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Off-campus housing guidance for students

A handbook of advice designed to explain best practice to students entering into the private rented accommodation market

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Useful definitions

Tenant

You! The person or people renting a property are known as the tenant(s). You'll sign a tenancy agreement to occupy a property.

Guarantor

Is an adult who lives and works in the UK and can vouch for your financial obligations under the Tenancy Agreement: namely unpaid rent, bills and any damages not covered by the deposit.

Landlord

The person who owns the house. This is the person who receives the rent you pay for living in the property. They will be responsible for looking after the maintenance of the house and expect you to be careful with their property.

Studentpad

roehamptonstudentpad.co.uk

University of Roehampton's Off-campus Accommodation website advertising properties owned by approved landlords.

Letting Agent

The person in the middle. They'll show you around the house, answer questions and deal with the administration of moving you into your new home.



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Finding and securing your home

Who to live with?

One of the most crucial things to think about!

Before you take the decision to form a group to go house hunting, you should have a frank discussion about all your expectations and make sure you have similar views, otherwise you could find yourself with problems later in the year. On the other hand, sharing a house can be brilliant. Choose the right people to live with and you'll have a great time together.

Some things to consider:

How many people?

More people can mean more fun and cheaper bills, but it can also mean more mess and more noise (and arguments?)

What are the housemates' relationships?

Is everybody friends? Are some couples? This can affect how people expect to pay bills and share house resources.

Tidiness!

If you're fanatically tidy or unbelievably messy, you know what to expect from yourself, but if your housemate(s) are the opposite, are you going to suddenly change your habits to match theirs? Do you expect them to do the same? Talk about it and try and find an amicable compromise before looking at properties.

Finances!

Try and team up with housemates with a comparable income. Resentment may creep in if your housemates can afford to party every night but you can barely afford to eat.

Think about how you will split the bills. A good idea might be to have a communal jar everyone pays into each week for basics like cleaning products and toilet rolls.

Friends staying

Having a few mates crash after a night out is all good, but if one person has a friend move onto the sofa for a month 'while they look for somewhere to rent' or if somebody constantly has a girlfriend/boyfriend staying over, it is not going to go down well with everyone. Discuss house rules before going on viewings.

TOP TIP: Someone from the group may drop out. Don't rush into filling a space with someone you barely know.

Determine budget

Don't underestimate what it's going to cost you

It's easy to say you'll compromise on essentials like travel and food costs - not to mention money for a night out. Don't become unrealistic on what you'll need to pay on rent, bills and other necessities.

Do you have enough money to cover your deposit and one month's rent? You will need to pay this before your tenancy starts which is usually before your student loan arrives.

Need help budgeting? Visit studentcalculator.org/

Finding a property

You've got plenty of options

Your first call should be:

roehamptonstudentpad.co.uk

This is the University's database of properties in the local area owned by trusted private landlords. When you register you will create a password to use the secure online service.

Key info: Properties are vetted by the University and all landlords have signed a strict Code of Standards for their properties and professional conduct. There is more than enough accommodation and the list for the next academic year goes live after the Accommodation Fair in late February.

Word of mouth

Like your friend's house? Know they're leaving at the end of the year and they've had a good experience? Why not ask to be referred to their landlord, or follow it up yourself.

gumtree.co.uk / sparerroom.com

Gumtree is popular – however! A word of caution: while there are some good landlords that advertise through this site, there's also a few bad ones. Exercise caution by never sending any personal ID info or money online before seeing a property and meeting the landlord/agent – be aware of scams involving transfer services like Western Union.

Use your common sense - If it's too good to be true, it most probably is.

Which leaves... Letting Agents

The law changed in June 2019 banning Letting Agents and Landlords from charging fees to tenants. Make sure the agent is a member of a regulatory body – The Property Ombudsman (TPO), or The Property Redress Scheme (PRS), and/or the Association of Registered Letting Agents (ARLA) who offer a scheme of redress and adhere to codes of professional practice.

Online

Most letting agents advertise their properties online. Sites like Rightmove and Zoopla let you search the listings based on criteria you set such as location, price and number of bedrooms.

