



WELCOME TO AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE GUIDE FOR PHASE 1 STUDENTS

UQ-Ochsner Program

Class of 2029

WELCOME

Congratulations (!!!) on your acceptance to medical school, and welcome to the UQ-Ochsner medical program! Traveling to Australia for school is a fantastic opportunity, but it presents its own challenges. The goal of the Ochsner Medical Student Association (OMSA) during Phase I of your medical education is to look after our unique interests as Americans in a foreign country. One of the first challenges you will encounter is the initial 10,000-mile journey to Australia and settling into a new city.

This document is designed to alleviate some commonly experienced growing pains, and to help prepare you for this fulfilling adventure. If you have any questions, feel free to post in the UQ-Ochsner Facebook group, attend an Ochsner Webinar, or ask your mentor.

OMSA

Ochsner Medical Student Association (OMSA) is the representative body for UQ-Ochsner medical students in Australia and the United States. OMSA's key directive is to help all Ochsner cohort students have opportunities to succeed and excel, with a specific intent to foster and promote professionalism, integrity, intellectual honest, and academic rigor. OMSA advocates for UQ-Ochsner students through policy, program development, and representation to faculty, staff, and the community.

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NOW THAT YOU'RE ACCEPTED

Acceptance Checklist

- ☐ Read all acceptance materials
- ☐ Check that your details are correct
- ☐ Pay your deposit and organize your health insurance – Overseas Student Health Cover (OHSC)
 - ☐ Receive your CoE (Confirmation of Enrollment) after
- ☐ Obtain your visa
- ☐ Complete the Compulsory Requirements - <https://medical-school.uq.edu.au/getting-started>

Health Insurance

The University of Queensland requires all international students to have Overseas Student Health Coverage (OSHC). UQ will arrange OSHC for you via Allianz or you can arrange for your own OSHC policy (for 51 months). If you choose to arrange coverage yourself, you must choose an OSHC provider approved by the Australian Government and include evidence (insurance certificate) of coverage with your acceptance documents. Your policy must cover the length of your visa.

Allianz: <https://www.allianzcare.com.au/en/student-visa-oshc.html>

Many healthcare providers are pre-approved by OSHC (UQ Health Services, major Brisbane hospitals, etc.) and will not charge you for services. This is referred to as “bulk billing”. A list of providers is available through the OSHC website. For healthcare providers who are not on the OSHC coverage list, you may need to pay up front and file an insurance claim to be reimbursed for your services. In general, if you go to a public hospital (PAH or RBWH), all non-elective services will be covered.

OSHC does not cover many pre-existing conditions, dental, or optical. If you have a pre-existing condition, note that you will not be covered for your first year in Australia. Therefore, students in the past have gotten an annual check-up in December right before leaving for Australia, and then getting a referral for January of year 2. Otherwise, you will pay out of pocket fees. Some health systems may waive the physician fee for care, but you are still liable for pathology and medications. If you require dental/optical/chiropractic care, you may wish to consider purchasing extras health coverage (options are available through OSHC). Note that extras health coverage usually has a waiting period of 2 months for vision/chiropractic and 6 months for dental. Therefore, it is recommended to have extras set up before you arrive in Australia so the waiting period will start the day you land in Australia.

Apply for Visa (High Priority)

The visa application process takes several weeks to complete, so start **ASAP**. Your visa must be granted before you can board a plane to Australia.

General Information about the Student Visa and how to apply:

<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/student-500#Overview>

- Create an **ImmiAccount** to lodge your visa application: <https://online.immi.gov.au/lusc/login>
 - The application process requires a variety of documents. The [Document Checklist Tool](#) is helpful for determining the supporting documentation you will need.
 - Pay the visa application fee payable by credit card, Paypal, or BPay.
- **Your passport must be valid for the ENTIRE duration of your visa.**
 - Renew your passport ASAP and use the expedited services, if needed.

- If applying for a visa with family members:
 - Complete an application for each accompanying family member
 - Submit evidence of the relationship between yourself and your family members
 - Ensure you can provide proof of at least 12 months of cohabitation if bringing a partner
- A **health examination may be required** to finish processing your visa.

Health Examination for Visa

As part of the visa application process, you may be required to have a health examination completed by a panel physician. A panel physician is a doctor who is authorized by Australian Immigration Services to conduct visa health examinations. **A non-panel physician cannot complete this examination.**

- General Information:
<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/meeting-our-requirements/health/arrange-your-health-examinations>
- List of panel physicians:
<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/contact-us/offices-and-locations/list>

Do not arrange your visa health examination until you have submitted your online student visa application and are notified, via your ImmiAccount, that the health examination is required. Also, do not delay your health checks. Students who have delayed their health checks have needed to travel out of state for their examination.

Compulsory Requirements

All UQ Compulsory Requirements must be completed by the end of February. It is recommended that you complete these tasks within the next few months but not before July. Bookmark the following webpage as it contains step-by-step instructions for completing each task. Below is a general outline of the requirements.

