISC buildings.

We will request vaccination status of all students on arrival to ensure the safety of all those at the BISC.

Please see our Covid-19 readiness webpage for more information.