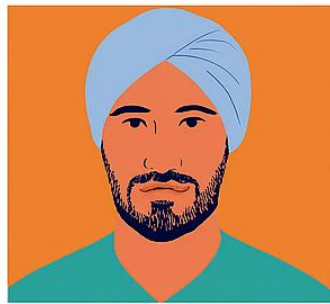




THE LEEDS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE SIKH STUDENT GUIDE

3RD EDITION



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About this guide

Congratulations on making it to the School of Medicine - all those long hours and hard work have paid off! This marks the beginning of a new journey, filled with ups, downs, challenges, and most importantly new opportunities. We hope these will be some of your best years, but we know there may also be difficult times, so we have created this guide to help you navigate your university experience.

We know that coming to university can be a daunting experience, and students of faith may face unique challenges.

This guide is the third in a series of religious guides. The first in the series was an adaptation of the Manchester Muslim Medical Student Guide. The School of Medicine Sikh Faith Guide aims to help Sikh students by offering some practical tips, advice, and answers to frequently asked questions. The guide has been reviewed to ensure it is a useful and accurate resource to help you throughout your journey at the School of Medicine.

We want this guide to empower you as Sikh students and give you the support you need to overcome any challenges you may face due to your faith during your time at the School of Medicine.

"Recognize the human race as one"

Guru Gobind Singh

Starting University

Welcome Activities

Welcome week and International Orientation Week are exciting times of the year, with so much to do and so many new people to meet. It's nice to be able to make use of welcome events with your fellow course-mates, and there are various societies who arrange lots of events for students.

Here are some common questions you may have at the start of your degree regarding Welcome Week:

My tutorial group are all going on a Pub Crawl and are inviting me along, I don't want to go because of the alcohol and the club environment. What should I do?

This guide recognises the different ways in which students engage with their religion, and we understand some students will choose to drink and others will not. Don't feel you have to take part in anything you're uncomfortable with. In this case, just explain to them that you can't take part due to your religious beliefs and/or personal preferences. You can also speak to your academic advisor or student pastoral support services, who can support you.

Moreover, there is no harm in suggesting alternative ways to meet up with friends and colleagues, such as coffee shops or restaurants. You may be pleasantly surprised at how accommodating people are.

Are there any alternative Welcome events on campus?

Definitely!

The Leeds Sikh Society runs many Sikh-friendly welcome events and continues to do so throughout the year. From bowling to social link-ups, games nights to Punjabi Reading and Writing courses, there's always something to do! So come along, it's a great place to make new friends. For the latest events be sure to check out their Instagram page: [@leedssikhsoc](https://www.instagram.com/leedssikhsoc)

There is also the Leeds Punjabi Society. They organise games sessions, DJ nights and meet and greets amongst other things. Find them on Instagram at: [@leedspunjabisociety](https://www.instagram.com/leedspunjabisociety)

[Global Café](#) is a regular alcohol-free event welcoming all students to relax, meet and chat. It runs every weekday during Welcome and International Orientation weeks and on Mondays during the year.

v1, The Leeds School of Medicine Sikh Student Guide created August 2024, v3 updated August 2026.

You can find information about all undergraduate societies directly linked to the School of Medicine here:

[School of Medicine Clubs and Societies](#)

All other societies can be found on the Leeds University Union website here:

[LUU Societies](#)

Meeting new people and making friends

Starting a new course can be a daunting experience at first, here are some suggestions for how you can meet new people:

- **Join Facebook/ Whatsapp groups for your course or accommodation** - These group chats tend to be set up before starting the course and will help you get acquainted with those you'll be studying with.
- **Sit with people in your lectures and start up a conversation** - This might seem scary, but it really can work. Introduce yourself to the person next to you - you might end up becoming friends.
- **After lectures or your other classes go out with people** - Invite people to get coffee or food, go to the library, or on a walk.
- **Join societies** - During Welcome Week, societies put on a range of events and this can be a way to meet people you might not otherwise from other courses and year groups. You might join School of Medicine specific societies or join University-wide societies (e.g. societies for commuter students or for mature students).
- **Volunteering** - Volunteering is an opportunity to do good and expand your social circle. There's a range of societies that give volunteering opportunities as well as organisations in the local community.
- **Join the [University Buddy Scheme](#)** to be matched with a new or returning student buddy who has similar interests. When you join you will also receive invitations to exclusive buddy social activities which are always alcohol free.
- **[MUMS \(Medical Undergraduate Mentoring Scheme\)](#)** is a programme where MBChB students have their own medic family consisting of a few fresher 'siblings', as well as second year 'parents' to help them adjust to being a Medical student in the School of Medicine.
- **[Meeting people](#)** - Have a look at our information about opportunities to meet people and get involved
- **Paid employment** - Your part-time job can be a way to meet people you wouldn't normally have the chance to. Try to make sure you'll be able to balance paid work with your studies.
- **If you live in a University residence**, look out for [Residence Life](#) activities where you can meet your flatmates and neighbours.
- **Host a gathering** - Invite people to where you live and tell them they're welcome to bring their own friends. This is a really good way to network and meet new people.
- **Most importantly, don't isolate yourself from people**

