



Student's Guide to... Private Sector Rented Accommodation 2016-2017

What this is:

This booklet is designed for students who are looking for accommodation in the Private Sector. It will provide a brief overview of Private Sector accommodation in Northampton.

More detailed information is available on our website:

www.northampton.ac.uk/accommodation



Two important aspects of selecting the right property will be the condition of the property and the manner in which it is managed by the owner or their representatives. To this end, the University recognises two property accreditation schemes which audit the condition of properties and their management. These are run by Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and Decent and Safe Homes (DASH).

The Housing List

The University runs the housing list online so that all students can access it. The list goes live from February each year and runs until December.

Initially the housing list will contain the details of properties which have been accredited by either Northampton Borough Council or Decent and Safe Homes (DASH). These properties will be identifiable by a logo from the accreditation scheme.

As the accommodation cycle progresses non-registered properties will be added to the housing list. These properties will not have a logo associated with them.

The housing list is available at: www.northamptonstudentpad.com



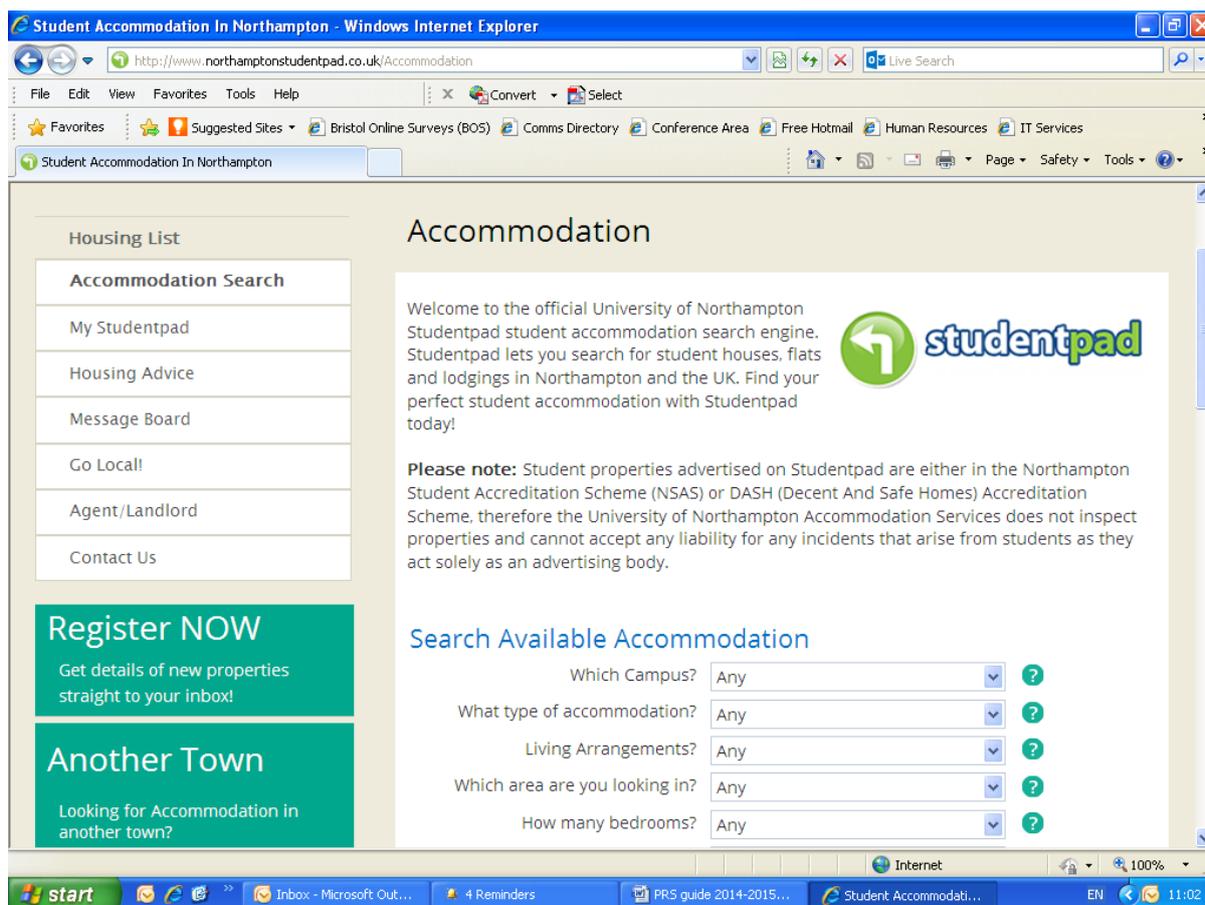
A screen print of the landing page is outlined overleaf.

You may wish to start by entering your criteria for the search (e.g. area, number of rooms, price).

You will then be prompted for the password. The password is: **studenthouse**

The list of matching properties will show on the screen.

You also have the option of registering to get frequent updates – click **register now** on the right hand side.



