

Useful terms and abbreviations.....

All Inc. = All bills included

All Mod Cons = All modern conveniences (facilities)

Bedsit = single room with shared bathroom, cooking facilities often in the room

Broadband = Fast internet connection

DG = Double glazing

Exc. = Not including bills

FFF = First Floor Flat

Fixed term = a period of time which a contract lasts. You can not usually leave the contract before the end of this time frame.

GCH = Gas Central Heating

GFF = Ground Floor flat

Inc. = Including bills

NS = Non-smoker

PCM = Per calendar month- usually with reference to rent

PPPW = Per person per week

Shared house = House shared with flat-mates, individual bedrooms with shared kitchen and bathroom

Studio flat = Single room apartment with private bathroom

TDS = Tenancy Deposit Scheme, more information on this can be found at www.direct.gov.uk/en/TenancyDeposit

Wi-Fi = Wireless internet access



Housing Guide for Students

Help and Information on:

Housing Options

Viewing a house

Contracts

Bonds and Deposits

Money and Bills

Helpful terms and abbreviations

And useful contacts!

Your Options.

Letting Agents: there are plenty of letting agents in Cardiff that rent houses or rooms in shared houses to students. Check out their policies, and ask other students who they recommend. It is also worth considering using an ALMA registered agent: www.almacardiff.co.uk.

Local Advertisements:

Don't forget to check around campus for advertisements for rooms available in shared houses. Also use the local press including the papers and websites such as www.gumtree.com www.easyroommate.com

The Advice Centre on the 3rd Floor of the Students Union Building also keep a list of rooms available to rent in shared houses.

Areas: Most students live in the Cathays or Roath area of Cardiff. These areas are close to the university, the Students Union and town centre. If you are not sure on where an area or what it is like then ask someone for advice before signing a tenancy agreement.



University Residences:

There may be rooms available in the University Halls of residence for long or short term lets. However these tend to go very quickly and can not be guaranteed. It is best to register your interest very early by contacting Residences@cf.ac.uk

Useful contacts and help....



For free advice and guidance

Cardiff University Student Support Centre
50 Park Place or Cardigan House
Studentsupportcentre@cf.ac.uk
029 2087 4844

Students Union Advice Centre
3rd Floor, Students Union Building
advice@cf.ac.uk
029 2078 1410

Cardiff Law Centre
41-42 Clifton St, Cardiff
029 2049 8117

Housing Help
Marland House, Central Square, Cardiff,
hau@cardiff.gov.uk
029 2087 1050

Private Sector Housing
Rm 139, City Hall, Cardiff
PrivateSectorHousing@Cardiff.ac.uk
029 2087 1762

Community Legal Services
0845 345 4 345
<http://www.communitylegaladvice.org.uk/>

Cardiff Council
www.cardiffdigs.co.uk

Other useful numbers:
South Wales Police switchboard
029 2022 2111
Cardiff Council 'connect2cardiff '
029 2087 2087

University Security 24 hour control room

Money and Bills

You should check your contract to see what bills are included in your rent.

Usually in private rented accommodation you would be expected to pay bills such as gas, electricity and water rates, as well as any extras such as telephone and internet costs. This would be organised between the house-mates.

Ensure when you move into a property you inform the energy supplier and you provide them with gas and electricity meter readings.

In halls of residences utility bills are included in the rent.

In all property, including halls of residences, if you have a TV you would be required to get a TV licence. You can find out about getting a TV license at <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/index.jsp>

Rent in Cardiff for a room in a shared house is on average between £230-£245 per month. Rent is usually paid monthly using direct debit from your bank account to the landlords. You should not be asked to give cheques in advance and if you pay cash ensure you get a receipt stating the date, amount paid and stating it is for rent.



Council Tax is a tax levied on a property to part fund services provided by local government. Full time students are usually exempt from paying council tax and as such the university will issue you with a council tax certificate which you must submit to the local Council. See <http://www.cardiff.gov.uk> or seek advice if you are unsure.

Looking at properties.

