

Information for landlords

The growth of the University has created a huge demand for good quality, well managed property across many areas of the city.

Landlords in the private sector play a vital role in housing a large proportion of our new and continuing students. If you are a private landlord interested in providing student accommodation, please call us on: **01905 855137 / 855300**.

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House in Multiple Occupation (HMO)

If you are considering letting to students, then it is important that you familiarise yourself with the Housing Act 2004, and in particular, the legislation surrounding HMO's. The definition of what constitutes a HMO is given below:

What is a House in Multiple Occupation?

- An entire house or flat which is let to 3 or more tenants who form 2 or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet
- A house which has been converted entirely into bedsits or other non-self-contained accommodation, which is let to 3 or more tenants who form 2 or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet facilities.
- A converted house which contains one or more flats which are not wholly self-contained (ie the flat does not within it contain a kitchen, bathroom and toilet) and which is occupied by 3 or more tenants who form two or more households
- A building which is converted entirely into self-contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and more than one third of the flats are let on short term tenancies

Further information on HMO's and your responsibilities as a landlord of this type of property can be found by visiting [Worcester City Council](#)'s website. Here you will also find the schedule of amenities required in relation to the number of people sharing a property.

Do all HMO's have to be licensed?

There are two different types of HMO – ones that need to be licensed and ones that don't. Either way, you should contact Worcester City Council to inform them that you have a HMO.

Licensable HMO

If your property has the following aspects, then you have a licensable HMO and this is subject to a fee. You should download a licence pack from Worcester City Council's website, or alternatively contact their Private Accommodation Standards Team. In obtaining a licence, your property will automatically become accredited, which will enable you to advertise the property with us, free of charge.

- 3 storeys AND

- 5 people or more, in more than one household AND
- Shared facilities

Non - Licensable HMO

If your HMO does not fall into the above category, then you have a non-licensable HMO. You still however need to inform Worcester City Council that you own this type of property, and if you would like to advertise the property to University of Worcester students, the property will still need to be accredited.

Accreditation is free of charge and further information on how to become accredited can be obtained from [Worcester City Council](#).

Rents

Rents within the sector have increased in recent years.

For many students the most important consideration is finding the right type of accommodation rather than saving a few pounds each week.

Rental periods are usually for 9 or 10 months and are currently between £60.00 and £100.00 per week exclusive of bills.

Quality and location

Increasingly students are looking for high quality accommodation within easy reach of the University to match that found in their family homes.

Gas central heating, double glazing, communal lounge, modern fitted kitchen and shower rooms are all attractive features for students, demanding higher rents.

Property standards and facilities - the essentials

It is in your best interests to have your property maintained to a high standard, not only to benefit the students, but also to increase your chances of letting your property.

A desirable student property will have all of the essential items such as furniture and white goods, however to ensure that your property stands out from the rest, you may wish to consider:

- Retaining a lounge area. Social space is very important, and many student landlords have mistakenly chosen to use this space to create an additional bedroom.
- Central heating. As students live on a very tight budget, it important to ensure that a cost efficient form of heating is in place. This also helps to prevent condensation, which is prevalent in a large number of student properties. Where possible, properties should have wall and loft insulation.
- TV aerial points. Ideally, a TV aerial point should be provided in each study bedroom, however as a bare minimum, one should be available in the lounge/social space.
- Washing machine. This is particularly important if the property is not within an easy reach of a laundrette. You should also look to provide an area outside of the property to dry clothes, or supply a tumble drier.

Students also take into consideration the standard of decoration, condition of carpets and furnishings within the property, as well as the quality of the kitchen and bathroom provided. The size of their room is also extremely important, and must be of a sufficient size to accommodate the following items as a minimum

- Bed – Single or double
- Desk – This should be of a good size and able to accommodate a desk top PC and printer
- Ergonomic Desk Chair – This should be height adjustable, with an adjustable back rest
- Wardrobe – This should be of good size and able to store full length items
- Additional Storage – either under bed or stand alone chest
- Shelving

Free promotion for landlords

Free advertising through StudentPad is offered to any landlord who is accredited through Worcester City Council and who meets our requirements in terms of safety and suitability of property and in terms of management. The Student Accommodation Office makes an initial inspection of every property.

