



TOP TIPS FROM STUDENTS

YOUR WELCOME LETTER



Welcome to GWH – Your Guide to Getting the Most from Your Placement.

Starting placement somewhere new can be daunting – especially when it's far from your usual campus. Whether you're from Oxford, King's, or Bristol, we want you to feel at home here in Swindon. This quick guide brings together tips from students who've been here before – the things we wish we'd known earlier!

★ Make the Most of Piota

Download and explore the Piota app – it's packed with useful resources like walking guides, local activities, and the Student Activity Hub. You can even report placement issues (like being turned away from a ward) directly through the app.

Know Your IT

The main systems to be aware of are: ICE – blood tests and imaging, Nervecentre – observations & NEWS2, EPMA – prescribing and meds, Medway PAS – admissions and appointments.

Don't panic – you won't be expected to use these on your own. Most teams are happy to give you a quick tour. And for any issues? Ask John Boyle: john.boyle@nhs.net.



Timetabling & Learning

GWH hosts students from three medical schools, and timetables are carefully designed to make sure everyone gets fair access. Stick to your schedule – it keeps things running smoothly and ensures you're where the learning is best. If a clinic is cancelled or teaching falls short, let your CTFs know early so they can help while you're still on placement.



Teaching & Study Spaces

Most teaching takes place in the education centre or Downsview House common room. Look out for excellent simulation sessions too! For studying, the library is open 24/7, with free printing and plenty of space – or you can settle into Bookends Café for something more relaxed.

Living in Downsview House

Downsview is safe, clean and walking distance from GWH. You'll find: Parking, Laundry via Circuit. Wednesday coffee mornings (8:30–2pm), Recycling and regular cleaning

If you have queries, email Karen Watkinson at karen.watkinson@unitestudents.com or visit the 24/7 reception.

Feeling Left Out or Concerned?

You're part of the team. If you ever feel excluded or see unacceptable behaviour, speak to one of the three Speak Up Guardians listed on the Wellbeing Board in the Academy. If you have any concerns the amazing admin team are available to help or direct you to the best person!

WELLBEING

Being on placement away from campus can be tough, but you're not alone—support is here.

-  **Talk to someone:** Your CTFs and admin team know the local resources. Everything's also on Piota.
-  **What's available:** Employee Assistance Programme (24/7), Occupational Health, Staff Wellbeing Office, and drop-in sessions with the hospital clinical psychologist.
-  **In an emergency:** Call 999 or go to A&E. For urgent help, call 111 or contact Samaritans at 116 123 or online.
-  **Quick tips:** Explore support early, speak up if something's bothering you, and remember—you matter and you're part of the team.

Maps & Getting Around

. For navigation, skip the giant map in the atrium and check out the more up-to-date floor plans on the GWH website. If you're lost, ask a volunteer in a turquoise polo – they're brilliant.

Social Life & Events

The GWH team is keen to support your time here – from quiz nights to ice skating. If you've got ideas, drop the admin team an email! Keep an eye out for event announcements via email or Piota. Whether you're here for 2 weeks or 2 months, there's a lot to enjoy at GWH. Don't be afraid to ask questions, get stuck in, and make the most of the opportunities – you're very welcome here.

Staying Active

- The Link centre has a nice pool in Swindon - not too busy, and they do a student membership which is a pretty reasonable price. You can drive there (~15-20 mins), and there's also a bus stop outside which has buses direct to Great Western hospital (although it does take about 40 mins)
- JD gym- It's always busy but the best gym in Swindon (puregym is bad!). But you have to drive over the magic roundabout! but there's a big tescos next to it and a B&M.
- Running around Coate water is lovely- there is a 5km route there, around, and back
- If you're looking for longer routes head to Chiseldon and the other side of the M4



What students are saying:



- On Monday evenings there is a 'pay as you play' netball group at the Dorcan centre - it's a really nice group of people and the academy reimbursed us each week
- We asked the academy for a social to Flashpoint climbing gym and they paid for taster sessions and 2 weeks free membership, we would encourage asking again
- Try to organize everything amongst yourself, the social space is big and free after 5! we did Mario cart and it was great!

