

The Advice Hub

House Hunting Starter Guide

Strathclyde Students' Union

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Pros & Cons

There are several different types of accommodation that you can consider when making a decision on where to live as you study at Strathclyde.

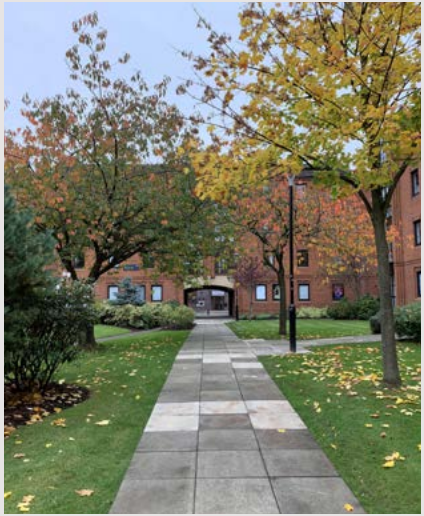
This booklet lays out some of the different types, the pros and cons of each one, as well as some information to get you started on searching and your rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

This is just information to guide you! As The Advice Hub is an independent service we do not promote or vouch for any of the external sites or agencies listed. You are recommended to do your own research into any organisation you choose to take up a contract or tenancy with and what you are agreeing to when you sign.

There are 3 main types of accommodation:

- University Halls
- Private Student Accommodation / Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSAs)
- Private Rented (either directly through a landlord or through a letting agency)







University Halls

- Run by the University
- Secure, easy to deal with problems
- Close to campus
- Only other Strathclyde students as residents
- You are allowed to pay in instalments
- No UK-based guarantor needed
- Accommodation for single occupants only
- UoS has accommodation for postgraduate students only
- Usually 50 week contracts available for PG students, 39 weeks for UG
- Contracts are fixed and you are liable for rent for full duration, even if you leave early
- Can be more expensive than private rented flats, but bills are included
- Care experienced students are guaranteed accommodation all year, including summer
- No deposit required

You can find more info at:

www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/accommodation

Private Student Accommodation

- Similar to University Halls but run by private companies
- You are allowed to pay in instalments with some providers
- Usually good condition/high spec accommodation
- Shared flats and studios available
- Accommodation for single occupants only
- Usually no UK-based guarantor needed
- Usually less than 52 week contract
- Usually more expensive than Private Rent / Uni Halls
- Contracts are fixed and you are liable for rent for full duration even if you leave early
- Care experienced students can apply for a Unite Foundation scholarship ,which provides 3 years free accommodation in Unite halls

There are a number of companies that offer private student accommodation in Glasgow. As with any accommodation, we always recommend visiting the property in advance and reading terms and conditions thoroughly to ensure that you make an informed decision.

Canvas
Fresh Student Living
Hello Student
Homes for Students
IQ Student Living
Nido Student
Prestige
Primo Property Management
Student Roost
Unite
Xenia Students

Search Engines for Private Student Accommodation:

My Student Halls
Accommodation For Students

Private Rent

(Landlord or Letting Agency)

- Usually cheaper than halls
- Maintenance may not be as regular or quick
- UK Guarantor is needed, or paying a significant amount of money up front (up to 6 months' rent in advance, though this may be negotiable)
- Letting agencies and landlords cannot charge you any other fees, just rent and deposit
- Renting through a letting agency can be a good option for those who wish to verify authenticity of a listing through a third party
- Deposit must be in a deposit scheme such as Safe Deposit Scotland; your landlord should arrange this and provide you with a reference number
- Never give any money until you have seen the flat yourself or someone you trust has seen it
- Don't pay in cash; bank transfers from and to a UK bank account will be more secure and traceable
- In most circumstances landlords must be registered and you can check this out on the Scottish Landlord Register

Info on private rent flats

The Advice Hub is an independent, unbiased service so we cannot recommend any individual letting agency, service or website. However, we know that many students use the websites below to search for accommodation.

BEWARE - Rental scams targeting students are common, so be cautious when looking at adverts online. Look to our Safety & Rights webpage for info on how to spot scams.



Websites to search for flats and rooms:

To find a whole flat:

Right Move
Zoopla
Gumtree
City Lets
S1 Homes
Letting Web

To find a flatmate or a room:

Spare Room
Gumtree
Flatshare
Rooms for Let

Strathclyde students are often posting adverts for flats or looking for other people to move in with on a variety of Facebook pages and groups. Try searching on Facebook for Overheard Strathclyde or one of the many groups for different departments, courses, or interests for Strathclyde students.