Types of accommodation

Shared Student Houses/Flats

Studentpad has a good selection of 3, 4, 5 and 6 bed properties (sometimes a 2 and a 7 bed), for which there are two types of contracts:

1. **Joint & Several:** all the students will sign one tenancy agreement along with the landlord. It means that you are all responsible for the total rent and for returning the property in a satisfactory condition at the end of the tenancy. If it is a 4-bed property you will need to be in a group of 4 to view and secure the property.
2. **Individual:** You (solely) sign a tenancy agreement along with the landlord but no other tenants are listed, although you will share the communal areas with other tenants. Your deposit covers your bedroom and your share of the communal areas. You are not responsible for anyone else's rent.

Living with a Resident Landlord – 'Lodgings'

Rent a room in the same household as the landlord. Lodgings tend to be more homely. Rent should be inclusive of all bills. You will be issued with a Room Licence which is more flexible and should allow you to give 1 months' notice to quit.

Independent Student Hostel

Struan House – advertised on Studentpad. Rooms offered in a Christian atmosphere for young women (up to the age of 35) of any creed or nationality.

TOP TIP: Join the University of Roehampton Studentpad to get property alerts emailed directly to you whenever accommodation becomes available that matches what you are looking for! You can also access more features on the student message board and create a shortlist of hot properties.

Booking a viewing

Before you make the call...

If you're a group searching together, it's best practice to have just one or two of you take the lead calling and arranging viewings, so that you don't all end up booking viewings under many different names and then on the day, realise you've booked 3 appointments for the same house!

When calling or emailing present yourself in a polite and prepared manner. Arrange a viewing for when the whole group can make it. If there is a lot of competition for the same property, the landlord will choose the group that is most organised and courteous.

Viewing a property

Be smart, stay sharp

A good idea is to take photos whilst you're in the property (make sure it's ok) as after you've seen a few houses it's easy to forget what each one looks like and how it is laid out.

Arrive promptly. If you don't know the area, streetmap it beforehand so you know where you're going.

Dress presentably – if you go for a job interview you'd dress smartly wouldn't you? This is no different. Whilst you're looking at the house, the landlord might be looking at you and wondering if you'd be a good responsible tenant.

When looking round, do think about where you're going to work in the house – are there desks? Don't just look at its party potential! Consider other things too, for example, if you're going to spend most of the time together in the kitchen or living room is it more important that those rooms be large and comfortable rather than everyone having double beds?

Try to view as the whole group so you can discuss the house and ensure everyone is happy. Arranging for everyone to visit a house over a number of days can potentially mean you lose out to a group who viewed together and made a decision before everyone in your group had even seen the place.

Get a receipt when you pay your holding deposit. You may be given a sample copy of the contract you'll sign when you move in – if not, it's a good idea to ask for one so you can read through beforehand and not feel rushed on the day of signing. The Roehampton off-campus team can help look over your contract if needed.

Once you've secured your house, you'll all be referenced as new applicants, together with your guarantors (if applicable).

If you're unsure what a guarantor is check the definition at the front of the guide, and ask the landlord/agent to explain their criteria for who / what a guarantor must be before you pay a holding deposit so you can be sure that your guarantor fits the bill! You don't want to lose your holding deposit because your guarantor wasn't right.

If you don't have a guarantor, you may be asked to pay the whole rent for the contract period upfront. You could consider using a company that will act as a guarantor for you, though you'll have to pay a fee – get advice from the Roehampton off-campus team.

Make sure you quickly complete and return any paperwork issued by your landlord/agent – hold ups from any one person can affect everyone moving in or even losing the property.



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Moving in

Arranging moving day

Thinking ahead

What time can you get keys to the house?

Using a van? Do you need to hire one, and where can you park? Do you need to pay for parking?

Consider how you're going to physically move everything in – if there's lots of stairs don't overfill boxes you can't then carry. If your friends or family are helping, politely remind them to be careful of knocking into / scratching walls etc. when moving furniture – excessive chips / scratches can cause issues with deposit returns.

Documents

The important stuff to pay attention to

All the tenants and guarantors will need to have signed their parts of the contract before keys can be taken – if some tenants are moving in later than others, you'll all still need to have signed the contract before the first people can get their keys!

Contract – you should have already read through this but if not, don't be rushed into signing. This is the important bit: This is a legally binding document. Once signed you can't walk away from your contractual commitments – regardless. If, for example, you decide to move out of the house due to a fallout with your housemates you will not be released from your contract so read it to find out what your obligations are.

Passport and Visa – by law your landlord/agent has to check and record that you have the right to rent in the UK. You will need to show your original passport (and visa if applicable) so a copy can be taken.

