



Knowledge for Change

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Student Welcome Pack

Placement Location: Fort Portal, Uganda

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Welcome to Knowledge for Change!

We are delighted that you have chosen K4C for your placement. This pack aims to provide you with some practical tips and guidance to prepare you for your placement. We work in an unpredictable environment where things change frequently, so the most important things for you to bring are a flexible mindset and a sense of humour!

Please read this pack carefully and let James james@knowledge4change.org or Juliette juliette@knowledge4change.org know if you have any questions.

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Fort Portal

About Fort Portal

Fort Portal is a medium sized town in Western Uganda. It is about a 6-hour drive from Entebbe airport. When you first arrive, K4C will arrange for your transportation to Fort Portal from the airport.

Fort is a generally safe and friendly place to live, with plenty of bars, restaurants, and supermarkets. Most places are in easy walking distance. It is in a mountainous area, so it can be cold. Daytime temperatures are about 25 degrees but at night you will need warm clothes. The main dry season is January so it will be hot and dusty but the rest of the year it will rain most days at some point, with sunshine in between the showers.

Accommodation & Area

K4C has two properties in Fort Portal, about a ten-minute walk from each other. The main compound includes the K4C office and the main student accommodation, this is where you will live. The compound is secure with an external locking door and a night guard. (There is however no secure safes). You should be prepared for basic accommodation shared with other people including students from other universities.

You will share a bathroom and an open plan kitchen/living area with basic furniture. There is running water, but it is usually not hot – there is a water heater for the shower. The tap water is not drinkable but it's fine to clean your teeth with. There is a water filter in the kitchen to 'make' drinking water. There is a fridge, but power cuts are frequent. There is a washing machine, but it is susceptible to breakages -alternatively you can handwash your clothes or ask our housekeeper to do your laundry for about £2 per load. There is BASIC Wi-Fi (capacity for messaging and emailing) at the house, but you can buy data for your phone and hot spot your laptop off your phone.

There are supermarkets in town for dry goods like rice, pasta, coffee, tea etc and 2 big fresh fruit/veg markets – all within walking distance.

There is also a decent homeware shop in town which sells Tupperware, kitchen stuff, towels and sheets, pens & stationery so don't worry about bringing that kind of stuff with you.

Costs

You can live very cheaply in Uganda if you choose to eat & drink at local restaurants and bars. The cost becomes more expensive if you choose more Western and 'Ex-Pat' places and do tourist activities. So, it is difficult to give an exact guide on how much money you should bring, as it is entirely dependent on how you choose to spend your time.

A few example costs to give you a sense:

A beer = £1.50

A meal in a local restaurant = £5

A meal in a 'fancy' ex-pat restaurant = £10

Fruit and veg from the market = very cheap!

Use of a hotel swimming pool = £5 for a day

Bus ride to Kampala (5-hour drive) = £10

Night in a decent hostel in Kampala including breakfast = £20

Health

Given the potential risks to health of working in a country such as Uganda, we require each student to have a pre-visit health check and to take advice on their personal health status in terms of inoculations and anti-malarials. Health arrangements should be made as far in advance of travel as possible to prevent last-minute delays.

Your first port of call should be your GP. They will arrange any necessary vaccinations you may require or refer you on should you need further assistance. You may also wish to contact your local travel clinic which can be found at: - <http://www.travelhealth.co.uk/travelclinics>).

As part of the Elective Placement agreement, you will need to confirm that you have undergone any necessary health checks, are up to date on all required inoculations and confirm that arrangements have been made to ensure you have a supply of anti-malarials for the duration of your placement.

Vaccinations

Most vaccines can be administered over a 4-week period but try to leave at least 8 weeks if possible. The final doses should be completed a little ahead of departure to allow immunity to develop. However, if the full course cannot be administered prior to travel then it's still usually worth having the maximum number of doses possible and completing the course on your return. A yellow fever certificate may be required for international travel. We recommend you carry this safely in your hand luggage and retain a photocopy in case it gets lost and needs to be reissued by your practice. If you work for the NHS, find out what support you can get from your NHS occupational health department. More information on yellow fever, malaria risk and recommended prophylaxis can be found on the WHO website.

Malaria

Levels of malaria vary from place to place depending on location, altitude, and climate. Antimalarials should be taken as advised by your GP along with preventative measures such as insecticides, repellents and wearing long trousers and shirts after dusk. Insecticide treated mosquito nets are recommended and can be bought either in the UK or locally in Uganda (usually for a fraction of the price). There are three main types of antimalarials taken by students: Malarone, Doxycycline and Lariam. There are advantages and disadvantages to each of these medications, and they have the potential to cause side effects for some people. If you start to experience any side effects, you should seek personal

medical advice. Antimalarials can be bought relatively easily and cheaply in most large towns in Uganda.

