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To view this guide online please visit http://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/support/accommodation/
Introduction

For most students looking to rent off-campus, there are 2 alternatives - living with other students in a shared house or living with a resident landlord. If you intend to share, think carefully about who you want to share with because if you change your mind once the tenancy agreement has been signed, you will be liable for the rent and other charges until the end of the tenancy unless you find someone to take your place.

When to look

Student Accommodation and the Students’ Union urge students not to rush out to rent in the belief that all the only nice houses and flats will be gone if they don’t, as it’s simply not true. If you take your time and choose your housemates carefully, you are likely to have fewer problems and get a better deal.

Where to look

- House Search website: www.housesearch.rhul.ac.uk (properties & housemates)
- Advice & Support Centre notice board (1st floor of the Students’ Union).
- Word of Mouth - you are more likely to get an honest opinion.
- Message of the Day (College Intranet) – if you’re looking for housemates.
- Lettings Agents - the most expensive option, as they usually charge an administration fee once you have found a property you want to rent.
Growing numbers of students are falling victim to scams after responding to advertisements online. They pay cash or make a money transfer as a deposit and/or for rent for a property by someone claiming to be the owner or agent. They are given a tenancy agreement, but when they turn up to move in as arranged, there is no-one to meet them and they subsequently discover that the owner or agent is someone else. By then the perpetrator has disappeared with their money and the students are homeless and several hundred pounds out of pocket.

Ulet, the SU’s own Lettings Agency

The Students’ Union Royal Holloway University of London (SURHUL) runs its own letting agency. It’s called Ulet, you’ll find it upstairs in the Students’ Union and students using the service won’t be required to pay administration fees. For all the details and to find properties please visit: http://www.ulet.org.uk

The Runnymede Accreditation Scheme

The Runnymede Accreditation Scheme, run by Runnymede Council, who accredit and monitor properties to ensure they meet minimum standards. Details can be found at http://www.runnymede.gov.uk

Beware Internet Scams

Growing numbers of students are falling victim to scams after responding to advertisements online. They pay cash or make a money transfer as a deposit and/or for rent for a property by someone claiming to be the owner or agent. They are given a tenancy agreement, but when they turn up to move in as arranged, there is no-one to meet them and they subsequently discover that the owner or agent is someone else. By then the perpetrator has disappeared with their money and the students are homeless and several hundred pounds out of pocket.
For your safety and security you should not visit a property alone.
Whenever you go to look at a property, you should inspect it thoroughly. Before you visit a property draw up a checklist or use the attached checklist, which contains information about things you expect to find in student accommodation.

A student let is regarded as a House in Multiple Occupation, and if there are 5 or more students living and sharing facilities in a property that has 3 or more floors, the landlord is required by law to obtain an HMO license for the property from the local council, even if there are shops and offices on one or more floors. You should ask your landlord to see his HMO registration certificate.

If there is anything about the property, the landlord or the agent that you are not happy with, don’t take the accommodation. If you are happy, make sure you are given the opportunity to take away a copy of the tenancy agreement to read and get checked before you decide to accept the property.

You may be asked to pay a holding deposit or advanced rent to ensure that no other tenants are offered the property, but be warned, if you sign a document to say that you understand that this money is non-refundable and you then decide not to rent the property, you may not get your money back.
Checklist

☐ If there are 5 or more bedrooms and the property has 3 or more floors, ask to see the HMO licence (House in Multiple Occupation).

☐ If the landlord claims that the property has been accredited by Runnymede council, check the list of accredited properties on the council’s website: http://www.runnymede.gov.uk

☐ Grounds – make sure they are clear of rubbish, especially if you have to maintain them.

☐ Outdoor shed – Are you allowed to use it? Is it clear of rubbish? Does it contain gardening equipment for you to use? If so, does it work?

☐ Side entrance – Check it has a secure lockable door to back of property.

☐ Walls and general structure – Check there are no cracks etc. which could indicate that the property may not be structurally safe.

☐ Roof – This should appear to be secure, with no missing slates, no broken gutters, and no moss or weeds growing out of the roof/gutters.

☐ Doors - Main doors should have secure locking facility, not just an ordinary Yale type, and not locks which need a key to open the door from the inside.

☐ Ask who else has the keys to the property.

☐ If there was a fire, could you get out of the property safely?

☐ Check that there are smoke detectors in bedrooms and on staircases.

