



WSA Housing Guide



Support
Advice Centre

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Union

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Housing Guide

SUSU understands that moving to private housing is a big decision and looking after your student housing requires a lot of work. With this guide, we want to help you find a place that suits you and assist you with any problems you may have with your current housing situation.

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1. Choosing where to live

When making a decision on where to live, there are a couple of questions you can ask yourself to help you choose your perfect type of accommodation in the city which suits you the most. **Here are a couple of important questions:**

- How important is cost to you?
- Would you mind a 30-50 minute commute?
- Would you prefer to live in a city with a vibrant nightlife?
- How much do you care about the cleanliness of where you live?
- How important is privacy to you?

To make the choice easier you can ask other students about their experience. **Below are some comparison tables that could help you get an idea of what you want:**

Southampton	Winchester
Bigger city (population >250,000)	Smaller city (population <120,000)
More vibrant & varied nightlife	More quiet & picturesque
Longer commute	Shorter commute
Lower prices	Higher prices
More housing availability	Less housing availability

Private student accommodation (e.g. shared houses)	Private providers of student halls accommodation (studios or bedsits)
Lower prices	Higher prices
Bills not usually included	Bills usually included
No cleaning service	Cleaning service in communal areas

University halls of residence	Private providers of student halls
Licence contract (you can leave if you're not a student, e.g. suspend or withdraw)	Assured Shorthold Tenancy contract for fixed term (usually you are locked in, no possibility of breaking the contract)
On site welfare (Student Life)	No welfare support
Sometimes not as modern	Usually more modern interiors
All bills included	All bills included
Good sense of community	Potentially less community

2. House-Hunting checklist

Unipol, a student housing charity, has created a handy checklist which you can use when house-hunting. It covers questions about the location, the features, the landlord and the opinion of the current tenants of the property.

You can find this list by [clicking here](#), or alternatively visit: www.unipol.org.uk/advice/students/house-hunting/viewing-properties/viewing-a-property-checklist

Alternatively, you can ask us to print a house-hunting checklist for you at the WSA reception desk!

3. Web Based Lettings Agents

There are a few simple checks you can do which will let you know if the letting agent you are using is operating legally and may help to prevent problems.

Read our Online Lettings Agents guide to find out what you need to look out for. [Click here](#), or visit: www.susu.org/support/housing

4. Contract Checklist

Checking your contract is not only about asking an Adviser 'is it a good contract?'. It is important you know what to look for and understand your rights and responsibilities before signing an agreement, paying rent or picking up the keys (the last two could be used to suggest you have formed a contract before you have signed any document).

For a handy checklist on what a contract should contain, [click here to view our contract checklist](#), or visit: www.susu.org/support/housing

Alternatively, you can ask us to print a contract checklist for you at the WSA reception desk.

5. Inventories

When asked what they would have liked to know before signing for their accommodation, many students suggested taking lots of photos of the property when moving in*. This way, by the time your contract ends, you will have evidence to protect yourself from disputes or deductions from your deposit.

For more information on how to create an inventory, [click here](#) or have a look at the Inventories Guide on our website: www.susu.org/downloads/advice/Inventories.pdf

*This was one of the open questions in a housing survey for WSA students and in the Rate Your Crib survey, both created by the Students' Union in 2017/18.

6. Deposits

Waiting to get your deposit back after your contract has finished can be stressful.

It's important to know the deposit must be protected by a landlord in one of the 3 deposit protection schemes: Deposit Protection Service, MyDeposits or Tenancy Deposit Scheme. The landlord or agent must protect your deposit and give you information about it within 30 days of receiving your money.

There are things you can do to avoid a long wait and to protect your deposit from deposit deductions.

To find out what to do, read the Deposits Guide document [here](#) and How to Get Your Deposit Back document on our website [here](#), or visit: www.susu.org/support/housing for all our housing support resources.

7. Guarantors

What is a Guarantor?

A guarantor is someone, often a parent, a guardian, close family member or a friend, who will agree to pay your rent and compensate the landlord for any damage you've caused if you fail to do so.

A guarantor usually:

- needs to be UK based
- will be required to undergo reference checks
- will need to sign a written agreement

I can't get a guarantor, what should I do?

If your family lives abroad or is unable to support you then there are other options.

Sometimes landlords will accept an increased deposit or you may be asked to pay rent in advance instead of providing a guarantor. These amounts may be negotiable. There are a number of Rent Guarantor Schemes in operation designed to enable students to rent private sector accommodation that may not otherwise be available to them, usually because a UK-based rent guarantor cannot be provided.

Currently, the University of Southampton does not act as a guarantor for students. If you would like further advice or to speak with somebody in person then a Students' Union Adviser may be able to help.

8. Problem Landlords

Although many students experience a problem-free tenancy, we do hear about students encountering problems with their landlords. Find out how you are legally protected from unwanted surprises, and what to do if problems arise.

Eviction

When a landlord evicts, or attempts to evict, a tenant from all or part of their home, they need to follow a legal procedure.

If you believe that you have been **illegally evicted** or that you've been **subjected to harassment** by your landlord or their agent, contact the tenancy relations officer at your local authority through our **Students' Union Advice Centre**.

9. Problem Lettings Agents

If you are not happy with an agent and how they have been treating you, you should first make a formal complaint to the letting agency's manager. If that doesn't help, you can escalate your complaint.

All letting agents are required by law to register with one of the 2 Redress Schemes to allow for an independent complaint process. These are independent organisations who will investigate complaints about agent members. To find out more about it, read the Advice Centre guide [Letting Agents – What to look out for](#). The Advice Centre can help you with any complaints.

SUSU has an in-house lettings agency, [SUSU Lettings](#). Although most properties advertised are in Southampton, the website is a more trustworthy source of private housing. SUSU Lettings also has an office in Building 42 on Highfield campus. Pay them a visit to find out more about what they have on offer, or go to: www.susulettings.co.uk.

10. Damp & Disrepair

Damp or disrepair in your accommodation? It's important to know your legal rights and how to report problems to your landlord.

To find out how to avoid damp and disrepair in your home, you can read the [Damp & Disrepair](#) guide on our website. [Click here](#), or visit: www.susu.org/support/housing

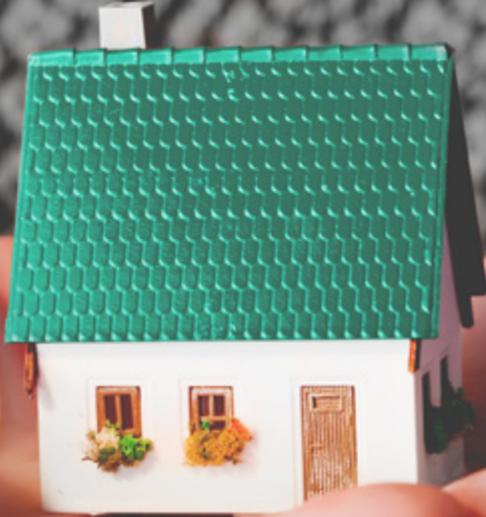
We hope this guide has been helpful and that you end up with a great place to live. The Students' Union are here for you whenever you need us.

Need more help? You can contact our Advice Centre if you would like to make an appointment with one of our Advisers.

SUSU Lettings

Looking for a property?

Talk to us about your property needs,
review your contract or book a
viewing.



No fuss, no fees,
always fair.



✉ lettings@susu.org
☎ 02380 598 501
🌐 susulettings.co.uk



Lettings

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