



UNIVERSITY OF
GLOUCESTERSHIRE

at Cheltenham and Gloucester

RENTING THE PERFECT PAD

> YOUR STUDENT GUIDE





“Where you live is as important as where you study.”

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Search for your ideal place on

www.glosstudentpad.com

GETTING STARTED

Where you live will have a major influence on your enjoyment of university life so it's important that you find a place that suits you.

The prospect of house hunting might be a little daunting but the Accommodation Department at the University of Gloucestershire is on hand to provide you with the support and advice you need along the way.

In order to get you started, we've produced this booklet as an overview to the information you will need for renting accommodation in the private sector.

Supporting You

Our Housing Support Team is here to offer help throughout your time at university with any issues concerning your private rented housing. From contract checking to mediating between landlords and students, you can always contact the team with any question you may have.

We also have comprehensive webpages with free downloads and information on all the key issues when finding a property to rent.

The Housing Support Team is based in the Accommodation Office at Francis Close Hall Campus and is open all year round between **9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Thursday** and **9.00am and 4.00pm, Friday**.

HOUSING SUPPORT TEAM

T: **01242 715322**

E: housingsupport@glos.ac.uk

W: www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

www.facebook.com/UOGHousing

“

Very many thanks for your time in answering my queries. Excellent service as ever. Your advice is most welcome.” **Craig**



Approved Housing List

The first thing you need to do is register for our online property search facility - Studentpad: www.glosstudentpad.com All you need to register is your university student email account. Alternatively, you can use your personal account but this will need to be verified prior to you gaining access.

Studentpad will give you access to a list of approved houses that are only available to University of Gloucestershire students. When a property is approved, it means that the landlord has signed up to the university scheme, provided gas and electrical safety certificates and many other criteria above and beyond the legal responsibility. This means a lot of the work is done for you before you even start looking.

For a full guide on how landlords become approved by the university and full registration criteria, please visit our website, www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

As well as displaying properties, Studentpad has various message boards that you can use and advice pages about any accommodation issues you may have.

Lodgings

You can also find lodgings through Studentpad. These are rooms let in a landlord's own home which could be a flexible and quieter option to living in a shared house. For further details, please see the accommodation webpages.

Other Rental Accommodation

Although there are several letting agents and landlords in Cheltenham and Gloucester, we always encourage students to use the approved list on Studentpad first. However, if you do go through other sources, remember to check through the housing essentials. A checklist is available on the accommodation webpages.

“

The house is wonderful and I am extremely lucky to be moving in there with such a caring landlord.” **Heather**



studentpad.co.uk

The quickest route to student accommodation

FINDING THE RIGHT PROPERTY

When Should I Start Looking?

If you're looking for housing for the next academic year, the best time to start looking for a house is from January onwards. You may be tempted to start earlier to beat the crowds but that could limit your viewing opportunities, leave you open to expensive contracts and increase the odds of ending up with housemates you'll regret.

The approved list of housing will be available from the start of the second semester online through Studentpad. Searching this list first will make your property searching simpler and ensure you end up finding a great house.

Living With Others

You have three main options – to live on your own, with a group of friends or share with people you don't know.

Living on your own will give you peace and quiet with your own space but it can be expensive. Living in a group can be cheaper but you need to choose your friends carefully. Living with students you don't know will give you the opportunity to make new friends and social groups but you should ask the landlord for details of the people you will be sharing with so that you can make an informed decision.

Decide what type of accommodation is going to suit you before you start looking. Take time to make the right decision as you could be committing to living in that accommodation for the whole academic year.



Top Tips For Viewing Properties

When you go for a viewing, have a chat with the landlord or agent as they show you around. Try and get an idea of how they operate. If you are renting from a private landlord then this will usually be the person that you contact first if you have any difficulties during your tenancy. If the current tenants are around, talk to them to see if they've had any problems.

Remember:

- ✓ Prioritise properties that are approved by the university.
- ✓ Check whether your landlord has signed the Landlords Code of Conduct, Fit to Rent Scheme or the National Landlords Association (NLA).
- ✓ If renting from a letting agent, check whether your particular property is approved by the university. If the property is not approved then you would need to complete all the necessary checks yourself.

The University of Gloucestershire does not endorse any Letting Agents.



YOUR TENANCY AGREEMENT

Contracts

The important thing to remember when signing your contract is that it is legally binding. For this reason we strongly recommend that you get it checked by the Housing Support Team at the university, a legal expert or a family member before you sign it. Landlords should allow you to keep the proposed contract for at least 24 hours before you have to decide whether or not to sign it so that you can have it checked.

Contracts will vary from landlord to landlord, so ensure that you understand all points listed, particularly with regard to responsibilities and whether there is any joint responsibility for all tenants on either rent or damage. Also check you are happy with the cost and length of the term as you won't have the option to leave earlier than the fixed term stated in the contract.

There is further detailed information on different contracts (tenancy agreements) and the main points to be aware of on the accommodation webpages.

Deposits

Deposits usually equate to approximately one month's rent. Many landlords will ask for this once you accept a property as it will sometimes act as a holding fee for the summer period (your contract should confirm this). If you decide not to take up the tenancy you could forfeit the deposit at this stage.

Once the tenancy begins, the deposit is held as a bond against cleaning and damages. It is refundable at the end of the tenancy but could be withheld if any conditions of the agreement have not been met. Always obtain a receipt for deposits paid.

Legally, all deposits must be registered with a Tenancy Deposit Scheme. Landlords must inform their tenants within 30 days of it being paid as to the details of the scheme.