A common cause of malaria is failure to complete the recommended course of anti-malarials on return to the UK. Please ensure that you complete the prescribed course.

For more information, please visit - www.nathnac.org

Culture

Uganda is a landlocked, ex-British protectorate in East Africa that gained independence from Britain in 1962. The country occupies an area of 241,551 km² and has a current population of around 48,582,334 (2023). Uganda has over 50+ tribal areas, each with their own language and customs. For communication across tribes the most common language is English or Luganda however the language in the Fort Portal region is Rotorro.

Uganda is a very religious country with 82% of the population being Christian (the remaining population is either Muslim or traditional African religions). This is reflected in the local culture with Uganda being quite traditional, conservative, and patriarchal.

Healthcare System & Placement

Although it is important you enjoy your time in Uganda and de-stress after your placement it is essential you remember that you're there to work and you should treat your placement as such. This includes turning up on time and leaving on time – if the ward is quiet there is always something to do (making gauze, tidying, looking at data). Additionally, you are not there to be a 'tourist' – moving around and trying to find interesting or unusual cases. You must stick to your assigned placement timetable and not wander off to other wards.

The K4C staff will be there to help you settle in and answer your questions, but you should remember that they will not supervise you full-time. Although you should always be supervised, this is not exclusively done by K4C staff; – this is also by the local staff (non-K4C).

You should prepare yourself for working in a very different environment to the one you are used to in the UK. Due to a lack of accessible healthcare/difference in attitudes people tend to seek care at a later point in illness (you will likely see more progressed illness). Unlike the UK, Uganda has a very young population. More than half of the population are under 16 years old. This means that a lot of healthcare is focused on children and maternity services.

You will be working at government facilities. In theory this means that healthcare is free, but there is a lack of resources, basic medical equipment, and consumables. Often patients' families will have to buy the necessary drugs and supplies from the hospital pharmacy themselves. This problem has partly arisen because of 'donor' projects that provided supplies for short periods of time. When funding stopped, so did the supplies, but the government supply chains had also stopped. You should **never** give money or buy supplies for patients as this feeds the problem.

You may notice that the staff you are working with have different attitudes towards providing care than you are used to in the UK. You may want to reflect on some of the reasons why with our team in the Friday debriefs. Attitudes to death, dying and pain are not always what we expect. Experiencing and understanding these differences is part of your learning – there is no right and wrong. Remember you are a student and here to experience, reflect and learn – it's not your role to solve all of the many complicated issues within the healthcare system!

In conjunction with this there is a difference in what a student can do in Uganda compared to the UK. Ugandan students start doing practical tasks with minimal supervision a lot earlier on in their academic practice. Therefore, the staff may expect you to do similar tasks (insert an IV or cannulate without supervision).

YOU SHOULD NEVER DO THIS!

Just because somebody gives you the opportunity to do something you are not qualified to do does not mean you should do it. If you are being pressured or feel uncomfortable – calmly say no or leave the situation. The golden question you should ask yourself is:

WOULD I DO THIS IN THE UK?

If the answer is NO – don't do it. This could be from taking pictures to doing something outside your field (i.e if you are a Mental Health Nurse, you should not be involved in the birthing of a baby)

Packing suggestions

As discussed, Uganda is a conservative country, and this should be reflected in the way you dress while on placement and while out and about town – wear trousers or shorts/dresses/skirts below the knee and cover shoulders/chest. Ugandans dress smartly and find it disrespectful if you turn up to work scruffily or casually dressed. It's a small town and people will know you work for K4C so please be mindful of your behaviour both in and outside of work.

General Clothing

Remember it is hot and humid so bring lots of light linen/cotton materials & NO SHORTS OR SHORT SKIRTS to or from work please.