Compulsory Requirements:

<https://medicine.uq.edu.au/current-students/work-integrated-learning-wil-requirements>

- ☐ Blue & Yellow Card Application
- ☐ Student Immunization Record
- ☐ First Aid Certificate (including CPR)
- ☐ Criminal History Checks
 - ☐ Aus National Police Certificate
 - ☐ FBI Records check
 - ☐ PreCheck
- ☐ Queensland Health Requirements

Save electronic copies of all aforementioned documents to be **uploaded in December-January when requested** by UQ via Placements, Blackboard, or My Requests. **DO NOT WAIT** until December to complete these requirements.

Student Immunization Record

Per the UQ website: *It is highly recommended that you complete this form, in collaboration with your medical practitioner (doctor/GP), as soon as possible after accepting your offer into the MD program. This will ensure that you have enough time to complete any additional vaccinations that are required and to take steps to confirm immunity if needed.*

In previous years, students have had trouble obtaining the correct immunization test for **Hepatitis B**. Make sure that the test requested is the one listed in the immunization form (**Anti-HBs or HBsAb**). You must provide both dates of vaccination and serology results for Hepatitis B. There are different vaccination requirements for the visa health examination and for UQ. The visa health exam includes the Hep B, Hep C and HIV *surface antigens* but *not the antibody test for Hep B* which is required by UQ.

Your immunization record must be submitted on this form:

<https://my.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/manage-my-program/immunisation-and-disease-screening/student-immunisation-requirements/dentistry-medicine-midwifery-nursing>

***Note that dates for immunization must be written in **DD/MM/YYYY** format.

First Aid Certificate (including CPR)

You have two options for completing your First Aid and CPR requirements. You can either complete this in the US before you leave, or in Brisbane once you arrive. Either way, it must be completed before the start of classes.

Option 1: complete in US

The American Red Cross course that meets UQ requirements is the **Adult and Pediatric First Aid/CPR/AED** course. If you are currently certified with this, check the expiration date because you will not be able to recertify with the American Red Cross while you are in Australia. We recommend recertifying before you leave so that you will be covered your entire time here.

Option 2: complete in Brisbane

There are many options in Brisbane to get it done:

- UQ offers a one-day course from 9-1pm. You must enroll in the First Aid course that includes CPR. For 2026 dates and to learn more, check the following website:
<https://uqsport.com.au/learn/short-courses/first-aid-cpr-course/>
- CPR First Aid: <https://cprfirstaid.com.au/>

Criminal History Check

As an Ochsner student, you are required to provide three criminal background checks.

1. Student background check via Precheck: <https://candidate.precheck.com/studentcheck>
2. FBI Identity History Summary Checks:
<https://www.fbi.gov/services/cjis/identity-history-summary-checks>
 - a. You can submit your request electronically, and then you can submit your fingerprints electronically (by visiting a participating U.S. Postal Office or local police station), found here: <https://www.edo.cjis.gov/#/org/USPS> or via the mail.

3. Australian National Police Check:

<https://www.afp.gov.au/what-we-do/national-police-checks>

Blue & Disability Worker Screening Clearance (DWSC) Application

As an international student, you cannot begin the Blue & Disability Worker Screening Clearance (DWSC) application until you have arrived in Australia and obtained a Customer Reference Number (CRN) from a Queensland Department of Transportation and Main Roads (TMR) Centre. This requires providing documentation of a Queensland address in the form of a rental/lease agreement, bank statement, utility bill, etc.

A full list of required documentation can be found here:

<https://www.qld.gov.au/transport/licensing/driver-licensing/identity>

You should begin the process as soon as you arrive in Brisbane. You can also get an Australian driver's license at the same time.

PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

Finances

Open a credit card account with no foreign transaction fees. Many students choose one with travel points and rewards to help pay for plane tickets. Check with your current bank to see if it has any Australian affiliates so you can open an Australian account from the US before you leave. If not, there are plenty of options for banks here in Australia.

Most places take credit cards and Apple Pay/Android Pay. Most students do not carry physical cash.

Extra tip: Tuition can be paid with your credit card with no added fees or even foreign transaction fees. Check with UQ Financial Aid Office for the exact procedure, but they will send you the tuition amount from your loan directly into your bank account. This is a great way to generate free points for travel or cashback!

When should I arrive in Brisbane?

It depends on how long it takes you to get settled in a new city. Australia is relatively similar to the United States, so getting acclimated is not as hard as other international locations may be. In general, we recommend giving yourself two weeks before orientation starts. Use this time to connect with your future schoolmates and explore the different neighborhoods in Brisbane. Finding long-term accommodation takes 2-3 weeks but can take up to a few months, so ideally you want to get this done before school starts. In regards to housing, some students do opt to secure housing prior to coming to Brisbane. Some apartment management offer video inspections. Only do this if you are willing to sign an unseen apartment agreement. Some 2nd year students may offer to do viewings and these will be posted on the Facebook group.

