

Frequently Asked Questions

We know starting university comes with a lot of questions – especially when you're joining a new community away from home. If you still have questions, we're just an email away at queens@hillelontario.org – don't hesitate to reach out.

Here are some helpful links and resources for beginning your first year at Queen's!

- Hillel Queen's Website: <https://hillelontario.org/queens/>
- Hillel Ontario Website: <https://hillelontario.org/>
- Campus Life at Queen's: <https://www.queensu.ca/admission/campus-life>
- Athletics and Recreation (ARC): <https://rec.gogaelsgo.com/>
- Queen's Faith and Spiritual Life: <https://www.queensu.ca/faith-and-spiritual-life/>
- Queen's Housing and First Year Webinars and Publications:
<https://www.queensu.ca/studentexperience/first-year-foundation/webinars>
 - The residence ones are on July 8 (all about self-selection), August 5 (all about living in residence/what to expect) and August 12 (all about move-in...so less applicable if you are participating in Hillel Pre-Orientation).
- <https://www.queensu.ca/studentaffairs/news-updates/pulse-newsletter> (Queen's wide)
- Residence Connection:
<https://www.queensu.ca/residences/families-supporters/residence-connection-newsletter> (residence specific), first issue will be in August

1. Who can participate in the Pre-Orientation Program?

This program is open to incoming first-year students starting at Queen's University in September 2026. It's open to all Jewish students – regardless of religious background, degree program, or housing situation. Whether you're living in residence, off-campus, commuting, or still arranging accommodation, you're welcome to join.

2. When is the program?

The program takes place Friday, September 4, 2026, the morning before Queen's official move-in day.

The day includes key pick-up, brunch, welcome programming, a Jewish community fair, free time, a relaxed late afternoon beach party, and Shabbat programming capped off

by our signature Frosh Welcome Shabbat Dinner.

3. Why is early move-in allowed?

Queen's University has officially approved early move-in for registered participants of this program. We coordinate directly with the university to facilitate early key collection at Hillel House so students avoid the long lines and congestion of regular move-in.

Historically, early move-in programs existed for other student groups (e.g., Indigenous students), but they weren't widely accessible to Jewish students until Hillel advocated for that access in 2023. Even then, the options didn't meet the needs of families who observe Shabbat and can not move in on a Friday evening or Saturday.

In the wake of October 7, we worked closely with the university to ensure this program now also serves as a safe, soft landing for Jewish students entering university in a challenging time, with a built-in framework for community, confidence, and connection.

4. How much does the program cost?

The total cost is \$250 CAD. This includes:

- An extra night in residence (we handle all arrangements and payments with Queen's)
- Residence key collection at Hillel House
- Kosher brunch, snacks, and Shabbat dinner
- All programming, facility rental, and activities
- A curated welcome gift pack
- Full staff support and upper-year student mentorship

5. Is financial assistance available?

Yes. We are committed to ensuring cost is never a barrier. Students can request confidential financial assistance through the registration form. You're also welcome to email us directly if you'd prefer to speak with someone first. Every request is handled with care and discretion.

6. What if I'm not Shabbat observant or religious – can I still come?

Absolutely. This program is for all Jewish students, regardless of background, denomination, or level of observance. Whether you identify as secular, Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, culturally Jewish – we welcome all kinds of Jewish at Hillel – you belong here. The focus is on building community, making friends, and starting your Queen's journey in a safe and supportive environment.

7. What will the schedule look like?



8. Can I choose who I room with during Pre-Orientation?

If you're living in residence, you'll move into your assigned Queen's room early - no temporary housing or room switching is required. If you're living off-campus or commuting, we'll coordinate with you to ensure you're comfortable and included in all programming.

9. Will this program conflict with Queen's Orientation Week?

Not at all. The program takes place before Queen's Orientation Week officially begins. You'll finish the program before O Week programming starts on Saturday, so you can join all faculty and university-led orientation activities with the added benefit of already knowing people and feeling at home.

10. Who runs the program?

The program is a Hillel Queen's initiative, co-designed and led by a steering committee of upper-year Jewish students (many of whom participated in last year's program) and supported by Hillel's professional staff team.

You'll also meet a wide group of returning students who serve as mentors, guides, and friendly faces throughout the experience and into the semester.

11. What kind of Jewish observance is included?

The program is pluralistic and optional in all religious aspects. On Friday night, you'll have the option to attend either a Modern Orthodox or Traditional Egalitarian Kabbalat Shabbat service, followed by a community-wide kosher Shabbat dinner. Shabbat observance is entirely up to each student – come as you are.

12. Will meals be kosher?

Yes. All meals provided through the program are strictly kosher.

13. Can you accommodate dietary restrictions?

Our caterer and our kitchen are allergy-aware; however neither are completely nut-free facilities. We are able to accommodate vegetarian, vegan, dairy-free, and gluten-free dietary needs.

For significant food allergies we recommend that you reach out to us directly so that we can arrange specialized food.

14. What should I bring with me?

Bring all the essentials you'd normally need for moving into your residence or apartment. In addition, we recommend considering:

- Comfortable walking shoes
- A reusable water bottle
- Any items you'd like for Shabbat (e.g., nicer clothes, ritual items)
- Personal medication or health necessities

15. Do parents/family members attend the program?

Parents and family members are encouraged to join our welcome brunch and community fair. The rest of the programming is planned with students in mind so that you have space to

start forming your Queen's Jewish experience.

With that said, every situation is different and we want you to feel comfortable easing in. If it helps to have a family member with you for the whole day we have some ideas about how to involve them in a way that still allows you to participate fully in the student experience. Please reach out!