☐ Carbon monoxide detectors - If provided, they should be just below the ceiling level in the rooms that contain a gas appliance. The only safe ones look like smoke detectors and sound an alarm to wake you up if there was a CO leak. They can be bought for as little as £20.
Make sure there are no sooty stains on or around gas appliances that might indicate that they are not working properly and that they are not situated in a bedroom or an unvented cupboard. Carbon monoxide kills, so check there is a valid gas safety certificate. It is a legal requirement for all gas appliances to be tested annually by a Gas Safe registered engineer, and your landlord is responsible for ensuring that the tests are carried out.

Heating - Check that there is sufficient heating and that it is suitable for your needs.

Electric wiring - Check that there are enough electrical sockets and that none of them are loose or have burn marks on/around them.

Ask to see the landlord’s electrical safety certificate.

Ask the landlord if he could show you a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate.

Water & waste pipes - Make sure there are no leaking pipes.

Damp - Make sure there is no sign of mould or damp discoloration on ceilings and walls (especially in the bathroom or bedrooms).

Pests - Check for any signs of animal life - insects, mouse droppings or slug trails.

Floors - Check that carpets are clean, in good condition and are properly fitted, especially on the staircase. Also check that there are no cracks/tears in the kitchen/bathroom flooring.

Furniture - Make sure there is enough for everyone and that it is in good condition.

Ask if the contents you see in the accommodation will be there when you move in or if they belong to the current occupants - ask to see the inventory.

Furniture & Fire regulations - Second-hand old furniture are often supplied in rented accommodation and could be a fire hazard. Unless it can be proved this furniture was purchased before 1950, it should have the manufacturer’s label on it saying it meets the requirements of the Furnishing Regulations 1988. Check this carefully.
Bedroom – Make sure that it has everything you expect: a bed (with clean mattress), adequate lighting, a reading lamp, wardrobe, easy chair, storage space, bookshelves, desk or table + study chair, adequate heating. All the bedrooms should be big enough and have a window which opens directly outside to provide natural light and ventilation.

Kitchen – Make sure that it is big enough, with adequate units and worktops to store and prepare food. If there is not a separate living room, there should be enough room for a dining table and chairs.

Cooker and fridge – Make sure they are in good working order, clean inside and out and are going to be big enough for you and your housemates.

Other appliances such as vacuum cleaner, washing machine, freezer, microwave, and dishwasher are not always provided in rented properties. If they come with your property, ask if the instruction booklets are available and check that the landlord will be responsible for any breakdowns.

Bathroom ventilation – If there is no natural ventilation, i.e. window, there should be a working ventilation fan.

Bath/shower – Make sure that there is a clean and undamaged sealant around bath or shower and that none of the taps are dripping.

WC – Check that the flush works and that the seat and lid is not damaged.

N.B. If the landlord/agent promises to carry out repairs, redecorate, or provide new furniture or equipment before you move in, get it in writing and make sure that the work is done.
Deposits

Tenancy Deposit Protection (TDP)

Tenancy Deposit Schemes were introduced in April 2007 to make sure that tenants’ deposits would be kept safe for the duration of their tenancies and would be returned to them in full within 10 days of the end of their tenancies unless there were legitimate reasons for withholding some or all of the deposit. If a disagreement between a landlord and tenant should arise over deductions, an alternative dispute resolution service can investigate.

Since then, all landlords and agents have had a legal obligation to ensure that any deposit paid to them for an assured shorthold tenancy or AST is protected by a TDS. If your tenancy has a rental income of £100,000 or less per year you are likely to have an assured shorthold tenancy (AST).

The first type of TDS is a custodial scheme, whereby the deposit is held by the scheme during the tenancy and during any legal dispute, the second is an insurance-based scheme where the landlord or agent keeps the deposit, but the deposit is insured in case of any dispute and thus protected for the tenant.

If you have an AST, your landlord must ensure that your deposit is put in a TDS and notify you of the details of the scheme within 30 days of you handing the money to them. If they don’t, you can take your case to a county court where a judge can order your landlord to return the deposit to you or protect it in a scheme. You could also be awarded compensation amounting to between one and three times the amount of your deposit. You can get more information about Tenancy Deposit Schemes from Shelter: http://england.shelter.org.uk/ and the Directgov website.

Holding Deposit

A holding deposit is essentially a bond that might be requested by a landlord or agent to reserve a property whilst the tenancy agreement is arranged. It is seldom returned if you withdraw your interest, but usually forms part of your security deposit if you proceed with the tenancy. So check before you pay it and ask for a receipt.

