Choose from a range of studios, en-suite rooms and houses. Prices start from just £85pw inc bills*

Sulets are the only lettings agency that are recommended by your Students’ Union!

Visit us at your Students’ Union. Call 0116 223 1173/0116 257 6303
www.sulets.com  enquiries@sulets.com
Hi! We’re your elected Student Union officers and having recently graduated we’ve had our fair share of (not always positive) experiences with renting student accommodation.

Reflecting back on when we were trying to find accommodation, it’s not always easy so we’ve partnered with Sulets and the University of Leicester’s Residential and Commercial Services team to produce Your Guide to Smart House Hunting.

This booklet will give you some guidance on what to look out for and what myths you’re likely to hear. Having each gone through the process several times, our door is always open if you have any questions!

A few things we think we would’ve found helpful to know are - when choosing housemates, make sure you’re clear about each person’s priorities, whether that be living in a particular area, not wanting to pay more than a certain amount etc.

Take a checklist of questions to ask and things to consider, you can find one on the Students’ Union website or make one yourself using this booklet.

Take pictures (with permission) of each house you view so you can remember everything afterwards.

Remember if something isn’t right or needs fixing, get an agreement in writing before you sign the tenancy.

If you have any queries about your contract get in touch with ProBono who offer free legal advice.

Finally, we regularly meet with the Council to discuss issues that students face while living in the community, so if you encounter anything you’d like to change or are interested in running a campaign please get in touch! You can find our email addresses on the Leicester Union website by clicking on ‘Meet your officers’.

Take your time
and happy house hunting!

Rachel, Roisin, Lily, Ayesha & Alex
Looking for student accommodation can be both an exciting and daunting prospect but don’t worry, this booklet will give you all the information you need to make sure you make the right decision.

Renting a property off campus is a big commitment, and not something that should be rushed into. The purpose of this booklet is to break it all down and make it easier for you to make the right decision for you. You’ll hear all sorts of myths and rumours about getting your property. You can read all about the myths and the facts on the next page.
The truth about house hunting

Horror stories about renting are common. Don’t believe everything you’re told! Here we explore some of the most common myths, so you can be a smart house hunter.

**FIB#1 – ‘All the good houses will run out! You’ll be stuck miles away from campus!’**

**FACT#1** - The amount of student accommodation in the private sector in Leicester has doubled over the past seven years. In Leicester, there are plenty of homes for students, so don’t rush into the first house you see. Making a decision under pressure often means you’ll settle for something that’s not right. You could also miss out on something you would have really liked, had you only kept looking.

**FIB#2 – ‘There are only a few agencies in Leicester that offer student houses.’**

**FACT#2** – That’s what the agencies want you to think. The truth is there’s a tonne of agencies out there with good quality housing on their books. Just because you don’t see their signs all around Clarendon and Evington doesn’t mean that they don’t offer houses there. It’s always good to look at properties from a number of different providers, as standards do vary. A bad initial vibe from an agent is likely to be representative of how you’ll be treated for your whole tenancy. It’s the same case with private landlords.

**FIB#3 – ‘If I find a house I want to live in, I have to accept its flaws’**

**FACT#3** – If you find a house that’s almost perfect but maybe has a few damaged floor boards or broken curtains you can ask the landlord before signing (directly or through the agent) to make these changes before you take up your tenancy. If they agree, always get everything in writing! That way you can hold them accountable for their promises.

**FIB#4 – ‘You should get a house before Christmas. Someone said landlords put rent up after then.’**

**FACT#4** – This is unlikely to happen, landlords are more likely to be open to negotiation if they still haven’t successfully signed their property. Pressure will be on you to get you to sign, but remember you’re the one who holds all the cards. Landlords are trying to make a sale, and should impress you to do this. You’ll find that as the year goes on your bargaining power can increase with landlords desperate to let their houses. You could negotiate a cheaper deposit or even a cheaper rent!

