

Student Housing Guide

All you need to know!



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All information given was correct at the time of printing.
For updates please see the Accommodation website,
www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

Introduction

Finding a house or flat to live in can be a daunting prospect. There can be many decisions to make and ultimately you will be entering into a contractual arrangement of a financial nature.

We've written this guide to help you weigh up your accommodation options and to give advice and guidance on finding a place to live in the private sector.

This guide has been produced by the Housing Support Team, Accommodation Department at the University of Gloucestershire. It aims to help prepare you to make informed choices when you are looking for accommodation and as a reference throughout your tenancy.

The Housing Support Team is based at the Francis Close Hall Campus in Cheltenham. We are open Monday - Thursday from 9.00am to 5.00pm and Fridays from 9.00am to 4.00pm all year round including the summer holidays.

This booklet contains information about renting a property in the private sector, contracts, an explanation of the Tenancy Deposit Scheme, student safety and can be your guide throughout the year.

It will also take you through the different issues and situations that may arise throughout your tenancy and how best to deal with them. Plus basic tips for living in shared accommodation and how to get the most out of your time here at university.

If you have any questions in your search for accommodation please don't hesitate to contact us.

What you need to do:

Read this entire booklet and make sure you understand all of the content before you start looking for private accommodation.

If you have any queries or questions at all, contact the Housing Support Team—we will be more than happy to help you.

To view all the University registered properties available, visit the website, **www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation**, see what you like and make some appointments for viewings. You will need to contact the Accommodation Office to be given the password to log onto the site.

Sort out your finances and deposit, how much you need to pay and when to sign your contract.

Refer back to the booklet at any stage during your tenancy for advice and guidance.

The Housing Support Team

The Housing Support Team are part of the Accommodation Department and consist of advisers who are able to offer advice and guidance on all issues relating to privately let off-site housing. From your first year in private housing the advisers are on hand to help ensure you settle into your new home quickly and have a happy productive year at the university.

The team has responsibility for registering the properties that are advertised on **StudentPad**. All properties are checked to ensure compliance with the university registration criteria (see page 6).

The Housing Support Team are able to act as mediators between landlords and tenants should any problems occur and can also signpost to other relevant services, whether internal or external. As part of Student Services we can provide you with all the information you need to get issues resolved.

Whatever your query, wherever you live in off-site accommodation, feel free to get in touch with the Housing Support Team or come in to see us at Francis Close Hall.

Contacts

Housing Support Team
Accommodation Office
Bodley Building
Francis Close Hall
Swindon Road
Cheltenham
GL50 4AZ

Telephone **01242 715322**
Email **housingsupport@glos.ac.uk**
Website **www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation**
www.glos.ac.uk/studentsservices

Househunting through StudentPad

StudentPad – www.glosstudentpad.co.uk

This is a dedicated University of Gloucestershire student internet-based database of property to rent covering Gloucestershire. Private landlords can register and advertise their property via the university. Rent levels are competitive and all properties registered also meet the university's registration criteria.

StudentPad has various message boards that you can use and advice pages about any accommodation issues you may have. The service is free to all University of Gloucestershire students; you'll need to contact the Accommodation Office first to obtain a password. Please make sure you have your university student number or personal ID number when you contact the office.

Rather than hold contact lists of different students within the Housing Support Team, we encourage all students to use the message board facilities to get in touch with each other.

www.glosstudentpad.co.uk

Student Guide to Off-Site Housing

University Registration Scheme

The university currently operates a database of flats and houses. In order for a landlord to register with us they have to fulfil a certain criteria, which is outlined below. This ensures that our required safety standards are met, all of which are there for your benefit. Only university registered properties will be advertised on StudentPad.

Please be aware that any student can use the message board facility to advertise a room and therefore not all rooms on this facility will be registered.

Compulsory Criteria for Registration

All properties on the list meet the following criteria:

- Mains interconnected smoke detectors on each floor, or the property is fitted with an integrated fire safety system
- Valid safety certificates for gas and electrical installation
- Furniture and furnishings that comply with the current fire regulations
- Four electrical sockets in each study bedroom
- A fire blanket in the kitchen
- Copy of Public Liability Insurance
- A copy of the HMO License for the property, if applicable
- A copy of the EPC for the property

Please notify the Accommodation Office immediately if you feel the property does not fulfil any of the above criteria.

Additional criteria will also be highlighted on the property advert including;

- Carbon monoxide detectors in the property
- Five lever mortice locks on the doors
- Landlord signed up to the Landlords' Code of Conduct (see website for more details).

Whilst it has been confirmed that the smoke detectors (where necessary) are fitted and in good working order, it must be the responsibility of the students to ascertain for themselves that these detectors are in full working order and remain so throughout the tenancy. Any faults should be immediately reported to the landlord. Any delay in rectifying these faults should be reported to the university Accommodation Office. Tenants should ask for copies of all certificates when they move into the property.

Other Sources of Accommodation

There are sources of private accommodation other than university registered properties. You can find rented accommodation through local letting agents and newspapers. As these properties are not registered you will need to check the standards yourselves. The University of Gloucestershire does not endorse any letting agents.

You should also be aware of extra costs with letting agents as they often work on commission. Get a full break down of charges and a copy of the contract to study before signing anything. You can always visit the university Housing Support Team for advice. We always encourage you to search via the registered list first but the following information can assist you when looking at all types of accommodation.

Viewing Properties

When you go to view any potential houses or flats it's useful to take someone with you for a second opinion and to ensure your personal safety. Have a checklist of items to look out for when you are viewing. Take your time – don't rush and miss something out.

If the property you are thinking about needs work doing to it, don't take the landlord's word that it will be done; **ask to have it in writing that any work or items be supplied before your moving in date.** Remember if you sign an agreement to move in and the landlord has not replaced the windows they verbally promised to do before you move in, you will either be stuck with the disrepair or subjected to the inconvenience of the work being carried out while you are living there.

Check List

When viewing a property you need to make sure it will fit your needs.

