# Finding a house

## Private Accommodation

A large majority of second and third year students choose the option of moving into private accommodation after their first year, with a variety of options available in the local area, including Selly Oak, a five minute walk from the University campus.

The weekly cost of rent varies from around £55 to £85; often this price excludes the utilities (electricity/gas, heating and water). The capacity of the houses also varies, from single bedroom flats to 9 or more bedroom houses. You should carefully consider what type of accommodation you are interested in before making any decisions. If you want to live with your friends, you should discuss location, size of your group and budget before you begin your search.

A good idea before you start looking for a house is to make a list of all the things that are important to you. This may include en suite bathrooms, a garden or closeness to the university, for example.

## Birmingham Studentpad

- The **Studentpad (http://www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk/Accommodation)** website is the official University of Birmingham property search engine and is useful for students looking for a house, predominantly from second year onwards.
- MLAS Accredited landlords (see below for more on MLAS) advertise their properties through our student pad website. Properties range from short term to long term leases, many within close proximity to the university.
- The properties include rooms, house shares, self-contained flats and also houses for couples or families.
- Accredited landlords must have copies of Gas Safety and Electrical Safety certificates, House in Multiple Occupancy licenses (where applicable), Tenancy Deposit Scheme details and EPC's (energy performance certificates). Only those properties with the relevant certificates will be advertised.
- Visit **www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk/Accommodation (http://www.birminghamstudentpad.co.uk/Accommodation)** to begin your search.

## What is MLAS?

MLAS is the Midland Landlord Accreditation Scheme which recognises professional landlords. Landlords are required to attend a one day seminar to learn about best practice for landlords, housing legislation, and what is expected of them. They will be required to sign up to the MLAS Code of Conduct. For further information please refer to the website at **www.mlas.org.uk (http://www.mlas.org.uk/)**

All members are required to undertake continual professional development, which allows them to keep up-to-date with the latest legislation, advice and guidance on renting and letting property.

## Right to Rent Checks

Following recent government legislation, landlords in the West Midlands will now be required to check a tenant's right to be in the UK before allowing them to live in their property. This applies to any new tenancy in private rented accommodation starting after 1st December 2014. Therefore if you are looking to rent property in the private sector, even if you are a UK citizen, you can expect your landlord to ask to see (and take copies of) documents that confirm your right to be in the UK. Further details can be found in our **information sheet (/Documents/students/accommodation/Landlords-HE-Living-version-V2.pdf)**. If you have any concerns about this you are encouraged to **contact Living (/undergraduate/accommodation/Contactus.aspx)** for assistance.

## Accommodation Checklist

### Exterior

- Does the roof look sound? Any broken tiles, holes etc?
- Check the gutters and pipes for cracks, moss and grass
- Ensure the window frames are not rotten and that the windows themselves are not cracked.

### Interior

- Check for signs of damp. These will look like dark patches, peeling wallpaper and flaking paint
- Look out for signs of condensation, such as mould on the walls.
- Check for signs of pests, such as slug trails and mouse droppings

### Gas & Electricity

- Do the plugs get hot when switched on? How many sockets are there
- Are there any frayed cables?
- If there is a gas fire, does it heat up correctly?
- Check that there is an Annual Gas Safety Certificate and that it is valid
- Check electrical appliances are in good working order.

### Plumbing

- Make sure the hot water and all the taps work.
- Check any baths/wash basins for cracks and ensure the toilet flushes properly.

### Security

- Ensure front doors are solid with five-bar mortice lock (some insurance companies will insist on this, if wooden do they have a secondary lock?
- Check that all internal doors and windows have locks.

- Does the house have burglar and smoke alarms?
- Check access to the rear of the property is secure, adequate fencing, gated entry etc.
- Ask your landlord to make any security improvements you feel are required.
- If the house has 5 or more tenants and is over 3 or more storeys then the property requires a HMO Licence (House in Multiple Occupation) which you should ask the landlord to provide.

It is also a good idea to ask the current tenants about their experience of living in the house and would they recommend. Recommendations are always a good indication.

### Local Area

Before you start looking for a property, take the time to check out the local area and be sure on where you want to live before you start the search. There are three main areas surrounding the Edgbaston Campus: Edgbaston, Harborne and Selly Oak. However, there are lots of other options in the city which you may consider, including Moseley, Kings Heath, Weoley Castle and the city centre.

### Types of Accommodation

There are now many options of accommodation within the local area from private landlords offering shared house accommodation to private providers with purpose built student accommodation, which is similar to University owned accommodation. Check out all the options and make sure you are completely happy before signing any contract - once you have signed, in most cases a contract is binding.



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