- If the person searching for a flatmate also owns the property then they are called a 'residential landlord.' This type of tenancy is unique and you can find out more by visiting Shelter Scotland's webpage on 'sharing with your landlord.'

Guarantor Information

Many private rented flats require a UK-based guarantor. This is someone that signs a contract to say that if you do not pay the rent then they will be liable to do so instead. If you do not have someone you know in the UK (usually a family member, but anyone who can demonstrate that they have a regular income will usually be accepted) who is acceptable as a guarantor, you can usually alternatively make an arrangement to pay more rent up front (usually 6 months' worth, but this may be open to negotiation).

There are a number of companies that offer a paid guarantor service, but please be aware that the costs of this service can be high:

Housing Hand
Rent Guarantor
Homeppl

Estate Agents

Renting through a reputable Estate Agent or Letting Agent can be a good option. They are more likely to know and stick to the rules and regulations around private renting and can help you to look for places within your preferred area and price range. They essentially act as a middle man between you and the landlord which means that rents can be slightly higher than if you are just dealing with the landlord directly. It is illegal in Scotland for a letting agent to charge you any kind of fee. They can only ask for a deposit and rent. There are loads of letting/estate agents out there so a top tip is to search for reviews online first.

Social Housing

Social housing is an umbrella term referring to rental housing which may be owned and managed by local councils, by non-profit organisations, or by a combination of the two, usually with the aim of providing affordable housing.

You may be eligible if you are on a low income, have a disability, or have children or caring responsibilities for someone who lives with you. In Glasgow, social housing is provided through housing associations and you would need to apply directly to each association to be considered.

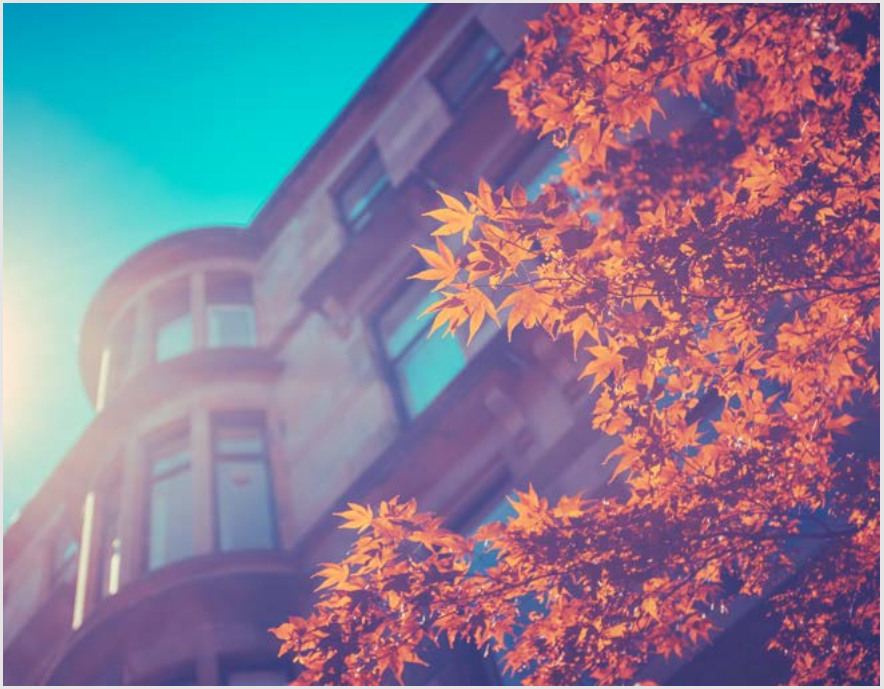
Glasgow has many housing associations, such as the Wheatley Group, who manage a number of associations, and Southside Housing Association.

Choose your flatmates wisely!



Sharing a flat while you are at university is a great way to keep costs down and have a great time, and most students get a lot out of it; but if you fall out with your flatmates it can cause a lot of problems. Try and have conversations with your flatmates before you move in together about the way you want to live. This should include topics such as your tolerance for mess, whether you will be making noise late at night or in the morning, what you can afford, and how you will organise and share the work of finding your flat and keeping it going.

Just because you are good friends does not mean that you will be good flatmates! You can be best friends but if you need everything super clean and your flatmate is very messy it can cause big tensions and fallings out. It is important to recognise that renting a flat together is a legal commitment to each other. In order to end the contract, you will all need to end it together, so it is also worth discussing and agreeing your expectations for when you will leave the flat.



When to look?