Not only is it important to give the property a thorough visual inspection, you should also ask the landlord or estate agent questions that might not be obvious; don't make any assumptions, speak to the current tenants where possible and ask their opinion of the house landlord and their tenancy agreement.

It is vital you ask questions with regard to the safety and security of the property; the landlord and estate agent should have the answers and proof that is required to ensure that the property is safe.

Finally, ask yourself questions about the area the property is in. It might be the best house you have seen, but make sure it is in an area that you feel comfortable in.

When viewing a house please remember to take our checklist with you on pages 22 and 23 of this guide.

Your Tenancy - Before you move in

The Housing Support Team have produced a quick Top Tips fact sheet for living with others. You can download a copy from www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation or pick up a sheet from any Helpzone.

Who are you going to live with?

Think carefully about who you are intending to share the accommodation with as you will be spending a lot of time with them and there will be no easy way to change this once contracts are signed. Think about the various aspects of your lifestyles to help you decide; are some of you very tidy, whilst others can live with mess? Are some of you early birds and others night owls? Will you be able to share out the responsibility of bills? A common issue during the year is students wanting to move as they have fallen out with housemates, so consider your choices carefully. **You will be signing a legal document stating you will stay in the property for a period of time; you cannot just leave half-way through, ensure you are happy with your choices.**

The Tenancy Agreement

A tenancy agreement can be written or verbal, but it is always better to have a written agreement. This is a legally binding document and therefore must be **read and understood before you sign it**. If you are unsure of any of the clauses or would just feel happier if someone else read it through for you, please bring it into the Accommodation Office. Once you have signed a tenancy agreement you are tied to stay in that property for the period stated, unless there is a specific clause which allows you to give notice to quit or if the landlord breaches the agreement. Sometimes landlords may release you from your tenancy agreement if you find a suitable replacement; however, this must be agreed in advance with your landlord. We are able to advertise rooms in our registered properties through StudentPad.

Ensure you know what type of tenancy you are signing. If you are signing a tenancy that states you are 'jointly and severally liable' it means you could be liable for the rent if any of your housemates leave. The agreement should also include the name and address of the landlord and indicate the start and finish date.

For more information visit www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

We would never advise a tenant to withhold rent. If you are thinking of not paying your rent for any reason please seek advice from the Housing Support Team prior to doing so.

It is usual to find clauses that outline both your responsibilities (e.g. looking after the property/ noise considerations) and the landlord's (repairs/ notice to enter the house). Check this through; if you are unhappy speak to a member of staff in the Accommodation Office. You can always try to negotiate parts of the agreement but once you've signed on the dotted line it will be too late. Ensure you keep a copy of your contract for your records signed by both parties. If you do not understand all the terms in the tenancy agreement or you are concerned about unfair terms, like high penalty charges for late payment of rent, please seek advice from the Accommodation Office.

Rent

The average rent for shared accommodation is between £65 and £85 a week based on four students sharing.* The university would expect small rooms to be charged at the lower end of this scale. Negotiate if in doubt. In general, if you are asked to pay rent at the top end you should expect to have a high quality property with a communal lounge, shower and either a washing machine or plumbing for one. In the majority of houses rent should include the water rates, but you must check your contract thoroughly. If rent is 'inclusive' check which bills are actually included so you know exactly what you are responsible for. The rent period is likely to run from September through to early July and will cover the Christmas and Easter holidays. * **Allow £12 per week for bills.**

If you are struggling with your rent payments please contact the Accommodation Department for advice. Student Services also have a Student Finance Advice Team that is available to students throughout the year. You can contact a Student Finance Adviser on moneyadvice@glos.ac.uk or into any Helpzone to make an appointment.

Deposits

You should expect to have to pay approximately one month's rent as a deposit. Many landlords will ask for this once you accept a property as it sometimes acts as a holding fee for the summer period (your contract should confirm this). If you decide not to take up the tenancy you could forfeit the deposit at this stage. Once the tenancy begins the deposit is held as a bond against cleaning and damages. It is refundable at the end of the tenancy but could be withheld if any conditions of the agreement have not been met. Always obtain a receipt. From April 2007 all deposits held by landlords have to be put into a tenancy deposit scheme. Landlords should inform students which scheme they have used. You can find out more at www.communities.gov.uk/tenancydeposit and later in this booklet.

Some landlords may want to take the details of a guarantor from you. The guarantor is the landlords' insurance against tenant default. He/she pays the landlord if the tenant defaults and he/she pays the landlord his losses, expenses or damages where the tenant fails to carry out his obligations under the lease. The guarantor is contractually bound to accept these legal liabilities of the tenant and will be sued if they don't comply. The landlord may want to take references from the previous landlord to show that you were a good tenant, paid your rent on time and didn't cause damage to the property.

Inventory

An inventory is simply a list of all furniture and furnishings within the property and should describe the condition of everything in the property including the wall and floor coverings.

It is very important that an inventory is compiled, either by yourself or the landlord, as this will often be the only evidence of the condition of the property before you move in. If you want your deposit returned in full it is worth taking the time to complete an inventory.

Remember to make sure both parties sign it. It is advisable that groups check it jointly in communal areas.

When compiling an inventory it is essential that you:

- state the condition of every item within the property. If the inventory does not describe the condition of a particular article it will be useful for you to do so, we suggest using terminology such as: new, fair, poor, scratched, torn, stained, etc.
- back it up with photographic evidence, this can be crucial if a dispute occurs, note the gas and electric meter readings.
- get the landlord to agree to, and sign, the inventory.
- get an independent witness to sign the inventory if the landlord refuses to do so.

A copy of an inventory is available from the Accommodation Office on FCH Campus or you can download a PDF Inventory from the Accommodation website.

Retainers

We advise that registered landlords should only charge retainers to current tenants who reserve the same house for the following year. However, if you are a new student to a house and you choose to pay a retainer then it is your decision. A retainer is non-refundable.