Prescribed Information – This concerns how your security deposit is registered and the process at the end of the tenancy for its return. It is a legal requirement that the landlord/agent gives it to you within 30 days from the start of the tenancy.

How to Rent document issued by the government should be given to you on the day you move in or before.

Gas Safety Certificate must be given to you on the day you move in or just before.

Rent and money

Paying the Balance of Money

Before you move in you will be required to pay your deposit and first month's rent (minus the holding deposit you paid earlier). Check they accept debit/credit cards beforehand if you want to pay that way. Cash can be ok but make sure you get a receipt. You can ask your bank for a bankers' draft, which is like a guaranteed cheque, though your bank might charge a small fee. Regular cheques take too long to clear! It is often easier to make an online transfer, but again ensure there's time for it to clear.

A transfer from an overseas account takes longer, will incur charges and depending on the exchange rate will affect the actual payment amount received.

Future Rent Payments

Set up a Standing Order – this is an instruction you give to your bank to pay the rent on a specific day every month. You may have decided to pay the whole rent from one joint account, or you may be paying individually.

Fees your landlord can charge during the tenancy

The Tenant Fee Act 2019 bans most fees but your landlord can charge the following:

- **Late payment of rent:** you can only be charged a late payment fee once you're 14 days late with your rent payment. The penalty must be cited in your agreement and is only permitted to be calculated as an interest on the debt payment that must be no more than 3% APR above the Bank of England base rate. You cannot be charged a fixed fee.
- **Lost keys or fobs:** you can be charged the reasonable cost of a replacement if it is mentioned in your tenancy agreement.
- **Ending your tenancy early:** if a replacement tenant is found the landlord/agent can charge you reasonable costs incurred to change the tenancy, but the amount is capped at £50. If a landlord/agent charges more than £50 they must provide evidence of the costs incurred and that they are reasonable.

No other fees are allowed. If you incur any fees from your landlord please check with the Off-campus team that they are legal and permitted.

Property management

You should be told who manages your property. If the landlord is managing it you'll be given their contact details and from that point on, you speak with them over any questions, reporting maintenance or rent issues.

A letting agent may be acting as a managing agent and you would deal with them as you would a landlord. The agent arranges maintenance on the landlord's behalf. If this is the case, establish who at the agency deals with property management and communicate with them directly with any issues during your tenancy.

Make sure you get an out of hours emergency contact number or instructions about what to do if you have an emergency during the night or over the weekend, e.g. if a pipe bursts do you call the landlord/agent or an emergency plumber?

TOP TIP: It is best to report any issues by email and make sure you get a reply so you've got things recorded in writing. You may need it as proof at the end of your tenancy if there is a dispute with your deposit.

Your deposit

What happens to your money

Part of your balance payment will be a security deposit (sometimes called a damage deposit). The law requires landlords/agents to protect deposits in a government approved scheme within 30 working days of a new tenancy beginning.

What this means for you is that your deposit is protected in a registered account.

You'll receive a certificate or notification of which scheme it's registered with and a unique ID so you can identify it.

When your tenancy ends, the deposit cannot be released unless there is agreement from both parties – tenant and landlord – over the condition of the property. So a landlord cannot 'just keep' the money.

If there is a dispute that can't be resolved between yourselves and the landlord/agent, the schemes offer an unbiased resolution service that will look at the evidence and decide if there should be a deduction from the deposit or not. If you need to use this service seek advice from the Off-campus team.

The inventory

Make this work for you

A powerful document that often isn't treated with the importance it deserves. If you're provided with one - pay attention to it! If you are not provided with one, create your own and take photos.

The inventory will list the contents and condition of each item and each room (including décor). Think of it as representing the value of your deposit. If there is a dispute at the end of the tenancy over the condition of the property, the inventory is crucial evidence to support an argument from either the tenant or the landlord. So, it must be accurate!

Example scenario

You move in and the hallway carpet has a stain on it but it's not listed on the inventory and you don't change it. At the end of the tenancy there's a dispute as the landlord believes you've caused the stain and wants to claim for a contribution towards replacing the hallway carpet – the inventory doesn't show it was there at the start of the tenancy, so how do you support your argument?

On the day of moving in, you might meet your landlord/agent who will check you into the house and go through the inventory with you. Or you might be given it and asked to check the house yourself before signing and returning it. Either way, ensure you take time to do it and record any damage to structure and/or furnishings for the avoidance of doubt at the end of the tenancy. If something is a little unclear on the inventory it's ok to add more detail.