Many students want to try and sort out their flats for the next year really early, but it is unlikely that anything will be available if you start looking too early. You will not normally be able to find anything advertised until 2-3 months before you are planning to move in, and many flats will be available at shorter notice than this. The normal notice period for people leaving flats in Scotland is a month, so most flats will only become available in the month before you are due to move in. Waiting longer to look for a flat also allows you to get to know your flatmates better, and make sure that you are making the right decision moving in together.

Top ten tips for renting privately

1

Landlord Registration

In Scotland, all private landlords must be registered unless they are residential landlords, i.e., they live in the property that they are renting.

It is an offence for a private landlord not to be registered and can carry a significant fine. Never move into a property which does not have a registered private landlord unless they are exempt. You can check if your potential landlord is registered by searching the Scottish Landlord Register.

2

HMO

In Scotland, any property in which three or more unrelated people are living needs a HMO (House in Multiple Occupancy) licence. Ask any potential landlord about this licence or check with the local council, as it means that the property has had things like the proper fire safety checks done, so it is really important. It is a criminal offence for a landlord not to have a HMO licence and can carry a fine for them of up to £50,000.

3

Photos & Inventory

When you move into a new flat the first thing you should do is check your inventory (provided by the landlord/letting agent) and take clear, dated and detailed photos of the flat – especially any areas of disrepair or damage. You should then send a copy of these to your landlord/letting agent. This is vital as, if there are any problems further down the line, you now have proof to show the state of repair when you moved in.

4

Deposit Schemes

Unless you are moving in with a resident landlord, all deposits in Scotland need to be registered in a deposit protection scheme. In Scotland there are three schemes: My Deposits Scotland, Safe Deposits Scotland and Letting Protection Service Scotland. They are independent organisations that hold your deposit so if there are any problems with charges or returning the money at the end of your tenancy they can review the case objectively. Your landlord needs to register your deposit within 30 days of you giving them the money and provide you with a reference number.

5

Flatmate Drama

Living with new people can be really exciting, but it can also be frustrating. Not everyone thinks the same way about mess or cleaning. To avoid getting into big arguments later it is a good idea to talk honesty with your flatmates when you move in together (or even before!), be upfront about how long you think it is acceptable to leave dishes in the sink, etc. Maybe come up with a cleaning rota or a kitty you all put into to pay for things like washing up liquid and toilet roll.

6

Tenancy Agreements

Read your tenancy agreement! Check it carefully to understand what your responsibilities are. Find out what type of tenancy you have and if it is joint or individual. This can have a big impact on your rights if any problems occur.

7

Tenancy Types

Unless you moved into your property before December 2017, all private tenants in Scotland must now be issued with a Private Residential Tenancy (PRT) agreement. Make sure you know your rights as a PRT tenant by checking out page 8 on Private Resident Tenancies.

If you are moving into a property with a residential landlord, this type of tenancy is different from a PRT and you may have less tenancy rights and you may want to contact us for specific advice!

8

Contents Insurance

Getting proper contents insurance may seem dull, but it's a much better option than having to replace all of your belongings out of your own pocket. Make sure to check the terms and conditions of any policy you take out. Endsleigh are a popular choice for insurance for students.

9

Trust Your Instincts

If a flat seems too good to be true or you are feeling pressured to hand over large sums of money then think twice. We have lots of useful info about avoiding housing scams on the Housing Problems webpage.

10

Ask For Help

The most important tip of all! If you have any housing or house hunting questions, want someone to look over your tenancy agreement, or can see a problem on the horizon then please come and speak to us! We are happy to advise on all housing issues and will do our best to point you in the right direction.

Areas in Glasgow

If you're a bit confused by the different areas in Glasgow, this might be help you understand where roughly different areas are.



Searching by postcode

The UK is divided into postal areas which are given a code.

For example:

- G is the code for the city of Glasgow and the surrounding area
- G1 covers part of the city centre
- G1 1XQ covers part of a street within the city centre

If you have the postcode of a property, you can use it to look up on Google Maps and see the area.

City Centre

This area is close to the University of Strathclyde and also cafés, bars, markets and night clubs. Not a lot of private accommodation available and, because of the location, it is usually of good quality and can be expensive. Areas within the city centre include the Merchant City (G1), Charing Cross (G2), Finnieston and Woodlands (G3), Cowcaddens & St Georges Cross (G4).

East End

The University is on the edge of this area and has a lot of affordable accommodation. Dennistoun (G31 & G38) is particularly popular with Strathclyde students.

West End

This area is popular with students from all over the city. It is very lively with lots of cafés, bars, interesting food shops & boutiques. Because of the competition for accommodation, rent may be higher than elsewhere (except possibly the city centre). Areas include Hyndland & Hillhead (G12), Partick &Thornwood (G11), and Jordanhill and Anniesland (G13).

