Visa Application process:
I would urge any student coming to study in London to ensure they have the appropriate visa. The consequences of not doing so are potentially very costly and distressing. What is 'appropriate' is dictated by a number of factors such as i) your nationality and ii) whether or not you intend to work in the UK beyond your MBA. The rules in the UK have just recently changed for the 'highly skilled' migrants visa so ensure you’re aware of these changes, especially if you intend to find work in London following the completion of your MBA.

I’m an Australian national and elected to apply for a 'special visitors' visa that permitted me to stay in the UK for 6 months for the purpose of study. I could have visited the UK on a standard tourist visa, which permits me to stay in the country for 90 days as a tourist and doesn't require any dealings with the British High Commission. I elected to obtain a 6 month visa because I wanted additional flexibility in my schedule, and the security of possessing documentation that justified my presence in the UK. That may sound odd but I have heard first hand instances of the UK border agency threatening to prevent people entering the UK because they have no evidence that they are students and instead appear to be tourists flirting with the idea of staying. If you intend to be travelling in and out of continental Europe from the UK I would recommend you to apply for a visa - consider it insurance!

Enrolment procedure (eg bidding process) and recommended subjects to study:
While it is tempting to want to go to LBS or Wharton simply because they’re ranked #1 in the Financial Times survey, I would encourage students to look beyond the ranking and understand the strengths of the school and how that relates to their own objectives. It’s important to know why you want to go to that school.

I’ve taken a lot of finance-based subjects here at LBS such as Private Equity and Venture Capital and Financing the Entrepreneurial Business which I have really enjoyed. The professors are practitioners as well teachers so they can share their own experiences. The benefit of this is incredible insight that takes the discussion in the classroom beyond being ‘simply academic’. Some of the stories that these people have about the work they’ve done and the things that have gone wrong are worthy of Hollywood films. Of course some things have also gone ‘incredibly right’ and let’s just say that they’re not teaching as LBS because they need the money.

Being based in London, and being one of the best business school programs in the world also attracts practitioners into the classroom and often these practitioners are the protagonists we are discussing in the relevant case.

All of you will take Strategy and may get the privilege of discussing the HBS Ducati case starring TPG Capital and Federico Minoli. Just the other day, a representative from the European private equity
firm InvestIndustrial, who have since purchased Ducati following TPG Capital and Minoli, came in to discuss the future plans they have for famous motorcycle manufacturer.

Workload at exchange school:
In short, the workload is no different to AGSM. I would argue that elective subjects are slightly less demanding than core subjects but generally speaking I would spend approximately 2-3 hours per week per subject doing preparation and homework here at LBS. That provides me with enough time to get out and enjoy London and Europe with my wife.

The flexibility that LBS offers students is very attractive and enables you to, in some sense, decide how hard you wish to work at certain times. Block weeks enable you to do a subject in an intensive format. I didn’t take any block weeks but from what I understand it crams 10 weeks of material into 6 day format and there are no concessions. Students are still expected to undertake the same number of readings, assignments as well as participate in classroom discussions. The upside of this intensity is of course that the subject is completed quickly and frees up some time during the term to relax and travel.

I’ve taken four courses throughout the spring term (or session from Jan to March)

Accommodation options:
Accommodation is a definite stress point but there are numerous ways to manage this. Stay close to school or close to transport that can get you close to school. Start looking a couple months out from your arrival date and use the following sources:

   The LBS Portal is critical to life at LBS and once you’ve been accepted into the exchange program you’ll soon be granted access. There are discussion boards where people are offering accommodation and seeking accommodation. Most exchange students that I spoke to found accommodation through this mechanism. It is also by far the least risky option because it is through fellow students who can sympathise with your position and can be mutually beneficial for outgoing exchange students looking to sublet their flats. The most difficult aspect of this whole very elegant dance is matching up length-of-stay.

2. Flat Club (http://www.flat-club.com)
   A friend of mine at LBS launched this site to help students find short-term rentals. The site is in its infancy as I write this in February 2011, but I imagine it may well soon replace the LBS portal.

3. Other
   This includes traditional real estate agents, online real estate agents and classifieds. No longer within known networks you are likely to find something but exercise judgement because you are more likely to encounter unscrupulous landlords.

Campus Facilities:
The campus is ideally located near Regent’s park, wonderful place to take a walk or a run and the facilities set up to help one adjust to life on campus ASAP. Some of the facilities that I have appreciated are:
• 24-hour security desk. Very handy when you first arrive. No matter what time you arrive LBS security can issue you with your LBS student card anytime, day or night. This card gives you access to all the important areas of campus.
• Gym and pool. If you happen to be a Fitness First member you may wish to use Fitness First gyms in London.
• Food. There are numerous options ranging from a quick snack to a cafeteria style dining experience. The English seem to have a penchant for cooked lunches and LBS is no exception. The Nash Lounge provides relatively affordable cooked lunches if you wish to indulge in a more substantial lunch such as linguini alfredo or crispy skin salmon.

As an AGSM exchange student the key thing to be aware of is that there are a few hundred people sharing these resources so sometimes you may have to be patient if you haven’t organised things in advance. For example, if you have a certain interest in specific LBS campus events (whether it be social or professional) such as the Annual Private Equity Conference or Women’s Conference, know when tickets are available and the application process to reserve your place because tickets sell fast. If you miss out you may be able to procure tickets in the secondary market but there are no guarantees.

**Career Services:**
I haven’t been heavily involved with Career Services but from what I understand they have staff focussed on specific industry sectors who are immensely helpful.

**Student Life:**
Get involved with clubs. You need to have an integration/‘assimilation’ plan for LBS because there are so many groups running around on campus there is a risk you may get lost in the crowd. One of those groups will of course be the IEP (International Exchange Program) crowd, fellow exchange students from around the globe, whom you should make every effort to meet at orientation.

As you can imagine when you first arrive at LBS there are a lot of people around you embracing one another as long lost friends following the Christmas break. It can be a rather sobering reminder that you don’t know anyone at the outset but don’t worry it won’t last too long.

I haven’t played soccer since primary school but I joined the football club because I thought I could use some exercise and it would be a way of getting to meet new people. It’s been something that I didn’t plan on doing but it’s been an immensely enjoyable experience. My skills are laughable compared to the abilities of some of these guys but its been all about learning and I think the Spanish guys have really enjoyed moulding a clueless Aussie guy into the next Ronaldo or Messi.

**Highlights:**
• It’s cliché – meeting some great people
• Being part of the football club
• The industry experience and knowledge of some of my professors and their accompanying ‘war stories’.
• The calibre of some of the guest speakers who stroll into the classroom to share their experience
• An appreciation for the intimacy and comraderie of AGSM
Trips to Bath, Edinburgh and Paris. Generally speaking; proximity to continental Europe

**Things AGSM MBA students should consider/be aware of when applying to this school for exchange:**

With LBS riding the wave of success it has achieved over the past few years in the rankings its natural for people to be drawn to it as an exchange choice. Be sure you know why you want to attend LBS other than the ranking because it will be competitive.

Purchase a good coat and set of gloves when you arrive, it’ll be the best investment you’ll make for your exchange in London.

**Photographs**

![Figure 1 Enjoying the British tradition of afternoon tea](image_url)
Doing everything I can to find a way to the finals of Wimbledon

Jamie Oliver’s Restaurant in Bath. So hungry I could eat the menu
Figure 4 Ahh Paris!