If anything is missed, add it and make sure you send a copy to the landlord/agent immediately.

You usually have 7 days in which to make amendments to the inventory and you are strongly advised to check it at the very beginning before unpacking your belongings.

Setting up utility accounts

Don't forget the bills

These might be arranged for you through the landlord/agent, but you might need to do it yourself. You'll need meter readings for the gas and electric and sometimes the water

(your inventory should tell you where the meters are and who the suppliers are). Pass the readings to the utility companies to set up an account for the household. Get all names on each bill. Do not take a bill each.

You'll usually be contacted by post within 6-8 weeks to confirm your account and set up the payment method.

You don't have to stay with the current suppliers. Save money by using search engines like MoneySupermarket and Comparethemarket to find a better deal. You can make further savings by choosing an online tariff, and by paying by direct debit. You are advised to search and change suppliers at the very beginning of your tenancy as many deals are for a minimum of 12 months.

It is often your responsibility to set up internet and/or phone line services. Your landlord/agent can clarify this. However, you must not make or allow any contractors to make any structural changes or installations (for example, attaching a Sky dish to a wall) without first gaining permission from your landlord. Not doing so would likely breach a clause in your contract.

There are a few companies that package everything together (utilities/services) to make things simple, and will view you as individual tenants rather than one household – you'll usually pay slightly more for these services but they can be great if there are concerns about people moving out down the line or not being able to pay their share of the bills.

Council Tax

If everyone is a full-time student you're exempt from council tax. If some people in the house are part-time or non-students Council Tax becomes payable although you may be eligible for a discount. First, you'll need to register with the council to get an account number:

wandsworth.gov.uk

Click on "Benefits and Council Tax". Click on Council Tax. Under 'New to Wandsworth' click on Tell us you've moved into Wandsworth to register for Council Tax. After registering, you must fill in the online Student Exemption Form.

Once you receive your Account Number (on your first bill) you need to download your Council Tax Exemption Certificate(s) from the Student Portal, enter your Council Tax account number and email it/them to the Council – counciltax@wandsworth.gov.uk – confirming in the email how many people live in the property.



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You must do the above otherwise you will receive a Court Summons for non-payment of Council Tax. You are only exempt from Council Tax when you receive confirmation from the Council in writing. For further information please refer to the How to Apply for Council Tax Exemption leaflet or contact the off-campus accommodation office for full instructions.

Council Tax Review Notice

Randomly, once a year, the Council send a Review Notice to all student households asking for a form to be completed within 21 days. If you DO NOT respond, the Council will WITHDRAW your Council Tax exemption and you may face a Court Summons.



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Easy living and caring for your home

Think about your end of tenancy before it is too late

Something often forgotten is the reference you might need from your landlord when you leave the house. If you move onto another property next year, you'll be asked for a reference from your current landlord. A bad reference could prevent you from moving into a new house.

You could think of it as a 'property CV'. You want your employment CV to help you progress professionally, so you should try and make your property CV work for your future housing.

Insurance

Most student properties will contain laptops, media/audio equipment, and smartphones etc. so it's important to ensure your stuff is protected. You can arrange students' contents insurance fairly easily online, or you might even find your parents' home insurance will cover some things – best to check, don't assume.

Recycling

Make sure you do your bit!

Wandsworth Council issue free Recycling bags which can be ordered from their website: wandsworth.gov.uk.

Cleaning

Not everyone's idea of fun, but sharing the cleaning between housemates is surprisingly easy and makes a huge difference to everyone's enjoyment of the place. You could try using a rota or all doing it on a certain day. Whatever works for you.

Remember you have a contractual duty as tenant(s) to maintain your property's condition and not cleaning at all can potentially develop issues like condensation, blockages and stains that could disrupt your enjoyment of living in the house and affect the return of your deposit at the end of the tenancy.

Neighbours

You are part of the community and you should consider the diverse range of cultures around you. Respect your neighbours and they should do the same. It's a nice idea to introduce yourself when you move in so you know each other. You could ask if they work unusual hours etc. so you know when to try and keep noise down, and in return you might find that they do the same for you if you need to be studying for exams!

TOP TIP: The Off-Campus Team and RSU Welfare and Community act as a bridge between the student population and the local community. If you run into difficulties, remember they can help you resolve things on a range of potential issues, even if you're not renting your place through the University. Just get in touch!

