



THAMES
COLLEGE
BERKSHIRE



STUDENT HAND BOOK

2010-2011

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1. Welcome

Dear Student,

I want to welcome you to Thames College Berkshire

Our mission is to enable financially disadvantaged students to gain a reputable UK qualification and achieve their full potential.

The purpose of this handbook is to support services available in the Institution to help you and to direct you where you can obtain assistance as well as to outline your responsibilities as a student and a member of the College community.

This is a source of information to you throughout your studies at Thames College Berkshire. You should make yourself familiar with its contents, and we recommend that you keep this handbook as an important reference guide.

You are most welcome to visit the College and meet members of Staff. Good luck with your studies and I hope you enjoy your stay and experience with us.

Abdul Baseer
Principal

2. **Thames College Berkshire** is in the Royal County of Berkshire in the heart of the Thames Valley just between London and Oxford; Reading offers the best of town life with the peace of some of England's finest countryside.

Reading whose heritage dates back to Roman times is home of one of England's largest and richest Abbeys and is also the burial place of King Henry I. The growth of new buildings reflects how many companies see Reading as a town of the future as much as the present.

The town is close to the M4, while fast trains will take you to London Paddington (25 minutes), Oxford, Birmingham or Bristol. Heathrow and Gatwick airports are not far away linked by coach and rail.

Reading is an important business centre in South East England and is often referred to as the capital of the Thames Valley, with the headquarters of some major British companies and the UK offices of a number of major foreign multinationals not forgetting to mention Reading is close to Windsor the home of Queen Elizabeth (Windsor Palace) and Ascot.

3. **Before you leave home**

3.1 Applying for your student visa

If you are a non-EEA/Swiss national, please make sure before leaving your home country that you have made the necessary arrangements. You must have a **valid passport** and remember that **entry clearance** (a student visa) is mandatory for all nationals who intend to stay in the UK for longer than six months. You apply for this at your nearest British Embassy, High Commission, Consulate or Visa Application Centre in your country of usual residence. A full list of contact details can be found on the UK Visas website at www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/wheretosapply you will also be able to download the application form and in some cases submit your application online

To apply for your entry clearance you will need a **CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies)** which you have received from Thames College Berkshire and evidence of **financial support** (documents to show that you have enough money to cover your first year's tuition fees and £5,400 for living expenses. You will have to show additional sums if you have dependants). For further information please visit <http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/>

You should check if you require an **ATAS (Academic Technology Approval Scheme) Clearance Certificate** - postgraduate students studying or researching in certain fields must obtain this certificate before you can apply for your student visa. The scheme is designed to

carry out security checks on those who will be researching/ studying Engineering, Science, Mathematics, Technology or Biomedical subjects. Applications for an ATAS certificate are free of charge and can be made online. Full details of the process and the subject areas can be found at www.fco.gov.uk/atas

If you are a non-visa national and you are coming to study for less than six months you can apply on entry to the UK for a **student visitor** visa, however, this type of visa cannot be extended and you will not be allowed to work. If you are a visa national coming for less than six months you will have to apply for a student visitor visa before you leave home.

Further information on all aspects of applying for Entry Clearance under the Points Based System can be viewed at: www.ukvisas.gov.uk/en/howtoapply/infos/inf29pbsstudent

If you have questions about applying for your visa please let the College's International Student Advisers know (see Welfare), however, Thames College Berkshire is unable to represent individuals who have been refused a visa.

If you are an EEA national (EU member states plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein), or a Swiss national, you will be admitted to the UK with a minimum of formality. On arrival, you must simply produce a valid passport or national identity card.

3.2 Money

There is no limit to the amount of money you can bring into the UK, but your own country may operate exchange controls. If this is the case, you must start making arrangements for transferring money several months before your course is due to begin. If you arrive elsewhere in the UK, you will need money immediately for train/plane fare to Reading; Berkshire and you may have a hotel (£50 or more per night) and meals to pay for. You should therefore bring approximately £200-250 in British currency with you, together with a credit card or sufficient traveller's cheques to cover all your initial expenses, which may include a deposit for accommodation, food and warm clothing. Traveller's cheques can be cashed at airports, railway stations, banks and bureaux de change. Try to avoid carrying too much cash in case it is lost or stolen.