Safety

Your safety is paramount to us and as such much of the registration criteria is geared towards this. Legally, all accommodation that is let must have any gas appliances tested annually. This has to be done by a Capita/Gas Safe registered gas engineer who will produce a safety certificate. As a tenant you have a right to request sight of this. The university also asks that all registered properties each have a report detailing the condition of the electrical installation. This has to be carried out by a qualified electrician. What's more, there should be a fire blanket in each kitchen and a minimum of two mains interconnected smoke detectors. Some larger properties will have a fully integrated fire safety system. You must inform us if any of these items are not in place.

Standard of Accommodation

When landlords register with us, as well as meeting the criteria, we recommend they provide accommodation to the following minimum standards:

- Accommodation to be in good decorative order throughout
- Single study bedrooms to be furnished with bed (including clean mattress), wardrobe, drawer space, desk and chair, shelving
- Kitchens to have cooker, fridge/freezer, adequate cupboards and work surface, and where possible plumbing for/or a washing machine
- Communal room
- Suitable heating appliance in each room.

If you view a property which does not meet the above standards, do not take the room and inform the university if the property is registered.

Insurance

Landlords are responsible for insuring the building and any contents that they supply. This will not cover your personal possessions. It is your responsibility to ensure that your own belongings are insured. We would advise that you do this prior to moving into your accommodation.

Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

Since 6 April 2006, landlords must obtain a licence from the local council if they are renting out property that is three storeys or more AND where there are five or more occupiers sharing facilities. Landlords must also demonstrate that they are fit and proper persons to manage the property and ensure that the property is free of hazards which may threaten the health and safety of their tenants.

Before you decide to accept a property which is an HMO it is in your best interests to check that the landlord has applied for or has been issued with a licence and their property complies with legislation.

Landlords can be fined up to a maximum of £20,000 if they fail to apply for a licence for a property that needs one

Your Tenancy - After you move in

Bills

Unless the cost of utilities is included in your rent, everyone should expect to pay for gas, electricity and telephone charges. You must ensure all gas and electricity meters are read when you first move into your accommodation. The appropriate utility company must then be notified and should be given the meter reading, your move in date and names that the bill can be put into. Remember you are jointly responsible for the costs incurred. Under no circumstance should one person take on the responsibility of every utility.

Please remember it is just as important to read meters when you vacate a house and pass this information on to your supplier in order for them to produce a closing bill. You do not want to end up paying for someone else's usage!

TV Licence

Remember that you will need to buy a TV licence if using a television. Whether you need a separate licence for each room will depend on whether you have a sole or joint tenancy. See the TV licensing website: www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Rent

There are a variety of ways that your landlord may collect the rent, including monthly or termly direct debits, post dated cheques or cash. Establish how the rent will be collected at the start of the tenancy and plan accordingly. If paying cash you must ensure you receive a receipt from your landlord.

Repairs

You may experience problems with repairs in your home and it is important to be aware of what action you should take and what you can expect the landlord to do:

Tenant's Responsibilities -

As the tenant, you have a duty to use the property in a proper manner and to take proper care of it. You will also be responsible for minor repairs, such as replacing light bulbs, unblocking sinks and keeping the place clean. If you have a garden you may be responsible for maintaining it – is equipment provided?

If you become aware of any repair or maintenance issues, **you should notify the landlord in writing and keep copies of any correspondence**. If it is an emergency, ring the landlord, but follow up your call with a letter. Your landlord should have a reasonable time to arrange for the repair to be carried out and may require access to the property. If you are not sure if your landlord is being reasonable, please seek advice.

Landlords' Responsibilities -

Landlords have certain responsibilities to maintain the property. A landlord is required to keep in good repair:

- The structure and exterior of the property
- Installations for the supply of water, gas and electricity
- Installation for hot water and heating.

This legislation has been further reinforced by the introduction of the Housing Act 2004.

Problems during and after the tenancy

Various issues can arise when living in a rented property from lack of heating to damp issues. The key rules to follow are to report things straight away, remember to put things in writing as soon as possible to the landlord and seek advice from the Accommodation Office. Housing Support Advisers can often mediate when problems occur and will be able to offer further advice and details of outside contacts should you need them.

Living in the Community

Living off campus is very different from living in Halls of Residence. The University works hard at maintaining good relationships with local residents and we expect students to fully cooperate in helping to improve this.

As such we recommend the following:

- Call round and introduce yourselves to your immediate neighbours. Ascertain whether they have young children; encourage them to contact you in the first instance if they ever have any concerns about noise levels.
- Wherever you live you will have weekly/bi weekly collections of household refuse; check the day that your collection is due using the council website or ask your neighbours. Ensure you that you only put your household refuse out on collection day as split bags will attract vermin. In some areas you will need to put household refuse into a bin that has been provided by the council otherwise your refuse will not be collected. Take pride in the area, call Cheltenham Borough Council on 01242 262626 or Gloucester City Council on 01452 522232. Keep any garden area clear of litter.

- Keep noise levels down especially after 11.00pm, remember to be considerate when going home late at night, don't slam car doors, don't sing and please watch your language.
- Take particular care if coming home from a late night club or party. The university takes grievances of this nature very seriously and all of our landlords are encouraged to notify us if they receive continual complaints.

All students would have a copy of the Student Charter and Code of Conduct when they first arrive. It is important students read these documents and are aware of the university's expectations of its students. If a complaint is made by a resident the university has policies and procedures it must follow.

Council Tax

Full-time students can claim exemption from Council Tax. It is your responsibility to contact your local Council and advise them that the property is occupied by students and exempt from Council Tax. This needs to be done at the start of each academic year. Evidence of being a full time student can be provided in the form of a print-out of your certificate of enrolment.

If you experience any problems contact our Student Records department on **01242 714079**.

Contact Cheltenham Borough Council on **01242 264161** or Gloucester City Council on **01452 396495** for further information.

Your Tenancy - When you move out

Before you move out there are certain things you should do to avoid losing your deposit and to ensure you are not charged for amenities you are no longer using.

Cleaning

Before you move out and return your keys to the landlord or agent make sure you have cleaned the property thoroughly. Deposits are often withheld because the property has been left in a poor state. You can check with the letting agent or landlord about what is expected of you before you leave.