**FIB#5 – ‘Everyone pays sign up fees no matter where you go’**

**FACT#5** – Wrong! Many property owners don’t ask you to pay admin or sign up fees. If you don’t want to pay these, find an owner who doesn’t charge them. If you’re cheeky and/ or brave, it could be worth asking them to explain why you have to pay the fee. You never know, you might persuade them to waive it or reduce it.

**Sulets** don’t charge fees – you pay your deposit or energy charge, and your rent. That’s it. You won’t pay fees in University accommodation either, just your pre-payment charge which comes off your bill once you’ve signed up.

**FIB#6 – ‘I have a specific need, but I won’t get any support if I go private.’**

**FACT#6** – Most full-time students don’t qualify for housing benefit, but there are exceptions. For example, you could get help if you’re studying part-time, are a lone parent or are disabled. You can find out if you’re eligible at www.gov.uk/housing-benefit. If you are still concerned about going into the private sector, you can always apply for the University’s returner accommodation where you can access our high level of support.
Before you start looking for somewhere to stay you might want to think about who you’re going to be living with.

The average shared student house accommodates four people, but you will be able to find properties for more or less. Take your time to decide who you want to live with, consider whether they’re trustworthy and have similar house preferences.

You only truly know someone when you live with them so it helps to know people’s habits, hobbies and personalities before you move in together. The person that was most fun during Fresher’s Week might not be the most reliable person to live with!

Alternatively if you prefer your own space you could opt for a studio apartment and not share with others.
Decisions, decisions

There are loads of options when choosing somewhere to live – house or flat? With friends or on your own? With or without bills included? Here are some things to consider to help you decide.

**University Halls of Residence**

Most first year students move into University Halls of Residence but returning students are welcome too. If you’ve enjoyed your time in Halls and want to do it again, no problem. You can even apply for the same room! Many of our returners choose to go to City Living properties but you can also apply for Oadby. If you want to live with friends but enjoy all the benefits of University accommodation, you can make a group application and share a flat.

**Purpose Built Accommodation**

Many second, third and mature students go for Purpose Built Accommodation. This is great if you would like to live in a studio on your own, with your own kitchen and bathroom or if you would like to live with your friends in a flat but with an ensuite. Sulets, the Students’ Union Lettings Charity have houses and 7 Purpose Built Accommodation Blocks around Leicester and is recommended to students by the University. What’s more, these types of accommodation usually have an all-inclusive option where you don’t have to worry about bills. Brookland Road and Regents Court are purpose built and only a 10 minute walk from campus.

**Shared Houses**

Lots of students decide to move into a shared house with friends they have made in the first year. In a shared house, you will need to set up your own utilities and broadband and then decide how to split the bills between all of the tenants. Sulets have many houses that are close to the University and they can support students manage any issues with landlords. What’s more, all Sulets properties are independently inspected under the Decent and Safe Housing Accreditation Scheme (DASH). This ensures that the property complies with all relevant safety standards.
Shared house/flat

This is the most common type of student housing and usually the cheapest. Renting a room in a house or a purpose built accommodation and sharing the kitchen, lounge (if there is one), and sometimes bathroom and toilet with other students.

Ensuite flat

This is where you have your own bathroom and toilet within your bedroom but you share a kitchen with your flatmates. You will find many types of ensuite options around the city. Sulets’ Brooklands Road site, near the University of Leicester, is mainly made up of ensuite flats with some studios on offer too.

Studio

In a studio you will have your own kitchen, bathroom and toilet so you will not have to share facilities. This is a great option for those who like their own space when cooking and also prefer not to share a bathroom or toilet. Studios are generally more expensive but there are many to choose from in Leicester. Sulets’ cheapest studio at Upperton Road is just £115 per week.

University Halls of Residence

You may already live in Halls. If you do, there’s not much we can tell you that you don’t already know. The University provides a wide range of room types to suit all tastes and budgets, from twin rooms to one bed flats. Our accommodation ranges from Edwardian houses to modern purpose built blocks, so there’s plenty of choice.
City Centre

Most of the city centre accommodation available consists of flats or purpose built accommodation. This is very handy are for shops and bars but about a 20 minute walk to campus.