Booking your flight

Some students opt to purchase a round-trip ticket while others purchase a one-way ticket.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when planning your travels:

- Check the UQ MD academic calendar for official breaks
- Exams tend to happen on the Saturday before the break

- There is a 2-week break between semester 1 and semester 2

Housing / Accommodation

The rental process works slightly differently in Brisbane than it does in the States. The whole process can take some time so we recommend looking early. Check the General Brisbane Information section below to learn about different neighborhoods and get an idea for where you might want to live. For more information:

<https://my.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/student-support/accommodation/renting-queensland>

Housing Search Engines:

- realestate.com.au
- domain.com.au
- gumtree.com.au

Furnished vs. Unfurnished Apartments

Furnished apartments are more convenient but will limit your housing options. Unfurnished accommodation is often cheaper; however, the logistics of buying all your furniture can be challenging. But it's doable. There is an Ikea outside of Brisbane (15 miles from the CBD, \$35-40 uber each way) and online furniture stores (www.supermart.com.au) offer delivery for a reasonable fee. Used furniture is available on Gumtree (the Aussie version of Craigslist) and the Facebook UQ Marketplace page. There are often options to rent furniture weekly through your building, but these often end up more expensive than buying furniture.

Student Accommodations (Scape, Hive, StudentOne, etc)

Students have mixed feelings about staying long-term in student accommodations. These apartments are affordable, include all utilities (including internet), close to bus stations/transportation, and (most) do not require an in-person inspection to sign a lease. Rooms are small and some include one common space for 4-8 occupants. If you are looking for a studio, these can be a great pick.

What to expect in Brisbane housing?

Houses in Brisbane are built to stay cool in the warm, sunny climate most of the year. The following are not standard in homes in Queensland, though newer apartments may have them:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Washing Machines/Dryers | • Central Heat |
| • Microwaves, Dishwashers,
Refrigerators | • Furniture |
| • Central A/C | • Ceiling Fans |

Housing Tips

- Most leasing offices will rent out a washing machine and fridge for a small weekly cost in unfurnished apartments. Otherwise, you will have to buy your own and sell it before leaving.
- **"Trust but verify"** as you conduct your housing search. Make sure you see things like the refrigerator and oven in the apartment during both the inspection and the lease during signing.
- Increase your chances for approval by attending inspections, having a conversation with the landlord/realtor hosting the inspection, and requesting private inspection times.

- Communicate with realtors! If you are denied for one listing, ask if they have others available. They often have properties they can recommend that have not been listed on major real estate websites yet.
- Be sure to read through the entire lease before signing.
- Housing discrimination laws are very different here; be prepared to be turned down from many properties for being a student.
- Keep in mind that it is possible to find housing without going through a realtor.
- **Customer service standards are different in Australia.** Aussies are much more laid back, and responses can be slow. Be proactive, follow up with emails and phone calls well in advance of deadlines.
- Queensland rental law regarding “Rent Arrears” states that if your rent is ever late by 14 days you can be evicted and given only 7 days to vacate.
- 2- or 3-bedroom apartments are the easiest to find. If you’re looking for something else, it’s possible but give yourself more time.

Documentation for signing lease

Assemble a packet of information before leaving the States:

- Electronic and physical copy of IDs (drivers license, passport, bank cards, Australian bank account statement)
- At least 2 reference letters of phone numbers of references (you can use us OMSA members if needed, just let us know!)
- Proof of income (financial aid letter) or evidence that you have the funds to pay rent for the entire lease.

Next steps after signing lease

Setup your internet. Make an appointment ASAP. To compare various Internet providers and plans, visit: <http://www.whistleout.com.au/Broadband/>. This process can be painstaking and could take up to 1 month so get started ASAP!

Update your address for the following:

- Allianz (or your OSHC) so you can get your insurance card mailed to you
- UQ contact details on SInet (sinet.uq.edu.au)
- Blue Card (if you applied with a different address), so that your card will be mailed to you

If you do not secure accommodation before moving to Brisbane, we recommend securing temporary accommodations while you do your search

You should secure temporary accommodation to stay in upon arrival. There is a wide range of accommodations in and around Brisbane depending on your needs and budget:

- **Airbnb or Vrbo**
- **Current Student Apartments:** Many of the students in the year above you will be on elective when you arrive. Post in the Facebook group, look out for a January student rental excel sheet, or ask your mentor if they know of somewhere you could stay when you first arrive.
- **Hostels:** \$20-\$30 AUD per night in a shared dorm. Check out options at www.hostelworld.com
- **Hotels:** There are a range of hotels in Brisbane at many different price points and

amenities.

- **UQ International House:** Residential college at UQ offering private rooms for short-term accommodations.
- **Off-campus student housing:** Urbanest, Scape, Atira, and UniLodge are all similar buildings with a variety of rooms available for short- and long-term stays.

Airport Transfer

Transportation options: Uber or Didi (no Lyft in Australia), taxi, or train (<http://www.airtrain.com.au>)

What to pack?

Make sure you have paper and electronic copies of:

- Passport
- Confirmation of accommodation (you must provide an Australian address for border patrol) - Offer letter
- Confirmation of Enrollment
- Reference letters (for housing applications) and/or phone numbers of previous landlords

Generally, things are a bit more expensive in Australia. There are a few items you should consider bringing with you from home.