The University of Worcester holds a comprehensive database of over 500 inspected and approved rooms.

Many students use the Accommodation Office as the first point of contact when beginning their search for accommodation. This provides an excellent marketing opportunity for your property. We can help in a number of ways:

- We will advertise free of charge all properties through our StudentPad website. Please note that any property that has not been inspected and passed our accreditation will be advertised with a disclaimer. This can be accessed by students and landlords from computer terminals on and off-campus on a 24/7 basis. Landlords will also be able to update their own information and upload photographs.
- We start marketing properties in February for the forthcoming academic year, the busy time for house hunting being from this period through to May. We advertise properties all year round as students come to us throughout the year. Over the summer many late applicants are looking for accommodation starting towards the end of September.

Showing your property to potential tenants

We encourage students to inspect a number of properties before making their final choice.

Students will contact you directly to arrange a viewing of your property.

If it is currently lived in, you will need to arrange viewings with the co-operation of your tenants.

You must show consideration to your current tenants and must not show groups of students around without the tenant's knowledge or permission. If you do, you may be in breach of your tenancy agreement with the students.

Tenancy Agreements

You should draw up a tenancy agreement as soon as students agree to live in your property.

The most common forms of tenancy agreement are the Assured Tenancy and Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Copies of Assured Shorthold agreements are available from Her Majesty's Stationery Office outlets. Alternatively, you may choose to seek legal advice when drawing up a tenancy agreement.

Under the 1996 Housing Act, all new lettings in the private sector are now automatically Assured Shorthold Tenancies, unless the tenancy agreement or separate notice specifically states it is an Assured Tenancy.

After you and the students have signed the agreement, the students should receive a copy for their records. If any repairs or additional furnishings are needed in the property, a clear written specification of such work, together with a completion date, should be given to the students.

Once the contract is signed the rent charged should be no more than the figure originally quoted on your advert, with landlords and tenants negotiating to achieve the best method of rent payment (i.e. termly, quarterly or monthly).

Receipts should be provided whenever money changes hands. Once your property has been let you can either remove it yourself from the website or let us know immediately so we can remove it for you.

Contracts can be a complicated issue and you may need further advice.

Deposits, inventories, council tax and utility bills

Deposits are intended to provide reparation for landlords to offset against non-payment of rent or tenant damage. Deposits are normally between £150-£200 per person.

If you ask for too much, students may think twice about taking on the lease. This deposit should be held until the end of the tenancy and after a satisfactory inspection of the property it should be returned as quickly as possible.

Money should not be used against fair wear and tear, but only to recoup losses caused by willful neglect or damage. Receipts should also be provided as proof of any work or cleaning that has been carried out and set against a deposit.

Recent legislation has changed the way in which landlords have to manage deposits, for further information see: <https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection>

- A detailed inventory of the property should be issued to the tenants at the start of the tenancy. Décor, carpets, fittings and all furniture should be noted along with a description of their condition. One copy should be kept by yourself and another given to the tenants for them to check and note their comments on. Once the inventory is agreed it should be accepted as an accurate record and be referred to throughout the tenancy and when the property is finally inspected at the end of the lease. They are quick and easy to do and can go a long way to help resolve disagreements which may arise over the return of tenant deposits. This will in turn help reduce hassle and inconvenience for both parties.
- Properties that are occupied by full time students are exempt from Council Tax payments. All students should collect a Council Tax exemption form from the University and submit a copy of this to the landlord. This is something that you may want to confirm with your

tenants. If a student is undertaking a part-time course, or drops out of their studies, this could have an impact on the entire group as they will then be responsible for paying a proportion of any council tax due. It is the landlord's responsibility to notify the council of any change in students' status.

- Utility bills - It is the normal practice for students to accept responsibility for electricity, gas and telephone supplies and ensure that relevant readings are taken prior to moving in or out. Students now have a choice of utility suppliers. You may wish to be informed of which supplier they choose. Standing charges occurring in the gap between two groups of students occupying a property are usually the responsibility of the landlord. We recommend that landlords pay the water rates i.e. that rents are inclusive of water charges. If water rates in a rented property are not paid the Water company will pursue the owner for payment regardless of what the tenancy agreement states and therefore inclusive rents protect the owner from unexpected expense.
- Landlords are responsible for insuring their property and contents. Students are advised to take out their own insurance to cover their own belongings and we encourage landlords to advise them to do this.