It is a condition of acceptance that you should not commence study in the Thames College Berkshire unless you have adequate funds available to finance yourself to the end of your course. Remember that in addition to tuition fees, you must take into consideration board and lodgings, books, stationery and equipment, clothing, travel, holidays and entertainment.

3.3 Food and plant imports to the UK

There are strict controls on bringing meat, milk, fish, shellfish, plants and their products into EU countries. If you are stopped by UK Customs and Port Health Officers, any prohibited items will be seized and destroyed and tough penalties can be imposed. For full information on what you can and cannot bring into the UK, please check the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs' website at: www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/illegal

4. Admissions

The Admissions office is responsible for admitting students to the College and advising on entry qualifications. They can help you if you need information about:

- Changing the course you have applied for
- Requesting academic credits for prior learning
- Enrolling onto courses
- Progressing from your current programme onto another program

5. Student's registration and advisory services

The Staff in Admissions offers a wide range of services relating to

- Modular registration
- Changing modules/courses
- Course withdrawal, transfers and deferrals
- Exam time tables
- Mitigating circumstances claims
- Financial implications of transferring courses
- Payment of fees

In addition they will handle receipt of all assignments.

You should obtain all the forms you need to action changes to your student record from the front desk and returned once dually completed

All changes to course units, modules, course transfers, withdrawals and deferrals must be authorised by your course leader before the Director of Administration can take further action on them permanently affecting your file.

6. Identity cards

ID cards are issued as part of the enrolment process, the student ID remains property of the institution and can be withdrawn in the event of breach of contract by the student or on disciplinary grounds. A replacement ID card will cost £10.

7. Office hours

All offices of Thames College Berkshire will operate from the hours of 9:00am – 6:00pm Monday to Friday other than on bank holidays where the College remains closed. All appointments should be booked at reception during these times.

8. Academic Advice

As students at Thames College Berkshire, you are entitled to seek and obtain academic advice which can be sought from your course tutors and department heads.

- The aim of this service is to provide independent impartial service
- To aid in queries relating to the structure of the program of study
- To advise for change of program or course
- To advise if you are having difficulty in attending/meeting class deadline
- To advise in issues relating to progression and referrals

9. Your studies

Your responsibilities are

- Attending lectures and seminars regularly and punctually
- Ensure you are registered on the correct modules
- Seek advice at an early stage if there is a problem
- Pay your fees accordingly
- Submit all assignments in due time

10. Registration

Following are the relevant points from College rules and regulations dealing with registration procedures .If you or your sponsor owes money to the College for tuition fees, you will risk:

- Not being allowed to register for the next session;
- Not being awarded a degree or diploma
- Non-payment of tuition fees by you or your sponsor by the required dates can lead to exclusion from your course in the current session.

11. Re-Registration

Students on courses of more than one year must re-register with the College each academic year. Information on how to re-register will be sent to your current home address at the end of the academic session. Students may re-register by post, those who do not register by post must attend a re-registration session in order to confirm details of courses, funding, address, and personal information.

Timetables and instructions for re-registration are normally published three weeks before each exam period commences.

Students cannot proceed to the next academic session nor will Student ID card be valid until you have re-registered.

Check that your personal details are correctly recorded and updated as necessary. These may be needed in an emergency.

12. Punctuality

Being late for classes is not only detrimental to the academic progress of the latecomer, but is disruptive for the entire class. Students arriving late may be marked absent. Persistent offenders may be suspended from the College.

Students who are late to start their course for whatever reason are not entitled to a reduction in tuition fees; this also applies where students have been absent from classes without formally withdrawing or differing their course of study to a later date.