Accreditation Schemes

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Decent & Safe Homes (DASH) Accreditation Scheme



DASH Landlord Accreditation is a scheme which recognises and acknowledges private sector landlords with good standards in the condition and management of their properties and their relationship with their tenants.

Accreditations support landlords and tenants in their responsibilities and as such is a significant factor in a strategy of self-regulating for the private rented sector which will contribute to the raising of housing standards.

The scheme has been successfully operating since 2008 and is part of DASH Services. DASH Landlord Accreditation was previously known as EMLAS (East Midlands Landlord Accreditation Scheme).

The scheme allows all landlords to become a member and achieve accreditation. DASH Landlord Accreditation compliments other accreditation initiatives already in operation and works alongside a range of partners in the private rented sector to offer landlords the best experience.

Northampton Student Accreditation Scheme (NSAS)

The University of Northampton has worked in partnership with Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and Northampton Landlords Association to create the Northampton Student Accommodation Accreditation Scheme.



This scheme was operated through the Private Sector Housing Solution Team and required the landlord to have each individual property inspected and assessed.

Accreditation for each property lasts for five years. Approximately 250 properties in Northampton have been accredited under this scheme. Unfortunately, NBC have indicated that they can no longer support this scheme. In terms of the housing list, the University will still honour the accreditation on individual properties until they lapse.

By supporting these schemes it is envisaged that students will be encouraged to make informed choices regarding their accommodation. This should enhance the quality of student accommodation in Northampton.

Properties which are registered through either scheme are advertised online through the University housing list at www.northamptonstudentpad.com and are identified by the attachment of the logo from the respective accreditation scheme.



Towards the end of the accommodation cycle, the housing list will also contain non-registered properties. These properties will have no logo.

Who We Are:

The Accommodation Services Team are here to help you find safe, secure and affordable accommodation on or off campus.



Please contact us on 01604 892434 or see our webpage at www.northampton.ac.uk/accommodation



Frequently Asked Questions:

Where to look

The vast majority of student properties in Northampton lie within a four mile radius of the University. The popular student accommodation areas are:

- Kingsthorpe;
- Kingsthorpe Village;
- Semilong;
- Mounts;
- Kingsley/Poet's Corner;
- Abington.

In many cases these properties are close to the University bus routes. Further information about these routes is available at www.northampton.ac.uk/buses



There are a number of ways in which you may search for private sector accommodation. These include:

- **The University housing list** - This contains details of properties which landlords wish to advertise to students. Many of these properties (identified by the respective logo) are accredited by Northampton Borough Council and/or DASH;
- **Estate Agents/Property management companies** - There are a number of companies who may let properties to students. In some cases these companies may only let to groups of students rather than individuals;
- **Local press** - The Chronicle and Echo will have a property section on Thursday and at <http://www.northamptonchron.co.uk/property>
- **On-line options and word of mouth** - A number of students will secure their accommodation through the recommendation of friends, third parties or the social media. You will need to be mindful of the source of your information when assessing whether it represents a good option for you.



What to look for

There will be a number of factors which could affect your choice of property. You may wish to consider some of the following:

- **Rent** - How much? For how long? What does it include?

- **Quality of the accommodation** - Is the accommodation in a good condition?
- **Contractual obligations** - Are you happy with the terms and conditions outlined in the contract/tenancy agreement?
- **Location** - Are you happy with the location? Where is the nearest bus route? How easy is it to access the University or shops; what is the neighbourhood like?
- **Flatmates** - Who are you sharing the property with? Are they students? If not it might affect the Council Tax status of the property.

Will I have to sign a contract or tenancy agreement?

Yes, most landlords will ask you to sign a contract or tenancy agreement. This agreement should outline your rights and responsibilities whilst you are renting. Any agreement may confer additional rights, but cannot take away any statutory rights which the law gives you.

A contract/tenancy agreement should contain some basic information including:

- The name of the residents;
- The name and address of the landlord/letting agent;
- The address of the property being let;
- The level of rent (detailing what this may cover e.g. utility bills; council tax; water rates etc.);
- The period of the letting.

What is a joint tenancy?

A few landlords may ask you to sign a joint tenancy. This is an agreement between a group of people where you have exactly the same rights and obligations as each other. You are all equally responsible for the agreement. Therefore if one person does not honour the agreement, for example not paying rent or causing damage to the property, then the landlord can expect the other residents to cover it.

How much rent will I be expected to pay?

The table overleaf gives average costs in the private sector for 2014-2015. Please note individual tenancies will vary.

2014-2015	Weekly cost (per person)	Total cost (per person)
Anticipated Average rent for a non-en-suite room	£80	£3,360 (42 weeks)
Approximate average weekly utility bills (water, gas, electric)	£20	£840 (42 weeks)
Approximate average cost of one journey on public transport to University	£20 (assuming 10 journeys @ £2 per week)	£720 (assuming ten journeys per week for 36 weeks)
Sub TOTAL	£120.00	£4,920 (42 weeks)
Retainer* for the summer, (assuming a charge of 75% rent)	Please check with Landlord	Please check with Landlord

* retainers are not normally applicable if you are securing the property at the end of the summer vacation.