- The academy has an office with everyone in it who were always happy to answer questions and queries. and the CTFs are amazing, super supportive
- **Make the most of it!** Everyone on outplacement is in the same boat! It's easy to think you can just focus on uni at placement and socialise when you're back in Bristol but there's no point wasting half your time being antisocial. Talk to people, even if it's just saying hi in the corridor or the common room. Try to avoid only talking about medicine. If it doesn't seem like there's anything social going on in the academy, then be the change you want to see! Ask on the chat if anyone wants to go for a pint or go to a park.
- Get to know your CBL group well. You're going to be with them for 5-6 months and having a close knit group was really nice, especially in the lead up to exams when things get stressful. Plan days out and events together such as movie nights, going to the gym together or meeting up for lunch. Out placement can be lovely if you have the right set up in terms of balance with studying and socializing.

"Swindon is what you make of it and who you're with! It's definitely been my favourite placement so far"

Got any other suggestions?
Let us know!



Places of Worship in Swindon

Islam – Shah Jalal Mosque · Swindon Mosque · Shaha Islamic Centre
Judaism – Swindon Hebrew Congregation
Hinduism – Swindon Hindu Temple Trust (relocating)
Sikhism – Shri Guru Nanak Gurdwara
Christianity – Holy Rood (Catholic) · Bath Road Methodist · St Mary's · St Mark's · St John's (CofE)



🚂 STEAM Museum – Explore Great Western Railway history with locomotives and interactive exhibits.

⚽ Swindon Town F.C. – Catch a League Two football match.

🧗 Rockstar Climbing Centre – Indoor climbing for all skill levels.

🎭 Wyvern Theatre – Enjoy drama, comedy, and live performances.

⛸ Link Centre – Ice skating, trampoline park, gym, and swimming pool.

🦋 Butterfly World – Butterfly house, farm park, garden centre, and soft play.



Gyms

New College Swindon Gym, Simply Gym Swindon East, Nuffield Health Swindon, The Gym Group Swindon, JD Gyms Swindon, Buzz Gym Swindon, PureGym Mannington Retail Park

Supermarkets Near Great Western Hospital

- Your Co-op Food (Badbury Park) – Unit 2, Homington Avenue, SN3 6FY
- Morrisons- Eldene Drive, SN3 3TX
- Aldi – West Swindon, Gorse Hill, SN5 7EX
- Lidl – West Swindon, Eldene, SN3 3SZ
- Tesco Extra – West Swindon Shopping Centre, SN5 7DL
- Asda Superstore – West Swindon Shopping Centre, SN5 7DL

Pubs

The Spotted Cow – ~15 min walk from GWH
The Sun Inn – ~5 min drive / 20 min walk from GWH
The Plough on the Hill – ~7 min drive from GWH

Restaurants

Mario's – Italian Fabio Ristorante – Italian
Los Gatos – Spanish tapas
Greek Olive Restaurant -Greek
Wagamama
Yak The Himalayan Kitchen – Nepalese
Harper's – Steakhouse
The Ridge – American BBQ

On-Site Food and Drink

- Main Restaurant (Ground Floor, Atrium)
- Costa Coffee (Ground Floor, Atrium)☕ Coffee, sandwiches & pastries
- Café Blue (Ground Floor, Brunel Treatment Centre Entrance)☕ Hot & cold food | ☕ Refreshments
- Bookends Café (Lower Ground Floor, Education Centre)☕ Perfect for studying with a coffee

Student Discounts

Check out Unidays and student beans for discounts on restaurants like Chiquitos and Caprinhos Pizza

How to Get to Swindon Railway Station from GWH:

Swindon Railway Station is approximately 6 km (3.7 miles) from Great Western Hospital (GWH). You can reach the station by bus (Service 1) or taxi.