Electronics

Most electronics are generally more expensive in Australia (depending on the current exchange rate). Goods, devices, and school supplies can be purchased at Target, Kmart, BigW, and Officeworks.

We recommend bringing the following:

- Laptop
- Cell phone
 - If you purchased your phone through a network provider, it may be “locked”. This means that your phone will only work with a SIM card from that provider, which is inconvenient when living abroad. Contact your provider to “unlock” your phone or purchase a phone for full price at the Apple or Microsoft store, for example, to assure your phone is unlocked.
- USB Drive
 - If you would like to have electronic resources on an external drive, students recommend bringing an external drive with at least 1TB of available space.
- Tablet
 - Many students use this for notetaking and all textbooks are available as PDFs or online.
- Adapters
 - Australia uses differently shaped outlets than the US and the power supply is different. The US power supply is 120V and the Australian power supply is 240V. If your device is labeled 110-240V, you will only need a plug adapter. If your device does not indicate that it works at 240V, then you will also need a voltage converter.

Stethoscope

It is worth investing in a decent stethoscope, as it will last you throughout your medical training and

onwards. The **Littmann Cardio III** is very popular with students and physicians.

Miscellaneous

If there are any medications, toiletries, makeup, etc. that you are fond of in the US, it may be worth it to pack extras. Most products are available in Australia, but it may cost more.

If you have extra room, you might consider packing the following items. They are either not available, hard to find, and/or more expensive in Australia.

- Excedrin
- Alka-seltzer
- Allergy medicine and nasal spray
- DayQuil and NyQuil
- Benadryl
- Deodorant (only gel, cream, and spray deodorants in Australia)
- Curl care (creams, gel, mousse, etc)
- Zinc oxide/Titanium Dioxide based sunscreen
- Tampons with applicators
- hot sauce + ranch packets
- Melatonin (requires a prescription in Australia!)

For more packing guidance, check the General Brisbane Information and UQ Information & Academics sections.

LANDING DOWN UNDER & GETTING SETTLED

TO-DO List

- ☐ Get cash from an ATM - if you wish to use cash. Mostly everything in Australia is electronic pay but some vendors may only take cash.
- ☐ Open a bank account
- ☐ Get a pre-paid SIM card for your phone
- ☐ Buy a GoCard for public transport
- ☐ Check out St. Lucia campus, Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital (RBWH), and Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH)
- ☐ Get your Student IDs
- ☐ Meet up with your classmates. Chill, explore, enjoy Brisbane!

Banking

Withdraw cash from an ATM at the airport or exchange your US dollars for Australian dollars if you would like. Beware, the exchange kiosks usually have the worst exchange rates.

Australia is cashless for the most part. Virtually all vendors accept Visa or MasterCard. Fewer places accept American Express or Discover. The majority of transactions use PayWave or EFTPOS, meaning you tap your card or phone on the card reader. ApplePay (or equivalent) works well here and it's the easiest way to use American cards.

It only takes a few minutes to open an account in Australia and most student accounts are free. It is best to complete the online application beforehand and do the verification in person once you arrive. Banks will be extremely busy during this time period. You can do this shortly after arrival because you will need to provide proof of an Australian bank account for housing applications.

The main banks here are ANZ, Commonwealth, NAB, and Westpac. Wise is a good option as well.

Transferring Funds between USA and Australia

- A Charles Schwab account is also an option. It allows you to pull out Australian Dollars from foreign ATMs with no charges as Charles Schwab will reimburse you the charges every month.
- **Wise.com is a great option to transfer money between the US and Australia. Fees are minimal and they typically give you a good exchange rate. (Definitely recommend! Wise has options to have an Australian bank too)**
- XE.com offers low/no fee international transfers.
- Wiring money through a Western Union type outlet is an option but may incur additional costs.
- Check with your bank at home about international transfer fees.
 - Bank of America allows no wiring fees as long as the transfer is done in Australian currency. There is an option to do so online and exchange rates will change daily.
- Transferring money from the US to Australia can take up to two weeks through most money transfer programs.

Example Budget

- **Rent:** \$400-\$750/week (depends on neighborhood and roommate situation)
- **Utilities:** \$25/week (variable based on how “green” you live)
- **Internet:** \$15-\$20/week (split between roommates, plans can be bundled with phone service)
- **Groceries:** \$75-\$150 per person/week
- **Phone:** \$5-\$20/week
- **Public Transport:** \$7/week (\$0.50 fares for bus/ferry/train! Except for train rides to airport which is \$20 each way)
- **Entertainment:** Going out is expensive and is comparable to the more expensive major US cities. Most bars don’t charge cover, but drinks are more expensive. Movies are cheaper. Check Groupon/LivingSocial for deals.
- **Fitness:** \$15-\$30/week – UQ offers a gym membership (wait to sign up until the undergrad students start to avail of their big discounts) and there are plenty of fitness clubs to choose from (Fitness First, Snap Fitness, Anytime Fitness, etc.). Yoga, Pilates, dance studios, and boxing gyms are all around Brisbane. There is free rock climbing in Kangaroo Point so bring your gear. A few parks have random equipment that’s free to use. There are lots of interest groups through UQ if you’re looking for a workout buddy! Check out ClassPass for some good deals or when trying out new studios.