For further details on all schemes available and the terms please visit www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

Guarantors

Many landlords will ask for guarantors. If your parent signs a guarantor form, they become liable for your financial responsibilities under the terms of the contract. That means they have to pay your rent if you haven't paid it.

If you're signing a joint contract with other students, your guarantor could also be asked to pay the rent of another tenant if they default, unless the agreement they sign specifically mentions that they're only responsible for their son or daughter's liability.

If you are an international student, please note that sometimes a landlord will specify that your guarantor must be based in the UK. You should check whether a UK based guarantor is required before signing a contract or paying any money. If you haven't got a UK based guarantor then you might be able to pay some or all of your rent in advance instead of providing a guarantor. Remember that there are landlords who do not require a guarantor and if you're not able to find a guarantor then you can look for a different property.

Retainers

A retainer fee is a fixed amount of money that a tenant agrees to pay in advance of the tenancy start date to secure the accommodation. There are two main instances where a retainer could be paid:

- 1** To stop the accommodation being let to anyone else just before you sign your tenancy agreement, ie taking it off the market (this is normally used by Letting Agents).
- 2** To keep the accommodation over the summer break if you have renewed your tenancy agreement for a second year and it is less than a 12 month term.

A retainer is non-refundable and the university would only expect its approved landlords to use it in a situation when you are renewing your tenancy for a second year.

Additional Charges

Private landlords and agencies can operate in different ways and some will ask for additional fees. Holding fees, signing fees and summer retainers are all common, so make sure you know what you are paying for. Make sure that you get a receipt and if you are not happy paying then don't be afraid to try and negotiate or find somewhere else that doesn't charge.

Approved landlords should not be making any additional charges to the rent and deposit.

Paying Your Rent

Your contract should state how much your rent is, the frequency of payment and how you must pay. Payment could be by direct debit, standing order or cheque.



If you're paying by cheque, allow at least one week for it to clear before your rent is due and make sure you get a receipt from your landlord.

The average rent for shared accommodation is between £65 and £90 per week based on five students sharing. Do negotiate if you are in any doubt. In general, if you are asked to pay rent at the top end, you should expect to have a high quality property with a communal lounge, shower and washing machine. In the majority of houses rent should include the water rates, but you must check your contract thoroughly. If rent is 'inclusive', check which bills are actually included so you know exactly for what you are responsible. The rent period is likely to run from September through to early July and will cover the Christmas and Easter holidays. Make sure you also allow £15 per week for bills in addition to your rent.

If you are struggling with your rent payments, please contact the Housing Support Team for advice. Student Services also have a Money Advice Team that is available to students throughout the year. You can contact the Money Advice Team on moneyadvice@glos.ac.uk or pop into any Helpzone to make an appointment.

MOVING IN

There are certain things you may need to do when you move into your property.

These are listed opposite and further information can be found on our webpages.



- **Bills** – If your bills are not included in your rent, you should expect to pay for gas, electricity, possibly water charges and telephone bills. You must ensure all meters are read when you first move in and phone it through to the utility company. This will also need to be done at the end of the tenancy so you only pay for what you use. Talk to your group about how you are going to divide up the bills and whose name will be on the paperwork.
- **TV Licence** – You will need to purchase a licence for the property when you first move in - this can be paid annually, monthly or weekly.
- **Rent** – Your contract should state when and how your rent should be paid. It is imperative that you stick to these dates and methods and contact the landlord if there are any problems with payment.
- **Repairs** – If the property needs any repairs you must always inform the landlord in writing and give a timeline as to when you would like a written acknowledgement and the works to be completed.
- **Council Tax** – Full-time students are exempt from paying Council Tax. Evidence of this can be produced by printing your certificate of enrolment when you first enrol online. If you have any queries please contact Cheltenham Borough Council on **01242 264161** or Gloucester Borough Council on **01452 396495** for further information.

LIVING IN THE COMMUNITY

We encourage all students living in private housing to consider their neighbours and each other. We work hard to maintain good relationships with local residents and appreciate co-operation with this.

With a diverse neighbourhood comes a variety of lifestyles, all of which need to be recognised and accommodated as part of living in a community. Everyone deserves the right to enjoy their lifestyle without it impacting on or disturbing others.

With this in mind we would always recommend that if you are new to the area, to introduce yourselves to your neighbours and provide a contact number should they need to get in touch.

Take pride in the area in which you live. Only put rubbish out on your collection day and ensure all rubbish is kept tied and away from vermin.



Support is available to all students living in the community through the Housing Support Team, Student Services, Students' Union, local police and Cheltenham Borough Council.

MOVING OUT

Before you move out there are certain things you should do to avoid losing your deposit and to ensure you are not charged for amenities that you are no longer using.

Cleaning: Before you move out and return your keys to the landlord or agent, make sure you have cleaned the property thoroughly. Check with your landlord or letting agent as to what is expected of you before you leave.

Meter Readings: Take meter readings on the day you leave. Inform the utility companies

of the reading and give them a forwarding address to which they can send a closing bill.

Post: If you are not returning to the property, please ensure you inform all relevant companies of your new address and set up a mail redirection service with the Post Office at www.postoffice.co.uk

Deposits: You will need to find your Tenancy Deposit Scheme paperwork that you received at the beginning of your tenancy and discuss how and when your deposit will be returned.

HOUSING SUPPORT TEAM

University of Gloucestershire
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Bodley Building
Francis Close Hall Campus
Swindon Road
Cheltenham GL50 4AZ

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