House hunting 2021

Louise Martin & Tash Burden, Housing Advisers, The University of Bristol
Victoria Hanley, Head of Property Services, Bristol SU Lettings
Ruth Day, Student Living Officer, Bristol SU
Before you start, think location.

- Properties closer to the university can be more expensive and there’s more competition for tenancies and pressure from landlords and agents to rush a decision
- Consider Montpelier, Bishopston, Horfield, Easton, Eastville, Totterdown, Upper Knowle, Southville, Bedminster, Gloucester Rd, Ashley Down, for better availability, potentially cheaper/better quality accommodation, better parking and better community relations
Location

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Before you start, think budget...

- 2020 figures are showing...
- Overall average rents in shared houses are around £500 per person per month based on more than 1500 Bristol SU Lettings vacancies
- These rents range from £375 - £700 at the top and bottom of the scale
By area

- Clifton  £550
- Redland  £500
- Cotham & Kingsdown  £500
- City Centre  £490
- Gloucester Road  £465
Think bills

Average per month, per person (4 sharing)

- Gas/Electricity bills (heating, hot water, cooking, lights, appliances) – average £40
- Water/Sewage – average £12
- TV Licence – average £3
- Broadband and line rental – average £7
- Contents insurance – average £10

**TOTAL: £72**

Factor this into your accommodation budget!

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Shop around

- Utility bills and internet/landline/tv packages vary in price
- Try sites like uSwitch or Go Compare for comparisons
- Tenancy agreements sometimes restrict ability to change suppliers but landlords should not forbid this without good cause
Also... Don’t forget to complete an online Council Tax Exemption form at the start of your tenancy!!
Student Funding

Can help with funding advice, budgeting advice, and can ensure you are in receipt of the correct level of funding

Contact via email at student-funding@bristol.ac.uk

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Options

Before you start, decide if you want to...

• Share with students you already know?
• Find new housemates to form a group with or join
• Take a studio or a room in a flat in a purpose built residence?
• Live with a resident landlord?
• Get a self contained flat?
• Stay in halls? (places limited to more vulnerable students)

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When considering who to share with think about...

- How many people do you want to live with – consider the impact of Covid restrictions on visitors?
- Your budget - can you all afford the same level of rent and bills?
- Do your potential housemates have similar ideas about partying? Loud music? Sleeping? Time spent studying? Covid guidelines?
- Do you all have the same academic demands in terms of your course?
- Will everyone do their fair share of washing up and cleaning?
- Will you feel able to discuss matters comfortably with your housemates as they arise?

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Where to Look - University Resources:

**Bristol SU Lettings**
- Agency managed by the SU and have students’ interests at heart
- L/L’s sign a code of good conduct and promise to treat tenants in professional manner
- They are a member of the ‘Rent with Confidence’ accreditation scheme

**Bulletin Board**
- Students mainly advertising for 1 or 2 students to make up a house or looking for individuals to make up a group

**Homestay**
- Rooms with resident landlords vetted by the University
Where to look - avoiding scams

- Scams are increasingly common and the pandemic has created more opportunities for scammers to exploit
- Scammers can access Facebook pages, accommodation websites etc unless secure
- Read our factsheet and trust your instincts if they’re telling you something's wrong! Beware adverts that are too good to be true
- If you have any queries or suspicions email us
Where to look - Agencies

• Dozens of agencies in Bristol, ensure to use a trusted one!
• No signing up fees following the Tenants Fees Act 2019
• Check which redress scheme and client money protection scheme they are with and whether they are a member of a professional body such as ARLA or BALMA.
• Also worth looking them up at Companies House if it’s a limited company, to double check authenticity.
Where to look - other resources

• Other websites: there are lots of other websites to look on, some student specific, others more general

• Commercial providers: e.g. IQ, CRM, Vita. Many are high end, more expensive than shared houses though bills are included. Rents range from £190 per week for a room in a flat to £340 per week for a luxurious studio. Tenancy lengths vary as well.
Booking accommodation this year

- Don't rush or be concerned that things are moving more slowly than usual
- Ensure everyone has seen any online tours before booking a viewing
- Try to ensure the whole group has seen the property in person and not to pay holding fee and commit to anything until you have all seen the property in person
Viewing properties

• Covid 19 – follow the current government guidance
• Think of yourselves AND the current tenants
• In person viewing procedures are likely to vary between agents
Viewing properties

