

## Your guide to finding private accommodation

What happens if halls of residence accommodation is not available, is not suitable for your needs or you just want to live elsewhere? Here's your helpful guide to finding accommodation privately.

### Let other students know you are looking for housemates or a room in a house

Join [www.facebook.com/BUfindahousemate](https://www.facebook.com/BUfindahousemate) and make contact with other students looking for or offering rooms in private accommodation (click on the "Community" tab).

### Start your search for houses, flats or rooms

There are many private **Letting Agents, Landlords** and **Private Hall of Residences** in Bournemouth who can assist you with your search (conduct an internet search for options).

[Gumtree](#) and [SpareRoom](#) are also useful sites for privately rented rooms/flats.

It is sensible to do some research before committing yourself to an accommodation contract. We also suggest you arrange viewings before you make your decision and we have provided you with some key things to ask.

#### Ask the important questions:

##### Letting Agent, Landlord or Hall of Residence?

You want to ensure that the Letting Agent, Landlord or Halls operator you are renting from is trustworthy and legitimate.

- LettingsBU is BU's very own student lettings agency. It is a trustworthy agent that you can rely on. LettingsBU only lets student houses/flats for **September starts** – [LettingsBU | Student Accommodation in Bournemouth | Student Lets in Bournemouth](#)
- Private letting agents** need to be signed up to a

redress scheme that provides a route of escalation for any complaint. You can check if the agent is signed up to a scheme here - [Search the Property Agent Checker - National Trading Standards](#)

- If a **private letting agent** receives money from you such as rent payments, they should also belong to a Client Money Protection Scheme. Their membership details should be clearly visible at the agent's premises or on their website. However, you can check membership through the scheme - [Protecting clients' money if you're a property agent - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- If you are renting direct from a **private landlord** then look for landlords who belong to an accreditation scheme, such as the [National Residential Landlord Association](#) (NRLA) and the [UK Association of Lettings Agents](#) (UKALA). You can also check out the [Dorset Register of Accredited Landlords](#) (DRAL) which is a database of local accredited landlords within the Dorset area.
- If you are renting a room in a **private hall of residence**, then the operator should be signed up to The National Code. You can check here [Welcome to Accreditation Network UK | ANUK](#)

##### Location of property

Many students choose to live in areas which are popular for students with most shared student housing located in Winton, Charminster, Ensbury Park, Springbourne, Boscombe, Wallisdown – all are well served by regular bus services to and from campuses (every 15 – 30 minutes). The private student halls of residences are mainly located in the Lansdowne.

- Is the property in an area convenient for your studies and social life?
- Is the property within a suitable distance

to local public transport and local amenities?

- Would you feel sufficiently safe walking around the area during the day or in the evening?
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### External features

- Does the exterior of the property appear well maintained? This would include no broken guttering, no damage to the roof e.g. missing roof tiles, no cracked window panes and solid front and back doors
- Are all boundary walls in good condition e.g. no missing sections or crumbling bricks?
- Are there sufficient bins for the property, including recycling?
- Is the garden well maintained and clear of any rubbish?
- Is the landlord/agent clear about who is responsible for the maintenance of the garden?

### Internal features

- Is there sufficient communal living space?
- Does the bedroom and storage size meet your expectations and needs?
- Does the interior of the property appear well maintained? This includes no signs of damp, décor and furniture in good condition, no outstanding issues of disrepair and all the appliances and lights work (try them)
- Are there enough facilities (e.g. kitchen appliances and cupboard space, bathrooms) for the number of tenants?

- Is there sufficient heating (radiators etc.) throughout the property and does the heating system work?
- Do the appliances and taps work?
- Is there hot water?
- Where is the water, gas and electric meter?
- Do you know how to report maintenance?

### Safety features

- Does the landlord possess a current gas safety certificate that has been provided by a Safe Gas registered engineering within the past 12 months? You can check this at: [www.gassaferegister.co.uk](http://www.gassaferegister.co.uk)
- Does the property have working smoke and carbon-monoxide alarms?
- Are plug sockets free from cracks and other damage?
- Are there sufficient plug sockets in each room in the property?
- Ask the Agent/Landlord is the property requires a HMO license (if property is five people or more)?

### Security features

- Are all windows lockable and do they have keys that work?
- Are there suitable strong locks on front and back doors?

### Money

- A room in a private hall of residence will cost approx. £160-£190 p/wk (all bills included). A

room in a shared student house should cost approx. £400-£500 p/month (bills not included). If you are a couple or have a family expect to pay approx. £1,000-£1,350 p/month (bills not included).