Having a party

House parties happen. This guide isn't going to tell you not to have one, but here's some tips on how to avoid causing nuisance and upset to your neighbours, as well as making your life easier:

- Tell neighbours ahead of time – e.g. a note through the door a few days before warns them to expect a bit more noise late into the night. They might even make plans to be out – regardless, it's just courtesy. Sometimes neighbours will know the landlord and this avoids them reporting back negatively that you aren't being considerate.
- If it's wet outdoors, have somewhere people can wipe feet or leave their shoes to avoid dirty / wet footprints all over the house – or you could be paying for a carpet cleaner.
- Turn speakers away from walls and move off floors to avoid noise and vibration passing into next doors walls and ceilings.
- Turn the music down a bit later into the night – you don't have to turn it off but respect that some people want to sleep.
- Excessive noise could lead to the Council's anti-social behaviour team or the Environmental Health Service being called.

- Get people to smoke outside. Tenancy agreements don't allow smoking indoors, so carpet burns and a property smelling of smoke will cause you issues when it's time to get your deposit back.
- Be aware of who's coming into your house. Contractually you are responsible for guests in your home, including any damage or theft caused by them.

Duty of care reporting issues

Your contract details your responsibilities as tenant(s) so do pay attention – you have a number of items called Tenant Obligations that you need to ensure you follow.

These are items such as (for example):

- You agree to pay rent on time
- You agree to take care to protect the property and its security
- You agree to care for the property and report any issues promptly

You are responsible for minor repairs during your tenancy, such as light bulbs, batteries, fuses and unblocking drains. Be mindful - many contractors incur a call out charge to attend to reported maintenance, and if the issue they attend to is your responsibility you may be liable for their charge, not the landlord!

If you have any problems that you do not think are your responsibility to fix, you have a duty to advise the landlord/agent promptly. If you don't report it promptly and the problem/damage gets worse the landlord can charge you.

Report all maintenance issues in writing (email) so that you can keep a record. If you inform your landlord/agent of a maintenance issue by phone, follow it up with an email confirming the telephone conversation so that you have a record. These emails may be needed at the end of the tenancy if you have trouble getting your deposit back so make sure you create a file to keep all records.

You might find appliance manuals in your property to help you operate things like the boiler and washing machine. If not you can often find and download these online by simply searching your appliance make and model. Please refer to 'Caring for Appliances' in the appendix.

TOP TIP: Note that if a contractor responds to a problem you've reported to your landlord/agent, which has been caused by your misuse or neglect, you may well be liable for the cost!

Inspections

Your landlord/agent may want to visit occasionally to inspect that the property is being cared for and there are no unreported problems developing that might need attention. This is quite reasonable, but they should give you a minimum of 24 hours' notice that they will be coming – it should be in writing (post or email). You are not necessarily required to be present, but you may choose to be.

This is where it's useful to be easily contactable and on good terms with your landlord/agent for the purpose of arranging inspections when it's convenient for everyone.

Remember you won't necessarily all be contacted individually – if one of you is taking 'the lead' with the tenancy, make sure you pass on any messages to everyone in the house so they're not surprised when someone arrives!

TOP TIP: Set up a WhatsApp group with tenants and landlord so that all maintenance issues can be reported and everyone is notified including when the repairman is coming. Just remember to keep the group chat for maintenance only – don't post personal conversations that often embarrass the landlord!

Keys

If you lose your keys or lock yourself out – **DO NOT BREAK THE DOOR OR WINDOW TO GET IN!** Sounds obvious, but it does occur... and then what happens? You'll be charged for replacing the door / window, plus lock and frame if you've damaged those too (which is very likely).

If you are locked out, try calling your housemates to see if you can borrow their keys or call the landlord to ask if they've a spare set (or they might have a set with a friend / neighbour locally). If you're managed by an agent, they should have a spare set of keys you could borrow.

The Tenant Fee Act 2019 states that landlords can only charge the cost of a replacement key – they can't make a profit.

Preventing condensation

You should take an active role in the prevention of condensation build up.

This is a big one that often causes students stress and problems during their tenancy, plus issues with their deposit return at the end of a tenancy.

For more information refer to 'Condensation, Damp and Mould Prevention' in the appendix.

Moving out

You can clarify with your landlord/agent but the general rule is that the property should be left in the same condition as you received it, with FAIR wear and tear accepted.

That means if 5 people have lived in a house for a year, certain things can reasonably be expected to have gotten a little worse (example: wear on the carpet) but some things will be considered above or beyond what is reasonable (example: burn marks on the kitchen counter).