Checklist for viewing a house

Is there a written contract? How long is it for?
Is it a joint tenancy?
Has your house been granted additional licensing from the council?
What is included in the rent? Check what utility bills?
How is the rent to be paid? Monthly or quarterly? Direct debit?
Is the property clean?
Do any repairs or decorating need doing before you sign?
Are there any signs of damp or condensation -peeling wallpaper, mould or flaking paint? - smell of damp?
Will the landlord provide you with an inventory?
Do all taps and plumbing work?
Have you seen a copy of the landlord's Gas Safety Certificate?
Is there adequate heating?
Are there smoke detectors or fire alarms? Fire blanket in kitchen?
Is there adequate parking?
Do the external doors have good strong locks fitted? Are there window locks on all accessible windows?
Have the current tenants had any problems?

Always go to look at a property **before** you sign a contract.

Take your time, look around and don't be rushed.

Think about the condition of the property.

Use the checklist as a guide when viewing the house.

Consider safety and security.

Get any promise of improvements in writing



Make sure all tenants names are on the household bills!

The legal bits....

Administration Fees: Some letting agents will ask you to pay a fee for setting up the contract. Even if you don't go ahead with the agent this is usually non refundable. Always ensure you are paying a reasonable amount for the service being provided. Make sure you get a receipt stating the date, how much you paid and what it is being paid for.



The Contract: You will normally be asked to sign a contract in order to rent a house or room. If all tenants in the house sign one contract then this is a Joint Contract and all tenants are individually and jointly liable for the rent on the house. So if one person leaves without paying you may have to cover their rent too!

Also be sure you are clear how long the tenancy is for. You will be expected to pay rent for the full length of the contract and you are legally bound to pay this. You are signing a legally binding document so please read it carefully. If you are not sure about anything in the contract then come and see an advisor. Once you sign you can't usually change your mind.

Guarantors: You may be asked for details of a guarantor when you sign the contract. This is someone who signs to say they will be liable for your rent if you fail to pay it, usually a parent or guardian. If you were on a joint contract they would also have joint liability, so if one person leaves the tenancy the liability for their rent could ultimately be passed to your guarantors. It very rarely gets to this point but it is certainly worth informing your guarantors.

Additional Licensing: Since July 2010 landlords in the Cathays area have applied for or are in the process of applying to Cardiff Council for an additional license. To get this licence the council would have inspected the property, which would have had to meet a minimum standard.

Deposits and Bonds

A bond is a deposit paid to the landlord at the start of the tenancy to cover any out of pocket expense incurred. Usually, if there is no damage or money owed at the end, this is refunded to you. The amount of the bond is usually equivalent to just over one months rent.

All deposits must be dealt with under the government's Tenancy Deposit Scheme. When you pay your bond to the landlord they should give you a receipt and must pay it in to one of the Tenancy Deposit Schemes within 14 days and inform you in which scheme your bond is being held by. Check if it is detailed in your contract.
www.direct.gov.uk/en/TenancyDeposit

This now means your bond is held by the scheme during your tenancy and if there are any disputes at the end, the scheme can hold on to your money and help resolve disputes.

The scheme can also pay bonds back in to international bank accounts so there should be no issue if you return home in getting your bond returned.

Tips on protecting your bond!

Your bond can be retained for damage to the property and furniture so it is important you can prove what state the house was in when you moved in! It is important that you have an inventory when you move in. An inventory should detail the state of furniture and rooms and highlight any damage already there. Make sure you check what your inventory says, and if you don't agree with anything, make the changes, sign it and send a copy back to the landlord, always keeping your copy safe.

If the landlord does not provide you with an inventory then make your own, listing all the furniture, any damage to it and any damage to the house, and send them a signed dated copy, it is usually a good idea to get a third party to sign where possible and post it by recorded delivery. You can even take a photo of any damage as evidence.

At the end of the tenancy, and presuming there has been no damage its time to write to the landlord requesting the bond back in full.

If the landlord is withholding an amount they must give a breakdown of what it is for. If you are not happy with this then write to the landlord asking for a breakdown of costs and quotes or receipts of what the withheld money is being used for.

If you are still not happy you can go through the Small Claims Court or the Dispute Resolution Service offered by the Tenancy Deposit Scheme which your bond is being held by. Bonds cannot be withheld for non payment of council tax.

You should also seek advice- please see the back page of the booklet for useful contacts.

Always remember if you are unsure about anything you are signing up to or being asked to pay come and speak to an advisor immediately.