16. I'm not living in residence – can I still join?

Absolutely. We know that sometimes students live off-campus instead of in residence and we want you to be able to enjoy the full program as well. Just let us know your situation when you register so we can support your logistics and make sure you feel fully included.

17. What's the cancellation policy?

Cancellations made by August 6, 2026 will receive a full refund. After that date, we can assess partial refunds on a case-by-case basis.

18. Is this program religious?

No. The program is cultural, social, welcoming, and community-centred. While there are opportunities for Jewish ritual (like Friday night services and Shabbat dinner), no prior religious knowledge or participation is required or expected.

19. Will I be able to meet upper-year Jewish students?

Yes – and that's one of the biggest benefits! From the moment you arrive, you'll be introduced to upper-year Jewish students from a range of Queen's programs. These student leaders are there to welcome you, help you move in, answer your questions, and stay in touch throughout the semester.

20. How many students participate in the program?

In 2025 we had just over a hundred students join us. We anticipate similar numbers or more this year.

21. Are there any volunteers at the residence hall to help us move in?

Unfortunately the university is not able to accommodate this and we don't have quite enough volunteers to cover all of the residences. If you need additional help, reach out to us and we will try to match a volunteer to your residence.

22. Can I bring my non-Jewish friends/roommates to Hillel events?

Absolutely! Hillel events are a welcoming and inviting space for all Jewish students and supportive allies. We have had non-Jewish students who attend things like Shabbat dinners, Café Hillels, holiday celebrations, and other community events. For many of them, it's a great opportunity to learn more about Jewish culture, traditions, and community in a warm and welcoming environment. Hillel creates a welcoming space not only for Jewish students, but also for the friends, roommates, and supporters who want to be part of our community. So if your roommate is interested in coming along, they would absolutely be welcome.

23. What is the “ideal” Hillel student, and what is the “ideal” Chabad student?

From a student perspective, I'd actually say there isn't an "ideal" Hillel student or an "ideal" Chabad student.

Both communities welcome students from a wide range of Jewish backgrounds, levels of observance, and experiences. Some students grew up very involved in Jewish life, while others may be exploring their Jewish identity for the first time in university.

If I had to describe the general vibe:

Hillel:

- Hillel tends to be a broad, pluralistic Jewish community space.
- Students come for many different reasons: meeting friends, celebrating holidays, attending social events, exploring Jewish identity, engaging in Israel-related programming, leadership opportunities, Shabbat dinners, and community-building.
- You will find students from many different denominations and backgrounds, as well as students who do not strongly identify with any particular movement.

Chabad:

- Chabad tends to have a stronger focus on Jewish learning, tradition, and religious practice, while still being incredibly welcoming to students of all backgrounds and observance levels.
- Many students enjoy Chabad's traditional-style Shabbat meals, learning opportunities, and religious atmosphere.

The reality is that many students participate in both, and both Hillel and Chabad have collaborated together on many events throughout the years. It is very common for students to attend a Hillel event one day and a Chabad Shabbat dinner the next. The two organizations play different but complementary roles in Jewish life at Queen's.

The "ideal" student for either community is simply someone who is looking for connection, community, friendship, or a way to engage with Jewish life during university. There is no expectation that you be particularly religious, knowledgeable, or involved before showing up. In fact, many students arrive in first year unsure of where they fit and find that both Hillel and Chabad help them build a sense of belonging.

24. Where can I pick up my mail and packages living in residence?

Every student in residence picks up their mail and packages from Watts Hall. When ordering, use the address:

[Student's Full name], [Student Number]
Queen's University, Watts Hall
23 Lower Albert Street
Kingston ON, K7L 3V1

25. Who do I go to if I need help? What supports are available?

- If you need help within your residence, a great contact is your residence don! They are trained upper year students and always there for you!
- SWS (Student Wellness Services) offers mental health support and counseling and it is super easy to book an appointment!
- For help with academics, visit SASS (Student Academic Success Services)
- If you need support with an ongoing health condition, visit QSAS (Queen's Student Accessibility Services)
- There is WalkHome services if you ever feel unsafe walking alone
- Call the campus security line if you ever feel unsafe or in danger

26. What is 'O-Week', and should I attend?

- O-week, also called frosh week is an orientation program for first year students to meet students in their program and get acclimated to university life
- YES! If you have ever been to summer camp, that is exactly what O-week feels like! Lots of games, fun, and bonding. You'll regret it if you don't go to every event!

27. What do I do if I need to see a doctor while I am living in residence / in Kingston?

Student Wellness Services in Mitchell Hall! Call them to create an account with them and book an appointment!

28. I have dietary restrictions. What accommodations are there for food?

Each dining hall will have vegan, vegetarian, gluten free, and other specialty meals. If you require further dietary assistance, there is a chef, registered dietitian, and other kitchen staff that you can talk to in order to get the food you need!

29. How do I get around Kingston without a car?

Kingston is a great walking city! If you don't feel like walking, the bus routes are also super convenient and easy. You can check the bus lists and bus schedules on the transit app or on google maps!

30. Are mezuzahs allowed on residence doors?

Yes! You are more than welcome to put a mezuzah on your door! If you need any help with that, there are supports at Hillel and Chabad who are more than happy to help!

For more information, or to access some of this information in a different way....

View the Community Leader Panel Zoom Recording:

<https://hillel.zoom.us/rec/share/Fyjk7KajP4WpaizQUTi2bzcBX3iMitOtVPALJWGIGC0CiCLVS0EbQhTrUqluLekt.rYMBOkcD6KQ2W006>

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