- Raincoat
- Warm jumpers/fleece
- Jeans
- Normal clothes for a fairly urban environment in a tropical climate (wet and hot – but cold at night) – dresses (knee length or below), trousers, t-shirts, shirts etc.
- Shorts/beach clothes for safari/holiday/around the house (it's not considered acceptable to wear shorts or short skirts generally unless in 'tourist' settings)
- Some nice 'going-out' clothes for weekends (you may want to travel to Kampala for a weekend which has a large night life scene)
- Bikinis/swimming costumes
- Sandals/trainers/flip flops/waterproof shoes – suitable for rough ground
- Slippers for around the house
- Pyjamas
- Sports clothes if you like running etc – there is also a small gym at one of the hotels
- Sunglasses
- A hat for keeping off the sun

Work stuff

On the wards you wear scrubs (we may have some spares but please bring your own)

- Shoes for work e.g. crocs
- Small bum-bag to wear at work (to keep your valuables/phone with you)
- You may want to bring your own stethoscope with you
- Fob watch

Technology

Ugandan plug sockets are the same as the UK so you don't need an adapter (the only time you may need one is if you are stopping over in a European airport)

- Your mobile phone (unlocked so you can get a Uganda sim card) and a spare charger

- Laptop (for work stuff and watching films)
- External hard drive with films/box sets downloaded onto it
- Bluetooth speaker
- Power bank (so you can charge your phone during power cuts)
- Kindle
- Head torch
- Hairdryer

Toiletries

You can get basic toiletries easily, but they may not be the brands you like. You can get all basics like toothpaste, body lotion, deodorant, shower gel, soap but most students take their own supply of face cream, shampoo/hair products, make up and sun cream.

Periods – you can get sanitary towels easily, but tampons are hard to find so bring your own if you use them. A moon cup is also a good option.

Other

- Bank card with good overseas rates for getting cash out
- Driving license – you can drive on a UK licence for 3 months
- Things to make you feel at home – photos for your room, scented candle, hot water bottle

Money

Most street vendors, shops restaurants etc do not take cards and if they do there is a large transaction fee on top of it. Therefore, it is better to use cash.

You **cannot** get Ugandan currency outside Uganda. The easiest way to get money is to get cash out of the ATMs when you are here. There is an ATM at the airport when you arrive and several in Fort Portal.

The best thing to do is bring a card with a good foreign exchange charge. These are typically Monzo, Revolut or Starling as more traditional banks charge an additional fee on top of the transaction fee. Regardless, each time you take out money there is a charge so it is better to take out larger amounts. This is better than changing money to dollars and then to shillings as you will then experience two exchange costs!

Safety

Day-to-Day

Check the FCDO travel advice before you travel: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/uganda>

Uganda is generally a very safe and friendly country for Europeans to visit. You should be conscious of your personal belongings, phone etc as you would anywhere. It is safe to walk alone around Fort Portal in the daytime, but we wouldn't recommend walking alone at night. Many people use motorbike taxis (boda-bodas) to get around town, but you are not covered by insurance to use these. We can provide contact numbers for trusted taxi drivers when you arrive.

If you decide to go hiking/visit waterfalls etc you should always do this with a local guide.

Road traffic accidents are very common in Uganda so exercise caution, and ALWAYS wear a seatbelt. You can drive on a UK license for 3 months. Obey all traffic laws and NEVER drink and drive.

You will be provided with emergency contact numbers on your arrival.

LGBTQ+ rights in Uganda

We welcome and value all students and volunteers regardless of sexual orientation and gender identification. Unfortunately, as you may be aware, Uganda has recently (March 2023) passed extreme anti-LGBTQ+ legislation.

To protect yourself and our staff, we recommend that you don't engage in any discussion of LGBTQ+ issues even in a social setting. The beliefs and attitudes are very deeply held and would unlikely lead to a positive resolution. We would be more than happy to discuss anything relating to this in more detail prior to your placement in absolute confidence, please contact any of the team in the Who's Who section if you would like to arrange this.

However, if you are from the LGBTQIA+ community, you are unlikely to experience problems whilst travelling/living in Uganda. These laws are rarely implemented against foreigners. To keep yourself safe, don't engage in intimate relations (e.g kissing) in public (these are not acceptable for any couple) and be mindful of local attitudes.

Applying for a Ugandan entry visa

If you have a British Citizen you will need an entry Visa – it is worth looking if this is necessary for your passport type. E.g Irish Citizens do not need a Visa.

The eVisa system was newly introduced in 2016 and is still subject to frequent problems and errors. Please be patient should the system be down the first time you try to use it; any problems are usually resolved within 24 hours. Once you have applied for a visa, you should receive a response from the Ugandan Immigration Authority within 3 working days. Please follow the instructions below carefully as any errors or omissions may lead to your eVisa application being rejected or delayed. You should complete this process as early as possible and no later than 2 weeks before your departure. The process should take around 10 or 15 minutes to complete.

Applying for an eVisa

1. Visit the Ugandan Visa website at: <https://www.visas.immigration.go.ug/>

BE CAREFUL: There are loads of dodgy websites that look similar. Use the above link, don't just go through google.