Remember, it can take time to make friends, and that's okay.

Accommodation

Moving into new accommodation can be a very exciting experience, and it can also be something some students worry about. This may be your first time moving away from home and living with strangers, so it's important to set your boundaries and expectations from the beginning.

I'm uncomfortable with the accommodation I have been allocated. Is there anything I can do to switch halls?

To find out your options regarding switching halls visit: [Making accommodation changes.](#)

If something is affecting or upsetting you, speak to the warden in your residence. They will do what they can to help sort out the problem. All wardens hold advisory sessions during term time. Find out about the [advisory session in your residence.](#)

I've moved into catered halls and I don't know if they can provide me with vegetarian food.

Some Sikh students will have a vegetarian diet. There are vegetarian options within the catered accommodation. You can view more information on [the catering for each hall by selecting your hall from this this central list.](#)

When applying for any type of accommodation (catered or not catered), students may request a preference to live with other students who have a similar diet to them. Unfortunately, this is not guaranteed as it depends on numbers of students requesting this. If it's not possible for the entire flat to be made up of students with a vegetarian diet, the accommodation team will at least try and pair up two students with the same diet.

You can find more information on the following web page: [Accommodation Additional Requirements.](#)

My flatmates only want to socialise in an environment that I am not comfortable in (i.e. alcohol, clubbing etc.)

It's important to know that you shouldn't ever feel pressured into doing something that you're not comfortable with. At the beginning of your tenancy, it would be good to explain to your flatmates how

you feel about the nature of these gatherings as early as you can. Other students tend to respect your decision and will try to make changes. You can always offer alternatives if you want to get to know your flatmates/neighbours in a better environment, such as going to a restaurant for a meal or watching a movie.

Remember that you don't have to only socialise with your flatmates. Meeting people in your hall's common room or your halls of residence may have a Facebook group you could join as another way of finding people living in your building.

A member of the accommodation staff has made a racist or discriminatory comment towards me. What can be done and who should I report this to?

The University is a welcoming and diverse place, and if you do experience any unpleasant behaviour, there are measures in place to address discrimination on University premises. It is really important to speak to someone about any incidents that have taken place. For more information see the [reporting procedures section](#).

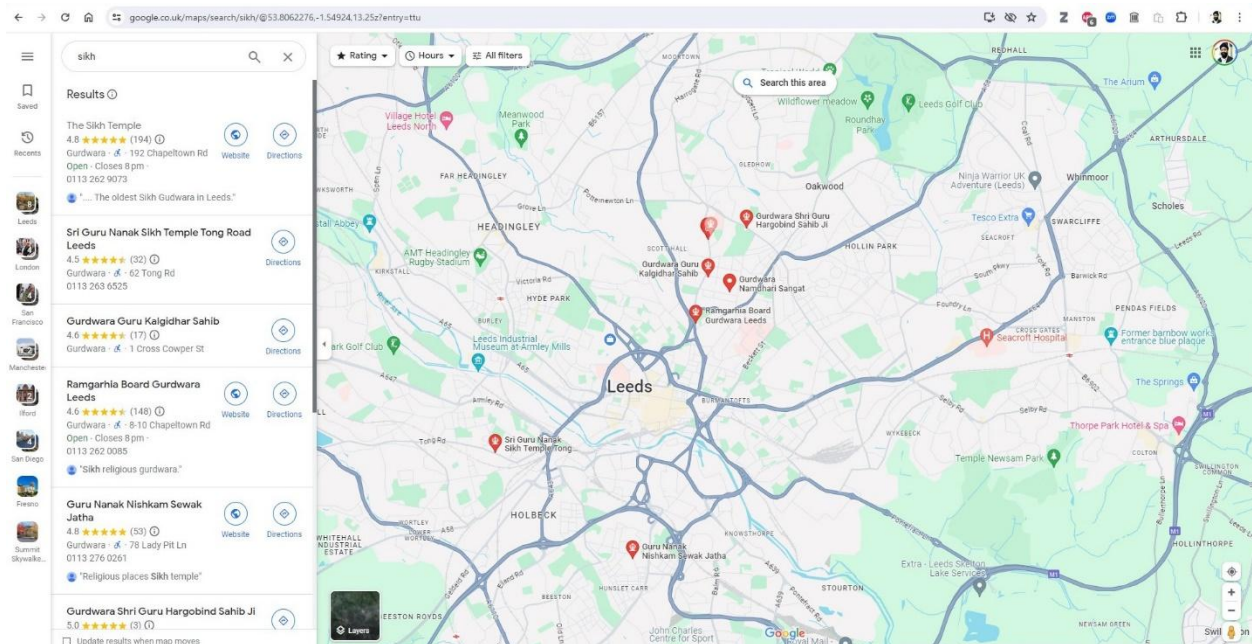
If you are in halls, every accommodation will also have a [residence life warden and a residence life assistant](#). They can help with problems you have during your stay. If you attend your accommodation welcome event, this will be a chance to meet them.