This is where you should get out the inventory you were given when you moved in and read through it to see what's expected.

It's in your interest to replace any missing or broken items at this stage, as you may be charged for them after your check out. Make sure the property and its contents are cleaned in line with your inventory.

Cleaning the house

Plan enough time to clean – it can take longer than you think! It's easier once your belongings and any furniture are taken out. You'll probably need to vacuum the whole house, clean windows, wipe down all surfaces including the kitchen units and bathroom suite, empty cupboards and mop floors.

Here's some common items that get missed and cause issues with deposit returns:

- Not clearing out kitchen cupboards
- Not cleaning grease from surfaces in the kitchen
- Fridge / freezers not emptied of food, not defrosted, not clean
- Not cleaning out the washing machine soap tray
- Not replacing blown light bulbs
- Not cleaning light fittings, or wiping down skirting boards/doorframes

DON'T dump all your rubbish outside on the street because you run out of time on the last day and expect the bin men to pick it all up – excessive rubbish on the pavements etc. can be fined by the council, which would be passed onto you. It also fuels a stereotype of students and reflects badly on the reputation of the University.

Preparing to leave

- Heating should be turned down to a minimal setting or check with your landlord/agent
- Do a last check of the house to ensure you've removed everything that you've brought in.
- Take the final meter readings. Take photos and email them to yourself to prove date of photos.
- Have you ordered something that's going to be delivered after you've moved out?
Rearrange delivery. Re-direct your post
- Remember to update your new address details with your bank, mobile phone company, and the Roehampton Registry Dept.
- Give your forwarding addresses, contact numbers and account details to your landlord/agent so they can return your deposit and contact you if there's any issues.

End of tenancy

Some important things to think about!

The landlord/agent should perform a check-out of the property with you, where the end of tenancy house condition is compared to the original condition. It's not necessary for you to be there but you might like to be in case something isn't quite right and you want to do some last minute cleaning.

Keys will either be collected by the person checking you out of the house, or you'll need to arrange with the landlord/agent what to do with them – you might have to leave them in the house (take a photo as proof). Bear in mind until all the sets of keys are back you could be charged rent.

Contact utility companies with the date your tenancy ends (not the date you move out), pass on the final meter readings and give them a forwarding address. You should give your landlord's name as the next occupant.

Contact your service providers (internet etc) to close accounts if you're not transferring them to your next place.

Remember to cancel your standing order with your bank for the rent payment. The landlord/agent can't do this for you.

Arrange for post to be redirected at the post office - don't expect the landlord/agent or next tenant to forward post on for you.

Return of your deposit

One of the last and best parts of your tenancy!

Your deposit return procedure is detailed in the information provided to you at the start of your tenancy with your tenancy deposit certificate / emailed confirmation, or can be found online here (depending on which scheme your deposit is held with):

mydeposits.co.uk

tenancydepositscheme.com

depositprotection.com

Deposit refunds will normally be made by an online BACS payment within 10 working days after the end of the tenancy. In the event of a dispute however, refer to the deposit scheme guidelines, as the time frames can differ.

These payments must be made to the tenants named on the tenancy agreement, and cannot be made until the landlord/agent has confirmed your account details and forwarding addresses. They'll normally also require written confirmation of the outcome agreed between all parties (tenants and landlord).

If a dispute occurs between you and your landlord/agent and no agreement can be reached about how much of the deposit should be returned, there will be a free service offered by the scheme protecting your deposit to help resolve the matter – the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) service. Please also seek assistance from the Off-Campus Accommodation team who will ensure your case is presented correctly.



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Appendix

Condensation, mould and damp prevention advice

Condensation is probably the biggest cause of damp inside homes. This information should help you identify and reduce condensation as well as help treat the mould growth that's often associated with it.

There's four main types of dampness. Understanding the difference between them allows you to treat the problem effectively.

Condensation

By far the most common cause of dampness experienced by tenants.

Condensation is water vapour or moisture inside the home coming into contact with a colder surface like a window or wall. The resultant water drops (condensation) may then soak into the wallpaper/paintwork and over time, those damp areas attract black mould that grows on its surface.

Condensation mainly occurs during winter when it's cold – whether rainy or dry outside. Usually it's found in the corners of rooms, north facing walls and on or near windows. It's also found behind furniture (like wardrobes and beds) when they're pushed up against external walls and there's no air circulation.

Note: Black mould is frequently seen on this type of dampness.

