Your guide to househunting
Private-rented accommodation
You’re starting to think about accommodation options for your next academic year and have decided that privately rented accommodation is for you.

Take some time to explore your options, areas of the city, find what’s right for you and – most of all – enjoy your househunting experience.

You can find lots more information and tips from SU Advice at su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice or pop into SU Advice on C floor, Portland Building.
Negotiations

You can try to negotiate on the following:

- The amount of rent payable
- The summer retainer (if this is being asked for)
- The length of the contract
- Bills included
- Refurbishments/improvements
- Furniture/appliances
Tips

It is nearly always cheaper to pay bills directly yourselves.

Be confident (not pushy) and ask, they can only say no.

Remember, agents/landlords are just as keen to let their properties as you are to find somewhere.

You should negotiate a gap between tenancies to allow for cleaning/refurbishments.

Know the market – find out average rents for the area.

Be able to justify your reason for asking for a discount/reduction.

When viewing as a group, you may want to nominate a lead negotiator.

Make a good impression – landlords want responsible tenants.

International students

Ideally, you should have viewed the property in person before you commit and pay any money.

If you need a UK-based guarantor and this is not possible, you may be asked to pay an increased amount of rent in advance. Try negotiating to minimise the upfront cost.

If you are bringing your family later in the year, don't make a long term commitment to a property that is not suitable for your family.

It's not rude to ask questions and walk away if you need further advice and support before committing to a decision.

Licensing and accreditation

Most properties in Nottingham fall under a licensing scheme, which sets out standards that your house has to meet.

All letting agents need to be members of a "property redress scheme". These are government authorised schemes which give you a way to escalate complaints if you're unhappy with how they have been dealt with by your letting agent.

You should also look for a property that is Nottingham Standard accredited.
Checklist

Here’s a checklist of what to look out for, with three rows to compare viewings.

Ask the landlord

- To confirm that the property has a licence (if required)
- Is the property part of the ‘Nottingham Standard’ accreditation scheme?
- To see the gas safety certificate
- Which deposit protection scheme do they use?

Ask the current tenants

Are repairs completed in a reasonable time? ☐ ☐ ☐
Does the heating work? ☐ ☐ ☐
Have they enjoyed living there? ☐ ☐ ☐
Why are they leaving? ☐ ☐ ☐
Are there any issues with the house? ☐ ☐ ☐
How is the local area? ☐ ☐ ☐

After your visit

Have you visited the area during the day and night? ☐ ☐ ☐
Contact the current tenants if you missed them earlier ☐ ☐ ☐
Do you require a guarantor? ☐ ☐ ☐
Is there a ‘holding deposit’? ☐ ☐ ☐
Do you want to live there? ☐ ☐ ☐

Viewing notes

SU Advice can provide all the advice and support you need in finding the perfect home.
Step 1
When do I start looking?

You've probably heard it lots already but we can't stress it enough: take your time!

It's tempting to start looking as the first houses start appearing on websites, and especially if others around you are, but you really don't have to. In fact, we recommend you don't start looking until after your January exams.

There's nothing wrong with starting to consider what it is you may want, but take the time now to be clued up on your options and then in January you can be fully prepared to search for your ideal property.

Step 2
Who do I live with?

This is a big one and probably one of the hardest decisions to make when considering your home for next year.

Alongside the buzz of who gets the larger room with the en-suite, you may want to have discussions about how you will get along. We all live differently and nothing proves this more than living together. Are you an early-night kind of person in a group of nocturnal owls? Prefer peace and quiet when your housemates are forming a house band? Compromise is key, so use your experience of living with new people in halls to guide you.

It's important to consider your budgets too; can everyone in your group afford where you're hoping to live? Remember, you'll likely have bills on top too. Once you've signed a tenancy agreement it can be difficult to get out of it, so make sure you consider all possibilities before putting pen to paper.

Still looking for people to live with? Check out University of Nottingham Flatmate Finder Group on Facebook.

Please consider others before knocking on doors, especially during exam period.
Do not rely on verbal agreements.

Step 3
Where do I live?

Location is really important

It’s important to consider:
Distance to Uni and the city centre
Transport links
Are there shops, cafés, supermarkets and gyms close by?
Does the area feel safe?
If you have a car, do you need a parking permit?

Step 4
How do I find a property?

There are lots of websites where you can search for accommodation.

Good places to start your search are:
- accommodationforstudents.com
- unipol.org.uk/nottingham/accommodation
- student.spareroom.co.uk
- Rightmove.co.uk

Word of mouth is also really important – speak to second and third year students about their experiences in areas you’re considering.
Step 5
The legal bit

It doesn't have to be scary!
Here are some things to look out for:

Who will be managing the property – the landlord or a letting agent? Who will you be paying your rent to? Who will you report disrepair to? If it’s managed by an agent, you should still ask for the landlord’s full name and address.

What type of contract are you going to be signing? Joint or individual? Most student contracts are “joint”, meaning that you’re all responsible for the total rent for the property (not just your share). With an “individual” contract, only you would be named on the agreement and you would only be responsible for your share of the rent.

Living with your landlord? Your rights and the landlord’s responsibilities will be different. Ask SU Advice for details.

Do you need a guarantor? (Many landlords/agents will require one.) Can everyone in your group provide one? In most cases your parents/guardians will be guarantors – have they seen a copy of the contract and are they happy to agree to it?

New legislation prohibits landlords and agents from charging administration/agency fees when signing a tenancy.

Your landlord must register your deposit in one of the three tenancy deposit schemes. They must do this within 30 days of getting it. Your landlord must use a TDP scheme even if your deposit is paid by someone else, such as your parents.

Make sure you get your contract checked with SU Advice before signing!
Step 6
Viewing properties

Just because it's student accommodation doesn't mean you should accept sub-standard housing.

Take the attached checklist with you so you can compare the different houses you've viewed.

Is there any obvious disrepair to the house? Note this down to raise with the landlord/agent before signing.

Speak to the current tenants – are they happy with the landlord? Are there any issues with the property?

Does the landlord provide "notice" before they come round? (They should provide you with at least 24 hours' notice.)

Be safe, don't visit on your own.

Property not built/going to be renovated/extended/redecorated? Can the work really be done in time? When are the current tenants leaving? When is the work going to take place? Discuss with the landlord/agent what happens if it's not finished? When does your tenancy start and end? Make sure that everything agreed is in writing.

Visit the area during the day and in the evening. Does it feel safe?

Ask the current tenants how much the bills are. If bills are included in the rent ask the landlord if there's a cap on usage.

Make sure you view a selection of properties, but if you're on your 15th viewing, you may need to revisit your requirements.

The best houses go first – FALSE – properties become available to rent all year round for lots of reasons.

e.g housemates don’t renew their contracts, properties are being renovated...

Make sure you get your contract checked with SU Advice before signing!
Checklist

Potential housemates – check. An idea of where you want to live – check. Now you’ve got these covered you can start viewing possible new homes. We’ve put together a checklist of what to look out for with three rows to compare viewings.

Before you go
Who manages the property? Landlord/letting agency?
Rent per person? £

When you’re there
Is the location suitable?
How long does it take to get there?
Are there shops and services nearby?

The house
Does it come furnished?
Is there any damage or disrepair?
Signs of mould or damp?
Windows double-glazed?
Rooms a good size?
Is there enough shared space?

Safety and security
Working smoke detectors?
A working burglar alarm?
Safe external doors?
Lockable windows?
Car/bike storage?

Money
Are bills included in the rent?
Is it a joint or individual contract?