For more information about University of Leeds rented and leased properties, you can visit the [accommodation web page](#) where the University provides more detailed advice on accommodation.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can email accom@leeds.ac.uk.

The Local Sikh Community

There is a thriving Sikh community in the city of Leeds, both on campus and in the city. There are Sikh Gurudwaras local to the University which can be seen on the following Google maps screenshot:



An Akhand Paat (continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) is held at [The Sikh Temple on Chapeltown Road Leeds](#) every weekend from Friday to Sunday. This is a 25 minute journey from the University and regular buses are available from the city centre, you can find more information on routes and times on the [Metro website](#).

To find out more on what's happening in the local community, check out Sikhs in Leeds - [Facebook Sikhs In Leeds](#)

Leave for religious holidays

In line with the University's commitment to equity and inclusion, the School will make every effort to accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of staff and students.

Students or staff requiring special arrangements should try to make their needs known to their School ahead of the production of the timetable to ensure that any special arrangements can be accommodated therefore minimising post-publication changes to the timetable.

Can I take a few days off to celebrate religious holidays?

To submit a leave request for religious holidays including Vaisakhi, Bandi Chhor Diwas/ Diwali or Guru Nanak's Gurburb you should follow the process for your programme/course. MBChB students are encouraged to contact the Academic Sub Dean for their year group to talk about leave requests. Classified undergraduate (CUPS) and Taught postgraduate students (e.g. MSc, MRes) should contact their Programme Leader if they are uncertain of how to request leave. You might also contact your Academic Personal Tutor. Staff should be happy to have supportive chats with students religious issues impacting teaching, personal and clinical issues. In some circumstances, it may be possible for you to negotiate and make these days up when others are away for Bank Holidays, such as Christmas or New Year Holidays. In other situations, it may not be possible for any time off to be allowed if the clinical or learning experience can't be made up at any other time.

If you are unable to attend examinations/assessments on holy days or religious festivals please contact the Assessment & Progress Team by completing the Notification of religious commitments form. This form needs to be completed in advance and by the deadline specified by the University. You can find the form and the deadlines for completing it on the [Preparing for assessments section](#) of the 'For Students website.

Clinical Placement Allocation

Some students across the School of Medicine will be placed at a teaching hospital or other clinical setting for part of their course. This is so you can experience real clinical situations with real patients/clients and train in the same environment you will eventually work in.

If any personal or religious circumstances will preclude you from being at the teaching hospital/clinical setting allocated, please let the School of Medicine know or contact the Chaplaincy for support, requests are dealt with on an **individual case basis**.

Dress code in the Clinical Environment

For comprehensive guidance on placement dress, please see the [School of Medicine Student Dress Code](#) which has been written to help students feel more comfortable in their uniforms, including being able to dress in accordance with their religious and cultural practices.

I've heard that I can't wear my dastār in Clinical Theatres. How do I still attend without compromising my beliefs?

For School of Medicine students who wear the dastār, it is important for them to navigate the challenges that can arise in clinical environments and not feel like they need to compromise on their values.

There are many reasons why people may decide not to wear the dastār, but if you do wear the dastār, it is important to be aware that trust guidelines state that you can wear this in theatres, as long as it has been washed at 60 degrees. Alternatively, the placement may provide disposable orthopaedic hoods which cover the head and neck. Head coverings do not present an infection risk if they are properly worn and supported in the clinical environment.