N.B. Some landlords and agents are avoiding using deposits completely, so in order to secure interest in a property they are demanding a payment of a month’s rent instead. Students are asked to sign an agreement to say that they understand that it is non-refundable if they decide not to rent the property.
Security Deposit or Damage Deposit

The amount of damage deposit you should expect to pay is 1 - 2 months rent. Damage deposits are intended to give landlords some financial security for any financial loss they might suffer as a result of any damage that you and your housemates might cause to the property while you are living there.

If you have an assured shorthold tenancy (AST) your deposit should be protected in a tenancy deposit scheme (TDS). You should find this information in your tenancy agreement or you could ask your landlord for written confirmation.

N.B. If you have a joint tenancy, it is likely that one housemate will be appointed as lead tenant and will receive the whole household’s deposit at the end of the tenancy. Make sure you have arrangements in place with this person to ensure that you get back your share of that money.

Make sure that you obtain receipts for any money paid for the initial deposit and any further payments you make to replace any of the deposit that the landlord spends on repairing damage caused during your tenancy.

Inventory

Ensure that a full inventory of the condition of the property and its contents is completed when you move in (check-in) and is agreed and signed by the landlord and all tenants. If the landlord does not organise a check-in inventory, you can download a blank form from the London Student Housing Guide website and complete it yourself.

Invite the landlord to be present when you complete the inventory, but if the landlord is unable to, ask an independent witness to attend and sign the form instead. Then send a copy of the completed form to your landlord.

Take plenty of photographs, with proof of date if possible, of the inside and outside of the property as evidence to back up the inventory at the beginning and end of the tenancy. These would prove invaluable if there should be any dispute about deductions from your deposit.

If anything is worn, broken or damaged, missing or just plain dirty when you move in, report this in a polite letter to your landlord or agent and keep a copy of your letter. Ask for repairs or replacements or for dirty items such as carpets and ovens to be cleaned.
Landlords should be happy to let you keep a copy of your tenancy agreement or contract for at least 24 hours before signing it. Use this time to ask for advice if you are unsure about anything in the agreement. The Students’ Union Advice & Support Centre would be happy to help you and can provide details of where you can obtain more specialist help if necessary. Problems with tenancy agreements often arise when terms are deliberately vague. It is vital that any promises made by the landlord or any conditions you agree to are put in writing. If the landlord does not do so immediately, write a letter confirming the details, send it by recorded delivery and keep a copy for your records.

N.B. When you sign a contract you are agreeing to its terms and conditions and that you have understood them, so it may be difficult to say later that you did not understand something. Therefore ALWAYS read a contract before signing and get it checked if you are unsure of its contents. Once signed, make sure that you and all your housemates have a copy.

Resident Landlord

Most students’ first preference would probably be to share with other students but it is worth considering the advantages of living with a resident landlord as well as the disadvantages.

Advantages:
1. Usually cheaper.
2. Usually kept in good repair.
3. Good availability.

Disadvantages:
1. It’s not your home and if you fall out with your landlord you will usually have no option but to find somewhere else to live.
2. You will often have less freedom to bring home friends or guests and this could leave you feeling isolated.
3. You would be living by someone else’s rules regarding playing music, when you can cook or use the washing machine etc.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies

If, like most students renting off campus, you don’t live with your landlord and the total rent on the property you rent is less than £100,000 per year you are likely to have an Assured Shorthold Tenancy (AST).
In most cases students are given a written copy of their tenancy agreement or contract which has been signed by them and the landlord. In the case of joint tenancies, the written tenancy agreement must be signed by each tenant. There is no legal requirement for a landlord/agent to provide a written contract, but always try to have one or provide one yourself, as it is proof of what was agreed and helps prevent future misunderstandings and disagreements.

Joint and severable liability

Many students with ASTs are given joint contracts that each person who will be living in a house will need to sign. Many of these contracts state that the tenants have “joint and severable liability” for any charges arising from the tenancy. In practice this means that all your housemates could conceivably leave, and you, as the remaining tenant or your guarantor, would be liable for the whole rent, unpaid bills and any charges for damage caused by other tenants.

Verbal Agreement

These tenancies are generally regarded as Assured Shorthold Tenancies but they could cause problems if there is a dispute over what was agreed at the outset. It is vital to keep a record of any rent payments, even if you end up writing your own receipt and getting the landlord to sign it.