Repairs

As a landlord you are obliged by law to carry out repairs to:

- The structure and exterior of the building, including drains, guttering and pipe work.
- Water, gas and electricity supply installations.
- Heating and hot water appliances.
- Baths, sinks, toilets and other sanitary installations.

You would also be expected to maintain furnishings and appliances which are supplied as part of the tenancy agreement, such as the washing machine and fridge/freezer.

Owners should agree upon access arrangements with the students when organising repairs.

You should advise tenants of the time scale for the repair work to be completed and name the contractor who will be carrying it out.

Repairs representing immediate risk to the tenant's health or safety e.g. gas, electricity, water or sanitation should be attended to within 24 hours.

Defects which cause loss of facility or are likely to cause further deterioration to the structure/fabric of the building should be rectified within seven days, whilst defects which can be deferred without serious inconvenience to tenants should be rectified within 14-28 days.

Access to the Property

You legally have to allow your tenants quiet, peaceful enjoyment of the property.

You should always have permission to enter the property.

If you need to visit the property to carry out an inspection, or deal with a reported repair, you must give the students at least 24 hours written notice.

Only in the case of an emergency can you enter the premises without the tenant's consent.

Access arrangements and procedures for getting repairs done and organizing viewings should be set out in the tenancy agreement.

Gaining Possession of the Property

While it is extremely unlikely, there may be a need for you to gain possession of the property.

For example if the tenants stay beyond the fixed term of the agreement without committing to a new contract.

You can only gain possession of the property once you have obtained the correct possession order from a court of law and only after the proper notice has been issued to the tenant.

All notices and possession orders must be in a prescribed format - that is: they must contain certain information required by law.

If you try to gain possession without following the procedures laid out in law, you could be charged by the tenant with harassment or illegal eviction.

Suggested inventory

We strongly recommend that an inventory is completed when students move into a property which all parties should sign to confirm the contents and condition of items upon commencement of tenancy.

Below is a suggested inventory:

Living Space	
carpet	
curtains/blinds	
light fitting/shade	
adequate lounge seating for all tenants	
dining facilities (if not in kitchen or separate dining room)	
central heating	
TV Aerial	
waste paper bin	
Kitchen	
floor covering	
curtains/blinds	
light fitting/shade	
cooker with extractor hood	
microwave	
fridge/freezer or fridge and separate freezer	
dining facilities (if not in living room)	
washing machine	
tumble dryer or washer dryer (optional)	
central heating (if applicable)	
bin	
kettle	
bucket & mop	
dustpan & brush	
broom	
fire blanket	
dry powder fire extinguisher	
vacuum cleaner	
iron	
ironing board	
toaster	

pots/pans	
crockery	
cutlery	
mugs	
utensils	
Bedrooms	
carpet	
curtains/blinds	
bed	
mattress	
wardrobe	
drawers	
study desk/table and chair	
central heating	
Internet access	
Light fitting/shade	
wastepaper bin	
Hall/stairs/landing	
carpets	
curtains/blinds (if applicable)	
light fitting/shade	
fire extinguisher – water/foam	
Bathroom	
floor covering	
curtains/blinds	
bathroom suite including bath, sink and toilet (additional requirements under HMO legislation for properties with more than 4 bedrooms)	
shower	
extractor fan	
central heating (if applicable)	
toilet roll and holder	
towel rail and hooks	
mirror	
cabinet/shelving	
light fitting/shade	

Furniture

We do not expect landlords to buy brand new furniture but we suggest that all furniture is durable, coordinated and of good overall quality. Items such as bookshelves, modern light shades/fittings and new, matching curtains, are always appreciated and can be a relatively inexpensive way of increasing the appeal of your property.

All soft furnishings (e.g. three piece suites, chairs, curtains and mattresses) must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire/Safety) Regulations 1998.

Fire Safety

Landlords should note that there is a requirement for a hard wired smoke detector in the property and wall mounted fire extinguishers on each level.