Wearing a mask with a head covering can be difficult sometimes to hook the mask over your ears. It is possible to use a mask connector which connects the mask behind your head and this can make the process easier.

Can I wear my Kara on placement?

Where, for religious reasons, students wish to wear a bracelet, e.g. the Kara, they must ensure that the bracelet can be pushed as high up the arm away from the wrist as practically possible (while still allowing comfort for the wearer) and secured in place to enable effective hand hygiene/surgical scrubbing which includes the wrists. This is comparable to guidance regarding the wearing of wedding rings.

The Beard and Fit-Testing

For some Sikhs, maintaining the beard is an important part of their faith. Kesh (sometimes kes) is the practice of allowing one's hair to grow naturally out of respect for the perfection of God's creation. The practice is one of The Five Kakaars, the outward symbols ordered by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 as a means to profess the Sikh faith.

You may be able to request a beard snood on some placements which covers your beard subject to availability. Beards should be kept tidy and should not be allowed to hang down such that it comes into contact with patients during examination or care delivery.

I've got a surgical placement coming up and I have been emailed that I need to get fit tested to be able to go into theatre. This requires a clean shave but I want to keep my beard for religious reasons. What should I do?

'Fit testing' is a mask fitting procedure that requires a clean shave so that a tight seal can be formed to prevent leakage of contaminated air. This is especially important in aerosol-generating procedures (AGP's). This can be difficult for Sikh students as facial hair prevents the formation of a tight seal.

Also, as per NHS public health guidelines, FFP3 masks (that require fit testing) are required in Aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) ([NHS England guidelines](#)). Now not all surgeries actually involve AGPs and it is worth speaking to your consultant supervisor to discuss which surgeries can be attended where an FFP3 mask is not needed and a surgical mask alone is sufficient.

Be mindful that different trusts have different guidelines and so it's important to read up on what those guidelines are and to once again speak/email your Clinical Placement Supervisor or Clinical Skills Tutor, at the start of your block, to see what the best course of action is.

Reporting procedures

What can discrimination actually look like in a clinical setting?

In our conversations at placement or University, it can be tricky to tell whether questions about our faith are asked because of genuine curiosity or an indirect attempt to offend and belittle. Genuine questions, even if they seem surprising or bizarre at first, can turn into really healthy and open conversations about certain topics relating to your faith. It can be a good way to tackle misconceptions and educate others about your beliefs and practices. However, if you are getting asked and being singled out about what your viewpoints are on certain issues, or an aspect of your faith is being belittled that is not acceptable. Even if the perpetrator did not mean to offend, if you feel like you're being put in a vulnerable position and feel hostility towards you, or your beliefs then please do speak to the School of Medicine about it.

What reporting procedures are there?

Some students choose to report because they want some action to be taken based on what they witnessed or experienced. Other students report because although they don't want anything done in their particular case they do want the University or School to become aware of patterns occurring in certain environments (e.g. placements, lecture theatres or seminar groups) so the School of Medicine can improve the experience for everyone. Below we explain the options you have to report including where there is the opportunity to report anonymously.

Report and Support

[Report and Support](#) is a University wide service, whereby you can report acts of hate, harassment, and discrimination either anonymously or by speaking confidentially to an advisor, who will talk you through the various options you have.

Working within the University, the Harassment and Misconduct Advisors can explain what support is available; what would happen if you choose to make a formal complaint, and they can help with referrals for practical issues such as mitigating circumstances and accommodation concerns.

Freedom to Speak up Guardians

You can contact the Faculty of Medicine and Health [Freedom to Speak Up Guardians](#) to:

- Speak about any issue that concerns you big or small, including any form of discrimination (such as racism, sexual harassment), bullying or microaggressions.
- Discuss your experiences in a confidential, safe and impartial space.
- Explore options and make an informed decision about the next steps.
- Share your suggestions and help influence change for all students.
- Receive feedback from your Guardian who will work to ensure your concerns are listened to and followed up.

How to Contact the Freedom to Speak Up Guardians

 **Via email**

medfsug@leeds.ac.uk

 **Via text message**

Robina Mir – 07541 207278

Farhana Mulla – 07541 207279

The Clinical Placement Reporting Tool

The **Clinical Placement Reporting Tool (CPRT)** is a system that allows students and placement staff to feed back to the School about their experiences working with one another. They can do this in two ways: by **leaving a Commendation** or by **raising a Concern**.