Agency charges

Letting agents can levy a range of charges against tenants once they have found you a property to rent. Typical charges include:
1. Contract fee (drawing up of the contract).
2. Reference checking fee.
3. Administration fee.
So before you start to use a letting agent, you should ask them for a comprehensive list of all the fees that they charge. If you think the charges are excessive, go elsewhere.

Name and address of your landlord

To obtain this information, tenants should write to the property agent or rent collector and ask them for the landlord’s name and address, which they are legally obliged to provide to you within 21 days. If the person claiming to be the landlord is not the registered owner of the property, then they may not have permission to rent out the property, so you should ask for written confirmation that they have permission.

Ownership of a property can be checked online at the Land Registry website at a cost of £4 per search. Go to http://www.landregistry.gov.uk/ and click on “Find a property”.

Before agreeing to rent you might also want to ask the landlord or agent for proof of permission to let. If a Landlord who is paying a mortgage and is letting without permission stops paying the mortgage, the Mortgage Lender could foreclose on the property and evict the tenants.
HMO Licence

A landlord should have a license from the local authority before renting out a property in which 5 or more tenants are required to share facilities and where the building has 3 or more floors, which might include a basement, even if shops and offices occupy one or more of those floors. If your landlord is not able to provide evidence of the license, contact your local council.

Who is responsible for what?

Before you make any agreement, it is important that you agree with the landlord and other tenants who will be responsible for what, including utility bills, garden maintenance and other services. Make sure you get this agreement in writing.

Guarantors

Students are usually required to provide a guarantor who is prepared to accept responsibility for unpaid rent or other costs associated with the tenancy. This person is usually a parent, but if they are retired or unemployed or don’t live in the UK they may not be regarded as suitable by the landlord or letting agent. In any event, you would be unlikely to want your guarantor to accept liability for your housemates, so the wording of the guarantor agreement form should be checked carefully. If you are not happy with the form that has been given to you by the landlord or agent, you could download the guarantor form from the London Student Housing Guide website http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/downloads.html.

Legal/Administration Fees

There should be no need for a legal fee, as a signed contract does not need to be approved by a solicitor. Some landlords, however, may not be aware of the legalities of renting properties and may have consulted a solicitor. Also note that if you have found your accommodation through an agency, an agent will have drawn up the agreement and you will most likely be asked for an administration fee.

Premiums/Key Money

This is a non-returnable sum of money demanded from the tenant as a condition of tenancy. It is legal to ask for this, but most landlords do not ask for a premium. If you are asked for a premium you are strongly advised not to pay.
Payment of Rent

If you give your landlord post-dated cheques for a whole year, it may prove difficult and expensive to stop them. It is also possible that the landlord could present these for payment early. It would be better to ask your bank to set up a standing order but your landlord would need to provide you with his bank details.

If you pay your rent weekly, you must have a Rent Book. This should include:
- The name and address of the landlord (and their agent if they have one).
- The amount of rent payable.
- Information about your rights to protection from eviction and agencies that can give you advice.

If you are required to pay rent or other charges in cash, make sure you are given a receipt as proof of payment.

Notice to Quit or Break Clause

A break clause in a contract would allow you to give notice to your landlord so you can end the tenancy early. A notice to quit should:
- Be in writing
- Be served on the day when the rent is normally paid
- Give no less than 28 day’s notice prior to the date on which it is to take effect
- Identify the premises to which it relates
- Name the landlord and the tenant

Unless your Tenancy Agreement contains a break clause, you can only leave without liability for the full rent if a replacement tenant can be found and you assign your contract.

Utilities

Most students in shared rented properties are responsible for the contacting the gas and electric companies when they move in and paying the bills throughout the tenancy. This should be clear in your tenancy agreement. Make sure you read any meters when you move in and keep a record of the readings, then notify the gas, electricity and water companies that you have moved in. Try to make sure that all the tenants’ names appear on the bills or someone could end up being solely liable for any money owed.

