



# UCAS

## University Accommodation



### What is in this presentation?

- The different types of accommodation on offer**
- The positives and negatives of different accommodations on offer**
- How much money do you get for a loan**
- Other frequently asked questions regarding loans**
- Mental health support on offer**

# DIFFERENT ACCOMMODATION



**What's the difference between halls and private accommodation?**

## **Halls**

**Owned by the university and often provide on-campus accommodation to students, mostly first years, in catered or self-catered options. You usually apply with a list of your preferred halls and room types and will be assigned a room. The amenities and modernity of the facilities will be between universities.**

## **Private accommodation**

**Can either be halls owned by a company, which can serve students from different universities and colleges, or it can mean privately rented houses or flats, where you can have more choice over who you share with and exactly where you'll be living.**

# THINGS TO CONSIDER



## Who do you want to live with?

**Halls** – usually your housemates are allocated by your university. Though you may be able to state a preference on your application if you have any requirements or you'd like to live with someone you already know.

**Private** – you may be able to choose your own housemates in private accommodation, e.g. if a few of your friends are going to the same university. A lot of students go into private accommodation in their second year, when they can choose to live with people they've met during their first year. Or if you end up applying for accommodation later on the application cycle – and as a result there are no more places in halls left for your first year – you may be able to join with other students who are going straight into private accommodation.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER



## Where do you want to live?

**Halls** – often located on campus or nearby, or with direct student transport to your campus (with student-friendly rates). Or your halls might be closer to the town centre than your campus is – or they could be tucked away somewhere quieter, but containing its own amenities (like a shop, refectory, students' union bar – maybe even a gym and sports court).

**Private** – student houses or flats could be situated anywhere in town really – from family-friendly neighbourhoods to lively areas with nightlife or entertainment venues close by.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER



**How long do you want to live there?**

**Halls** – usually have lengths of tenancy that match the academic year. This might be September to June for example, and then you might move back home for summer before returning to university. Your university might offer different lengths of tenancy though – get in touch with them to find out more.

**Private** – tenancy lengths vary for private student accommodation. You may be able to stay for a full calendar year if you wanted to remain in your university town or city over the summer. Or you might be able to live in the same place for multiple years if you're happy with the property and the people you live with.

# THINGS TO CONSIDER



## What shared spaces would you like?

**Halls** – you’ll either have a shared bathroom or your own en-suite shower room. You probably won’t have any outdoor space that’s exclusive to you and your housemates. But you might have a courtyard or green spaces outside shared with other student halls – or your halls might be right on campus.

**Private** – you’ll probably have a shared bathroom and a private garden or courtyard, which could be great if you like growing things, barbecues or spending time outside.

# HALLS OF RESIDENT

Halls of residence are owned by your university and they're mostly reserved for first year students. They're usually closer to campus and can be cheaper than other types of accommodation.

You'll need to apply for a place in halls of residence through the university accommodation office, and you can usually do this online. You'll apply for a few different halls and rate them in your preference order, but bear in mind they are popular, so you may not get your first choice. Check the university website for details on how and when to apply.

## Pros

- ✓ Uni halls are very social, and it's a good chance to make lots of new friends.
- ✓ Halls are great if it's your first time living away from home. You usually get water and electricity bills included, as well as broadband.

## Cons

- ✗ Halls are the most popular option, so you might not be put in your first choice.
- ✗ You'll be living with lots of people you don't know, which can be challenging if you're not used to it.

# **PRIVATE HALLS OF RESIDENT**

**Private halls are like normal halls of residence but aren't owned by the university. They're usually part of a UK-wide chain of purpose-built student accommodation. Sometimes this means you could be living with students who don't go to the same university as you. They also sometimes have other options like studio flats available, although they're more expensive.**

# WHEN CONSIDERING HALLS

**Cost:** Prices will vary depending on the location and what's included. See what options will suit your budget. You usually get electricity and water bills, but you'll still need to pay for things like a TV licence and insurance, so make sure you factor those in.