City Living accommodation

The University has a number of properties located within five minutes walk of campus. Nixon Court and Freemen’s Common are particularly popular with returning students due to their proximity to campus and the city itself. Opal Court is a privately owned development which you apply for through the University. Or, if you’ve really enjoyed your year at Oadby, you can even do it all over again!

Clarendon Park

Clarendon Park is just a short walk across Victoria Park to the University; most houses in Clarendon Park are Victorian terraces. It is not unusual for the bathrooms to be downstairs in these houses, to make space for an extra bedroom. This is a very popular area due to its proximity to campus and a great variety of bars and shops on Queens Road.

Evington & Highfields

You will tend to get more for your money in Evington rather than in the Clarendon Park area. Houses in Evington are typically larger but rent prices are very similar. Evington is still only a short walk from the University, close to the bars on London Road and there are 24 hour convenient stores here too. It is very close to the train station which is handy if you need to travel out of Leicester a lot. Most of the parking in this area is permit only so find out if you can apply for a parking permit and how much this will cost.

West End

This is a bit further from campus but convenient for getting into the City Centre, the Leicester Royal Infirmary and close to the shops on Narborough Road. This is also a popular area for De Montfort University students. Most of the parking in this area is permit only so find out if you can apply for a parking permit and how much this will cost.

Where?

Tenancy agreement

Your tenancy agreement is the most important part of getting your house – it’s there to protect both you and the landlord so it should be read very carefully. You can see an example of a contract online at Sulets.com.

Last year Sulets had a number of students asking for support on tenancy agreements they had signed with private agencies. Agencies such as these look to exploit students as they know it’s likely they’re inexperienced in the world of lettings.

Make sure you are not one of the students who is tricked by these agencies. Always check and then double check what you are expected to pay and most importantly what you are signing.

Always ask for a copy of the signed agreement, any payment receipts and complete an inventory on the day you move in. Also get written confirmation of any repairs you’ve requested.
During the viewing

Below is a list of important things to consider when viewing a house.

1. **What kind of boiler does the property have?**

   Boilers come in different types, eg conventional or combi, and can be powered by a variety of different energy sources. Do your research on the pros and cons of each.

2. **Does the property have double glazing?**

   A lot of heat is lost through single glazed windows, meaning you end up paying a lot more to keep your house warm. With single glazing comes condensation which can lead to a build-up of damp and mould in your bedroom.

3. **Are there any signs of damp or mould?**

   Does it smell musty? Are patches of the painting discoloured?

4. **Are there any damages you want to be fixed?**

   Check for holes in the wall, damaged floorboards and anything else which needs to be fixed. It's fine to ask for repairs before you sign your contract but remember to get any agreements in writing.

5. **Try to quietly chat to a current resident without the agent or landlord who is showing you round, to ask about their experience of the property.**

6. **Is there ample storage and fridge/freezer space in the kitchen?**

   Remember that all of the tenants need to fit your cooking equipment and food into the cupboards.

7. **Are the energy meters and stopcock (the valve that turns off the water if you have a burst pipe) accessible?**
Having fun? Why change?

Stay in halls!

We have an excellent range of accommodation for second and third years, much of which is just a five minute walk from our main campus.

- Group bookings mean you can stay with friends
- All-inclusive rent – no hidden extras
- High-speed WiFi available across all areas
- Enjoy a hassle free year – no wrangling over deposits
- Support and guidance for all aspects of University life
- Catering by award-winning chef
- Great accommodation only five minutes from campus
- 24 hour security
- Our contract lengths are shorter than those of the private sector, saving you money

For more information:
www.le.ac.uk/accommodation/apply
Moving in

Welcome to your new home! This section will provide you with some advice on how to have a smooth year.
Before you get settled

Once you’ve moved in, there are a few things to consider straight away - don’t let them pass you by with the excitement of a new place (which can often happen with unpacking!).

The Inventory

Your landlord or agent should provide you with an inventory. This tells you about the condition of the property at the point that you moved into it. It’s an important document because it’s used to compare the state of the place when you move out, so if you don’t check it thoroughly now, you might find yourself facing deductions from your deposit for damage you didn’t even do.

