

What and where is SAMS

The Scottish Association for Marine Science is one of the oldest marine institutes. Primarily known as a marine research institute, it also specialises in marine focused higher education programmes from bachelor degree through to PhD. You can find out much more about SAMS on our website – www.sams.ac.uk. We have a relatively small student population, but most exchange students are easily integrated into the student community.

SAMS is located just north of Oban on the west coast of Scotland, approximately 100 miles from Glasgow. The institute is situated on the Argyll coast, with a beach on its doorstep and castle next door! For more information on the local area and things to do and see check out [Our area — The Scottish Association for Marine Science](#).

There is lots to do and explore in the local area, particularly if you enjoy outdoor pursuits. There are local clubs for just about every kind of interest (from rugby clubs to amateur dramatics!) and a few university clubs that are run by the students here at SAMS (diving, sailing and mountaineering).

SAMS is an academic partner in the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI). All credit awarded for study at SAMS on the BSc Marine Science, is awarded through UHI. For more info on UHI check out their website www.uhi.ac.uk.

Getting here

There are regular [buses](#) and [trains](#) from Glasgow and Edinburgh (trains from Edinburgh change in Glasgow for Oban).

What to bring

The Scottish weather can be beautiful, but can also be unpredictably wet and windy, so it is best to be prepared. A waterproof jacket is a must and if you enjoy the outdoors, waterproof trousers are a good idea! Bring some warmer layers for colder days or during the winter.

Depending on the modules you chose to study you may be spending time either out in the field or on SAMS' research vessel – so you will definitely need warm and waterproof clothing as well as sturdy waterproof shoe/boots or wellingtons (you may be able to borrow wellingtons if you need them). Students must wear lab coats whenever they are in laboratory sessions – but you may be able to borrow a lab coat for any lab sessions

You will need a plug adaptor – in the UK we use type G

VISA information

Most students coming to study in the UK will need Incoming a visa. It is really important that all incoming students check if they need a visa and it is the student's responsibility to apply and pay for the relevant visa.

VISA applications can take time to process so please ensure that you apply in plenty of time to ensure you have the correct documentation before travelling.

The International Office at your home institute may be able to advise you but if you need any further information please contact the SAMS BSc Registry team on admissions@sams.ac.uk. It would be helpful if you specify study abroad visa advice in the subject line of the email. If you require a letter from SAMS to support your visa application please contact us on admissions@sams.ac.uk

[Check if you need a UK Visa](#)

How to apply and which visas are required to enter the UK:

[UK Government Visa and Immigration - Student Visas](#)

Accommodation

Student accommodation can sometimes be a challenge in many university location in Scotland, and Oban is no exception. SAMS does have 2 student accommodation facilities, one on campus and one in Oban itself. SAMS accommodation is usually reserved for new first year students and we have found that most incoming exchange students would rather share private rental accommodation with older students. We will help facilitate this, where we can, but cannot guarantee. Accommodation@sams.ac.uk will be able to advise if there are any vacancies in SAMS' accommodation.

Additional learning support/Disability Support

If you would like to be considered for additional learning support or disability support, or you would like to declare a disability please contact Polly.Crooks@sams.ac.uk. Polly is very experienced and can advise you on the services and support we offer to students.

Healthcare and insurance on a Standard Visitor visa

All students on a full-time course in Scotland are eligible for National Health Service (NHS) treatment, but you may have to pay for more specialised services.

Healthcare you are entitled to

If you are studying in Scotland full-time as a visiting student on the Standard Visitor route and you become ill or have an accident, you will be able to access free NHS treatment.

It must not be your intention to access healthcare when you travel to the UK.

[Factsheet on free NHS healthcare if you are studying full-time in Scotland](#)

Take out insurance

Students should ensure that they have adequate travel insurance which includes medical cover and protection to cover personal items you will have with you on your travels (such as your luggage and laptop). You should seek advice from your home institute.

You should research the options available to you and select the insurance policy which is most suited to your situation.

[UKCISA information about medical insurance](#)

Note that while you are enrolled to study at SAMS you will be provided for all study activities, practical and fieldwork.

Semester Dates

For Academic year 2026/27

Semester 1 (Autumn semester) – 31st August (induction week) – 11th December 2026

Semester 2 (Spring Semester) – 25th January – 14th May 2027