



PRIVATE SECTOR ACCOMMODATION

A student guide to flat
renting in Edinburgh





Finding a place to live in a new city can be a challenge. Whether you are moving away from home for the first time or just new to Edinburgh, choosing your accommodation is a big decision.

Edinburgh has a large student population and there are plenty of flats available for rent. In addition the city provides a number of student-friendly neighbourhoods to choose from. This guide should help you to find a suitable place to live.

WHERE TO START...

Support and Advice

If you are having difficulty finding accommodation or just need some help and guidance then please contact us. We have a dedicated team of staff that can give you information and tips on how to find accommodation.

Private Accommodation Support Service

The private accommodation support service is available all year. Please contact privateaccommodation@napier.ac.uk to arrange an appointment.

The accommodation support service can:

- Offer advice and information on finding a flat in the private sector
- Set up flat viewings by calling estate agents on your behalf
- Provide a dedicated member of staff to provide information and to answer any related queries
- Provide information on any vacancies arising in University accommodation
- Provide access to the internet and telephones
- Provide access to other support services within the University
- Provide a landlord reference within 5 working days when you email us at accommodation@napier.ac.uk

ENSA Advice

This is a free, confidential and independent welfare rights and education advice service run by Edinburgh Napier Students' Association.

They can offer the following:

- Advice on how to find accommodation
- Look over leases and tenancy agreements
- Advice on tenant rights and responsibilities
- Help with disputes (landlord, flatmates, deposit)

Please contact **ENSA Advice** on **0131 229 8791** to arrange an appointment or email ensa.advice@napier.ac.uk

You can also find useful advice and guidance at scotland.shelter.org.uk and citizensadvice.org.uk



B&Bs in Edinburgh on [booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

Private Sector Accommodation

Private sector accommodation in the city generally consists of 3, 4 and 5-bedroom flats located in tenement-style buildings, which are very common in Edinburgh. Flats are usually rented to tenants either by the home owner (usually the landlord) or through a letting agent

In some cases you may find lodgings where the home owner lives in the same property and rents out rooms to tenants. This option of housing is less common and not suitable if you are sharing with a number of people. Lodgings are usually let on a self-catered basis, meaning that you will provide your own food and share the kitchen with the owner.

Finding a flat...

There are often a lot of people looking for student properties in Edinburgh. We therefore suggest that you start searching for a flat **at least** a month prior to the start of your course.

There are a number of points to consider before starting your search for a prospective property:

- What is your budget?
- What area do you want to live in?
- How accessible are the public transport links?
- Are there shops and other local amenities close by?
- Is the prospective flat in close proximity to the university campus?
- How long do you plan to live there?

Student Accommodation

We operate a waiting list for University accommodation after our guarantee date in August. If spaces become available after this date we can often offer a place to someone who may not have met our eligibility criteria. If you wish to be considered for such a place, please contact us at accommodation@napier.ac.uk or phone **0131 455 3713** and ask to be placed on this waiting list.

Please note that being placed on the waiting list does not guarantee a place in university accommodation and we suggest that you continue to search for a flat in the private sector.

Short-term Accommodation

We recommend you organise your accommodation as early as possible once you have received your offer and prior to arriving in Edinburgh.

If you do not have accommodation or if you arrive before your accommodation is ready, you will need to book a place to stay. Hostels are the cheapest option and Edinburgh has many very clean, centrally-located ones to choose from. If you are staying for an extended amount of time, ask if they can give you a weekly rate. There are also plenty of hotels and bed and breakfasts (B&Bs) around the city.

You can search for hostels, hotels or



Find your flatmates before you find your flat. That way you know exactly what you are looking for and you will get to know them before you actually live with them! Also, finding flat mates with similar budgets is important.