We suggest that you at least ensure the following is carried out:

- Clean the cooker, including shelves, doors, grill pan and oven
- Clean microwave if provided
- Clean surfaces in kitchen and throughout the property
- Clean and wash down all hard floor surfaces or vacuum everywhere including under your bed
- Clean all bathroom fittings, including the toilet, bath and shower
- Throw away any unwanted food, defrost and clean the fridge, leave unplugged with the door open or as specified by the landlord
- Tidy up the garden and make sure that rubbish is not left lying around
- Clean the windows
- If walls are marked you must ensure they are washed down and if necessary, repainted with the same colour
- Check your tenancy agreement to ensure there is no specific cleaning that should be done before you leave ie shampoo the carpets

Meters

Take meter readings on the day you leave and inform the companies, giving them an address they can send a closing bill to.

Post

If you are not returning to the property please make sure you set up a mail redirection service with the Post Office.

Logon to www.postoffice.co.uk to setup a redirection online.

- The service is available for periods of one, three, six or 12 months
- Redirect to any UK or overseas address
- Renew up to a maximum of two years
- Convenient and a secure way of applying online for home movers
- Prices from as little as £7.65 for one month

Re-directing your mail not only saves you, your landlord and new tenants time and hassle but also protects you from Identity Fraud.

The Home Office Identity Fraud Steering Committee recommends that to reduce the risk of identity fraud when you move, use Royal Mail's Redirection Service to direct your mail from your old address to your new one for at least a year.

Deposits

You will need to find your Tenancy Deposit Scheme paperwork you received at the beginning of your tenancy and discuss how and when your deposit will be returned.

Health and Safety

Electrical Safety

The law relating to electrical safety is not as stringent as gas safety but your landlord is responsible for maintaining electrical sockets, wiring and appliances.

An electrical safety inspection should be carried out by an electrician who should be compliant with current regulations BS7671.2001 or their work should be signed off by someone who is.

Fire Safety

There is a legal requirement for larger properties such as HMOs to have a smoke alarm system, fire doors and emergency lighting. The local council is responsible for inspecting HMOs to ensure that they comply with fire safety regulations, but not all properties will have been visited. If you have any concerns about fire safety in your property, contact your local council. All properties on the university list must have mains connected smoke detectors.

Gas Safety

Landlords are required by law to ensure that gas appliances, such as cookers and boilers, are checked for safety every 12 months by a registered Capita/Gas Safe installer. You can check if the installers are registered with Capita by contacting them on 0800 408550. The landlord must keep a copy of the Capita/Gas Safe inspections and should give you a copy of the gas safety certificate within 28 days of the check being carried out. By law the gas engineer must be on the Gas Safe register: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless, poisonous gas. Every year approximately 20 people die from CO poisoning caused by gas appliances and flues that have not been properly installed or maintained.

Make sure that there is a carbon monoxide detector – if there isn't one already in place then we suggest you buy one with an audible alarm.

Although carbon monoxide (CO) is a colourless, odourless gas, there are signs you can look out for.

These include:

- Yellow or orange rather than blue flames (apart from fuel effect fires or flueless appliances which display this colour flame)
- Soot or yellow/brown staining around or on appliances
- Pilot lights that frequently blow out
- Increased condensation inside windows

It is important that you do not block up any air vents in rooms with gas appliances. For more information visit www.hse.gov.uk/gas/domestic

Symptoms of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning: Early symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning may easily be confused with flu or simple tiredness.

Symptoms to look out for include: Tiredness, drowsiness, headaches, nausea, breathlessness and pains in the chest or stomach. If you experience any of these symptoms and you believe CO may be involved, you must seek urgent medical advice. Your doctor will need to test you for a blood and breath sample.

Tenancy Deposit Scheme Explained

From 6 April 2007, when you pay a deposit, your landlord or agent must protect it using a government authorised tenancy deposit scheme.

Make sure you ask your landlord about it.

The Government wants to make sure your tenancy deposit is protected so that:

- You get all or part of your deposit back, when you are entitled to it
- Any disputes between you and your landlord or agent will be easier to resolve

Moving in

At the beginning of a new tenancy agreement, pay your deposit to your landlord or agent as usual. Within 14 days, the landlord or agent is required to give you details about how your deposit is protected including:

- The contact details of the tenancy deposit scheme
- The contact details of the landlord or agent
- How to apply for the release of the deposit
- Information explaining the purpose of the deposit
- What to do if there is a dispute about the deposit

If you don't get this information, ask your landlord or agent the simple question—'**how is my deposit protected?**'

Safeguarding your deposit

You have a responsibility to return the property in the same condition that it was let to you, allowing for fair wear and tear, so it is a good idea to make sure that when you sign your tenancy agreement, you:

- Keep a detailed list of contents (furniture and fittings)
- Record the condition of the property and its contents (photographs are a good idea)
- Check the circumstances in which your landlord or agent could have a claim on your deposit

Who are the organisations running the schemes?

The three Tenancy Deposit Schemes are:

My Deposits:

www.mydeposits.co.uk, 08449 800 290

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme:

www.thedisputeservice.co.uk, 0845 226 7837

The Deposit Protection Service:

www.depositprotection.com, 0844 412 7000

Ask your landlord which scheme is protecting your deposit.

What should you do if your landlord or agent hasn't protected your deposit?

Firstly seek advice from your local Citizen's Advice Bureau. They may then tell you to apply to your local county court. The court can order the landlord or agent to either repay the deposit to you or protect it in a scheme. If your landlord or agent has not protected your deposit, they will be ordered to repay three times the amount of the deposit to you.

Moving out

At the end of the tenancy, check whether you are leaving the property and its contents in the condition in which it was handed over to you—allowing for fair wear and tear—and check that you have paid your rent and any other expenses. Then agree with your landlord or agent how much of the deposit should be returned to you.

Within 14 days you should have received the agreed amount of the deposit.