Swindon to Oxford: Great Western Railway (GWR), ~35–55 mins

Swindon to King's London (Paddington): GWR to London Paddington, ~55 mins

Swindon to Bristol Temple Meads: GWR, ~35–55 mins



Swindon to Oxford: Stagecoach S6, every 15 mins, ~1h30

Swindon to King's London: FlixBus to Hammersmith + local bus, ~2h57

Swindon to Bristol: National Express/FlixBus, ~55 mins–2h



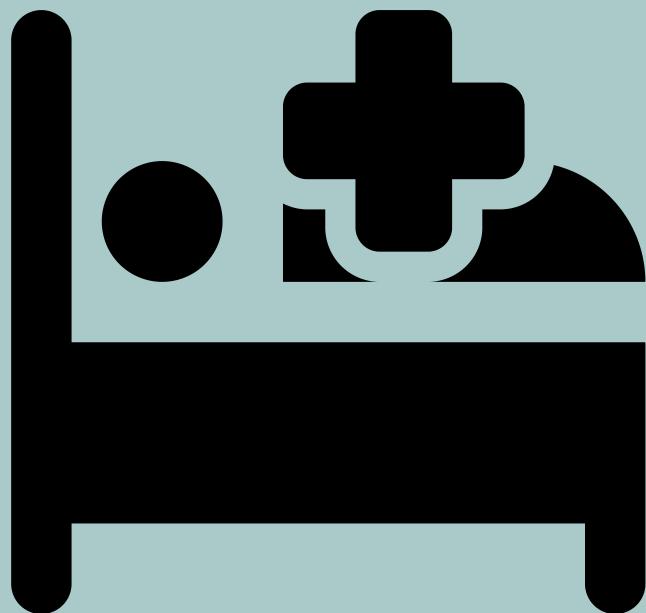
Cycle Loan scheme

Various sized recently serviced preloved cycles that are available to loan to all student groups - a £40 returnable cash deposit is all that is required. Email the admin team to find out more.

Find bikes stored in the Staff Cycle Hub near the main road entrance and/or at Downsview House accommodation cycle store



NAVIGATING THE WARDS



Join the Ward Round

Arrive early and offer to prepare or update patient notes.

Ask if you can write in the notes (always under supervision).

Use the round to learn how diagnoses are managed and plans are formed.

Ask About Ward Teaching

Speak to junior doctors, registrars, or nurses about any scheduled teaching sessions.

If there isn't any, ask if someone would be happy to do a short case-based discussion.

Seek Out Extra Learning Opportunities

Ask if you can attend Morbidity & Mortality (M&M) meetings, journal clubs, or multidisciplinary team (MDT) meetings.

Great places to hear about real challenges in patient care.

Shadow an Allied Health Professional (AHP)

Spend time with physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, dietitians, or pharmacists.

This builds a better understanding of holistic care and discharge planning.

Take a Patient History & Do an Examination

Choose a patient (with consent) and do a full history and examination.

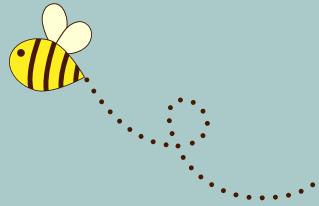
Afterwards, ask a doctor if you can present your findings and get feedback.

Ask About Ongoing Audits or Quality Improvement (QI) Projects

Find out if there are any active audits or QI initiatives on the ward.

Offer to get involved—many students join projects on documentation, prescribing, or post-op/medication safety.

There is always someone there for you!



Galenicals welfare: med-galenicalswelfare@bristol.ac.uk

Senior tutors: med-senior.tutor@bristol.ac.uk

Little Blue Book

Galenicals peer support form:

<https://forms.office.com/e/zmgqNut5Lt>



NHS Urgent Mental Health Helpline: [Check your mental health symptoms - NHS 111](#)

Samaritans - call 116 123 or visit <https://www.samaritans.org/>

Mind Bristol - helpline: 0117 203 4419 or visit <https://bristolmind.org.uk/>

Bigmoose Charity: <https://bigmoosecharity.co/can-we-help/>

BEAT eating disorder support: <0808 801 0677>

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/>

The Sanctuary Bristol:

The Bridge (NHS Sexual Assault Referral Centre): 0117 342 6999

Next Link (Domestic Abuse Specialist Support Organisation): 0800 4700 280

Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

