

Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

Student Handbook



www.scottishoverseasguardianship.co.uk

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Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association

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This handbook contains general information on Scottish Overseas Guardianship Association and is written for Students whose parents have arranged for S.O.G.A. to be their guardians while they study in the UK

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INTRODUCTION

Your Named Guardian is Mrs. Pamela Keracher.



I am delighted to welcome you to S.O.G.A. I have been involved with students, guardians, and guardianships for the past sixteen years and with children since forever. I am married to Peter; we have three children and three grandchildren.

When time allows you will find me outdoors enjoying our Scottish lochs and mountains, spending time with family or quietly reading.

Over the years, I have really enjoyed covering courses on child psychology, health, and wellbeing.

I am totally committed to providing a caring service for you. By law, I must ensure you are safe, but I also want to make sure you have an enjoyable time in the UK, while reaching your full academic potential.

I work very closely with our group of extremely good, kind, and professional host families. You will stay with a host family during any holidays or breaks from school.

My number 07762791805 available 24 hours . Feel free to call or leave a message at any time.

Pam Keracher

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Why Do I Need a Guardian?

If your parents live overseas and you are attending a boarding school in the UK, no matter how old you are, you need a named Guardian. This is a school representative Guardian not by law Legal Guardian. Your named Guardian must be a UK resident who is over the age of 25 and who is ideally able to reach you in school within one hour in case of any emergency.

A Guardian will act on behalf of your parents when they are not able to do so.

A Guardian will look after your welfare in the UK when school is closed for the holidays. A

Guardian will provide you with a host family to stay with during any time you are not in school.

A Guardian will help you with things you may need, such as uniform, sports items, telephone, and sim cards, etc.

A Guardian will help you arrange travel to host, to airports, to visit University, as well as any trips.

A Guardian will help when/if things go wrong.

If you get into trouble in school and are suspended or are asked to leave school for a short period.

If you have problems with immigration, lost or stolen passports

If you get ill, you need to leave school and stay with a host or stay in hospital.

A Guardian will support you for anything, being there for you to talk to

- If you are worried about work
- If you are worried about school
- If you are worried about friends
- If you are feeling homesick, missing mum and dad
- If you are worried about staying with a host
- If you are worried about anything.
- If you just want someone to talk to.

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Why Do I Need a Host Family?

You need a Host family because when you are not in school (over an exeat, half term, before or after school starts, or any other time you are not permitted to stay in school), the safest place for you to be is with an inspected and experienced Host family.

Do I have to Stay with a Host Family?

Under normal circumstances: Yes, you must stay with a Host family. The accommodation is confirmed two weeks in advance but there are exceptions.

If you wish to spend an Exeat (holiday weekend) or half term with a friend, then we need written permission from your parents **and** an invite from your friend's parents. You will also need to give us their contact details: Name, Address Telephone, and email.

If you are wishing to visit a University on an Open day with the arrangements pre-booked and confirmed, we can arrange accommodation. All arrangements will be confirmed to your parents before you travel.

If you wish to stay one night over your holiday with a friend and have the correct permissions in place, you may but as the host's expenses for accommodation are paid two weeks in advance, your parents will still have to pay the full amount. **What is a Host Family?**

Soga have several Host Families. These are families who will look after our students during half-term and weekend exeats. Host Families can be a man and woman with children or a single person living on their own or with children. All the Host Families have gone through an extremely strict assessment to ensure they can provide the best possible care when looking after an international student. The Host family will welcome you as a member of their family and you are expected to respect their way of life. It is important that you remember your named educational guardian is still Mrs. Pam Keracher while you are staying with the Host Family, so it is important that you speak to Pam about any concerns, you let her know if you want to do anything that hasn't been previously arranged.

Can I Choose my Host Family?

S.O.G.A will arrange a family for you. When we arrange the family, we take into consideration your interests and how this will fit in with the family, the family location, the ages of children in the family, whether you are ok with the pets they have, their experience of looking after international students, if there is another student already staying with the family.

IF A HOST FAMILY HAS BEEN ARRANGED AND THEY HAVE BEEN BOOKED AND YOU DECIDED TO CANCEL THIS ARRANGEMENT YOUR PARENTS WILL CHARGED A CANCELLATION FEE

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What Will A Host Family Provide?

Your Accommodation: You will either have a bedroom to yourself or will share with another student of similar age to you, it depends on what the host has available. You will also have a study area, though this may not be in your room.