Resolving disputes

When you move out, if you and your landlord or agent can't agree how much of your deposit should be returned, there will be a free service offered by the scheme protecting your deposit to help resolve your dispute. Check the information your landlord or agent gave you at the beginning of your tenancy for details.

Your landlord cannot give notice that he is repossessing the property at the end of the tenancy until he has protected the deposit and told you how it is protected.

For further advice and information please contact the Accommodation Office on 01242 715322.

Safe as Houses Information

Safe as Houses

Student Services have teamed up with your Students' Union to inform students about the security risks they may face within their halls of residence and homes.

Students are, statistically, one of the most likely groups to fall victim of crime, owning more expensive consumer goods per head than the rest of the population. It is no surprise then that one in three students become the victim of a crime each year. Added to that fact, young people (aged 16 to 24 years old) are around three times more likely to be victims of burglary than people in other age groups, which makes students all the more vulnerable.

If you are worried ask your landlord to help you with extra locks or improvements to windows. Don't settle for second best. If you live in a house with up to seven other students the chances are that it is very tempting for a burglar to know that they can walk through your place like a PC World showroom.

Gloucestershire is a relatively safe county but with any area, you should be aware of your surroundings and take extra care when travelling alone or at night. These tips are not just for women, men are just as likely to be victims of crime:

- Avoid walking home on your own through unsafe/unlit areas
- If you go out in a group, return in a group - make sure you look out for each other
- Never get into an unmarked or unlicensed minicab
- Make sure you look after your belongings and keep them with you at all times
- Walking whilst on the phone, or listening to an MP3 player means you are less aware of your surroundings
- If you are a victim of crime, make sure you report it to the police

Listen to your instincts; if you feel in any way nervous, uncomfortable or vulnerable then don't ignore it. You should never feel coerced or pressured into doing something that you don't want to; whether it be sex, alcohol, drugs or crime.

Read the simple tips below and stay safe.

Top safety tips

Don't be a statistic. Staying safe is all about following a few common-sense guidelines. Read the following tips, which could make all the difference:

Private accommodation:

- When choosing a house, if possible, select one with strong doors which has good quality locks on doors and ground floor windows
- Burglar alarms and security lighting also act as deterrents
- Leave a light or radio on when going out to give the impression that someone is in the property
- During the Christmas, Easter and summer vacations take all items of value home with you
- Don't leave spare keys outside or in a garage or shed
- Make sure you have your belongings insured
- Do not let people into your property without first checking who they are. All official bodies will carry full identification so ask to see identification cards and call the appropriate department if you remain unsure. If in doubt don't let anyone into your property
- Be vigilant when using your mobile phone - if your phone is stolen, call your network or 0870 112 3123 to immobilise it
- Protect yourself with insurance - keep lists of the make, model and serial numbers of your electronic items to help police track them down if they are stolen. Try and get into a good routine of securing your house every time you go out even if it's only for five minutes.

Bicycle Crime

Over 100,000 bicycles are reported stolen every year. They are a popular target for thieves because they can easily be sold.

- Get your bike frame marked with your postcode and stick on a coded cycle sticker as a visual deterrent
- Always lock your bike to something solid, preferably a purpose built cycle rack
- If you have quick release wheels, take off the front wheel and lock it to the frame and back wheel
- Remove smaller parts and accessories, especially lights, pumps and quick release saddles
- Record all your bike's details including a photograph. These will assist the police, who may be able to match them to recovered bicycles.
- Your wheels - it may be difficult to protect your car or bike from a determined professional thief, but most vehicle crime is opportunist and you can put them off with vigilance and relatively cheap security precautions.

What do I do if I have been burgled?

- Call the police.
- When they come round make sure they give you a crime reference number as you will need this for your insurance claim
- Do not move anything or tidy up until after the police have been
- Contact your landlord to secure the property if forced entry has been used
- If you live in private accommodation inform the Accommodation Office so they can check everything is sorted out appropriately.

If you do become a victim of crime there are people around to offer advice, guidance and support.

Please see the list below:

Student Services

www.glos.ac.uk/studentservices

Counselling - 01242 714536

counselling@glos.ac.uk

Chaplaincy - 01242 714593

chaplaincy@glos.ac.uk

General Welfare - 01242 714542

studentservices@glos.ac.uk

Medical Centre - 01242 714400

www.underwoodsurgery.co.uk

Victim Support

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Useful Links and numbers for further information

Home Office:

www.nusonline.co.uk

Crime & Victims

www.studentuk.com

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime-victims

www.need2know.co.uk

Crime Reduction - 01452 396984

www.crimereduction.gov.uk

Police - 999

Non-emergency - 0845 090 1234

www.gloucestershire.police.uk/contact

Crime Stoppers - 0800 555 111

www.crimestoppers.co.uk

General

www.good2bsecure.gov.uk

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I get hold of the housing list?

You need to go online to www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation to see the list and details of each property.

Is there enough registered housing for all students?

There are over 400 properties of varying sizes on the registered housing list. The majority of students find housing through the list.

Are there houses for large groups?

The typical house size in Cheltenham and Gloucester is four-five. There are a small number of houses for six-nine students. More than nine is unusual.

What should I look out for when viewing a property?

See the Accommodation Housing Check List at the back of this booklet.

Can students find property not on the registered housing list?

Yes, there are Letting Agents in Cheltenham and Gloucester that rent properties to students, however, the university does not endorse any Letting Agents and would urge students to try and find property from the registered housing list first.

If I don't have a property on the registered housing list, can I still seek advice on matters?

Yes, the Accommodation Office is open to all students. We will give advice on any housing matter whether you are in registered housing or not. We are however, limited by what we can do to help if you are not in a property that is registered.

Can I leave the property half way through the year if I am not happy?

When you move into a property you sign a contract. That contract is normally for the academic year and it is legally binding. Your landlord may however, let you out of the contract if you find another person to replace you. You would need to speak to your landlord in the first instance to clarify the situation.

How and when do I get my deposit back?

Your landlord will keep your deposit in a scheme, which means it will be kept safe. Your deposit will be returned to you once the landlord is happy with the state of the property.