Inventories

When you move into a property a full check-in inventory or schedule of condition should be provided by the landlord or agent and should note everything in the property. Some landlords and agents insist on using the services of an inventory company and share the cost with their tenants. If no inventory is provided, you could employ a specialist inventory company, but you will be charged for their services. Alternatively, you could write one yourself on the day the tenancy starts or use the blank inventory form can be downloaded from the London Student Housing Guide website: http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk

You should note the condition of everything, including walls, carpets, tiles and furniture. Make a note of anything that is not working, and arrange with the landlord to get it repaired. Apart from “fair wear and tear” you will be expected to leave the place as you found it. Take photographs with proof of date if possible to back up the inventory, as these may help prevent you being charged for something that was missing or damaged before the tenancy began. The landlord should be asked to sign and date the inventory to confirm his agreement, but if he is unable to, you could ask an independent witness to do it, and then send a copy of it to the landlord or agent.
Possessions insurance

You might think you can't afford the additional expense of insurance, but if you can't afford to replace all of your possessions, then you really can't afford not to have insurance.

The landlord will expect tenants to insure their own possessions against theft and damage, as they will probably not be covered by his insurance. If you already have an insurance policy, you will need to notify the insurance company that you have moved.

Some lettings agencies include a basic student possessions insurance policy as part of their package, but since it may not include electrical items such as laptops, it may be worth extending the policy at a small additional cost. Be sure to ask at the outset if you’re going to be insured and what possessions are going to be covered.

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Checklist

- Check ownership of the property on the Land Registry website.
- Ask for proof of permission to let from the landlord or agent.
- Organise References, Rent Guarantor details – see University of London Housing Services for tenant-friendly Guarantor forms.
- Find out if you have to pay a holding deposit and if so, make sure it forms part of the damage deposit or rent once the tenancy begins. Get this in writing.
- Check how much damage deposit you will have to pay, ask what it covers and what Tenancy Deposit Scheme it will be held in. Get this in writing.
- Exactly what services, if any, is the landlord providing for you?
Exactly what are you responsible for? If the contract is not specific enough, ask the landlord for further details.

Is the contract complete and are all the pages there? Even if the pages aren’t numbered, the clauses should be, in which case check that there are none missing.

If there is a cover sheet to the contract outlining the rent and term etc, make sure these details are correct.

Check the contract for wording to indicate whether yours is a joint contract, such as “joint and severable liability”. If you would prefer not to be jointly responsible with your housemates for the rent etc, you might be able to get an individual tenancy instead.

If a fixed term is stated and there is no ‘break clause’ within the main body of the contract then that is what you are bound by. In other words you cannot get out of the tenancy without the landlord’s consent and you are likely to have to find a replacement tenant.

Make sure you understand any legal terms or phrases used within the contract and always seek advice when in doubt.

Don’t be caught out by the small print in a contract. If you think that any of the terms in the contract are unfair, seek advice.

Make sure the contract you are given to read is the same as the one you are given to sign.

Make sure each tenant is given a copy of the signed contract.

If you have any concerns please contact the SU Advice and Support Centre.

Do not sign anything you are unsure about.
Rights & Responsibilities

Landlords’ Responsibilities for gas and electrical safety

- To ensure that gas appliances are maintained and in good working order (unless tenants will be taking them away with them at the end of the tenancy).
- To ensure that these gas appliances have an annual inspection by a Gas Safe registered engineer and keep records of it.
- To issue tenants with a copy of a gas safety certificate within 28 days of the inspection.
- To ensure that electrical systems and appliances that he or she provides are safe to use, with an electrical safety certificate to confirm this.
- To ensure that any electrical work is carried out by a suitably qualified electrician.

Landlords’ responsibilities for fire safety

- To ensure that furniture and furnishings supplied meet requirements under the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety) Regulations 1988 regarding fire resistance, unless they were made before 1950.
- Install a working smoke alarm on each floor of the property.
- Depending on the size of the property, there may have to be fire extinguishing equipment.
- Ensure that there is a fire blanket in the kitchen.
- Ensure that there are adequate means of escape.
**Landlords’ Responsibilities for Repairs**

- Repairs to the structure and exterior of the dwelling, such as roof, walls, floors and windows.
- Upkeep of gutters, drains and pipes.
- Repairs of basins, sinks, baths, toilets and other sanitary installations in the building.
- Repairs to heating and hot water installations.
- Repairs of faulty electrical wiring, gas pipes, fixed heaters, water heaters and appliances provided by the landlord that tenants will not be taking with them at the end of the tenancy.

N.B. The landlord has these duties no matter what is written in the tenancy agreement but is not obliged to undertake any repairs that he has not been asked to carry out.