2. Select 'Start a new application' and 'Accept' the disclaimer notification

Step 1 of 4:

Select type of application

Visa or permit type: Visa

Category: Uganda Ordinary/Tourist Visa

Subcategory: Single Entry

NOTE: Don't worry about the long list of documents. You don't need them all.

Select: **Next Step**

Step 2 of 4:

Ignore the question about group data

Fill the form

Complete the personal and passport data as requested.

Under the section 'Other Data', please use the following information:

Contact in Uganda: Mr Allan Ndawula, Plot 29 Saaka Road Fort Portal, 0774671007

Purpose of Visit: Tourism

Port of Entry: Entebbe

Duration of stay: Write **THREE MONTHS** regardless of how long you are coming for.

Select: **Next Step**

Step 3 of 4:

Add documents

In this section you must upload the following documentation. The tricky part is that each document must be less than 250KB. One way to do this is to take a photo on your mobile

phone then email it to yourself; on most phones it will ask you what size you want to send the photo as so you should select a smaller size (under 250KB):

1. Passport Copy (bio-data page) – this is the page with your photo and passport information
2. Recent Passport-Size Photograph – this can be a normal photo, although it must be in the style of a passport photo (with a plain white background, showing clearly only your shoulders, neck and face and with no sunglasses or hair covering your face etc.)
3. Yellow Fever Vaccination Certificate – you will receive this when you have your yellow fever vaccination. Remember to carry this on your person when you fly to Uganda
4. Full flight itinerary – this must be added as a separate document, otherwise your application will be rejected. Remember to include your return journey. Don't worry if this is in more than 3 months time – they don't care.

Step 4 of 4: Confirmation

Check carefully over all the information you have provided and, if correct, select: **Submit**
You will then be taken to the payment page to pay online (\$50 for a British Citizen).

What Happens Next?

After you submit your application, you will receive an email acknowledging receipt and informing you that your visa application is being assessed. This usually only takes 24 hours but please allow for 3 full working days. The Ugandan Immigration Authority will respond with a 'Letter of Approval' or they will defer your application if anything is incorrect or missing. This might go to your junk folder so check it.

If approved, please print the approval letter and carry it with you on your person when you travel along with your passport, yellow fever vaccination certificate.

If your application is deferred, please refer to the information they provide in their email and address their concerns as soon as possible. Should you have any problems or questions, please let us know and we will advise accordingly.

Looking after your wellbeing

Working in a low-resource setting can be emotionally and physically demanding, and it is common to witness high levels of preventable morbidity and mortality and experience stress, which you may need emotional support for.

Take regular breaks and enjoy your weekends and time away from the clinical area.

If you are feeling down, stressed, or upset, please tell someone! Speak to our volunteers or staff, or any member of the K4C team so that we can support you and speak to friends and family at home regularly. (Anyone in the 'Whos-Whos' section would be happy to talk to you about anything concerning you or your mental health).

The Mind website has lots of good resources to support your mental health: <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

You can also access emergency mental health telephone support using Skype to call:

The National Suicide Prevention Helpline / 0800 689 5652 / <https://www.spuk.org.uk/national-suicide-prevention-helpline-uk/>

Samaritans / 116 123 / <https://www.samaritans.org/>

If you feel that a serious incident has occurred, either inside or outside the clinical area, that needs investigation by K4C, please complete a serious incident report. You can also contact Anya Ahmed, K4C Trustee with responsibility for safeguarding, in confidence on Anya.Ahmed@mmu.ac.uk.

Who's Who in K4C

K4C is a small team, and many of us are volunteers. Our UK office is housed within the University of Salford, Manchester. Please feel free to contact any member of the team with concerns or questions.

There is a K4C Uganda team of midwives, nurses, orthopaedic technicians and other professionals who you will work closely with day to day, who you will meet when you arrive in Uganda.

Predeparture, your first port of call should be James Ackers Johnson and Juliette Bowman in the UK. Once you are in Uganda, Richard Isingoma is the person to contact in the first instance.

K4C International Team

Louise Ackers, K4C Chair (H.L.Ackers@salford.ac.uk)

James Ackers Johnson, International Project Manager (James@knowledge4change.org)

Juliette Bowman, International Project Officer (Juliette@knowledge4change.org)

Allan Ndawula, Regional Project Manager Uganda/Tanzania (garyallan46@yahoo.com)

Richard Isingoma, Office Manager, K4C Uganda (R.Isingoma@salford.ac.uk)

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