How much damage deposit will I be expected to pay?

Landlords will require a refundable damage deposit. This is to cover any damage, beyond normal wear and tear, which may be outstanding at the end of the residency. The average cost is between £300-350 per person. Deposits must be protected by a tenancy deposit protection scheme.

Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd (TDSL) – 0870 707 1707
<http://www.mydeposits.co.uk>



Deposit Protection Service (DPS) – 0871 703 0552
<http://www.depositprotection.com>

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) – 0845 226 7837
<http://www.thedisputeservice.co.uk>



Will I be able to access the internet?

The majority of private sector houses do not include internet within the rent. This is something you may have to set up separately in conjunction with the other tenants.

Will I have a cleaner?

The majority of private sector houses do not include a cleaning service. Please check with your landlord as there may be additional charges to pay for this service to be arranged.

Moving in

There are a number of things which you may wish to do when you first move into a property. These could include:

- Ensure you have the contact details of the landlord/letting agents whom you may need to contact regarding the letting or in an emergency;
- Many landlords will now use on-line payment services, however if you are making payment by cash or cheque, ensure that you obtain a receipt outlining what it covers;
- Ensure that you have a copy of your contract/tenancy agreement;
- Check with the landlord/letting agent as to how they wish to receive your Council Tax exemption certificate. You will receive a copy of this document at your enrolment. The owner may require this document to ensure that the property is rated exempt from council tax;
- Take all meter readings for the utilities and services for which you are responsible. If in doubt, take them anyway!
- You may like to consider taking a photograph of the condition of the property for your records (in case there is a disagreement at the end of your residency);
- Familiarise yourself with any appliances, heating controls and stop cock. If you are unsure ask the landlord/letting agent;
- Ensure that your possessions are covered by personal possessions insurance;
- Introduce yourself to the neighbours (after all you will be living next to one another for up to nine months).
- Ensure that you have registered with a local GP.

Can I move rooms if I am unhappy?

The possibility of room transfers within the private sector is limited to the Landlord's portfolio of properties and availability. Larger landlords may transfer students between houses to help the groups gel – make sure you agree to the room/location/condition before transferring your belongings!

Glossary of Terms

Name	Description
Agent	Someone who acts on behalf of the landlord. Their duties include collecting rent, arranging viewings, and attending to minor repairs. If an agent is in place, clarify the limits of their authority i.e. can they authorise major repairs.
Contract	A legal agreement between two parties usually in a written form, providing some clarification of your rights and responsibilities. Usually Assured Shorthold Tenancy.
Contents Insurance	We recommend all students take out insurance on their personal possessions with a reputable insurance company: http://www.endsleigh.co.uk/
Council Tax exemption certificate	A form that all full-time students will receive at enrolment. If a property is inhabited solely by full time students then it should be exempt from council tax. Students will need to provide their exemption certificate to the landlord so that they can demonstrate their student status for council tax purposes.
Damage Deposit	A sum of money retained by a landlord against any damage that may occur during the residency. Depending upon agreement, this can cover unpaid bills.
DASH (Decent & Safe Homes)	DASH Landlord Accreditation Scheme – focuses on landlord management and risk assessment of properties. An acceptable alternative to NSAS (below)
NSAS	Northampton Student Accreditation Scheme. Accreditation means the property will be in good condition and the tenancy will be managed to a good standard.

Name	Description
Environmental Health Office (EHO)	A council department which enforces minimum standards in private sector accommodation.
Guarantor	A person who agrees to cover any outstanding liability of a tenant (e.g. rent, damage, bills etc.)
Interlinked fire alarm	A fire detection system, where each sensor and sounder are linked to one another. This enables the efficient notification of activation throughout the property.
Inventory	A list of items contained within the property. Usually completed by landlord and tenant at the beginning of the residency as a benchmark to access standards at the conclusion of the tenancy.
Joint and several liability	A contract where all tenants are bound together. In such circumstances, a tenant could be liable for the outstanding bills/rent of another tenant.
Rent	The money paid by a resident to use the property. This is usually exclusive of utility bills, although a small number of landlords will offer inclusive rents. Ensure that you know which bills are included/excluded in the rent e.g. electricity, gas, water bills etc.
Retainer	Usually landlords will charge a retainer during the summer vacation; in return you should be able to store your possessions in the property. This can be as little as one month retainer and the remaining at full rent please read your contract carefully.

Useful Contacts:



University of Northampton Private Sector Officer (Madie Patel)

www.northampton.ac.uk/accommodation

Tel: 01604 892434 or 07793529600

Email: madie.patel@northampton.ac.uk



SHELTER

Tel: 0808 800 4444

Web: <http://england.shelter.org.uk>



Citizen's Advice Bureau (Northampton)

Tel: 0844 855 2122

Web: www.mypropertyguide.co.uk



or <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>



Northampton General Hospital Accommodation

Tel: 01604 545455



Decent and Safe Homes (DASH)

Web: <http://www.dashservices.org.uk/Accreditation>

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