**The right fit:** Check the university accommodation website to see what each option looks like and what they offer. Some might be catered, for example, or have shared bathrooms. It's about what's going to suit your needs best.

Understanding what's included will also help you know what to take with you.

**Location:** Depending on which university you're going to, you'll need to think about the location of your accommodation. For example, is there a halls option on your campus and if not, how will you travel to university and how much will it cost?

**Read the small print:** Make sure you know what you can and can't take with you. For example, some halls have restrictions on taking cars, and some accommodation has different contract lengths.

**Remember:** You aren't guaranteed a place in your first choice, so when you're selecting your options, make sure you'd be happy to live in any of them and scope out what your day-to-day life would look like in each one.

# SHARED HOUSING

If you're not interested in going into halls of residence, or you haven't managed to get a place, you could choose to rent a house or flat, either by yourself or with other students.

This is common for second and third year students, but you can ask your accommodation office or students' union to see if there are other first years looking for private rented accommodation too. This might also suit you if you're a mature student.

## Pros

- ✓ You can choose exactly who you live with and you're in control of your independence.
- ✓ You can explore more options – from flats and houses, to studio apartments.

## Cons

- ✗ It can be harder to make friends. You don't naturally meet as many people as you would in halls of residence.
- ✗ You'll need to organise more bills yourself and you'll have to liaise directly with the landlord.

# WHEN CONSIDERING SHARED HOUSING



**Cost:** On top of any rent, you'll need to budget for your essential bills like electricity, water, and WiFi. You'll need to manage your budget well, which can be tricky if you're not used to living away from home. You also need to pay a deposit for rented accommodation, so make sure you factor that into your costs.

**The right fit:** One of the pros of living in shared accommodation is you can choose who you live with. Make sure you know who you'll be living with beforehand. It's a good idea to visit the property before signing any contracts or paying a deposit to make sure you know what you're paying for and that it's a good fit for you.

**Location:** One of the perks of shared accommodation is you can choose the exact location of where you live, so you could pick somewhere right in the centre of the local town or city, or somewhere close to campus. Think about how you'll get to university each day and what's in the local area before signing any paperwork.

**Read the small print:** Make sure you understand exactly what you're signing up for when renting, how long your contract is for, and that your deposit is secured in a deposit protection scheme. Read more about [how to keep your wits about you when renting](#).

# HOW MUCH MONEY WILL YOU GET?



**The amount you're entitled to borrow depends on two factors:**

- **Whether you're living in London.**
- **How much your household (parents') income is.**

**Students living in London can get bigger loans to reflect the higher living costs in the city.**

**Household - or parental income - is a factor that affects every student. The amount you can borrow is means-tested, so the more money your parents earn, the less you can claim. The principle is that better-off parents should support their children financially through their education, whereas children of lower-income parents should be given more help.**

**There are a number of bands you can fall into, starting at £25,000 (combined income), and rising by £5,000 up to the cut off of £62,215.**

**The amount you can apply for depends on which income band your parents fall into. So, for example:**

- **Children of parents earning £25,000 can claim £8,944 per year, whereas**
- **Those of parents earning £50,000 can only claim £5,735.**

**If you're living at home during your time as a student, you can claim a maximum of £7,529. These figures change from time to time – sometimes up, sometimes down.**

# HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR LOANS?



**You can apply on GOV.UK. Make sure you've got all your personal details to hand. Your parents will probably need to be with you when you apply.**

## **When do I have to pay it back?**

**You have to start paying back your maintenance loan the April after you finish your course. You only have to start paying once you earn £25,725 per year.**

## **How much do I pay back every month?**

**The amount you pay back depends on how much you're earning.**

**It's calculated at 9% of everything you earn over the threshold (£25,725). So, what does this look like in practice?**

**If you earn £26,725 before tax, for example, you will be £1,000 over the threshold. This means you'll have to pay back £90 in that year (£7.50 a month).**

**If you earn £30,725, you'll be £5,000 over the threshold, so you'll pay back £450 a year (£37.50 a month).**

# MORE LOAN QUESTIONS



## What do I need to do to pay back my loan?

The loan will be automatically taken out of your pay, just like tax, once you're in employment.