13. Attendance

All full-time students are required to attend all lectures for a minimum of 16 hours per week from Monday to Friday excluding the computer Lab sessions and to take all tests and submit assignments set by their tutors.

Failure to adhere to these guidelines/deadlines may render the student liable to certain penalties, and in some circumstances expulsion from the course. The College does not recommend students for examinations if attendance falls below 85% of that required. In the case of absence, the College must be informed of valid reasons. A medical certificate is required if there are more than three days' consecutive absence owing to illness.

Students are required to:

- Attend classes punctually and regularly; Immigration regulations require you to attend at least 85% of all classes, tutorials, etc. This is the crucial & most important, students whose attendances are lower than above will be expelled from the college. Immigration authorities ask for proof of this when students apply to extend leave to remain.
- Be in residence from the beginning to the end of each term. This includes examination periods. If you fail exams you will also be expected to be available to re-sit in the summer examination period.
- Attend classes regularly as per time-table. A minimum of 85% attendance on the course is required. If attendance falls below this mark, without a valid reason, student may be suspended, not permitted to take examination, or both.
- Students are expected to behave in a responsible manner, both on and off the premises. Failure to do so, may result in suspension from the College.

14. Non-Attendance and Non-Arrival:

Any student who is absent for 10 lessons without any prior arrangements will be reported to Border and Immigration Agency

The College Registrar/Principal monitors student attendances from the class registers on regular basis (Daily/Weekly), and warning letters are sent to the students who show a pattern of consistent absenteeism.

The students are generally asked to make an appointment with their course director and provide details of any accentuating circumstances. Non respondents may risk suspension/expulsion from the course with out any further notice.

In case of non- arrival on a course, reminders are sent to the students during the second week of the course. Late arrivals are allowed to join the course, no later than three weeks, after the commencement of their academic session.

Failure to arrive within the first two weeks may result in your place given to the next available candidate, with out any prior notice

15. Teaching

All full-time students are expected to attend day time classes from Monday to Friday. Course start and end dates are an indication of the academic calendar and are not expected to change. The College reserves the right to alter dates in order to facilitate or improve the provision of the course and its examinations. Any such changes will not affect the College regulations.

16. Books & Stationary

The College provides students, where applicable, with the relevant course materials. The textbooks and other course materials forming an essential part of class work must always be brought to the class for studies. Students are expected to buy their own textbooks and stationery.

17. Examination Entry

Students are entered for examinations only if their attendance is not less than 85% of the total and they are recommended by the Course Leader. Though the College informs, advises and assists students in examination entry procedure, it is entirely the students' responsibility to register with the professional bodies as Student Members and to register for examinations in good time. The student must pay all examination fees and student membership fees.

It is the student's responsibility to register with the appropriate examination body, to enter all relevant examinations and be to in good standing with that body.

18. Non-Invigilated Examinations (all students)

Non-invigilated examinations include course-work for assessment, projects, theses, dissertations, extended essays etc. Careful quoting of material from books and articles is permissible, but the material must always be attributed to its sources by means of quotation marks (i.e. "....."). A footnote or brackets naming the author and the title of the text plus the dates of publication will be required, as well as a bibliography that provides full references to all the material consulted or used. It is not sufficient simply to list the sources in the bibliography.

Students should take great care when taking notes from books or articles or when down-loading from the web pages to always record the source at the time so as to be able to attribute the material if used later.

If the student is found guilty of cheating, this may result in exclusion, failure or other appropriate penalties, even if the plagiarism is not discovered until much later. Please refer to the "Student- Handbook".

19. Invigilated Examinations (students on taught courses)

Carefully note examination dates in your diary each year, please refer to the College academic calendar.

If you find that an examination might be set on a day when your religious beliefs would prevent you attending, you must contact the Examinations Team in the Registry Office. It may then be possible for timetables of examinations to take account of your needs. For students taking examinations for professional bodies no such concession may be available.