It is really important that you mark on the inventory all signs of damage or defects. If there are any items listed on the inventory that are not in the property then mention that as well. Try to take pictures as well with the dates on them. Keep a copy and send them to the landlord along with the signed inventory.

Here is an example of an inventory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>Sofa</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Small rip on side</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>Carpet</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Lots of small stains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>Wallpaper</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Perfect condition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deposit

It’s a legal requirement for your property deposit to be placed in a Deposit Protection Scheme. This guarantees that your landlord will have set the funds aside to be able to reimburse you with your deposit at the end of your tenancy. You can check to see whether your deposit has been put in a Deposit Protection Scheme on the Shelter website.
If there are any issues or the property isn’t as you expected, don’t keep quiet. Contact the landlord or agent and calmly express your concerns. In most cases it will be a genuine oversight and they will quickly rectify the problem. It’s usually a good idea to do this over email so that you have a written record of the conversation. If they take a little while to reply, give them a call and follow up with a confirmation email of everything you discussed and any actions they’ve agreed to take. If you’re still having problems you can speak to the University Welfare Service in the Student Union or Shelter and they will be able to help.

With some tenancy agreements your bills may be included in your rent - you might find this easier to manage but take into consideration it may not always be the cheaper option as you’ll be paying the same through all seasons regardless of how much energy you use. If bills aren’t included, you need to contact the utility companies as soon as you move in to give them your contact details and meter readings for that day. Your landlord can tell you how to take a meter reading, and which company currently supplies the property.

You’ll need to contact:

- Gas
- Electricity
- Phone line
- Internet connection (if different to phone line provider)
- TV licence
- Water company

If you’re sharing bills with others, for example if you’re living in a shared house, make sure that everyone is comfortable with their contribution to the bills and more importantly, sets money aside so that they can pay them! There are online resources to help you budget effectively. Remember you are entitled to change your energy provider so shop around for the best deals and let the landlord know if you do decide to change.
Bins

Find out when your bins are due to go out and when the recycling will be collected. The Council should provide you with a leaflet explaining how recycling works and most will give you a calendar indicating which bins go out when. Bins are of course a potential health hazard if you don’t keep on top of taking the rubbish out so make sure you do it. Draw up a rota if necessary.

Living in the community

You should be used to living in a community already, either through staying in University accommodation or in the private sector. But just in case you do need reminding… remember that you’re living alongside all sorts of different people and it is your responsibility to behave like a good citizen! If you’re in a shared house, the other people in your street may not be students and won’t appreciate noisy or messy neighbours.

Budgeting

Hopefully you’re becoming used to budgeting. Your time at University can be tough financially and you need to make sure that you balance your incoming and outgoing funds, particularly if you’re going to be paying for bills. If you’re struggling to budget properly, help is available through the University Welfare Service in the Student Union or there are lots of useful resources online.
How to be a good citizen

Meet your neighbours – Introduce yourself when you first move in. If you get to know the people around you it will help to build a good relationship with them and you are more likely to have an enjoyable, trouble-free year.

If you’re going to have a party, tell them or better still invite them! – If you’re going to be creating noise, it is courteous to tell your neighbours in advance. They’ll appreciate the gesture. You might need to come to a compromise around noise levels and when to bring your party to a close, so if you do, make sure you stick to what you’ve agreed. It might be worth giving them your mobile and asking them to drop you a text if you’re being too noisy - especially if they have young children.

Get involved – There are so many ways to become part of your new community, from local residents associations to community projects and other volunteering opportunities. It’s a rewarding way to spend your free time and it helps to improve the relationship between students and permanent residents. Remember the community will always consider you a representative of the University.

Please be a responsible and considerate resident - don’t assume your neighbours will by default dislike students, remember they’re just seeking a comfortable, peaceful home. An additional bonus of getting involved and getting to know your neighbours is that it’ll provide you with an additional sense of security - a strong community can ward off burglars.

Represent the University – Remember that the community sees you as a member of the student population and the University of Leicester. You are representing us at all times and any misbehaviour reflects badly on the University.