Rising Damp

This is water rising from the ground into the home, through or round a broken damp proof course (DPC) or passing through the brickwork if the property was built without one. (A DPC is a horizontal layer of waterproof material built into the walls just above ground level).

Rising damp only affects basements and ground floor rooms. Normally it won't rise more than 12 - 24 inches (300mm - 600mm) above ground level and normally leaves a 'tide mark' low down on the wall with white salts on the affected areas.

Rising damp will be present all year round but is more noticeable in winter. Left untreated, it can cause wall plaster to crumble and paper to lift in the affected area.

Note: Black mould is rarely seen where there is rising damp (and then only in the early stages) because rising dampness carry natural ground salts which prevent the growth of black mould.

Penetrating Dampness

This type of dampness will only be on external walls or if there's a roof leak, on ceilings. It only appears because of an external defect to the property, such as missing pointing to the brickwork, cracked rendering or missing roof tiles. These defects allow water to pass from outside to the inside surfaces.

This is far more noticeable after rain and normally appears as a well-defined 'damp-patch' which looks and feels damp to touch.

Note: Black mould is rarely seen on areas of penetrating dampness, because the affected area is usually too wet and the dampness contains salts picked up when passing through the wall, which prevent black mould growth.

Defective Plumbing

Leaks from water and waste pipes (especially in bathrooms and kitchens) are relatively common. They can affect external and internal walls and ceilings. The affected area looks and feels damp to touch and remains damp whatever the weather outside.

A quick look at the pipes serving the kitchen and bathroom and the seals around the bath, shower and sinks; plus the external pipework (such as guttering) will usually find the source of the problem.

Note: Black mould is rarely seen on this type of dampness because the area is usually too wet – and chemicals in a waste water leak will prevent mould growth.

How to reduce condensation and black mould growth

1. Produce less moisture

Everyday our activities – even breathing – add moisture to the air inside our home. The below table gives you some idea of how much moisture you could be adding:

Activity	Moisture-generated
2 people at home for a day	10.5 pints average
A person seated, working for 4 hours	0.5 pint
A person sleeping for 8 hours	0.5 pint
A shower	1 pint a day
Washing clothes and drying indoors	3.5 pints a day
Cooking and use of a kettle	3.5 – 6 pints

Source: Typical Moisture Generation Rates for Household Activities, British Standards Institute

To reduce this:

- Always try to dry clothes outdoors.
- Avoid drying indoors – but if you have to, use a clothes airer in the bathroom, close the door and turn on the extractor fan, or leave the window slightly open.
- Vent tumble driers to the outside.

- Cover pans when cooking, don't leave kettles boiling and only fill with the water you need (this will also help reduce fuel bills).

2. Remove Excess Moisture

Wipe windows and window sills to remove condensation. This is especially important in the bedroom, bathroom and kitchen - just opening the window is not enough. Make this a part of your regular cleaning.

3. Ventilate - Get Rid of Moisture

Ventilating rooms removes condensation and excess moisture.

You can do this without making draughts or cooling the room too much – open the window slightly or use the trickle vent that's often on new UPVC windows. This allows warm (moist) air to escape and lets in cool (dry) air.

- Don't completely block chimneys, vents, air bricks and flues.
- Always ventilate or open a window when using the kitchen or bathroom and close the doors to prevent moisture spreading to other parts of the house. Continue ventilating these rooms for a short time after a shower, bath or cooking, and keep the door closed!
- Open bedroom windows after you get up for the day (ideally for minimum 1 hour) and pull back the sheets to air the bedding. De-clutter your window sill if opening it is difficult.
- Leave gaps between the back of furniture and cold walls so air can circulate, and avoid overfilling cupboards and wardrobes as air cannot circulate.

4. Steady Heating

In cold weather, keeping low background heat on is the best way to warm rooms and avoid condensation – much better than short bursts of high heat.

Make sure you understand your radiator heating controls, thermostats and timers which allow you to control the heating and manage heating costs!

5. Black Mould and Dealing with it

Black mould can grow on walls, ceilings, furnishings – even clothes.

To kill and remove the mould:

- Remove excess mould carefully with a damp cloth (throw away after). Or use a vacuum and empty afterwards. Avoid brushing mould as this releases spores into the air.
- Wipe affected areas down with a fungicidal wash or diluted bleach (available from most DIY shops or supermarkets). Protect yourself with rubber gloves and safety glasses.
- Mildewed clothes can be dry-cleaned.