The best place to start looking is online. Here are a few sites to get you started - most will be updated regularly with new properties. Searching for a private flat can be quite time consuming so be prepared to do a lot of browsing online:

edinburghstudentpad.co.uk

This site contains University and private sector accommodation. Use the message board if you are looking for flatmates to share with. This site is useful if you want to stay with a family.

unite-students.com

Privately owned student-style accommodation, not associated with any university, but set up like student halls.

thestudenthousingcompany.com

Privately owned student-style accommodation, not associated with any university, but set up like student halls.

homesforstudents.co.uk

Search for flats with students who are studying at other universities in Edinburgh.

accommodationforstudents.com/ Edinburgh.asp

Search for student flats as well as individual rooms

Letting Agents

Not all flats will be rented by the homeowner. In some cases the homeowner will employ a letting agent to manage their properties. The letting agent will manage the rental process, including legal formalities from signing a lease to dealing with repairs and maintenance. The main letting agents advertise on the following sites:

espc.com

lettingweb.co.uk

citylets.co.uk

s1homes.com

zoopla.co.uk

rightmove.co.uk

Visit Google and search for estate agents or letting agencies in Edinburgh for a full list.

Flatshare websites

There are many online sites where people advertise for flatmates to live with them. You'll need to register with these sites but you can look for a room to rent, as well as post a profile of yourself - be honest! They are quick and easy to search and generally no calls need to be made initially since most of the communication is done via email which makes the process a bit less daunting if English is not your first language.

Visit spareroom.com

Classified Ads

We advise avoiding websites such as Gumtree to search for properties. These websites are not governed by a local body so be careful with private adverts and don't hand over any money until you have seen the flat. This is very important - do not send or make a payment for accommodation until you have seen the property.

The following websites provide good advice and further guidance:

scotland.shelter.org.uk

citizensadvice.org.uk

Be safe!

Remember, when you go to view potential flats to rent, always follow these safety guidelines:

- Don't go on your own. Always take someone with you when you visit a flat.
- Always let other people know where you're going, who you're meeting, and when you should be back.

- Arrange to call someone afterwards to let them know you're safe.
- If you arrange to meet someone over the internet to view a property, be doubly cautious - people on the internet aren't necessarily who they say they are.
- Don't pay any monies prior to viewing the flat and signing your tenancy agreement.
- It is advisable to make payments via a bank transfer, cheque or debit/credit card.
- Always try and get the names of people you speak to on the phone and keep all correspondence, e.g. letters and emails.

Landlord Accreditation

Landlords accredited by Landlord Accreditation Scotland means they offer good quality accommodation and operate to higher standards than other landlords and letting agents.

For further information and to check if your private landlord is registered, check landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk



WHERE SHOULD I LIVE?

Popular student areas

Our Edinburgh Napier campuses are located on the west side of the city. Popular areas with our students include: Tollcross, Fountainbridge, Bruntsfield, Marchmont, Morningside, Polwarth and Newington. Gorgie and Dalry are also suitable. Leith, located on the east side of the city, is one of the cheaper areas to rent from but slightly further afield.

You may also wish to expand your search to surrounding areas outside the city and commute into Edinburgh, especially if property availability is limited.

How much will it cost?

Rent will vary depending on the size, location, and condition of the flat. Most single bedrooms in a shared student flat can cost between £350-550 per month. All students will have to pay gas and electricity bills. In addition you may want to factor in other costs including telephone, internet, and a TV licence as these will not be included. Please note that most landlords will request one month rent in advance in addition to your deposit, and may request up to 6 months if students do not have a UK guarantor or a reference.

Deposit

The Scottish Government introduced the Tenancy Deposit Schemes (Scotland) Regulations 2011.

Under this legislation, the method by which a deposit is taken and held

by landlords has changed. All private landlords must now place the deposit paid into a tenancy deposit scheme.

The deposit resides within the deposit scheme and is repaid to the tenant by the scheme administrator should there be no dispute at the end of the lease. In the case of a dispute the scheme will provide a resolution service. This means the tenant can ask for the case to be referred to an independent adjudicator. The adjudicator will make a decision about how the deposit should be repaid, based on the evidence provided by both parties.