If he/she is not, then a discussion would have to take place as to how much you will receive back. You can seek advice from the Accommodation Office if you are not happy with the outcome. See section on Tenancy Deposit Scheme in this booklet.

What do I do if I want to leave university?

If you have signed a contract you will still be liable for the rent of your property for the stated time. You would need to inform your landlord of your departure and they may agree to release you from the contract if you find a suitable replacement. This would need to be discussed in advance though with your landlord.

Can I stay on in the property for a further year if I want to?

If you have looked after the property most landlords will rent the property to you for a further year. You will however, need to speak to your landlord in advance to ensure he/she hasn't let it to anyone else in the meantime. You will need to speak to your landlord with regards to deposits and an increase of rent for the forthcoming year.

What do I do if I have a dispute with my landlord?

We would always urge you to try and resolve the dispute between yourselves before involving a third party. However, if you find you are not resolving the problem then you can get in touch with the Accommodation Office for advice. You can ask for advice at any time from the Accommodation Office and we will be more than willing to help you out.

Are there houses that accommodate only couples?

Yes, we do have a limited number of houses that are suitable for couples. This information will be advertised on the housing list.

Can my landlord enter the property at any time?

You are entitled to have 'quiet enjoyment' of the property. This means, for example, that your landlord should give you reasonable (normally 24 hours minimum) notice (unless it is an emergency) before entering the property. Your landlord should not let himself (or any agents acting for him - this includes builders) into your home, without having your express permission first. You also have the right to request to be in attendance at any visit your landlord (or agent) makes to the property. Please check what is written in your tenancy agreement.

I am living in a house with a group of friends I met in halls. I now feel I have made a mistake and want to leave, what can I do?

Check your tenancy agreement, you will probably find that you have an assured shorthold tenancy agreement and are tied into it for a fixed term, eg six months, 12 months or an academic year. It may say that you can leave if you find a suitable replacement. If the property is registered with the university, we can advertise the space for you, if not we can advise and assist you.

We have several maintenance issues in our property. We have told the owner on several occasions but nothing has happened, what can we do?

Ensure you put it in writing to the owner and give them a deadline, be realistic! It is important that this is done; otherwise it is your word against theirs. Hopefully, it will never have to go to court but if it did you need to have evidence.

My landlord has not carried out maintenance issues that we have asked to be done; he keeps promising but nothing is done. I have decided I am not going to pay my rent.

It is not a good idea to withhold rent, as this could go against you, now and in the future. We would advise that you get legal advice.

Our house is very damp and the owner is doing nothing about it, there are black spots all over the bathroom, it's disgusting, what should we do?

Are you ventilating the house after showers/baths? Are you opening the windows or putting the fan on? You also need to ensure you open windows in bedrooms, only when you are in! Clean off any marks that are there, if the problem persists contact your landlord.

Jargon Buster and Useful Contacts

Arrears

This relates to late rent payment or failure to pay rent on the specified date agreed in your tenancy agreement.

Assured Shorthold Tenancies (ASTs)

These are tenancies created after 28 February 1997. ASTs apply to a property for which you pay rent and where your landlord does not reside.

Break-clause

This relates to a term in your tenancy agreement allowing both parties to end the tenancy before the due date. Although this may be beneficial to the tenant, ending a tenancy early has to be agreed by the landlord.

Eviction

This can be a complex area in which a landlord can request through the courts to have an order directing a tenant to leave the landlord's premises. There are specific procedures that need to be followed before a tenant can be evicted and trying to evict someone illegally is protected by law under the Prevention from Eviction Act.

HMO

Houses of Multiple Occupation are categorised as houses which have five bedrooms AND go across three floors. These properties require a licence to be issued by the council to landlords and are subject to HHSRS checks.

Inventory

An inventory is a detailed list produced by the landlord, who states the condition and age of various items in the rental property such as cookers, chairs and carpets. It should also list items which are present, even down to the number of hooks on the walls. The inventory is an important way of clarifying at the end of the tenancy whether any items have been damaged or are missing.

Joint tenancy agreement

If all the students living in the property sign one agreement with the landlord at the time of moving in, this forms a joint tenancy agreement. All the tenants have exactly the same rights and are all equally responsible for paying the rent and keeping to the terms of the agreement. If one tenant is not paying the rent or causing other problems you could end up having to pay her/his share, or any other costs.

Landlord

The person who has the legal right to let the property. Landlords also collect rent for the property and are responsible for ensuring that the property is in working order.

Letting Agents

These act on behalf of the landlord and can have responsibility for collecting rent, dealing with repairs as well as undertaking reference checks and regular maintenance checks.

Notice

This is the amount of time that your landlord gives you or that you give before ending a tenancy. Landlords normally have to give two months and tenants one month. However, this can vary dependent on the condition of the tenancy agreement and therefore it is important to seek advice if you are unsure.

Private Sector

This consists of housing which is owned by private landlords.

Tenancy

Private tenants are given an agreement by the landlord (usually in writing) to confirm the tenant's rights and responsibilities to the property whilst it is being let.

Tenancy Deposit Scheme

This came in to affect in April 2007 and is relevant to any tenancy agreement that was entered into after this point. The scheme places your security deposit either in the hands of a third party insurer (known as the custodial scheme) or it is initially held by the landlord who insures the deposit. In case of dispute the deposit is handed over to a third party until the dispute is resolved (this is known as the insurance-based scheme).