**Tenants’ Responsibilities for Repairs**

- Repairing or paying for the repair of anything that has been damaged by a tenant or their own visitors. If damage occurs during the tenancy, it is advisable to report this to the landlord and ask their advice on how to rectify the situation. If this is done by telephone it should be followed up with a letter or email.
- Repairing any appliances that they themselves have put in e.g. tumble drier.
- Repairing appliances such as a washing machine or fridge, unless it is specified in the contract that the landlord is responsible for such repairs.
- Unless specified in the tenancy agreement, it is generally the tenant’s responsibility to ensure that light bulbs are changed, batteries for doorbells and smoke detectors are renewed and so on.
How to Get Repairs Done

If repairs are needed, tenants must report them to the landlord straight away. Wherever possible, do this in writing and keep copies of all correspondence. For urgent repairs, 24 hours should be sufficient time for a response to be forthcoming. For non-urgent repairs, where the repair is not likely to deteriorate rapidly or does not interfere with tenants’ use of the property, you should expect to wait longer. Allowances must be made for busy times of the year and to allow the landlord time to find a suitable contractor.

What if the Landlord Does Not Respond?

Tenants should not withhold rent as a method of getting repairs done, as this could lead to eviction for rent arrears. You should write to the landlord again, referring to the last letter and asking again for the repair to be done within a reasonable time limit which you should state in your letter. If there is still no response, then seek advice from the Students’ Union Advice & Support Centre on the different courses of action you can take.
Since October 2008, landlords have been required to show prospective tenants an energy performance certificate to show how their property compares with other similar properties in terms of energy efficiency. This is because almost 50% of the UK’s energy consumption and carbon emissions are arise from heating, lighting and the way buildings are used. A copy of the EPC must be given to new tenants free of charge by their landlord.

The certificate includes a rating panel that looks similar to those shown on domestic appliances, but for homes, 2 ratings are shown. The Energy Efficiency Rating shows the property’s overall efficiency. The higher the rating, the more energy-efficient the home is and the lower the fuel bills should be. The Environmental Impact Rating measures CO2 emissions and the higher the rating, the better the property is in terms of its impact on the environment.

An EPC is valid for 10 years and the penalty for any landlord who does not provide it is a £200 fine, unless he believes that the person viewing his property is not genuinely interested in it or is unlikely to have the funds to pay for the rent. For further information on Energy Performance Certificates visit the Direct Gov website.

N.B. These ratings do not extend to the appliances provided by landlords, such as washing machine, cooker or fridge.
Gas & Fire Safety

Gas Safety

When gas does not burn properly, Carbon Monoxide is produced. You cannot see or smell it, but it can kill within a matter of hours. The early symptoms of poisoning include tiredness, headache, pains in the chest and stomach pains, and you are most vulnerable when you are asleep.

Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Decent CO detectors will cost between £20 and £40 and are available in most hardware and DIY stores. Only buy the ones that look like a smoke detector and sound an alarm that would wake you if there was a carbon monoxide leak. You could ask your landlord to provide one or share the cost of one with your housemates.

If you live in private rented accommodation, ask your landlord to give you a copy of the latest GAS SAFETY CERTIFICATE, as landlords are obliged to keep a record of safety checks and supply certificates to existing occupiers. Prospective occupiers must be given a copy of the latest check before moving in. For more advice, ring the Gas Safety Advice Line on 0800 300 363.

N.B. Do not use any appliance you suspect is unsafe.

Fire regulations in a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

A property in which 5 or more tenants are required to share facilities, and where the building has 3 or more floors, including a basement is defined as an HMO and must by law be licenced by the local authority, even if shops and offices occupy one or more of those floors.

HMO landlords must ensure that there are sufficient fire precautions, including alarms, extinguishers, fire blankets and fire escape routes, which must be well maintained and adequate for the size of the property and number of tenants.
HMOs must be fitted with fire warning systems such as fire alarms and heat or smoke detectors. These must be serviced and checked regularly and should be placed all the way through the building, particularly in escape routes and areas of high fire risk, such as kitchens. There should be a fire blanket in every shared kitchen and at least one fire extinguisher on each floor, of the correct type.

HMOs must have a fire escape route that can resist fire, smoke and fumes long enough for everyone to leave the building (usually at least 30 minutes). This could be an external fire escape, internal stairs, corridors or walkways that are specifically constructed or treated to resist fire. All the walls, ceilings, floors and partitions along the escape route must be fire resistant. All the doors leading to the escape route must be doors which are fire resistant and close automatically.

