

LOOKING GUIDE

RH SU



HELLO.

We've packed our best tips for finding a new home into this guide, helping you to find high quality accommodation and understand your rights as a tenant.

Take your time and make informed decisions - there's loads of student accommodation out there, and you don't need to rush into anything.

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03.

BEFORE LOOKING.

- Decide how long you want the contract to be: base this on what your income will be and whether you will be liable for council tax after the last day of term.
- Decide which area you want to live in: the more flexible you are, the more likely you are to find something to suit your budget. Keep your travel time and costs in mind though!
- Locate all the documents you'll need: landlords have to confirm your identity, immigration status (even if you're British), credit history and student status.
- Most landlords/agencies require students to have a UK guarantor. Those without a guarantor, including international/EU students, are usually asked to pay 3-6 months' rent in advance instead. Contact the Students' Union Advice Centre if this is a problem for you.

04.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR.

- Online ads are not properly regulated and can have fraudulent users and scams.
- Never go to a viewing alone. Take a housemate or a friend along with you. If you don't have a good feeling, don't go.
- When your group attends a viewing, let someone know where you'll be.
- Never pay in cash.
- Don't sign or pay anything before having your contract checked by the Students' Union Advice Centre. You can book an appointment with the Housing Advisor, or just email your contract over to advice@su.rhul.ac.uk with the subject 'contract check'.

05.

WHERE TO LOOK.

>> HOUSESEARCH

HouseSearch is your free portal to hundreds of local properties, run by the Students' Union. You can use it to search for accommodation, post ads for rooms, and find housemates.

housesearch.rhul.ac.uk

>> ONLINE

You can find lots of accommodation advertised online, including on social media platforms. We've created a group to help:

bit.ly/RHSUHousemating

>> LETTING AGENTS

You can find local letting agencies and their ratings on Google. If you call each agency and tell them what area you're looking in and your budget, they'll contact you with what they have available.

>> HALLS

Private halls are independent from the College. They're one of the easiest options if you're not able to visit the area, but they're also one of the most expensive.

You can also apply for a priority placement in College-run halls on campus if you have health problems or learning difficulties.

disability-dyslexia@royalholloway.ac.uk

06.

FEES AND CHARGES.

- Trustworthy letting agents will have a full and transparent price list on their website, including costs of possible future fees and charges.
- Most fees agents and landlords could charge were banned on 1 June 2019.
- You could also be asked for a holding fee (maximum 1 week's rent; refundable unless you cancel) to stop advertising the property.
- Eventually you'll be asked for a security deposit (maximum 5 weeks' rent), and you will also have to pay the first month's rent before you move in.
- You can make an appointment to get help with budgeting by contacting Financial Wellbeing - moneymatters@royalholloway.ac.uk.

07.

ALL THE LEGAL BITS.

>> YOUR LANDLORD IS REQUIRED TO:

- Provide a smoke detector on each level of the property, i.e. on the staircase and near the kitchen.
- Provide a carbon monoxide detector which needs to be placed near the boiler and have an installation date written on/by the side of it.
- All furniture must have a label stating it meets the requirements of the Furnishing Regulations Act 1988. If it doesn't, it could be a fire hazard.
- Place your deposit in a government protected scheme (TDS, DPS or My Deposits). Ask your landlord which scheme they have placed your deposit in before you move in, if they haven't sent you a confirmation this was done. This will prevent unfair deductions being made from your deposit.

08.

ATTENDING VIEWINGS.

- We want to make sure you know how to keep safe while you're viewing properties during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. Check out our guidance on safe house viewings [here](#).

- It can be hard work getting your landlord to fix things after you've signed. Landlords and agents often make promises they never fulfil during viewings, so if they promise to fix things, ask them to put it in writing.

- If the current tenants are present during the viewing, don't be afraid to ask them if they have had any problems with the accommodation or landlord. You can ask them about what the bills are like, too.

Ask the landlord or agent if you can see the inventory which will state exactly what pieces of furniture will be staying at the property. If they do not have one, request that this is done before you move in.

09.

CHECKLIST.