• Use the Checklists available, keep a record of properties viewed. Have a really good look around!
• Take the whole group along if possible
• Beware properties that look run down/neglected
• If a landlord or agent promise to carry out any work – ask for it in writing
Viewing properties

- Have a really good look around! Try and imagine it without the other tenants belongings in situ.
- Ask the current housemates about their experience in the property and with the landlord/agent if possible.
- Look out for damp patches, ask about patches of black mould and have a good sniff around too!
- If you’re not all sure, don’t rush, don’t feel pressured. There will be other properties!
HMO’s (Houses in Multiple Occupation)

Properties with 5 or more tenants must have an HMO license from the local authority and Bristol have additional licensing rules that mean in many areas, properties with 3 or more tenants need a licence.

They have to pass certain prescribed standards in relation to the management of the property and its facilities.

If you’re in a licensable HMO and having problems with repairs or safety issues then Bristol City Council or your local authority may find it easier to step in and assist.

You can check if your property is licensed on Bristol City Council’s website – link is on the resource page.

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Holding Fees

These are now limited to 1 weeks rent

Once paid the tenancy should be signed up for within 14 days unless the tenants have agreed in writing that this period can be extended.

Within the next 7 days, the fee should either be returned to you or, if you agree, can be used towards your deposit or taken off your first months rent.

Don’t pay it unless you’re sure you want the property. If you change your mind without a good reason you will not get your money back. However if the landlord or agent pulls out, the money should be returned to you.
Contracts

• Make sure you read and understand your contract - you can get your contract checked by the accommodation office by emailing it to accom-private-sector@bristol.ac.uk

• Most contracts are fixed term agreements for 12 months. You will remain liable for rent unless a replacement is found

• Joint and several liability – If the contract is in more than one name, you are jointly and severally (individually) liable for the rent!

• If you feel the terms are unfair, get in touch with us to discuss

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Guarantors

• A person who guarantees to pay your rent or for any damage.
• Joint liability can apply to guarantors
• The guarantor will need a UK address
• If you are unable to provide a UK guarantor you may be asked to pay up to 12 months rent in advance
• www.housinghand.co.uk in partnership with the University can act as UK guarantor for a one-off fee
Deposits

• A deposit is money paid to the landlord/agent at the start of the tenancy in case you default on your rent or cause damage and incur costs for the landlord.

• Deposit amounts are now capped by law at 5 weeks rent if your annual rent is under £50,000 or 6 weeks rent if your annual rent is over £50,000.

• The law states that all deposits paid on assured shorthold tenancies MUST be protected within 30 days by one of the 3 government approved schemes and the ‘prescribed information’ must be supplied to tenants.

• NOTE: To help get your deposit back at the end, ensure you take lots of dated photos at the start of your tenancy and complete a detailed inventory.
Right to Rent

- Legislation, from the Immigration Act 2014
- Private landlords are under a duty to check that potential tenants have the right to be in the UK
- By checking documents/visas or contacting the Home Office for confirmation
- Temporary adjustments due to covid 19
- Retrospective checks when temporary measures end
Ensure to get...

- Your contract/tenancy agreement
- Landlord name and address (should be on the tenancy agreement)
- Receipts for any money you pay out *Promises of work to be carried out before you move in, in writing
- Gas Safety Certificate
- Electrical Installation Condition Report
- Energy Performance Certificate
- Most recent CLG booklet “How to rent: the checklist for renting in England”
- Deposit scheme details
- Redress scheme details
- Client Money Protection Details
- and check your deposit isn’t more than 5 weeks rent (6 if you’re annual rent over £50,000)
- and that your holding fee’s not more than 1 week’s rent
Any problems...

• We are here for you throughout the process – before, during and after your tenancy.

• We can advise on all housing problems e.g. disrepair, problems with landlord, bills, council tax, deposits and much more!

• You can email for advice to accom-privat-sector@bristol.ac.uk
Resources/Links

Email: accom-private-sector@bristol.ac.uk

Online househunting module:
https://accommodation.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/online-guide-to-house-hunting-20212022

Website: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/finding-privately-rented-accommodation/

Factsheets: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/advice/


Homestay: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/privately-rented/homestay/

Checklist: http://www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation/media/docs/factsheets/choosing.pdf

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