- Have you compared rent levels of other properties of a similar size?
- How much is the deposit?
- The landlord must register the security deposit with a registered **Deposit Protection Scheme** (DPS). There are currently three government approved scheme that can be found here [Deposit protection schemes and landlords: Overview - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk). The landlord or agent should provide details of which scheme they use to protect your money.
- Do you know when rent payments are due?
- If you renting as a group, will you be on a joint or on individual contracts?
- If on a joint contact, do you understand the impact of having joint liability? All people named on the tenancy agreement have equal responsibility for the terms of the contract including rent (i.e. if one person leaves the others could potentially have the responsibility to pay their share). If in doubt, then ask the landlord or contact SUBU Advice for guidance.
- Do you know if there is anything else included within the rent e.g. utility bills, broadband etc?
- Do you know who the utility (gas, electric, water) suppliers are for the property are and how to set up your own accounts when you move in?

- Fees** – Aside from rent, a refundable deposit (no more than 5 weeks rent) or a refundable holding deposit to secure the property (no more than 1 weeks rent), agents and landlords are not legally entitled to charge any other fees. See the UK GOVT advice here [How to Rent - The checklist for renting in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)



## Get your finances in place

Remember to calculate the total contract cost, i.e. multiply the weekly or monthly costs by the length of the contract.

If you receive a student maintenance loan it will usually be in place within a few days of enrolment but make sure you have funds available in case of a delay. If you are self-funded then ensure you have enough to cover the cost of the accommodation.

You will most likely be expected to pay your rent monthly, usually on a fixed-date. Unless your rent has bills included you will need to factor in these costs. Typically, in a shared house of 4, you can expect to pay (per month):

- Gas & electricity – approximately £40–60 each
- Water & sewerage – approximately £15 each
- TV Licence – approximately £4 each
- Internet – approximately £10 each
- **Council tax** – If you are a fulltime student you will receive council tax exemption, for further information see [Council tax exemption | Bournemouth University](http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk)

On top of these costs you will also need money to buy food, drink, transport and entertainment. You can check your budget to ensure you have enough at [SaveTheStudent.org](http://www.savethestudent.org), which has a useful online

budget calculator.

## Secure your property

- Know what you are signing - Remember that you are signing a legal contract for your accommodation, so you will be held liable for the full term of the contract. Be sure to read through the terms & conditions to know what you're signing-up to. If you are not sure about anything then [contact your SUBU Advice team](#) who will be happy to look at it for you.
- Note when your contract starts and ends. Contracts with private landlords are typically 10 – 11 months.
- Guarantors** - You might need to provide a Guarantor that is a named person who will be legally responsible for any rent arrears that arise. If you from outside of the UK and/or don't have a UK based guarantor, there are companies who offer this service. Just conduct an internet search for "student guarantor schemes" for details.
- Pay your deposit** - Once you have confirmed you wish to go-ahead with the property you have selected, you will probably need to pay a deposit (typically 4-5 weeks rent). You might also be required to pay the first month's rent. At this point, you should ensure your deposit is held in a [Deposit Protection Scheme](#). This means your refundable deposit money is safe and any deductions at the end of your contract the agent or landlord wishes to make will have to be agreed with the DPS.
- Contents insurance** - Don't forget to organise contents insurance to cover your personal belongings.

## Arriving and start of term

- Make sure your able to collect your keys and move in before the date you are required to arrive for

the start of your academic course. BU's term dates can be found here [Undergraduate academic dates | Bournemouth University](#)

- Inventory** – Make sure that the agent or landlord has provided a full inventory of items you have in your property and their condition. It is important to receive and hold on to this as you can refer back to it when you move out.

## Further useful information:

- We have created a [series of accommodation videos](#) to help you with what to do before and during your first few weeks in your accommodation.
- If you are arriving in the UK from overseas and have a family or other dependents then we strongly advise that you secure your accommodation before you arrive, or you should come by yourself and wait to bring your family/dependents over to the UK until you have secured suitable accommodation. Further information can be found here [Accommodation for Students with Families](#)
- The Student Union Bournemouth University (SUBU) have some useful information on what to look for when renting. Further information can be found here [Housing \(subu.org.uk\)](#)

Our Accommodation Team are there to support you with any questions you might have related to your search. Email them – [accommodation@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:accommodation@bournemouth.ac.uk) or call +44 (0)1202 969696