**GUIDANCE FOR FINDING A PROPERTY**

**Establish your criteria and budget**

Before you start looking for a property set out your key requirements – you may need to

revise these once you start viewing properties. Points to consider include:

• The type of property you want to live in eg self-contained flat, shared house,

bedsit, private halls

• The size of your group

• What length of Tenancy Agreement you require

• What furniture and equipment you require – for example, a desk, washing

machine

• Your TV and broadband requirements

• Access to your place of study – is public transport convenient or will you walk,

cycle or drive?

• Do you require parking facilities (bearing in mind these might be limited)?

It is important to decide on your budget and to stick to it, and to be aware that there are

a range of costs to cover over and above the basic rent, such as Council Tax (in some

properties), water rates, electricity, gas, phone and broadband. Sometimes the rent

advertised includes some of these but in other cases you will be responsible for them

and to pay the supplier direct. Check exactly what is included before you sign any

agreement. It is important that you fully understand your position before renting.

**When to start looking for accommodation**

The lists of private accommodation are usually made available by the Universities from

mid February. While some people start looking for accommodation before this, most

people will find it helpful to wait for the lists as the University accommodation offices will

have carried out an initial sift of the properties submitted to them, for example checking

that electrical and gas safety certificates are all up to date and all legal requirements are

in place.

However property becomes available all through the year as tenants give notice and

move out so, while there are clear advantages to allowing yourself as much time as

possible to find the right property, it is never too late to start looking.

**What to look for**

Once you start viewing properties there are a number of details you will need to check

including the following:

• Overall condition of the property: is it in a generally good state of repair? If the

landlord advises that repairs or decorating are to be carried out before the

planned start of your tenancy ensure that there is written confirmation of this or

you may find that the work is not done. Check what arrangements are in place

should the work not be completed in time for you to move in;

• Size of the rooms: are there sufficient rooms for your group and is each room of

a suitable size? Do you require a separate living room?

• Type of heating: is the property centrally heated? Are there storage heaters or

electrical heaters? What are the approximate running costs?

• Level of security: are there adequate locks on doors (front door and internal

doors), windows and any patio doors?

• Furniture and equipment: does the property have everything that you need?

• Council Tax position: if the property is solely occupied by students it is likely to be exempt from Council tax but if the house is shared with non-students there will be a liability for the tax so check if you will be expected to contribute;

• Utility bills: check the position regarding bills for water, electricity, gas, phone

and broadband. Will you be expected to take responsibility for the supply and

divide the costs between your group, or are bills in the name of the landlord and

recharged to the tenants?

**Relevant legislation**

**Discrimination:** It is illegal for landlords to discriminate against tenants, or potential

tenants, on the basis of race, gender, disability, sexuality or religion. Landlords must

comply with the legislation set out in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, Race

Relations Act 1976 and Sex Discrimination Act 1975.