20. Academic offences

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that results in incremental discipline for multiple offences and severe discipline for some offences. Consequences may include denial/ revocation of admission, warning, receipt of a reduced/failing grade, suspension or dismissal from a class or program, suspension, dismissal, and degree annulment

The rules and conventions of academic writing are intended to increase your ability to have independent and critical thought. The work you produce should always be in your own words or images and should be of your own ideas, results and experiences as well as your understanding of the ideas of others. You must always reference the source of copied or paraphrased material. This is to inform the reader where it can be found, and to give credit to the authors.

21. Cheating

This is where a student either copies from scripts of other candidates or allows their work to be copied, brings into an examination any unauthorised materials or impersonates in any form.

22. Fabrication

Fabrication of information is where a student presents false or fabricated information, results or conclusions in any form of assessment, including practical work, field studies, oral presentations, interviews and reports on work placements.

23. Plagiarism

This is where a student either copies from another source-published or unpublished and presents the copied work as their own. Work presented in an assessment must be of their own and any references to other work must be fully acknowledged. The college may submit any material presented for assessment to an electronic means for detecting incidents of plagiarism.

24. Personal property

Students bring items of personal property on to the College premises do so at their own risk, the college does not accept any responsibility for loss of personal property. Any such loss should be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate office or the reception desk.

25. Data Protection

Law requires the College, to make a variety of statistical returns on students to external bodies such as the department of Education and skills, and UKBA including local education authorities using data collected at enrolment. In accordance with the statement signed by all students on enrolment, personal data may be divulged only to the following.

- An employer or sponsor named on your enrolment form
- Person requesting for a reference
- An external collection agency in the even of non-payment of fees.

Please ensure that your parents and guardians, in particular understand that under the data protection act, College staff cannot divulge information about you to them without your written consent. Students can however make arrangements to see a copy of the personal data of which they are subject.

26. Change of Circumstances

It is vital that Students informs the college about the change of their circumstances, such as change of address or change in their personal circumstances. Please ask the reception for the change of address form; alternatively please email us on admin@tcb.uk.com

27. Code of Conduct

- Students are made aware of conditions of study at the College and the regulations covering progression and awards. The code of conduct for students and the student disciplinary procedure are detailed in the College regulations for Academic programs
- Lectures will begin on time with attendance being taken not later than half an hour after the lecture starts. Any students coming to class half an hour after the scheduled start time will not be admitted into the lecture hall and will be considered as absent on that day.
- Food and drink will not be permitted in the lecture hall during lectures, tutorials and seminars.
- Students are requested to switch off mobile phones during lecture and tutorial sessions.
- Students are required to take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and others who are either affected by what they do or fail to do.
- It is required of the students to cooperate with staff who look over classes, activities and areas to enable them to carry out responsibilities.
- Report all events and incidents including hazardous situations.
- Comply with policies, procedures and instructions that govern and guide student welfare.

28. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The complaint procedure is aimed at providing a mechanism for receiving and examining complaints by student against the level of facilities or training provided by the Institution.

28.1 Notification of the complaint

- Complaint shall be in writing
- All complaints shall be addressed to the Registrar and shall be made within

30 days of the scheduled end of the course contracted for.

- Complaint forms are with the administration department.

28.2 Procedure after receipt of a complaint

- The nature and scale of the complaint will be assessed, for instance, academic or administrative.
- Complaint committee headed by the Registrar would take steps to clarify and define the complaint and may request further information from the student, if necessary.
- In their assessment of the complaint the committee will give particular attention to the attendance record and academic achievements of the complainant.
- The student will be given the chance to make oral presentations in front of the committee.
- The committee will have a period of 7-14 days to notify the student of the outcome of the complaint. One copy of the findings will be sent to the principal.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, Welfare officer has the list of external bodies, where the student can lodge his/her complaint.

29. Payment of fees

The college provides ways by which students can pay tuition fees in instalments. Students are advised to seek help as soon as they identify that there is a problem.