Make sure you keep a receipt for all financial transactions from your landlord or letting agent.

I've found a flat I am interested in!

Once you have found a flat or flats you are interested in, you will need to arrange a flat viewing which will allow you to see the flat in person. In the interest of safety it is advisable to view the flat with a friend. If you are going to view a property on your own, you should let someone know the time and location of your viewing.

Never pay any money without seeing the flat

The Flat Hunting Checklist section of this guide will advise you on what to look for, and what questions to ask during the viewing.

Most of all - does it feel like 'home' and would you feel safe living here?

FLAT HUNTING CHECKLIST

What to check before you move in. Take this with you - these are just some questions that you might want to consider when looking at possible properties but don't be afraid to ask lots more!

Furniture

- Is there enough furniture for everyone?
- Does it meet current fire safety regulations?
- Will all the furniture be there when I rent the flat?
- Are there enough kitchen cupboards?

Gas and Electricity

- Is there heating in the house?
- Do the gas/ electric fires work?
- Is the electrical wiring safe? No exposed wires or hot plugs
- Does the cooker work?
- Have the electrical appliances been checked within the last year for safety
- Ask the landlord to show you a current gas safety certificate

Safety

- How do you get out of the house in the event of a fire?
- Are there smoke detectors fitted and do they work?
- Are the main doors fire doors?
- Does the property need a House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) licence? If so does it have one?

Money

- Have you calculated the rent?
- What is included in the rent? (bills, service charges)
- How is the rent paid to the landlord?
- Do you require a guarantor? Most private landlords and agencies will require a UK guarantor
- Does anyone in the house have to pay Council Tax?

Agreement

- Have you read the contract/ lease?
- Do you understand it?
- Have you kept a copy?
- Have you obtained a receipt for everything you have paid?

Services

- Who maintains the garden?
- Who cleans the windows and communal stair?
- Is there an extra charge for services?
- Who does the repairs?
- Who pays for repairs?
- How do you report repairs and how long will it take for them to be completed?

Sanitation and hygiene

- Do all the taps work?
- Does the toilet flush or leak?
- How is the water heated?
- Are there any pests in the house? (mouse droppings, fleas, bed bugs)
- Is there any sign of dampness?

THE LEGAL STUFF

Tenancy Agreement

When you move into a privately rented property, your landlord should ask you to sign a tenancy agreement outlining the terms of your stay. A tenancy agreement is a contract between you and your landlord that sets out your rights to live in a rented property.

From December 2017 all tenancies in the private sector are private residential tenancies. There are no fixed terms this means your landlord can't ask you to leave just because you've been in the property for 6 months. Your rent can only be increased once every 12 months and if you think the proposed increase is unfair you can refer it to a rent officer. If you've lived in a property for longer than 6 months your landlord will have to give you at least 84 days' notice to leave (unless you've broken a term in the tenancy). You can find more information here: legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/19/contents

How can I make sure my tenancy agreement is fair?

Your tenancy agreement should be written in simple language that you can easily understand. It shouldn't contain any unfair terms. Examples of unfair terms might be:

- a sentence stating that your landlord can change the terms of the tenancy agreement whenever they like and that you will have to accept the new terms
- a sentence saying that you have to pay for repairs that should be your landlord's responsibility

- a sentence saying that your landlord can enter the property whenever they like, without giving you notice.

Unfair terms are not legally binding.

If you suspect your tenancy agreement may include unfair terms or if your landlord is asking you to commit to something that isn't fair, you can arrange an appointment with ENSA Advice and they will look over the tenancy agreement for you.

Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|--|
| PCM | Per calendar month |
| GCH | Gas central heating |
| DSS | Department of Social Security (a type of housing benefit) |
| WMH | White Meter Heating (a heating system where you pay more during the day and less during the night) |
| FF Kit | Fully-fitted kitchen |
| N/S | Non-smoking |
| GF | Ground floor flat |
| TF | Top floor flat |
| DG | Double glazing |
| GDNS | Gardens |
| FUR | Furniture |
| DBL | Double room |
| LRG | Large room |
| BED | Bedroom |
| AVAIL IMMED | Available immediately |



YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The property which you live in is your home. This gives you certain rights.