Wear and tear

During a tenancy, the condition of a property is likely to change as tenants make 'reasonable use of the premises', for example, wear to the carpets in rooms. Most landlords will not make a charge to the tenant for fair wear and tear. This is however, distinguished from excessive wear and tear, for example, where the tenant has caused cigarette burns in the carpet. Compensation from the tenant in these circumstances will be sought by the landlord.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Cheltenham Borough Council, General Enquiries - 01242 262626 www.cheltenham.gov.uk

Gloucester City Council, General Enquiries - 01452 522232 www.gloucester.gov.uk

Housing Enforcement CBC - 01242 775011

Environmental Health CBC - 01242 775020

Environmental Health GC - 01452 396396

Council Tax CBC - 01242 264161
counciltax@cheltenham.gov.uk

Council Tax GCC - 01452 396495
revenues@gloucester.gov.uk

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Cheltenham - 01242 522491 or advice@cheltenhamcab.org.uk
14, Royal Crescent, Cheltenham GL50 3DA
www.cheltenhamcab.co.uk
Gloucester - General enquires 01452 527202
Advice line 01452 528017
75-81 Eastgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1PN
www.gloucestercab.org.uk

National Housing Advice helpline - 0808 800 4444

Shelter - www.shelter.org.uk

Grapevine (advice for 14-25 year olds)

Cheltenham - 01242 269503
Gloucester - 01452 500080
www.glosgrapevine.co.uk

Glofysh (works with young people with housing problems) - 01452 381650 or glofysh@hotmail.com

TV Licence - 0844 800 6790 www.tvlicensing.co.uk

SU Solicitor (Hughes Paddison) - 01242 574244

Police Non Emergency General Enquiry - 0845 0901234

Student Services at the University of Gloucestershire
- 01242 714542

TRANSCO (Gas Emergencies) - 0800 111 999

House Viewing Checklist

Accommodation Check List

When visiting a potential property to live in it is important to note if the property has a number of internal and external safety and practical features so you can have a safe and enjoyable time in your new house.

Below is a list of points to look out for when viewing the property. Check off which points the house has so you can compare the different houses you view. Please note that you will not be able to check off all the points on the list for each property as they are all different. This does not mean they are bad properties it is just worth bearing the points in mind.

External Features	HOUSE 1		HOUSE 1		HOUSE 3	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Are there any slipped or broken tiles / pavements?						
Is there any rotten timber, especially around the window frames and doors?						
Is any guttering broken?						
Are any of the external walls crumbling or cracked?						
Is there adequate storage space for rubbish?						
Has the property got a yard or garden; who is responsible for the maintenance of this?						
General Condition & Suitability						
Is the house size adequate for the number of people expected to live in it?						
Is the heating equipment suitable for the size of house?						
Is the heating in good working order?						
Is the heating going to be expensive to run?						
Is the heating system safe, have you seen a CAPITA/Gas Safe certificate?						
Do all the windows open, providing good ventilation?						
Are there extractor fans in the kitchen and bathroom? (Poor ventilation can lead to condensation)						
Are all the soft furnishings suitable (curtains, sofas, furniture etc)?						
Does all the furniture comply with the 1988 fire regulations?						
Note all faults and keep a record (inventory), send a copy to your landlord, so you can't be charged at a later date, take photographs as proof.						
Bathroom and Toilet Facilities						
Are there enough facilities for the number of people expected live in the property? There should be a minimum of one bathroom to five people.						
Is the bathroom clean and in good working order?						
Do any of the taps drip?						
Is there a plug for each sink outlet?						

Kitchen	HOUSE 1		HOUSE 1		HOUSE 3	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Is the kitchen big enough for the number expected to cook and store food in it?						
Is there a microwave and washing machine included in the contract?						
Are any pots, pans and utensils provided?						
Living / Communal Areas						
Is there an adequate heating source in the rooms?						
Are the soft furnishings adequate?						
Is the carpet in good condition and chairs securely fixed?						
Fire Safety						
As a minimum halls and landings should have regularly tested single point smoke detectors, are these in situ?						
In larger properties you should be looking for fire doors and hardwired smoke/heat detectors fitted in all rooms. Are these in situ?						
Gas Safety						
Have you seen a copy of a CAPITA/Gas Safe certificate?						
Security						
Are all door and window fittings securely fitted and do the keys turn easily in the locks?						
Do you know how to operate the alarm system if the property has one fitted?						

Common Sense

It makes good sense to make sure doors and windows are closed and locked when you leave the building. If you are in a large building you may not know if someone comes in the front or back door, so take precautions. You are responsible for the safety of yourself and your belongings. Don't make life easy for a thief.

For further information about staying safe either contact Student Services on **studentservices@glos.ac.uk** or your Students' Union at **www.yourstudentsunion.com**