The College reserves the right to exclude students who are in debt. The students will not be allowed to progress and certificates or awards will not be conferred until payment is made.

The College reserves the right to refer debt to external debt collection agencies for recovery as well as to take court action to recover the outstanding sums.

30. Remitting Fees

You may remit the fee by one of the following methods:

- Banker's draft or cheque made payable to "Thames College Berkshire" and posted to the College using a reliable postal service.
- Direct transfer to the College bank account, the details of which are as follows:

HSBC Bank plc,
Reading Branch
Thames College Berkshire Limited
Sort Code : 403804
A/C Number : 94132424

31. Term dates

Enrolment at the College takes place in the week before teaching begins.

Monday June 07 th	First Day of Class (1 st Intake)
Monday September 27 th	First Day of class (2 nd Intake)
Monday December 18	Start of Christmas Break
Monday January 8	Beginning of new term / Enrolment of new students
January 12 – 19	Examination week/submission of assignments
April 2—23	Easter Break
Monday April 23	Beginning of new term / Enrolment of new students
Monday May 7	May Bank Holiday
Monday May 28	Spring Bank Holiday
Thursday June 7	Submission of assignments
Friday July 7	Last day of class
July 9 – 13	Graduation at University of Sunderland
July 9—13 August	Assignment support
Monday -August 20	Assignment Submission/ Examination week

32. General Terms & Conditions:

1. All applications must be accompanied by non refundable registration fees of £50.00, copies of all the required certificates and two passport sized photographs. We regret that we will not be able to consider your application if the registration fees is not enclosed. This fees is non refundable unless admission is refused.

2. All students must produce evidence of qualifications and/or reference letters from employers detailing dates of employment, position held and duties. Anyone found to have given false information or forged documents will be expelled from the college.

3. All applicants/students on their arrival in the UK will have their prerequisites assed by the college academic staff. Following assessment the staff may at their discretion require the students to complete an access course successfully prior to joining their chosen course. Any applications for exemptions' will be assessed by and granted only at the discretion of the staff. Any exemptions' granted would be subject to condition for e.g. students wishing to join the second year of undergraduate study (or an HND) need to demonstrate successful completion of the first year (for instance an HNC and its associated course work). In all cases all cases the decision of the academic staff are final.

4. Students are required to attend all lectures, take all tests and submit assignments set by their lecturers. Failure to adhere to these guidelines or deadlines may render the student liable to certain penalties such as re-sits, which may in turn effect the students duration of studies, fees, completion etc. Students must inform the college of any change to their UK address and/or telephone number.

5. Students wishing to transfer their course from one term to another due to extenuating circumstances acceptable to the college may do so but a notice of two weeks is required and there is an administration of £100.0

6. TCB reserves the right to alter dates, fees and any particulars in the brochure without prior notice.

7. Course fees may be paid by instalment at the discretion of TCB.

8. TCB accepts no legal liability in the case of accidents, illness, loss of or damage to personal effects and mail. Students will be asked to pay for any damage they cause the premises and/or property of the college or their accommodation arranged by the college.

9. TCB reserves the right to expel any students for improper conduct or any conduct that interferes with the well being of other students, staff or the reputation of the college.

33. Financial Regulations

The fees can be paid from the following sources:

- An employer or other recognised sponsor
- Student or his /her family
- Students who are unable to produce acceptable evidence of support from their sponsor will be liable for the payment of their fees
- The college reserves the right to accept a sponsor's guarantee in a case where the guarantee is not acceptable it is the student's responsibility to pay his/ her fees in line with our admission procedure

34. Refunds

Registration fees are not refundable.

In order to claim a refund of tuition fees the student or sponsor must meet the following conditions:

1. Advise the director of Admission/Principal in writing of withdrawal from the course 4 weeks before the start date of the course on the advertised start date or within a reasonable period thereafter.

2. Complete and return the refund application form along with student card and student property including all original documentation issued by the college.