Meals: Your meals are included. Meals are arranged by the family. We, in the UK, tend to eat much less than Asian families, please do not go hungry. Speak to your host. In the UK we usually have a breakfast of Cereal and/or Toast, lunch is light, such as a sandwich and fruit. Dinner usually consists of a starter and main or main and dessert.

Please ask where you may access suitable drinks or snacks during your stay or space in the fridge for your own snacks.

Depending on age and your wishes, you may be encouraged to help cook some meals but please never cook when your hosts are in bed.

It's your holiday and food is important, so it is vital to speak to your host about your favorite food and any likes or dislikes.

Use of the kitchen area.

Use of the kitchen area, most homestays will prepare meals for you (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). You may want to help the family in their meal preparations or cook something yourself.

Please do talk to your homestay about this, dependent on your age and ability they will advise you how to use the kitchen and the necessary safety rules.

If you have your own food that you wish to eat during your stay, please let your homestay know so that this can be stored safely (for instance in a fridge if required). You will be able to access drinks and snacks throughout the day, such as fruit or biscuits. Your homestay will explain how you can access these.

In the UK table manners are especially important. It may feel like there are too many table manners rules but if you are invited to a UK friend's home you will be expected to know and abide by them.

Common UK table manners

- Wait until everyone is seated at the table before you begin eating.
- It is custom to eat quietly with the mouth closed
- If you wish for something on the table - ask for it to be passed to you or pass your plate, do not stretch over. ● Remember to use "Please" and "Thank you".
- Remain at the table until **everyone** has finished eating.
- When you leave the table, ask if you can help clear up by taking plates to the kitchen. It would be polite to offer to help wash the dishes.
- Thank your host for dinner.

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What will my host provide ,con` t

Bathroom facilities: It would be nice to have a private bathroom, but not all homes do, and you may need to share a bathroom with the host family. Please leave the bathroom clean and tidy. In the UK, hot water is not always readily available, so please make sure you know the times that are suitable for showering.

Internet: Most homes in the UK now have Internet, but it is important to note that your host may not have internet access or may not have unlimited internet, so it is important to check with your host. Some hosts will turn off their internet, so check with them what times you may use the internet and how long for.

Laundry. Your host family will be happy to help you with any laundry you may have. Ask them if they would mind doing the washing for you and where they would like you to put any dirty clothing. If you would prefer to do your own washing, ask them if this would be ok, and how to work any of the machinery.

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Can I visit my friends, go shopping or have day trips out?

Yes, you can, but depending on your year group and your age there will be restrictions. Not because we do not want you to have fun, but because in the UK we have laws and regulations we must follow. S.O.G.A must also take your parents' wishes into consideration during these circumstances.

All students,

Regardless of age, students are not permitted to consume alcohol, smoke or be involved in sexual activities.

6th Form

Normally, 6th form may arrange day trips to join friends for lunch or shopping. They must always have the day trip/itinerary agreed with the host family and must return at the time agreed. Our suggested time to be back before is 10.30 pm. Telephones must always be charged and on.

Under 6th form

Young people up to the age of 14 should always be accompanied by an adult.

14 to 16 years old may travel alone with pre-arranged plans/itinerary. Should as a rule return home before 9.30 pm unless at a movie that finishes after 9.30 pm. If student wants to go to movies and come back later then they must negotiate staying out after 9.30pm prior to going out. If for any reason student cannot get home for 9.30 or the previously arranged time, then the student must contact the Host Family immediately and let them know why they can't get home for the agreed time. Telephones must always be charged and on.

16 years plus but under 6th form may arrange day trips to join friends for lunch or shopping. They should have the day trip/itinerary agreed with the host family and must return before 10.15pm. If student wants to go to movies and come back later then they must negotiate staying out after 10.15. with the Host Family prior to going out. If for any reason student cannot get home for 10.15pm or the previously arranged time, then the student must contact the Host Family immediately and let them know why they can't get home. Telephones must always be charged and on.

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Can I change my host family?

The Host family are chosen for you with the information given by your parents. We take many different factors into consideration when choosing your host family. These factors include your age, likes and dislikes, whether you are an animal lover, and if you would prefer the city or countryside amongst many other factors.

But yes, you may request a change of host. We ask you to be honest with us, telling us why exactly you wish to change your host.