If you become self-employed, you'll have to declare your student loan when you fill in your tax return every year, and you'll have to pay back the amount you owe.

Clearly, the more you earn, the more you'll have to pay, and the quicker you'll have the complete loan paid off. If you change jobs and your income changes, so will the amount you have to pay back. It is taken month by month, so you should only ever have to pay more when you are earning more.

## What if I never earn enough?

If you leave university and never earn enough to meet the threshold, your loan will be written off after 30 years. Remember that the threshold does change from time to time (it was exactly £25,000 until recently), so you need to keep an eye on these changes if you are paying a loan back.

# LEAVING YOUR COURSE EARLY



## What if I leave my course early?

**If you quit your course, you will still have to pay back your student loan. However, you must inform the university and the Student Loan Company, as their payments to you will stop. It's possible to pause your course (for example, if you get ill or need to look after someone) and restart it again when you resume studies.**

# DO I HAVE TO PAY INTEREST



**Just like any loan, your student loan will accrue interest, but interest on student loans is usually set at a lower rate than normal commercial loans, but the rate you pay can change if government policy changes.**

**The amount you're charged in interest is based on the loan amount you still owe, and it's added to the total amount. That means your debt will keep rising if you do not meet the repayment threshold. But, every time you make a payment, your balance will reduce, so the amount of interest added to your account each month will also fall.**

**Basically, the quicker you pay off your loan, the less you will pay in total, as there will have been less time to earn interest.**

**You can opt to pay off your entire balance at any time – you don't have to pay it back gradually. If you start earning good money or get an inheritance, it might be an option. It will save you money in the long run as you will have built up less interest.**

**However, if you have other loans, credit card debts or hire purchase agreements, they will almost certainly have higher interest rates than your student loan, so you would probably be better off clearing those debts first.**

# SUPPORT YOU CAN GET



## **Are you worried about where you'll be living at uni?**

**Totally understandable – until you're all moved in, it's hard to imagine what it'll be like. Don't worry though, most people feel nervous, and you'll have plenty of time to get to know each other and settle in.**

**In case there's anything in particular you're thinking about, here's a run through some of the support you can get while you're living in student accommodation.**

## **Can't afford student accommodation?**

**Speak to your university's money advice team. They can let you know if there's any funding or finance you might be eligible for – whether short term while you're waiting for student finance or to start a part-time job, or perhaps a bursary to help you pay your tuition and accommodation fees.**

# SUPPORT YOU CAN GET



## Accommodation teams

**Most universities have an accommodation team that runs the various student halls and lodgings – you can contact them if you have questions about where you’re living. Or if you’re in a private shared house, they can probably still give advice if you need it.**

**If you’re in student halls, you might have a residential assistant – usually a final-year student or recent graduate. They’ll remember what it was like to move into student accommodation and can answer any questions you have. They might also be responsible for checking your kitchen and halls are in a decent condition (so if anyone’s a lazy cleaner, your residential assistant might be able to encourage them to get on with it!).**

## Maintenance and security

**If you’re on campus or in student halls, there’s probably a security team on site and CCTV. You can contact them if you notice anything untoward. You’ll also have a way to report any maintenance issues in your accommodation – most universities have a facilities team that’s responsible for fixing any wear and tear. If you’re in a private shared house, you should have decent locks on the exterior doors – and you should be in a safe enough area if your university has an approved private accommodation list.**

# WELLBEING/MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT



**If you'd like some support in general, or specifically with living in accommodation, unis have teams to help. Whether you speak to people you live with or spend time with them to help you settle in – or whether you'd like to speak to someone outside of your accommodation, there's always someone to talk to:**

- **Wellbeing and mental health teams**
- **Faith and spirituality spaces**
- **Student reps and residential assistants**
- **Your students' union**
- **Your housemates or students on your course**
- **Your personal tutor or lecturers**