Commendations give students and placement staff the ability to highlight outstanding individuals who have either demonstrated excellence or have gone 'above and beyond' expectations. The feedback the School receives will be passed directly to the student or staff member who has been commended.

Concerns are used to alert the School to problems or areas that may compromise either patient safety or the quality of the learning environment. Concerns will be handled confidentially through processes that will be outlined in more detail via the link below, normally by the Programme Lead or Head of Year responsible for the student.

To find out more, please visit: the [School of Medicine Taught Student Guide](#)

Your feedback will also be collected following each of your placements and it is used to improve aspects of clinical programmes. This is also shared with placement providers to encourage good practice and to improve clinical placements.

Code of Conduct

As set out in the University of Leeds [Student Policy on Preventing and Addressing Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct](#) the University will not tolerate unacceptable behaviours such as bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct. The School of Medicine's Anti-racism Code of Conduct supports this Policy, outlining the School's stance on racial harassment specifically, and to support our implementation of the BMA Charter to end Racial Harassment.

The Code of Conduct sets the School's expectations of behaviour and conduct of staff, students and postgraduate researchers.

This Code of Conduct is also intended to clarify to placement providers the expectations that we have for their staff who interact with our students, and the standards expected of our students.

The Code of Conduct can be found on the [School of Medicine Taught Student Guide](#)

Wellbeing

Support and Wellbeing

The School of Medicine takes its academic and pastoral support of students very seriously.

All students have an Academic Personal Tutor who meets with them at specific times during the year, throughout the course. We recognise that adapting to University, living away from home, or commuting long distances can be challenging and that being a student can be stressful. Knowing where to start can feel overwhelming. The University has a Student Services team that is available to help students with day-to-day concerns. You can find support for challenges you're facing - whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing, relationships, and more on the [University 'For Students' webpages](#).

The School of Medicine aims to support students throughout the course of their studies with the personal tutor programme. Students will be assigned a personal tutor who will work to help identify and address any problems, ensuring that you are able to make the most of your learning opportunities at Leeds. Find out more on the [Medicine and Health student support pages](#).

If you're feeling persistently sad, anxious, or lacking motivation, it's important to reach out. These feelings can be difficult to manage alone, and they may be signs that you need support. Talking to someone - whether it's a friend, family member, or support service - can make a real difference. You're not alone, and asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Likewise, if you're finding an aspect of studying hard, you can reach out to Andrea McGoverin A.M.McGoverin@leeds.ac.uk, who is the Academic Director of Student Support for the School of Medicine. You are encouraged to reach out to your course/programme/year lead to discuss and adapt expectations around clinical experiences or placement where appropriate. You can also reach out to mental health services at the University for additional support or book an appointment with your GP.

Mental Health Support

The University of Leeds offers a variety of services that can support you. Here are some contacts below:

Counselling and Wellbeing Support Services - [Leeds Students counselling and wellbeing Services](#)

Chaplaincy - chaplaincy@leeds.ac.uk

You can use the Chaplaincy:

- Whether you have a faith or have no religious beliefs.
- When you need someone independent and confidential to talk to.
- If you're finding life difficult or you have a tricky decision to make.
- If you have lost someone close to you.
- If you want to explore spirituality.

External Services

[Sikh Helpline](#) is a free professional and confidential telephone counselling and email inquiry service, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The services of Sikh Helpline are available to any individual regardless of age, gender, race/culture, physical and mental disabilities, religion, sexual orientation and nationality.

The helpline offers support services in the areas of substance abuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, depression, relationship issues and bullying."

British Sikh Doctors

The Sikh Doctors Association

Sikh Alliance Yorkshire

Concerns for Others

If you are concerned about a fellow student, please also use one of the above routes to let the University know.

Conclusion

So, there you have it, our **Third Edition of The Leeds School of Medicine Sikh Student Guide**. We hope that the content covered throughout this guide has provided you with solutions and practical advice to ease your experience through Medical School. We appreciate that additional issues may arise, which this guide hasn't covered. If they do, please get in touch with Kate Summers (K.B.Summers@leeds.ac.uk) so we can ensure the guide is updated.

We recognise the importance of supporting students with their faith and as such, this is part of a series of student faith guides.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this guide, please contact:

Kate Summers

K.B.Summers@leeds.ac.uk

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Project Manager for the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

Version Control Box

Version	Date	Description
1.0	August 2024	Document updated by Kate Summers and Bridgette Bewick
2.0	August 2025	Document updated by Kate Summers and Bridgette Bewick
3.0	August 2026	Document updated by Kate Summers and Bridgette Bewick