
Accommodation

Choosing the right place

A checklist of important things to take into consideration and questions to ask when viewing private rented accommodation.

When should I start looking?

- The main house hunting time for current students is during the spring term.
- Property becomes available all year round, peaking in the month of January.
- Big (7+ houses) can go early so may be wise to start earlier if you are looking for a large property
- Never allow yourself to be pressured into taking a property you don't like or you cannot afford.

Who shall I share with?

- Do you all have similar budgets?
- Do you all have a similar approach to cleaning, paying bills etc?
- Do you all have the same workload or the same attitude to studying versus socialising?
- Do you all get on well enough to discuss any issues that might arise?
- Do you get on with each other's partners and friends who may be visiting frequently?
- Do you all want the same length of tenancy?
- Would you like to live with a resident landlord?

Viewing houses

- If possible always ask the current tenants about the property/the landlord and how the tenancy has gone for them.
- Is the property clean? If not you should ask if it will be cleaned before you move in.
- Do any repairs need doing? If so when will they be done? The landlord should put this in writing for you and if s/he is planning any

major works during your tenancy that mean you cannot occupy the property or that you will be disrupted s/he should offer a rent reduction.

- Are there any signs of damp or condensation on the inside of the property - peeling wallpaper, mould, wet patches or flaking paint? Is there a smell of damp? Beware of renting a damp property!
- What about the exterior, is this well maintained?
- Furniture and appliances - is there everything you need? Is it in good condition? Check whether it comes with the house or belongs to the current tenants
- Bedrooms - are they different sizes and are they all big enough? Can you all agree who gets which? Will you all pay the same rent?
- Most shared houses do NOT have locks on individual bedroom doors. But if they are there and you wanted them, ask if they work and will all tenants be provided with keys.
- Bathroom/Toilets/showers – are there enough for all of you?
- Washing Machine – Is one supplied? If not, is there plumbing for you to put one in?
- Kitchen – is a fridge, freezer, microwave, crockery, utensils etc supplied, and are there enough? Is there enough food preparation and storage space?
- Gas and electricity - is there heating in every room? Does it work? Will it be adequate for the winter? Is it noisy? Where is the boiler, if it's in a bedroom will it disturb you? Ask to see the energy performance certificate (EPC).
- Are there enough plug sockets for your needs?
- Is there enough natural light?
- Are the curtains and blinds adequate?

- Is it on a public transport route?
- Is there an internet connection? Is it fast enough? If not will you be allowed/able to organise this?

Garden

Do you have to maintain it? Will the landlord provide the necessary tools?

Contract

Read it carefully before signing and if there is anything you're not sure about email the accommodation office for checking. A reasonable landlord should give you at least 24 hours to get your contract checked.

Money

- Can you all afford the rent?
- Is there a holding fee? Or agency fees? Never pay a holding fee unless you are all sure you want the property.
- Do you need a guarantor and do you have one?
- Have you considered all the bills? Gas, Electricity, Water/Sewage, Broadband, Phone, TV licence, Contents Insurance. This could all add up to an average of £70 - £75 per month each per person
- How is the rent to be paid? Monthly? Quarterly?
- Are there any extra/hidden costs eg cleaning of communal areas

Safety

- Are there smoke detectors on every floor which is a legal requirement for AST's.
- Are there fire alarms? Is there a fire blanket in the kitchen?
- If the property has a solid fuel appliance eg a gas fire then there must be a carbon monoxide detector by law in AST's
- Have you seen the landlord gas safety certificate for the property which is a legal requirement ?

Security

- Do the external doors have strong locks fitted? Do they meet the requirements of your insurance company?
- Are there adequate locks on all accessible windows?
- How do the current tenants feel about security? Do they feel safe at home and in the surrounding area? Have there been any break ins locally?

Building work

- Is there scaffolding outside or on a neighbour's house? Ask if there is any work taking place now or in the future and if so what type and when is it due to be completed, i.e. is it going to disturb you?
- If the landlord or agent say they're going to carry out any work or improvements for you ensure that you get the specifics **in writing**

The University of Bristol Accommodation Office runs a housing advice service for students, if you have any problems with your private rented accommodation please contact us.

Due to Coronavirus our office on campus is closed but our services are available remotely. Please contact us by email and an adviser will get back to you: accom-office@bris.ac.uk

The contents of this fact sheet are for information only. You should consult the Accommodation Office or an advice centre such as the CAB before taking any action.

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