What is not allowed when staying with Host Family

You are **NOT** allowed to stay away overnight without the permission from Pam Keracher **and** your parents in school you are **NOT** allowed to smoke, or drink alcohol.

It is **ILLEGAL** to buy alcohol or cigars, A B or C drugs

You are **NOT** allowed to dye your hair at home.

Body piercing and Tattoos are **Illegal**. [Tattooing Of Minors Act 1969 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1969/26/section/1)

Prohibition of tattooing of minors.

It shall be an offence to tattoo a person under the age of eighteen except when the tattoo is performed for medical reasons by a duly qualified medical practitioner or by a person working under his direction, but it shall be a defence for a person charged to show that at the time the tattoo was performed he had reasonable cause to believe that the person tattooed was of or over the age of eighteen and did in fact so believe.

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What can I do to make my stay at the Host families a good one?

Over the years, students have told us what makes their exeats and weekends most enjoyable. So here are some tips.

Remember you are not in a hotel. Be polite and treat the home like your own, offer to get involved i.e., clearing the table, drying the dishes, helping carry the shopping, keeping your room tidy.

Good Manners are important in the UK. Host families will appreciate you thanking them e.g., for a nice meal and thanking them when you go back to school.

Join in with any family activities.

It is unlikely that the host family will be fluent in your language so it is important for you to communicate as much as you can in English. If another student who speaks your language is staying in the house, you should only speak in your native language when the two of you are alone.

Try not to spend too much time in your bedroom. Host families will welcome the opportunity to chat with you and find out about your culture.

Do not use your phone at the dinner table as this is considered rude in the UK.

Respect the House Rules and ask if you are unsure about anything.

Should you have an accident and break or damage anything, don't be afraid to tell your host family and apologize.

The feedback from students over the year suggest the ones who enjoy their breaks most with the families are the ones who make every effort to be part of the family

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STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

When students are under the care of S.O.G.A there are certain expectations that must be met. These include staying with host families and taking part in activities, outings, and educational visits. All of these play an important part in the life of each student, as it enhances the cultural experience during school breaks.

The health, safety and welfare of all involved are of paramount importance to S.O.G.A. This agreed code of conduct will help ensure our recreational activities, outings, and educational visits are successful.

YOU MUST AGREE TO AT ALL TIMES:

- I recognise that normal S.O.G.A rules apply during the duration of the time I am under the care of S.O.G.A.
- I will obey and follow all instructions given by any adult in authority who is part of the S.O.G.A organization.
- I will not leave the group, at any time, on my own or without a member of the S.O.G.A organization's permission.
- I agree to respect the property of other people and look after my own belongings. ● I will not purchase, use or pass on any illegal substances, including drugs or solvents.
- I accept that smoking tobacco is not permitted, even if I am of age.
- I will not attempt to purchase or consume alcohol,
- I will not have in my possession anything which could be used as a weapon.
- I will respect and accept laws and cultures of the people I meet and show courtesy at all times, particularly to my hosts.
- I accept the use of technology will and can be restricted during leave.
- I accept that failure to obey the above rules could lead to me being sent home early at my parents' expense.

I have read the above rules and accept them.

Student Signed _____ Date _____

S.O.G.A appreciates parental support and reinforcement, and as such would ask that you also sign to show you have seen and accepted the above rules.

Parents Signature _____ Date _____

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Staying Safe

S.O.G.A believes that the health, safety, and welfare of our students are very important. S.O.G.A also believes it is important to respect students and adults and to protect their rights. S.O.G.A has various safeguarding policies which are written for everyone who works with S.O.G.A. These policies are there and are available on the S.O.G.A website and this should be read as a guide to the main policies.

Why do we need these policies? -

These policies are important as they help us know how to know what a problem could be and where to go and get help.!

If anyone at any time makes you feel uncomfortable or upset, YOU MUST TELL SOMEONE e.g.

If any person is bullying, you - You must tell someone. Do not keep it a secret!

Saying strange things to you - Has any person said something to you, or have you heard something you do not like or something that upsets you. Do not keep it a secret, tell someone!

Touching you - Has any person touched you on a part of your body like your bottom, chest, or anywhere else you do not like - you must tell someone!

Has any person tried to give you tablets, cigarettes, drugs, or alcohol - Has any person asked you if you want a tablet or to smoke a cigarette or have a drink of something and you do not know what it is - Do not eat, drink, or smoke what they are giving you - you must tell someone!