3. Overseas students or their sponsors' must return all original documents issued by the college (CAS ,Enrolment letter, receipts etc) which were issued by the college and proof of rejection of student visa (a letter issued by the British Embassy/High Commission or UK Border Agency confirming the refusal of visa entry).

4. Full refund of tuition fee will be made if the college is unable to offer an advertised course.

5. Home/Overseas students based in the UK: from the tuition fees paid £250.00 will be retained

by the college and the balance of the fees paid will be refunded if they meet condition 1 and 2 set above and the college must be satisfied that the student has not taken any advantage of college documents and references. This includes the arrival into or extension of stay in the UK, council tax and other benefits or services.

6.Overseas students (not based in the UK: tuition fees will be refunded after £250.00 deduction of administration cost only after they meet the conditions (1, 2 and 3) stated above. Should the student wish to appeal against an entry clearance/visa decision the college will provide documentation for the next available session at no extra cost if the student/sponsor does not apply for a refund.

7.No refund will be made if the student or sponsor is not meeting the conditions set out above or the student is required by the UKBA to leave the UK because of non or poor attendance or because any breach of the Immigration law or involve into any criminal activities.. Refunds will be made to the person or organisation that initially made the payment.

35. Outstanding Liabilities

The college will initiate the recovery of all outstanding fees or property at the earliest practical date after the liability has incurred. However if a student owes any fees (for example tuition fees) or is yet to replace or reimburse the college for, property lost or damaged by her or him, admission to the course will be refused after informal notice until the debt is discharged in full.

36. Exception arrangements

Special arrangements can be made where exceptional/extenuating circumstances apply. These are at the discretion of the college.

37. Accommodation

Should the college be asked to arrange accommodation for a student a minimum of two weeks rent is required in advance by the college as a deposit in order to secure the students accommodation. This deposit is non-refundable should the student find alternative accommodation.

TCB reserves all right to change vary or defer the terms of enrolment, fees and financial regulations' at its discretion.

38. The Health and Safety at Thames College Berkshire

Thames College Berkshire is committed to pursuing excellence in everything it does and this includes the management of Health and Safety. At the induction day all the students will be provided with the complete health & safety documents for your records.

- It is the policy of Thames College Berkshire to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the Health, Safety and Welfare of its employees, students and the Health & Safety of other persons who may be affected by its activities. The Thames College Berkshire will take steps to ensure that its statutory duties are met at all times.

TCB undertakes to continually review and develop our safety management systems, with the overarching aim of conducting our activities in a manner which does not affect the health and safety of any staff, students, contractors, visitors or members of the public, or adversely affect the environment.

39. Who is who at TCB

Principal and Chief Executive	:	Mr. Abdul Baseer
Director of Administration & Quality Assurance	:	Miss Preeti Gandhi
Director of Academics	:	Mr. Wasey Syed
Director of Operations	:	Mr. Abdul Mirza
Director of Support Services/Student Welfare	:	Mr Mujahid Hussain
Learning Resource Support Manager	:	Mr Naveed Mohammed

40. USEFUL CONTACTS

UKCOSA Help line for International Students		0207 354 5210
Wings of Justice Immigration Services		0207 498 4441
Thames Valley Police		0845 850 5505
Drug Help Line		0800 776 6000
Samaritans 24 hr confidential listening		0845 790 9090
Council tax benefits	Reading	0118 939 0656
Job Centre Plus	Reading	0118 980 8200
Waterstone Book shop	Reading	0118 958 1270

National Association of Citizens Advice bureau	www.adviceguide.org.uk
Advice for International Students	www.ukcosa.org.uk
Government pages for Higher Education	www.dfes.gov.uk/hestudents
Student Loans Company	www.slc.co.uk
Train Travel	www.firstcapitalconnect.co.uk
Student Travel discounts	www.statravel.co.uk
Student issues	www.studentzone.org.uk

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained within this student Hand Book and accompanying documents is accurate at the time of publication, all matters that it covers are subject to change both before and after students have registered.

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