Contract checklist

The following checklist will help you identify key information normally contained in housing contracts to enable you to make an informed decision on signing your contract.

Please read the list below and try to find the relevant information in your contract. It is helpful to write the information you find in the contract in the space provided next to the checklist point.

You will find a space at the end of the checklist where you can write questions about your contract, in case you need further advice from the Advice Centre.

Important advice:

During Covid-19 pandemic it is important that you consider carefully all pros and cons of the contract before you sign it. Usually once you have signed a fixed term tenancy agreement, you cannot simply end it because you will not be physically attending University.

It is likely that you will be locked in for the duration of the tenancy agreement which means you will be responsible for rental payments and general maintenance of the property, regardless of the circumstances surrounding Covid-19 and how the course is delivered.

If you have any questions regarding this, please seek support before signing your tenancy agreement and don’t allow yourself to be rushed by agencies or landlords into signing something which may ultimately be detrimental for you.

Does your contract have the following information:

- Information about what type of accommodation contract you will have (Assured Shorthold Tenancy, Licence, or other); Check the ‘Tenancy Rights Checker’ the Shelter website here for more information about rights under each type of the agreement ……………………………………………………………………….
- Your Landlord’s name & their address for correspondence…………………………………………………………
- Your own name and, in case of joint contracts, names of all other students (see Joint & Several Liability information here)……………………………………………………………………
- The address of the property you’ll be renting……………………………………………………………………………….
- The length of the contract (when does it start and finish?)……………………………………………………………………
- Rent amount and how often you will be paying? (monthly or 1 off payment?)……………………………………
Security deposit amount (it must not exceed the equivalent of 5 weeks’ rent) and the scheme in which it will be protected (TDS, DPS or MyDeposits).

Holding deposit amount (check the amount, as it can only be a maximum of one week’s rent) and in what circumstances it will be refunded.

Information about other fees or charges (for example late rent fee, or lost keys fee?) If you are not sure which fees are fair and allowed, see this guide here.

Landlord’s repair responsibilities (what will your Landlord repair, and how to report issues?) Not sure what is legally required, check here.

Landlord’s access to the house and how much notice they have to give you.

Your responsibilities as a tenant (what do you have to do in the house, for example cleaning and keeping garden tidy?).

A “break clause” (is there any information in the contract about being able to move out early and how much notice is required?).

Assignment of tenancy (can you assign the contract to someone else? Can you sublet/allow someone else to live with you?).

Other costs when renting – bills for gas, water, electricity, internet etc. (are they included in the rent or do you have to pay them separately?).

If you are going to be sharing the house with others, check if the property requires an HMO (Houses in Multiple Occupation) licence. You will find more information about HMOs on the Southampton City Council website here. If you are not sure if your house should have a licence you can contact the HMO Licensing Team via email at hmo@southampton.gov.uk.

Useful website with reliable housing rights information: Home - Shelter England

Your Questions:

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