Is any person ever been hitting, punching, or slapping you? - you must tell someone!

SOMEONE. When in school Your House Master, Your Host family will be available during holidays and always someone is available Mrs. Pamela Keracher 07762791805.

SOGA's designated safeguarding lead Mrs. Pamela Keracher 07762791805 (available 24 hours per day.)

is available to discuss with someone in confidence about problems you are having or worries that you might have about others please contact her:

If not available, then contact Peter Keracher 07834717879.as DDSL

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E Safety - Keep your personal information private. People you speak to online you do not know are strangers and they are not always who they say they are. Never arrange to meet an online friend. Tell someone - a grown up you trust - if they say anything or ask you to do anything that makes you feel uncomfortable.

The NSPCC website explains that cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone and can include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities, or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking, or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations. Cyberbullying is just one type of online abuse. Further details on the different types and signs, as well as how to help keep students safe online can be found in our online safety policy.

Emails If you receive a message that makes you feel uncomfortable tell an adult that you trust and delete it immediately DO NOT REPLY.

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Anti-Radicalization

Students are encouraged to share their views and recognise that they are entitled to have their own different beliefs which should not be used to influence others

It is essential that staff are aware and can identify students that may be vulnerable to radicalisation and know what to do once they have been identified.

Protecting children from the risk of radicalisation should be seen as part of schools' and childcare providers' wider safeguarding duties, and is similar in nature to protecting children from other harms (e.g. drugs, gangs, neglect, sexual exploitation), whether these come from within their family or are the product of outside influences.

The general risks affecting children and young people may vary from area to area, and according to their age.

SOGA members are in an important position to identify risks within a given local context.

It is important that SOGA members understand these risks so that we can respond in an appropriate and proportionate way. At the same time SOGA Members should be aware of the increased risk of online radicalisation.

SOGA's designated safeguarding lead Mrs Pamela Keracher 07762791805 (available 24 hours per day.)

is available to discuss with someone in confidence about problems you are having or worries that you might have about others please contact her:

If not available, then contact Peter Keracher 07834717879 or Mr. Duncan Wright DDSL 07476350802

What happens when you tell Someone. Sometimes the person will need to check things with Mrs. Keracher and then if they can deal with the issue themselves, they will. Sometimes they may need to contact some other agencies for support, but they will talk to you and explain all of this

Your Concern will be treated seriously.

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Dear Student,

We would like you to enjoy your time in the UK and achieve great success at school. While you are here it may help to be aware of the following:

Respect and Manners: Be polite and respect everybody you meet.
Use please and thank you, always.

When you are staying in a host family remember it is not a hotel.
Keep your room tidy, help to clear up after meals and be a part of the family.
Do not touch items that do not belong to you such as the host's computer,
No consumption of Alcohol, drugs, or smoking.

Behavior: Please always behave appropriately and remember:

- **Alcohol** o It is forbidden to all persons under the age of 18 years to consume alcohol.
- **Drugs** The use of non-prescribed drugs is strictly forbidden and the law regarding this is enforced very strictly.
- **Smoking** o It is a criminal offense to buy tobacco products under the age of 18. Smoking is forbidden in schools and in most public places.
- **Body Piercing and tattoos** are illegal under the age of 18.

Breaking any UK laws or school rules could result in suspension or expulsion.

Bullying It is not acceptable to take part in any behavior towards another person that negatively affects them either physically, mentally, or emotionally.

Warning Letters If your behavior causes disruption either at school or in a host family, SOGA will issue a warning letter to your parents. **Expulsion** If you are expelled from school or from any SOGA program you will be sent home immediately.

Loss of Visa: If you are expelled from school, you will lose your visa and must return home immediately.

Pam Keracher

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TRAVEL

Arriving in the UK

Prior to arrival in the UK, you will be told who will meet you when you go through the arrival gate. The nominated person will look out for you they will have a clipboard with the S.O.G.A Logo or a picture of your school, or your name clearly displayed. They will welcome you and arrange for you to continue your transfer either to the school or to your host family.

Travel Tickets

While many students/or families arrange their own travel tickets S.O.G.A can help with this. S.O.G.A can check timetables, book tickets, and arrange escorts if required

Passports and Visas It is essential that when traveling out with Scotland you must have your Passports and Visa.

Passports and Visa are usually kept in the school. S.O.G.A may ask for a photocopy of these and this will be kept in your personal file.