- You have a right to ‘quiet enjoyment’ of your home. This means that the landlord must give you 24 hours’ written notice if they require access. The landlord cannot let themselves in with a key without your permission unless you have signed an agreement allowing this.
- Security of Tenure. You can stay in the property unless the landlord follows the correct procedure to evict you. If you require advice on this contact the Citizen’s Advice Bureau or a legal advisor.
- The Repairing Standard, The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 requires the landlord to keep essential services, water, gas, electricity, sanitation in a state of repair and also the exterior

and structure of the property in good repair. Make sure you ask your landlord for repairs in writing and keep copies of all correspondence.

- Safety. The landlord must have all electrical appliances tested on an annual basis by a competent person and have a gas safety certificate for any gas installations. Any soft furnishings must also comply with fire safety regulations.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). The regulations compel landlords renting flats to 3 or more unrelated persons to meet a range of fire safety and management standards dictated by Edinburgh City Council. An HMO licence is not required if a flat is let to a couple and a friend, as the couple will count as one person. If in doubt, you require more information or want to check if your landlord has an HMO licence, contact the City of Edinburgh Council.

Along with rights come responsibilities

- You must act in a ‘tenant-like’ manner. This means that you must take care of the property and avoid causing a nuisance to neighbours.
- You are responsible for paying the rent as agreed with the landlord. If you do not pay the landlord will be able to take action to evict you.
- You will also be responsible for paying the bills in the flat. Gas, electricity, telephone must all be paid. Students are not normally liable for Council Tax, but if you share with a non-student you should contact the City of Edinburgh Council for up-to-date advice.

I'VE MOVED IN - NOW WHAT?

Utilities

You will need to record the electric and gas meter readings when you move in and where appropriate, register the bills in your names. The easiest way to do this is over the phone or on the provider's website e.g. Scottish Gas, Scottish Hydro Electric etc.

Internet

Broadband internet is affordable and can be obtained from many different service providers such as Virgin Media, O2, and BT. Check with your landlord before installing any phone lines as alterations may require written permission.

Bills

Decide together with your flatmates whose name will go on all the bills.

(E.g. gas, electricity, internet/television, etc.). Make sure everybody agrees on the payment system and that there are no surprises.

Pay the agreed deposit and rental payments on time and in the event of genuine difficulties inform the landlord.

Inventory

An inventory of the contents of the flat will usually be provided. However, if it is not then request this from the landlord before you move in. This may save any disputes later.

Council Tax

Students attending a course of at least 24 weeks' duration in an academic session and 21 hours' tuition weekly

may be entitled to help with their Council Tax. Single-semester students are not eligible for council tax exemption and therefore must pay council tax (£100-£200/month per flat depending on council tax band).

For students in their final year of study please note that Council Tax exemption regulations only apply until the end of your final term, not the date of your graduation ceremony.

In Week 4 of each Trimester, Student Affairs send a list of all matriculated students to the City of Edinburgh and Fife councils. This acts as proof of student status and all you need to do is contact your council office directly and they will update your record.

If you do not appear on their list, you should ask them to send you an exemption form and get it stamped and signed at any campus reception.

...AND FINALLY!

Don't stress out too much! You're in Edinburgh to study and have a good time, so if everything doesn't go perfectly according to plan, just go with the flow! But if you do have a big problem, don't hesitate to ask for help. This might be with the flat or with any other problems that could come up like health issues, culture shock/homesickness, money issues, or whatever! There is always somebody there to help you!*

*Edinburgh Napier University does not endorse any sites or publications that appear in this document (excluding napier.ac.uk), nor can we guarantee the accuracy of any information contained in them.



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