Ways to save money

- Bring your own unlocked phone
- Shop at the local and outdoor markets (weekend markets are super fun with fresh produce and good food)
- Limiting alcohol (so expensive...)

- Drink wine instead, get used to “goon” (box wine)
- Don’t get cable
- You can use your Netflix account, but you’ll need a VPN for Hulu/HBO Go accounts or to access some shows from Netflix. You can set up accounts with Foxtel or Stan (Australian streaming services). Disney+ has lots of shows that are normally on Hulu.
- Limit electricity use, can buy a standing fan from kmart
- Ride a bike! Some students purchase an electric bike or scooter. St Lucia campus has “Bike Boxes” for rent around campus to protect your belongings in a key-card access room with bike racks, showers, and lockers.

Cell Phone

You will want to prioritize this as you will need a phone to conduct your housing search. If you have an unlocked phone, you can purchase a prepaid SIM card or sign up for a monthly plan. If you do not have an unlocked phone, you can easily purchase a phone and sign-up for a 2-year plan. Compare plans here: <http://www.whistleout.com.au/MobilePhones>

Prepaid

You can bring a phone from home or purchase a go phone when you arrive. Prepaid SIM cards cost approximately \$30 and will get you through the housing search, but you may want to find a more long-term solution once you are settled.

Postpaid

Most carriers will allow you to transition your prepaid plan into a postpaid plan. This is a month-to-month plan that will bill you automatically and can be paused or canceled at any time. These cost \$15-55 per month and include data, Australian calls and texts, and some international calls.

Contract

This is a safe option if you did not bring a phone to Australia, although there are some financial pitfalls (early termination fees, overages, etc.)

- iPhone, Samsung Galaxy, etc. often come with a free 2-year contract (\$45-55 per month)
- Required Documentation for Contracts: it is necessary to provide various levels of identification to sign a phone contract. Proof of housing (copy of lease, receipt from hostel with name and address), passport, an Australian bank statement, and financial aid award letter are often required.

Australian cellular providers operate on a GSM standard. This means that phones from AT&T and T-Mobile will function on this network. Check with your phone company for compatibility.

The carriers are all pretty reliable, so opt for the cheapest plan to save money. Vodafone is the least expensive but has unreliable service outside major metropolitan areas. Optus is good. Telstra has the best coverage and data speeds but may be more expensive.

GoCard / Public Transportation

To ride public transportation, you can get a GoCard, which can be purchased at any major public transport station (like the airport or Central Station) or 7-11, or use the tap payment using credit card/Apple Pay/Android Pay.

The **M2 route** goes between the UQ Lakes station and Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital (RBWH) with stops at the Princess Alexandra (PA) hospital and Mater hospital. This is one of the most popular routes as it connects the St. Lucia campus to all three clinical units. Other popular bus routes to get to campus include the 412, 29, and 192. Consider living near one of these routes for an easier commute to school. Use the Translink website journey planner to see the route details.

GENERAL BRISBANE INFORMATION

Weather

Brisbane has a subtropical climate with warm or hot weather for most of the year. The sun is intense and shines often in Brisbane. We recommend you bring layers and pack wisely and comfortably. It will be cold in places like Melbourne, Tasmania, and New Zealand during the winter months, so you may want to bring some winter clothes if you plan to travel to these locations.

Best weather apps: Weatherzone, BOM

Summer (November – March): low of 70°F overnight, high of 95-100°F by afternoon. Humid, rainy season so you will get the occasional evening thunderstorm. It gets very hot from noon to 2pm. Stay hydrated and wear sunscreen.

Autumn (March – May): low of 60-65°F overnight, high of 80°F by afternoon. The climate gets a bit cooler with crisp days and nights. The sun still shines brightly and so make sure you don't forget that sunscreen.

Winter (June – August): low of 40-45°F overnight, high of 65-70°F by afternoon. The winters are mild. Think Southern California. It can get a bit chilly in the morning and night, but sunny in the afternoons. The temperature rarely falls below 35°F at night, or below 55°F past mid-morning.

Spring (September – November): low of 50-55°F overnight, high of 70-75°F by afternoon. Very similar to autumn. Crisp mornings. Sunny afternoons. Cool evenings.

Getting Around

Brisbane's public transportation is a reliable service that most students use daily. There are buses, trains, and the CityCat – a catamaran/ferry. Frequency of transport depends on time of day, day of the week, and which form of transit you are taking. Public transport becomes less frequent around 7PM, and many lines stop around midnight. Service runs on a reduced schedule on weekends and public holidays. Use Google Maps or the TransLink app to plan your journey.