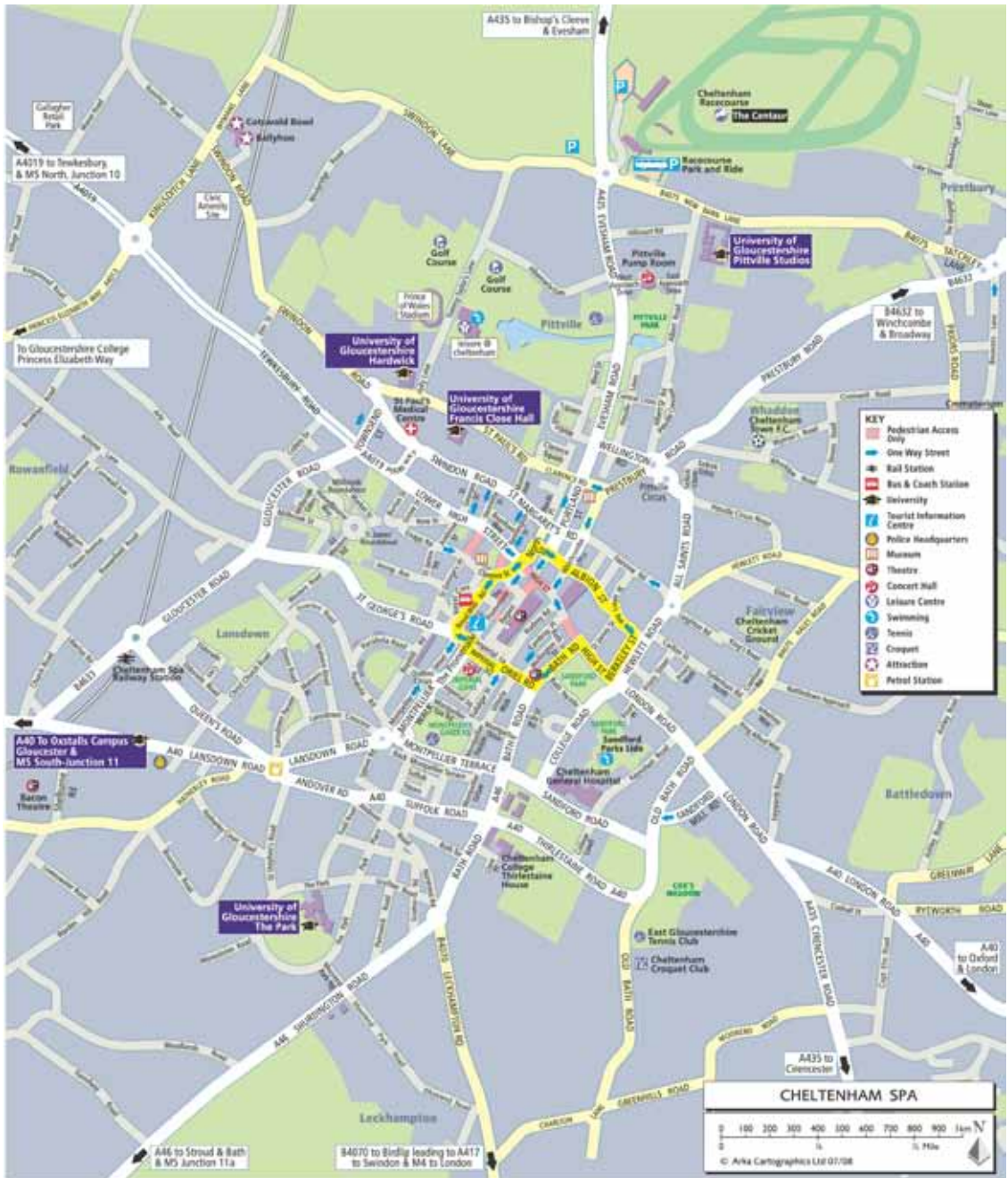
University of Gloucestershire
Accommodation Office, Bodley Building
Francis Close Hall, Swindon Road
Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL50 4AZ

Tel: **01242 714544** Fax: **01242 714838**

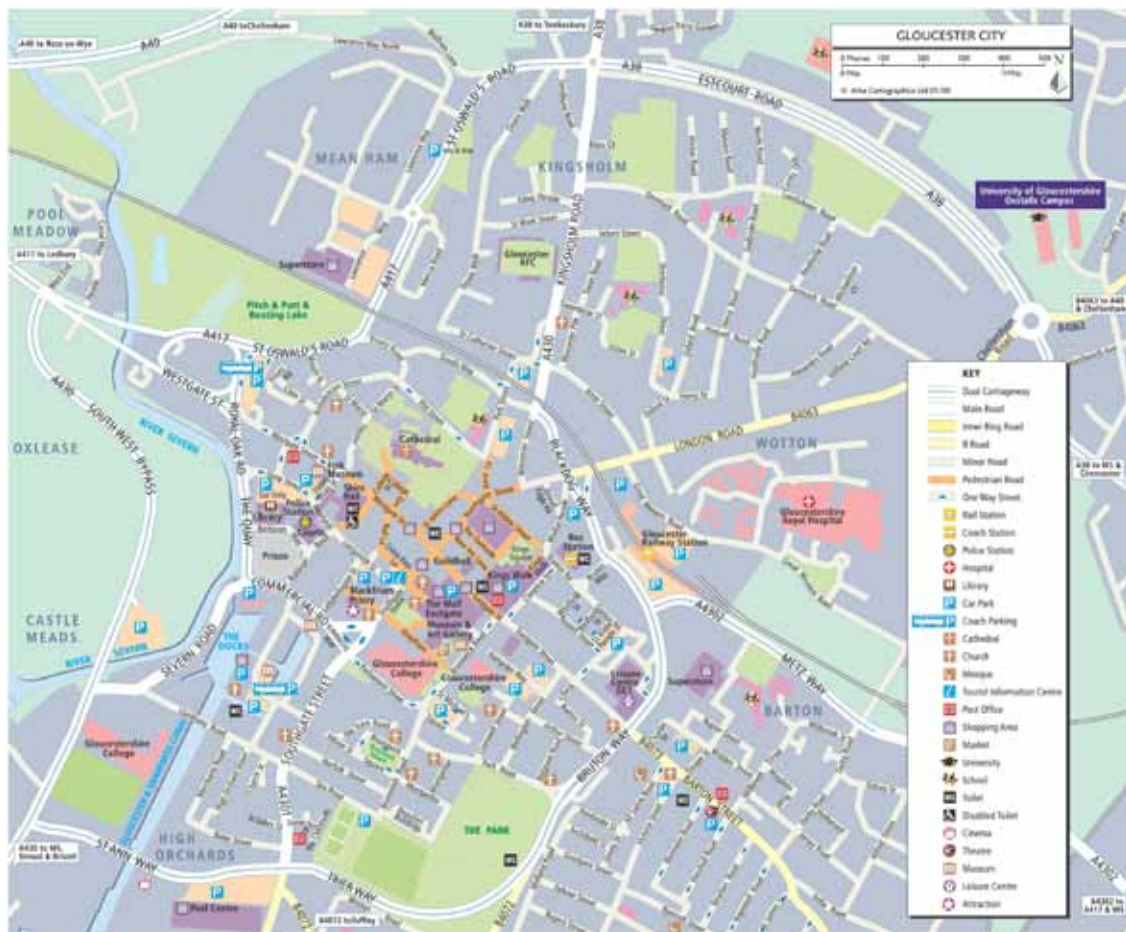
Email: **housingssupport@glos.ac.uk**

www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation

Cheltenham Campus Locations



Gloucester Campus Location



Housing Support Team
Accommodation Office
Bodley Building
Francis Close Hall
Swindon Road
Cheltenham
GL50 4AZ

Telephone **01242 715322**
Email **housingsupport@glos.ac.uk**
Website **www.glos.ac.uk/accommodation**
www.glos.ac.uk/student-services