South Side

This large area to the south of the River Clyde, is made up of many different types of suburbs, most of which are pleasant and have a variety of shops, bars & eating places. Accommodation is normally a reasonable price, particularly for those with families. Areas include Pollockshields & Shawlands (G41), Govanhill & Mount Florida (G42), Pollokshaws (G43), Cathcart (G44), Giffnock (G46), Kinning Park & Ibrox (G51 & G57), and Cardonald (G52).

Council Tax

Full-time students

All properties are charged council tax which is calculated on an annual basis, but most full-time students are exempt from paying this. You must apply to the council you live in for exemption.

Please note that council tax exemption applies to the individual, not to the whole property, so if you live with non or part-time students, there may still be council tax applied to the property as a whole. You should not be expected to contribute to this unless you have agreed this with your flatmates.

You must apply for council tax exemption on Pegasus each year.

Go to the 'Personal' tab and then in the 'Student Status' section you will be able to confirm your student status. There are two ways to do this:

Your council may accept electronic notification, but some require a stamped letter from the University. Ensure that you request the exemption on Pegasus and check with your council what they require.

Part-time students

Part-time students are not automatically exempt from paying council tax, but may be able to apply for a Council Tax Exemption directly from their council.

"I live with other people who aren't students..."

If you live with another person or other people who aren't students, they will have to pay Council Tax but you are exempt on the Council Tax bill. If you live with one other person they can apply for a single person discount because you don't count on the bill and this will give them 25% off the total council tax amount for your property.

If you own the property these rules are more complicated, so please contact us to discuss your situation.



Your rights and responsibilities when renting privately

Lots of students move out of halls and into private flats with friends (new and old!) at some point during their studies. This can be a really exciting time, but it's important to know what your rights are as a tenant and what responsibilities you have to the property and the landlord during your stay!

All private tenancies issued after 1st December 2017 should be Private Residential Tenancies (PRTs). If you have a question about another type of tenancy, get in touch with us directly, but check out some of your main rights and responsibilities here.



Your rights

1 No fixed terms:

PRTs are open-ended and you can't be asked to leave at a set pre-determined time, e.g. after six months or a year.

2 Notice periods:

Your landlord can still give you notice to leave, but there are rules on how and when they can do this. This is usually 28 days' notice if you have lived there for less than 6 months or 84 days' notice if you have lived there longer than 6 months. However, this can depend on the reason why you are being given notice, so get in touch with us if you think you have not been given correct notice to leave.

3 Quiet enjoyment:

All tenants in any type of property have the right to quiet enjoyment of private spaces as determined by their contract. This also means that landlords must give notice to you when they want to enter the property for repairs or inspections. This is usually 24 hours but should be stated in your tenancy agreement/ contract.

4 Repairs:

Landlords must meet certain standards for their properties to be considered habitable and necessary repairs should be completed within a 'reasonable' timescale; this can sometimes cause difficulties as it is open to interpretation.

5 Rent increases:

Your landlord can increase rent if they follow the correct process which varies depending on your type of tenancy. If you have a PRT, your landlord can increase the rent at any point in the first 12 months of you living there and thereafter only once every 12 months; the landlord must give 3 months' notice of a rent increase. You have the right to challenge the rent increase through Rent Service Scotland.

Your responsibilities

1 Giving notice to leave:

You must give 28 days' notice in writing if you wish to leave the property. If you do not provide this, your notice to leave may be invalid and you may continue to be legally liable rent. You must also allow 48 hours for your notice to be received by your landlord, so in essence you must notify your landlord that you wish to leave 30 days' in advance.

2 Paying rent:

You must pay rent on time as stated in your tenancy or contract. We do not recommend withholding rent for any reason as this may cause problems that you could be taken to tribunal for. If this is something you are considering, get in touch so we can help fix any issues you might be having.

3 Taking care of the property:

Tenants are expected to keep their rental properties in a good condition, including making sure it's kept clean, without any damage, that repairs are reported, and not making alterations (such as painting) without permission. Normal wear and tear is allowed.

And one more thing...

If you are unsure about something, please ask us!

Strath Union Advice Hub is on the ground floor of the Union building.
51 Richmond Street, Glasgow, G1 1XU
> See on map

- **You can make an appointment to speak to an adviser here:** www.strathclydestudentsunion.simplybook.it/v2
- **Or email us at** strathunion.advice@strath.ac.uk

Outside of our opening hours, these websites have some great info and may be able to answer some of your questions:

www.readytorent.nus.org.uk
www.scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice
www.strathunion.com/advice/housing
www.themoneycharity.org.uk/advice-information/students

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