Other modes of transport

- Driving
 - Your US driver's license is accepted in Australia. You do not need an Australian license.
 - Most Ochsners do not get cars due to the costs that come with ownership: insurance, gas, parking, and registration.
 - The few who have cars have had luck finding a used one on Gumtree
 - Car Sharing: GoGet Carshare (www.goget.com.au/) offers free student memberships with a refundable deposit. There are multiple pods around CBD, St. Lucia, and South

Brisbane,

- Car Rental: renting is very easy here with a US driver's license. Prices are comparable to the US. There is an additional fee for those under 25.
- Bike
 - Pack your bike or buy one here. Students have luck buying used bikes on Gumtree
 - Bikes cannot be taken on buses, but they can be taken on the ferry (CityCat).
 - Students also buy electric scooters. These can be taken on buses if they can fold up (note that bus drivers can choose to deny entry if the bus is at high occupancy).
- Motorcycle
 - Endorsements from the US will carry over

Brisbane Neighborhoods

Deciding where to live is very much a personal preference and it's best to explore each neighborhood shortly after arrival. Below are brief descriptions of some of the neighborhoods in Brisbane. This link contains a more definitive guide: <https://www.visitbrisbane.com.au/destinations/precincts>

As you consider housing options, keep in mind that in your first year, most of your time will be spent at the St. Lucia campus. This is where you will have lectures, TBLs, and practicals (anatomy, physiology, histology, etc.). In second year, most of your time will be spent at your assigned hospital (clinical unit). This is where you will have CBL and clinical coaching. A tip when looking for housing is to figure out the transportation route you will use to get to campus and the hospital during the week when considering a neighborhood. You may want to consider living in a place with access to heavily traveled routes or major connection hubs. You will not want a commute to campus that requires more than one connection or a travel time longer than 40 minutes. It is also good to live in an area with more than one transportation option for getting to campus.



Popular Neighborhood Descriptions

St. Lucia is a suburban area. It is almost entirely residential with no nightlife. It is densely populated with a mix of students and families and has small grocery stores (which tend to be pricey) and a limited number of restaurants. Its proximity to campus makes it desirable, thus rent here tends to be more expensive. Many rentals are “Old Queensland” style or part of student accommodations. However, note that, unless you have a car, it can be difficult to get to Brisbane city proper. Additionally, many of the buses that go to St. Lucia stop at night.

West End is the hipster/trendy place – often a bit more gritty than other places, but popular to live in because of the proximity to Boundary Street (restaurants, grocery stores, bars) and the West End Saturday Market at Davies Park. Additionally, there is easy access to a variety of transportation routes to Uni and the hospitals.

South Bank/South Brisbane is next to West End and is a fun, trendy, upscale area. It tends to be more expensive but very popular among international students. It is centrally located for most everything. You can find direct buses to CBD (5 min), UQ-St. Lucia (15-20 min), UQ-Herston/RBWH (20 min), and PAH Hospital (10 min). Ochsner students in the past have mainly lived around the South Bank and West End neighborhoods.

Dutton Park and Highgate Hill are right across the pedestrian bridge (Eleanor Schonell Bridge aka “Green

Bridge”) from campus. You could walk to school if you lived here, but it would take at least 30 minutes. Riding a bike makes it a quick commute, about 5 minutes. It is entirely residential and suburban, but it does have shopping centers. PAH clinical school and public transportation are nearby.

Toowong is west of St. Lucia and next to Indooroopilly. This area is a quick ride (bus or bike) to campus, or a 30-minute walk. It has a mall, a few small restaurants, and the Royal Exchange (“RE” – a favored watering hole for the undergrads). It has easy access to the train and buses, and a short walk to the CityCat ferry.

Indooroopilly is next to St. Lucia and Toowong. It is also residential and suburban but has a rather large mall and a touch of nightlife.

CBD – Central Business District – is the heart of town. It has lots of nightlife and will be more expensive than most places. There are plenty of transportation options from here including the CityCat and buses. It is walking distance to The Valley, South Bank, and more.

Fortitude Valley – aka The Valley. Here you will find Chinatown and the hub of Brisbane nightlife. It may not be the best place to live, because sleep and study could be a challenge, but it is definitely a place you will visit a few times throughout the year.

Kangaroo Point is across the river from the CBD and located on a finger of land which is connected to The Valley via the Story Bridge. The area is mainly residential with some nightlife and several parks. There are multiple transportation routes to St. Lucia but expect a 45-minute commute.

New Farm is next to The Valley and right across from Kangaroo Point. This is a mixed suburban neighborhood with shops, nightlife, bars/bistros, and plenty of good restaurants. The commute to campus is via 2+ buses or CityCat and will take 45 minutes. New Farm is very convenient to the RBWH clinical school in second year.

Herston/Bowen Hills is next to RBWH clinical school and extremely convenient for second year if you are assigned there. During peak traffic, commuting from Herston/Bowen Hills to the St. Lucia campus takes 45 minutes. Easy access to The Valley, public transportation, and the CBD.