**Moving In**

You will have a lot to do the day you move in to your new home and you might find that not all of your housemates will be moving in on the same day. It is always a good idea to make a list of things that need to be done and who will do them so that things don't get overlooked.

Get an inventory done, ask the landlord or agent to sign it and take photos to verify the condition of the property at the start of the tenancy. If you don't have an inventory form, you can download one at the London Student Housing Guide website. If the landlord cannot be present, ask an independent witness to come instead and ask them to sign the inventory form.

Read the meters and notify the utility companies that you have moved in, and make sure you have a TV license and insurance for your own possessions. Introduce yourself to your new neighbours and try to be considerate where noise and car parking are concerned. There are leaflets for students living in private rented accommodation which are available from the Student Services Point, FW141, and the Students’ Union Advice & Support Centre.
Checklist - Moving In

☐ Clarify in writing with the Landlord/agent who is responsible for the repair of non-essential equipment, e.g. washing machine or TV.

☐ If you haven’t already done so get a copy of the tenancy agreement for each tenant.

☐ Make sure you have the details of the Tenancy Deposit Scheme the landlord or agent is using and the ID or reference number.

☐ Arrange to meet the owner/agent to check off the inventory and the schedule of condition. If the landlord doesn’t have one, make your own or download one from the London Student Housing Guide website. If the landlord won’t check and sign the inventory, get an independent witness to do it instead.

☐ Take photographs or videos (dated if possible) as proof of the condition of the property and its contents when you have the inventories done at the beginning and end of your tenancy. These will help your case should your landlord want to claim for damages from your deposit when you leave.

☐ Get a copy of the GAS SAFETY CERTIFICATE - the legal requirement is that it MUST be supplied to new tenants BEFORE they move in. Check it is up-to-date and check that the inspector is Gas Safe registered. For general advice call the HSE Gas Safety Advice Line 0800 300363. Carbon monoxide detectors cost between £20-40 and could save your life. Check it complies with BS7860, but never rely entirely on these devices.

☐ Ask for a copy of the Energy Performance Certificate.

☐ Arrange for the telephone, water, gas and electricity (where applicable) to be transferred into all your names if sharing. If only one of you is named on the bill, that is the person that will be pursued for any money owed.

☐ Read and keep a record of the utility meters when you first move in, so that you can check you are not overcharged on your first bill.

☐ Ask to see some evidence that the electric wiring is good, such as an electrical safety certificate.
All furniture supplies should have a label to say it meets the fire resistant requirements of the Furniture and Furnishing (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988. Check for the soft furniture warning labels, e.g. ‘Carelessness causes fire’. However, furniture made before 1950 is exempt.

Locate important things such as the main switches to turn off the gas and electricity, the mains water supply stop. Ask for and read through the operation booklets for the washing machine, microwave, and other appliances.

If the owner/agent promised to carry out repairs, redecorate, or provide equipment before you moved in - make sure that the work has been done.

Make sure all tenants have their own key.

Window locks - if there are any, make sure you have keys.

Get a TV license. You only need one license for TVs in areas that are occupied by all tenants. However, you might need your own license if you have your own TV in your own room if you have exclusive access to it if you do not have a joint tenancy. You can get further information at: http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk

If you already have contents insurance, you will need to tell your insurance company that you have moved. If you don’t have contents insurance you should seriously consider getting some.

Notify everyone that needs to know of your new address, including College.

If you have any concerns please contact the SU Advice and Support Centre.
Spend time planning and preparing a Budget Sheet and keep a record of everything you spend, as this helps identify regular/occasional spending patterns. Plan for extra expenditure such as start of year costs/special occasions/birthdays.

Get a student bank account if you have not already got one and consider setting up standing orders/direct debits - this can help you to plan and make consistent regular payments to all the places you need to without worrying about missing payment dates. If you need to borrow money then try to use only interest free overdraft facilities. Keep your bank statements in a folder and file them as soon as you receive them, even if you don't have time to read them straight away.

When visiting your local supermarket take advantage of “Buy one get one free” offers, particularly on goods with a long sell by date; collect discount coupons and redeem them when paying for your shopping.

Join NUS and take advantage of the discounts available to students.

Be environmentally friendly, for example turning off lights and not leaving appliances on standby, this will help save the planet and save you money.

Further help

Managing your finances as a student is very important. If you need help with putting together a budget plan, or financial advice on managing your money please see the RHUL Student Financial Adviser or Student Funding Officer.