- Think about location - is it close enough to walk to campus, or if not is it close to public transport links?
- Make sure there is enough furniture and that it is in good condition. Ask the landlord if the furniture will be included. Are the carpets in good condition and are properly fitted?
- Check for any cracks or tears in the bathroom and kitchen floor.
- Is there a sufficient heating system? Is it suitable for your needs? Make sure that there are enough bedrooms, and that they have everything you expect (bed, storage space, desk and study chair) as well as adequate heating, light and a window.
- Do you have access to a shed? Is it clear? Does it contain gardening equipment that is in good working order?
- Can the property be securely locked? If there was a fire, could you get out of the property?
- Check the roof has no missing slates, no broken gutters, moss or weeds growing out of the gutters.
- Is the kitchen big enough, with adequate units and worktops? All kitchen appliances including the fridge, freezer and cooker are in working order.
- Is the sealant around the bath and shower damaged? Turn on the shower to assess the water pressure in the building. Also, check that the toilet flush works.
- Look out for any evidence of damp or mould on walls, ceilings, around windows and on furniture.
- Talk with current tenants as they can give an unbiased and realistic account of what it's like to live there.

Don't forget – you can request a free contract check from our Housing Advisor.

10.

BEFORE SIGNING.

>> YOUR LANDLORD/AGENT SHOULD GIVE YOU:

- A copy of the government's 'How To Rent' guide.
- A Gas Safety Certificate issued within the last year.
- Evidence of an electrical inspection within the last five years.
- Tenancy deposit protection scheme information.
- Energy Performance Certificate.
- Information about who manages the property i.e. if the landlord or agent is responsible for maintenance/repairs.
- Confirmation in writing if your bills are included, either in an email, letter or in your tenancy agreement.

>> YOU SHOULD:

- Check the rules about overnight guests, smoking and pets.
- Check who is responsible for the bills and make sure this information is included in the tenancy agreement.
- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors should be fitted by your landlord - it's the law.
- Check under which circumstances you could leave the tenancy early without still being liable for rent.
- Make sure any other appliances, such as washing machines, are included in the inventory and that the landlord will be responsible to replace them if they break down.
- Check who owns the property at **landregistry.gov.uk** if you're not using a letting agent.
- Request a free contract check from our Housing Advisor.

Make sure you are happy with the Tenancy Agreement. Don't be afraid to question the meaning of certain clauses. You should not sign anything you are not 100% clear on!

12.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE.

UNFORTUNATELY, WE COME ACROSS A NUMBER OF CASES EVERY YEAR WHERE STUDENTS HAVE BEEN MISTREATED AND TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF IN THE HOUSING MARKET, BUT YOU CAN HELP REDUCE THIS.

- Email the Housing Advisor with your experiences (the good and the bad) to help inform outreach projects.

advice@su.rhul.ac.uk

- Use Google to review the letting agents you've used to better inform next year's students.

13.

USEFUL CONTACTS.

>> ADVICE CENTRE

The Advice Centre is a free and independent service for all students here at Royal Holloway, based on the first floor of the Students' Union building. Our friendly, experienced and professional staff will provide a listening ear and offer general and specialist advice. We're here to support you with a whole range of issues, big and small, but if we're not the best people to help you we'll find you the right support.

- Pop along to the **Union Helpdesk** on the first floor of the Students' Union and of our Helpdesk Assistants will book you in.
 - Alternatively, you can call the Helpdesk on **01784 276700**
 - Email us at **advice@su.rhul.ac.uk**
 - Look through our online resources at **su.rhul.ac.uk/advice**
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>> HALLS ENQUIRIES

For halls enquiries, contact the Student Services Centre.

- Call them on **01784 246641**
- Drop them an email at **student-enquiries@royalholloway.ac.uk**



Your Housing Guide

What to look for in your ideal
student accommodation.

Visit: **endsleigh.co.uk/housing**



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15.

GOOD LUCK!

Looking for housing can be stressful, but we're here for you.

Finding the right housemates or somewhere to live can be a daunting task in a new place. Our top tip is don't rush into anything, as most contracts are very hard to get out of.

If you encounter any problems, feel free to contact the Housing Advisor at the Students' Union Advice Centre who will be more than happy to help you while you're looking for housing, or after you move in.

We wish you the best of luck in finding your next home!



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