UQ INFORMATION & ACADEMICS

Visit Campus

Campus map: <https://campuses.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/security/id-cardss> Map

Student ID Card

Submit an online request for your Student ID card, which includes submitting a photo. You will collect your ID at Student Central (Building 42). Make sure to indicate you are a medical student as you need two Student ID cards. Try to complete your request before classes start! Details:

<https://campuses.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/security/id-cards>

Books

All textbooks are available electronically via the UQ library. There are also hard copies available to borrow at any UQ library. We do recommend a decent anatomy book/atlas that you don't mind getting dirty during MDP lab. There are various options to purchase books:

- Medical Bookstore (St. Lucia or Herston)
- Online
- Used from upper years
- UQMS Marketplace Facebook group

Lab

UQ is very strict and particular about proper laboratory attire. You must wear closed toed shoes that cover the tops of your feet in microbiology, anatomy, physiology, and histology labs. You will not be allowed entry into the labs if your shoes do not meet the criteria – and they will check! **For anatomy labs (in the GAF), you are required to always wear a lab coat and safety glasses.** You will need these before your GAF induction session. You can purchase a lab coat and safety glasses for about \$30 AUD at the Student Locker store on St. Lucia campus. Alternatively, OMSA does a Lab Coat Exchange drive and sells lab coats and safety glasses in the beginning of the year for a discounted price.

Clinical Attire

Some Year 1 clinical coaches will require you to dress in clinical attire for clinical coaching, although this is becoming rarer. *At very least, you are required to wear closed toe shoes.* You will be required to wear clinical attire anytime you are working in a clinic, hospital, and/or theatre (aka operating room). Your Year 2 clinical coaching sessions will take place in the hospital, seeing patients, thus you will be required to wear clinical attire.

Clinical attire includes closed-toed shoes, slacks and collared shirt, knee-length dress, or slacks and an appropriate top. Neck ties are optional, but if you wear a tie in the hospital you will need a tie clip. Sometimes, but not always, scrubs can be substituted for clinical attire. Queensland Health mandates “Bare Below the Elbows” so make sure your shirt sleeves can be rolled up if needed.

Academics

Timetable and Enrollment

Sometime in late December or early January you will be notified that timetable preferencing is open in Allocate+. This is your opportunity to rank which TBL group you prefer. Each TBL group is based out of one of the two clinical units and has a slightly different weekly schedule. Students often do not get their top choice, so be open to multiple timetables.

More information: <https://medical-school.uq.edu.au/getting-started?p=2#2>

Clinical Units

1. PA-Southside Clinical Unit

This is the largest of the three clinical units and it is the closest to the St. Lucia campus. All clinical unit classes will be at the Translational Research Institute (TRI) building.

2. Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital (RBWH)

RBWH is the farthest from St. Lucia, but it contains the purpose built UQ Health Sciences building which contains dedicated study space and a student lounge for both Phase 1 and Phase 2 students. The Mayne Medical School building is located here.

USMLE Preparation

It is recommended to take the USMLE Step 1 before you start clinical rotations at Ochsner in Year 3.

You can take the exam in Australia (Sydney or Melbourne) or in the US (which is recommended).

Peer Tutorials

During the first year, you can join a weekly Peer Tute led by second year students that will highlight high-yield USMLE topics relating to that week's lecture topics. This is a great way to get an introduction into the USMLE exam and reinforce UQ content.

Resources

UQ provides all Ochsner students with a copy of First Aid and a two-year subscription to Boards and Beyond. You will receive both resources in the first month of class. Additionally, UQ provides a subscription to UWorld Question Bank during your second year.

MEDI7200 USMLE Stream

This is a required course during Semester 2 of Year 2. The course entails weekly group tutorials led by fourth-year students who have taken STEP 1. There is support on STEP registration, academic, health and wellbeing and advising.

What to expect

- Self-directed learning. Take initiative. Make a schedule and stay on top of the material. Most lectures are recorded, and the recordings are available on Blackboard. Workshops, symposiums, practicals, and plenaries are not recorded.
- Your weekly timetable is subject to change – check it regularly. It is best to subscribe to your timetable.
- The exams (called CATs) are all multiple-choice questions.
- You will spend most of your time with your TBL group, 10 person group. Get to know them. It is an awesome experience to work with people from such different backgrounds.
- You will be overwhelmed with resources and materials when you get here. Decide what works best for you.
- Supplement and integrate microbiology and biochemistry to prepare for USMLE Step 1.
- There are plenty of research opportunities. Be proactive, but don't compromise your grades.
- Studying can become overwhelming. Take a break. Get involved. Indulge in non-med activities.
- The Medical Student Support Team is a great resource. They offer support for a range of needs including pastoral needs, generic academic and learning needs, physical and mental health needs, and international needs (e.g., adjusting to life in Australia). More information: <https://medical-school.uq.edu.au/medical-student-support-team>

Extracurriculars

Get Involved

There are many opportunities for student involvement at UQ and in New Orleans. Beyond OMSA, we are represented in all UQ student organizations. Visit the UQ Medical Student website for more information: <https://uqms.org/>