S.O.G.A can help you to get in touch with the appropriate people to renew or assist you if you should lose your passport or VISA - this also applies to Schengen Visa

Start and End of Term.

School publishes well in advance the start and end dates of terms and expects these to be adhered to. Failure to adhere to these dates can result in an unauthorized absence being recorded which in turn can lead to disciplinary procedures. S.O.G.A will arrange for transfer between airport and school

Half-Term and Weekend Exeats – Staying with Host Families

S.O.G.A will arrange for transport between school and host families. You will be advised by email/WhatsApp or text (your chosen form of contact).

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Important information

Living in the UK

Living in the UK may be quite different to what you are used to.

Every country has its own customs, and it may take you a while to get used to the new way of life. Please do not worry, this is most normal.

Here are a few examples of British customs to help you understand what is expected.

Meeting people: Sometimes British people come across as being reserved but usually they are kind, helpful and welcoming of visitors. British people usually greet each other with a handshake and use their title and surname, until being invited to use their first names. For example, when meeting a new contact, they may greet saying "Good morning Mr Harris". Due to Coronavirus you may find greetings have changed, and handshakes are not currently being used. A verbal greeting is perfectly acceptable, whilst maintaining social distancing.

Queues: The British people love queues! When waiting their turn, for example in a shop, bank or for public transport, people form a line one behind the other so that they are served in turn. It is considered rude to push in. Due to the coronavirus, spaces between people waiting in the queue are currently larger, so please be aware of maintaining a suitable distance. In the UK this is currently 1m plus. Shops in the UK may still be limiting the number of people allowed inside at any one time, so you may need to queue more often than in usual times. Some shops and services have clear instructions and markers to show where you should stand. Please respect the instructions given.

Please and thank you: British people greatly appreciate politeness. This means when you would like something you would start a sentence with the word "Please", for example, "Please may I have a sandwich?" When you have received something, you should always reply with "Thank you".

Sorry! The British people are often heard to say "Sorry!" This word is used if people accidentally bump into each other or make a mistake. Often people say it even if they were not to blame (for example, a person bumped into them whilst walking in the street).

Mealtimes: It is considered polite to wait for all people at the table to have their meals in front of them before you start to eat. Knives and forks are used to eat most main courses, although some British families may use other cutlery to suit the cuisine. Knives and forks are placed together to indicate that the diner has finished. It is not considered polite to eat with your mouth open or speak whilst eating. Similar to the beginning of the meal, diners usually wait until everyone is finished before leaving the table, and often time is spent having a chat around the table

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Electric Appliances

Overseas phone chargers and laptop power devices can pose a significant fire risk in the UK. Where possible please purchase a UK version. Please do not leave chargers and power devices on overnight.

Care of Valuables, Cash and Credit Cards

Remember to look after your personal belongings. Valuables should be kept in a safe place.

Registering with a Doctor

Normally the school will register you with a local doctor if you are unsure about this speak to Mrs Pam Keracher

What To Do in a Medical Emergency

Hopefully, the situation will not arise, however, it is essential you are prepared in case you are involved in or witness a medical emergency. In a minor situation you should enlist the help of an adult. If the emergency is serious then DIAL 999 and ask for an ambulance. You will need to give your name, your location and what has happened.

Mobile Phones

It is best to have a UK sim either pay as you Go or a monthly contract. Mrs. Pam Keracher can help you organize this.

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Essential rules

Keep in Contact .

Mobile Phones

You must make sure that Mrs. Pam Keracher has your current email and mobile number. It is your responsibility to let her know of any changes to these contact details

During traveling, weekend and half terms you must have your mobile phone on and always charged. You must make sure when you arrive at your host family that you give them your mobile phone number.

You must make sure when you arrive that you put the host family's name, address, and telephone number into your contact details.

USEFUL Numbers /Emergency Numbers/information

Mrs. Pam Keracher 00447762791805 available 24 hours.

Mr. Peter Keracher 00447834717879

Mr Duncan Wright DDSL 07476350802

Duncan Wright pwrightd@aol.com

Your House Master/Boarding house contact. Confirm on arrival.

Your Host Family. Confirm on arrival.

[Tattooing Of Minors Act 1969 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1969/26)

[Government drive to phase out smoking and tackle youth vaping attracts large response - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-drive-to-phase-out-smoking-and-tackle-youth-vaping-attracts-large-response)

[Alcohol and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/alcohol-and-young-people)

