

Shared Housing: What to think about?

Rent and bills

Before you sign a contract, draw up a budget plan to make sure that you're able to pay your rent, bills and any other related costs. Renting accommodation can vary in cost depending on type of accommodation, the area and size of the property, as well as how many of you are living there. You may be expected to pay your rent monthly or termly, if paying termly check that you will have received your student loan instalments before the date your rent is due. Most students pay on average a monthly rent of around £370-£500 per calendar month. Rental prices vary dependant on location. If your tenancy agreement starts during the summer and you and any other students you may be sharing with will not be living there, try to negotiate a reduced rent during this period (particularly if the landlord will be using this time to complete any repairs).

Contract and payment of rent

You will be given a contract to sign which will confirm the rent and deposit payable. This will state whether the rent includes or excludes utility bills e.g. gas, electricity, water (as a student you will not need to pay council tax for the period you are a student). In nearly all cases, the contract will be for an 'assured short hold tenancy'. This gives the Landlord the right to have the property back after 6 months, regardless of how long the contract is for. The Landlord can also have the property back at any stage if you are at least 2 months behind with your rent payments. In practice, if you are a good tenant and prompt payer, this is unlikely to happen unless the landlord has other plans for the property, e.g. selling the property. You are not normally entitled to leave the property before the end of the term of the contract. If you do so without good reason, you could still be liable for the rent until the end of the contract. Make sure you read, understand and are happy with the contract before you sign it. Please also note that some landlords request that overseas students pay the full annual rent in advance if a UK guarantor cannot be provided by the tenant. The School is unable to act as a guarantor.

Household bills

You may be responsible for paying for the bills in your rented property, particularly if you are renting a shared house or flat. You should clarify what is included in your rent before signing a tenancy agreement. The average cost for student household bills is up to £80 per month. However, bills are increasing due to the current cost of living crisis, so make sure you're prepared for any increases in costs.

Gas, electricity and water

Most shared houses will have an Energy Performance Certificate, which addresses how energy efficient a particular property is and will give you an idea of the energy required by the property. To find out if a property has an EPC, check www.epcregister.com.

- If possible, ask the previous tenants for the rough costs of these bills.

- Take meter readings as soon as the contract starts
- Change the bills to your name(s)

Phone, Internet and TV

If internet is not included in your rent you may decide to sign up to a package, check what's popular in your area. Look around as there are many different packages available, some will include a phone line or extra TV channels. If you live in a shared house, one TV licence is needed per house as long as you have a joint tenancy.

Inventories

The Landlord or agent may produce an inventory. This is a list of all the furniture, fixtures and contents that will be in the property while you are there. Importantly, the condition of these items will be noted. This can be very important when you leave the flat as the Landlord may try to withhold some of your deposit for breakages and damages – this can be your proof that something was damaged in the first place. If there is no inventory, you can create your own by listing out contents and damage and taking photos and let the Landlord have a copy.

Guarantors

As students, it is likely that you will be asked for a parent/guardian to enter into a guarantee with the Landlord. It means that as a Guarantor, they are liable to pay the Landlord in case of any unpaid rent if you leave the contract early or are unable to pay. Your Guarantor will need to meet certain financial criteria that differ between Landlords and can be different if your Guarantor is not UK based. Northern School of Contemporary Dance is unable to act as a Guarantor.

Dealing with problems

Occasionally problems do arise. Initially, it is always best to discuss these with the Landlord or his agent. If this does not resolve matters, please feel free to discuss with the Admissions team, or Student Support, and we will do what we can to help. Advice websites include Shelter and Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as support available from Unipol.