Research

There are numerous ways to do research. However, university sponsored research is currently not allowed during first year. For details, visit: <https://medical-school.uq.edu.au/research>

Travel

There are so many great places to explore in Queensland and beyond. Highlights include:

- Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary – meet kangaroos, koalas, Tasmanian Devils, and more
- The Australia Zoo – run by Steve Irwin's family, many animals, and a great croc show
- Ferry to Stradbroke Island. Kayak with dolphins and spot whales in the winter.
- Head to K'gari island for a beach/forest experience. Go camping, hang with a dingo.
- Sail the Whitsundays
- Surf in Gold Coast
- Bushwalk in the ancient forests
- Scuba the Great Barrier Reef
- Head to Heron Island or Turtle Island to snorkel
- Always keep an eye out for flight deals – Sydney, Melbourne, Tokyo, Auckland, Fiji, Bali...
- Take advantage of where you are and go see stuff you've never seen before. Now is the time!

INFORMATION FOR PARTNERS AND CHILDREN

Visa

First, always confirm your individual situation with a certified visa officer via the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. It may be hard to get quick answers to questions about your status until your application has been lodged. At that point, you will be assigned a caseworker whom you can contact directly regarding via email. In some cases, your partner may be able to apply for their own visa through their employment.

- List ALL dependents on your student visa at the time that you lodge the application. This includes a spouse, de facto partner, or children who might join you, even if they do not arrive with you in Brisbane initially. Adding them later could result in additional visa fees (which can be as high as the cost of the original visa!) or rejection of the application. Verify any specific enquiries BEFORE you lodge your application to avoid any miscommunication with the Department of Home Affairs.
- All dependents must have OSHC cover for the entire duration of your visa (just like your own OSHC coverage) if you plan for them to join you at any point in the program, regardless of their actual length of stay.
- You do not have to purchase OSHC via Allianz, and it would benefit you to shop around with the various OSHC-sanctioned providers for the best prices and coverage. Individual plans for each

member may be cheaper than a combined “family plan”. Confirm specifics with each provider and refer to the Department of Home Affairs website for approved OSHC providers/terms: https://www.privatehealth.gov.au/health_insurance/overseas/overseas_student_health_cover.htm

A spouse/de facto partner is no longer restricted to a maximum number of work hours if they are on your student visa

Partners working in Australia

Things to consider:

- If they are planning to travel to Australia on your student visa, your spouse will be able to work 40 hours/week
- Minimum wage is approximately \$15/hr – this varies by age and experience. Most employers pay competitive wages.
- To work, most employers will require a Tax File Number for income tax reporting purposes. This is free and you can apply once you arrive: <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Tax-file-number/>
- Some employers may wish to sponsor a visa for your partner. This varies by employer and industry. This can usually be arranged after your partner’s arrival. At that point they would be taken off your visa and put on their own. Again, this all must be directly confirmed with the Department of Home Affairs.

Childcare

If you need childcare, be sure to sign up as soon as possible as centers fill up quickly and have long wait lists. The average price of childcare is \$75-98 AUD/day. Below are the recommended childcare centers for students:

- UQ Child Care at St. Lucia
- Early Learning Center at Princess Alexandra Hospital
- Nazareth Early Learning Center

Brisbane is very child friendly, and the city offers amazing amenities to keep children entertained. Here are a few recommendations:

- New Farm Park
- Southbank Parklands (public swimming pool and man-made beach)
- City Botanical Gardens Parks
- Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary
- Frew Park in Auchenflower
- Hickory Dickory Rock at the State Library in Southbank – a sing-along program on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday mornings
- Museums (free!)
- Queensland Art Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) Children’s Art Centre

There are also several playgroups and mom groups. To connect with other parents and mature age students, join the Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/883863992378229/>

Packing for children

There is no need to over pack clothing, toys, etc. There are tons of places to purchase baby stuff for cheap, especially second hand stores for children.

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

Things to leave in the USA

- Blow dryer: it will not handle the voltage difference in Australia, even with a converter. You can buy one for cheap here.
- Hair straightener: same as the blow dryer. Basic ceramic models start around \$35-45
- Hair clippers/shavers/anything with a motor: they will burn out even with a voltage converter

PC vs. Mac

This is your preference; it does not matter. Most of the computers in labs and libraries are iMacs and run on either OSX or Windows (whichever is preferred by user).

eReaders: iPad vs. Tablet vs. Kindle

The general consensus is that iPads are better than other tablets. There are many useful apps for medical school. Textbook applications (i.e. Inkling) offer an affordable alternative to purchasing physical textbooks. Kindles are great for reading, but not useful for studying medicine. Most students use GoodNotes, Notability, or other popular apps for writing notes.

Medications

Some over-the-counter medications are difficult to find here. If there are medications you require or use frequently, you may consider bringing them from home.

Nurofen = Ibuprofen/Advil

Paracetamol/Panadol = Acetaminophen/Tylenol

QUESTIONS or SUGGESTIONS?

Email omsaphase1liaison@gmail.com

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