Dealing with condensation isn't easy, and you should try to carry out as much of this advice as you can each day so it becomes part of your habit and lifestyle – just doing one or two steps won't necessarily solve a problem.

Warmth versus ventilation

Striking a balance between warmth and ventilation is important, and done correctly can be very effective.

A common thought is that by opening windows or ventilating you are losing heat - but what you're actually doing is allowing warm moist air to escape and cool dry air to enter your home. Dry cool air is actually cheaper to heat than warm moist air!

Today, many homes with double-glazing experience problems with condensation and mould growth that didn't happen previously with old draughty windows, because the natural draughts around the poorly fitted windows have been sealed. Using trickle vents or opening windows slightly achieves the necessary air circulation.

Remember the point is to ventilate for an appropriate period of time, not to leave the windows open all day long!

Caring for your appliances

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement you'll be looking after the landlords contents. Here's a few basic instructions for the care of appliances that may be present in your property, to help prolong their life and assist you in trouble free living.

Operating manuals can be found and downloaded online by entering the make and model into a search engine.

Fridge/Freezer

A full fridge maintains its temperature better, so keeping your fridge fuller (even just with bottles/jugs of water) helps avoid food spoiling. Keep your freezer free from ice build-up to improve its efficiency, and keep running costs down.

You can also occasionally vacuum the coils at the back/underneath of the fridge to avoid dirt build-up, which helps improve efficiency.

Washing machine

Remove items from clothes pockets before washing to avoid denting the drum or causing a blockage, which can lead to the machine not emptying. Keep the soap dispenser clean and free from blockages. Cleaning the rubber seal inside the door prevents build-up of grime and deterioration of the rubber.

Tumble dryer

Remove items from clothes pockets before use. Make sure the filter is kept free from fluff and fibres. Using the machine when the filter is clogged can result in burnt clothes and the seizure of the motor. If it is a condensing dryer, the waste water compartment needs regular removal and emptying.

Dishwasher

The machine will need regularly filling with special dishwasher salt, and rinse aid fluid – both can be bought from most supermarkets. Ensure the filter is cleaned regularly. Waiting until the machine is full before using will help improve water efficiency. You should check that your cutlery/crockery etc. are suitable for dishwasher cleaning.

Waste disposal

Operation varies depending on the unit, however nearly all require running water during use. Do ensure that only food waste is disposed of – paper, cutlery or anything plastic or metal will jam (and potentially break) the appliance.

Radiators

Don't place damp / wet clothing over the top of radiators. As well as causing condensation and mould, this can cause radiators to rust and wallpaper behind to peel. At the start of winter bleed the radiators to remove any air – ask your landlord/agent for a key and instructions.

Smoke Alarms

Battery operated smoke alarms have a removable cover so batteries can easily be changed. It's your responsibility to test the smoke alarm. Mains operated smoke alarms are the responsibility of the landlord/agent so you must report any faults immediately.

Intercom

Intercom systems are maintained by the managing agent for the building. Report any issues to your landlord/agent so they can follow this up.

Boiler/heating system

It's relatively simple to reset or re-pressurise a boiler, which would avoid a call out charge for this simple task. Instructions in the operating manual should tell you what to do, or you could try calling your landlord/agent for advice if unsure.

You should not attempt to make any significant repairs or changes to the boiler and/or heating system; this would be something for a certified gas engineer to carry out.

Should you suspect a gas or carbon monoxide leak at any time ring TRANSCO immediately on 0800 111 999.

Useful contacts and resources

Off-Campus Accommodation

0208 392 4451

RSU

0208 392 3221

Police

101 – if you wish to report a crime that does not require an emergency response

999 – for emergencies only (Police, Fire and Ambulance)

NHS

Emergency 111

Student Welfare Officers

portal.roehampton.ac.uk/information/student-support/Pages/welfare-support.aspx

020 8392 8110

Student Finance Office

0208 392 3090

Medical Centre

020 8392 3679

Careers/Job Centre

020 8392 3040

Sport Roehampton

0208 392 3467

Samaritans

116 123 (free from mobiles and landlines).

jo@samaritans.org.uk

020 8789 9121 – Localbranch

Rape Crisis

0808 802 9999

Wandsworth Council

Private Sector Team – 020 8871 6000

Recycling and Rubbish (Waste Services) - 020 8871 8558

wandsworth.gov.uk

wandsworth.gov.uk/wasteservices