Appointments can be made by phone or email, or by visiting the Student Support Office in Founder’s West 151.
Tel: 01784 414633 / 01784 276109
Fax: 01784 470249
Email: FinancialAdvice@rhul.ac.uk
www.rhul.ac.uk/For-Students/student-support/financial-counselling/
Refuse & Recycling

There are rules about refuse and recycling in Runnymede and you could run into difficulties if you don’t abide by them and even incur charges if your landlord has to dispose of your rubbish for you, especially at the end of your tenancy when you want your deposit returned.

Runnymede Borough Council operates a ‘no side waste’ and ‘closed lid’ policy to encourage residents to minimise the volume of waste they produce. Refuse Collectors are instructed not to empty bins that do not have closed lids, nor take away any waste not contained within the bin. Refuse should be made available from 6am on the morning of collection. You can find out the collection day for your street on the Runnymede Borough Council website. Residents are required to move their wheeled bins to the boundary of their property for collection, once emptied the bin is returned to the curtilage of your land i.e. gateway.

The Council operates a ‘kerbside collection recycling service’ that all residents are encouraged to get involved in, for more information please call the Recycling Hotline on free-phone; 0800 052 0067 or email recycling@runnymede.gov.uk. For details of refuse and recycling collection dates in Runnymede please visit: http://www.runnymede.gov.uk/portal/site/recycling

There are some materials the council have to prohibit from being put in the wheeled bin for safety reasons or because they damage the vehicles. These include liquids, such as waste oil and paint, brick rubble and metal bars. These can be taken to an amenity site; the nearest one being located at Lyne Lane, Chertsey, KT16 0AR.
From October 2012, the previous recycling boxes and bags were replaced by one blue lidded wheeled bin for each household collected fortnightly for all recyclable waste. Please make sure all items are rinsed out and squashed before placing them in your recycling bin. All items should be placed loose in the bin and not in plastic bags.

In addition to the blue-lid wheelie bin, you should also have a small grey food caddy and small green bin for your kitchen waste, as well as a black wheelie bin for your non-recyclables. If any bins are missing from your rented house please call the Runnymede Recycling Hotline on 0800 052 0067 and they will arrange for them to be delivered to you.

The Council can arrange to collect unwanted furniture and other bulky household items for a fee of £36.00 for up to three items. Additional items up to a maximum of 3 are charged at £12 each. For a fridge or a freezer there is a fee of £36.00 each. Please contact Runnymede Depot on 01932 425750 or 01932 425776 for more details.
Notes
Useful Contacts

Support & Advice Centre
1st Floor, Students’ Union
01784 276700
www.su.rhul.ac.uk/support/

Student Accommodation
01784 443341
www.rhul.ac.uk/studyhere/
accommodation/home.aspx
email: studentaccommodation@rhul.ac.uk
office: Student Services, Windsor Building

House Search RHUL
www.housesearch.rhul.ac.uk

University of London Housing Services
www.housing.lon.ac.uk
email: housing@london.ac.uk
020 7862 8880

London Student Housing Guide
www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau
www.adviceguide.org.uk

Runnymede CAB
The Old Library
Church Road
Addlestone
Surrey KT15 1RW
http://www.randscab.org.uk/index.html
Advice: 01932 842666
Appointments: 01932 827187

Staines CAB
Community Link, Knowle Green,
Staines, TW18 1XA
01784 444220

Legal Advice Centre
Queen Mary, University of London
020 7882 3668
www.advicecentre.law.qmul.ac.uk
email: lac@qmul.ac.uk

Community Legal Service
http://clsdirect.org.uk/
0845 3454 345

Runnymede Borough Council (RBC)
Station Road, Addlestone
01932 838383
www.runnymede.gov.uk

RBC Private Sector Housing
01932 425888

RBC Environmental Protection
01932 425716

Shelter Housing
www.shelter.org.uk
0808 800 4444

Direct gov
www.direct.gov.uk

Office of Fair Trading
08457 22 44 99
www.oft.gov.uk

Consumer Focus (gas & electricity issues) 020 7799
7900
www.consumerfocus.org.uk

Gas Safe Register
0800 408 5500
www.gassaferegister.co.uk

HSE (Gas Safety Advice)
0800 300 363
www.hse.gov.uk/gas

Fire Kills (Fire safety)
https://www.gov.uk/firekills

Land Registry
www.landregistry.gov.uk

Association of Registered Letting Agents
(ALRA)
0845 345 5752
www.arla.co.uk