Leaving the property over the vacation

If you’re heading home for the holidays, there are some important things you must do first:

Tell the landlord and the neighbours that you’re going to be away – Make sure the landlord knows you’re going to be away and give them your correct contact details in case they need to be in touch.

Lock it up! – Sounds silly but it’s an easy mistake to make. Securely lock all windows and doors and make sure that no valuables are on show.

Keep it clean – It’s so much nicer to come back to a clean house. Throw away perished foodstuffs to avoid having to deal with nasty smells. You’re less likely to return to some new additional residents - a family of rats or mice.

Turn it off – Save energy and money by turning everything off. If you’re not there you obviously won’t be using it so why pay for it to be on?

Throw it out – Don’t leave any perishable foodstuffs in the kitchen. Either put it in the bin outside or take it home. Just don’t leave it!

Set the heating on a low timer in the Winter – This is particularly important over the Christmas vacation. You don’t want to come back to frozen or burst pipes. It’ll get pretty chilly and the repair bill could run into the thousands. The heating doesn’t have to be on constantly, a couple of short blasts at a low temperature should be fine.

Check your insurance – Just in case the worst should happen, you might at least want to make sure that you’re covered.

Write it down – that’s the best advice we can give. Written communication is essential for a successful relationship between tenant and landlord. It provides a useful record of what was said and on what date, just in case you need to refer back to anything.

It’s important to be polite and respectful. It’s amazing how much more helpful people will be if you treat them with dignity.

Be factual and try to avoid communications which are either too lengthy (stick to the point) or too brief (make sure you actually get the point across).

If your landlord or agent says they’ll do something for you, ask them to put it in writing or alternatively, email them confirming the content of your conversation and thank them for their assistance.

If you receive lots of emails and correspondence between you and your landlord or agent is likely to get lost, set up a specific folder so that you can find their emails easily.

If you’re having issues with your landlord or agent which you are unable to resolve, speak to the Student Union or to Shelter and they will be able to help.

There are a number of accreditation schemes out there which give you extra reassurance. If your property is part of the Sulets scheme we will be glad to help you out with your issue.
Living with your housemates

It’s pretty intense, living with other people. You may fall out over all sorts of things, some of them trivial, some more serious. At the end of the day, you’re committed to making it work so here are some tips to make it a happy home.

Be clear about your expectations – Make sure that everyone understands financial arrangements such as paying for bills. It’s also important that you share duties such as cleaning and putting the bins out. If you don’t want noise after a certain time, say so.

Resolve your problems before they build up – Don’t let things get out of control. If something is annoying you, speak up. Be prepared for someone to raise an issue with you. Listen and respect their feelings. Be prepared to change if necessary.

Be sociable – Most people are living with their mates so this is an easy tip to follow. But if things do turn sour, make an effort to chat to people, cook together and avoid living in isolation.

Have fun – Being a student is a serious business but it should also be fun! Some of the best and most unforgettable moments in your life are likely to take place when you’re at University. So enjoy it! If all else fails, you might want to consider mediation to try and resolve your problems. Speak to the Welfare Service for specialist advice or intervention.
Moving Out

When your contract is about to end, your thoughts will turn to getting your deposit back. Here are the most important things you need to do.

Cleaning

Check your tenancy agreement to see if there are clear instructions on how the landlord expects the property to be returned at the end of the contract. Make sure you follow any such instructions – failure to do so will probably lead to a delay in receiving your deposit back and the landlord may also make deductions if you haven’t done what was asked of you.

Regardless of whether there are specific instructions, it is always a good idea to leave the property as clean as possible. If you incur any costs, such as a professional carpet cleaning, keep receipts and invoices as proof that you have looked after the property.

With several of you all clearing up at the same time, it’s likely you’ll have more black bin-liners than will fit in your bin. Ring the Council to schedule a pick-up, maybe co-ordinate with your neighbours if they’re also moving out. This is very important not only for the environment, but also to maintain positive community relations for future tenants. Remember it’s illegal to fly-tip unwanted items.
The inventory

About a month before the contract ends, go through your inventory line by line. If you can’t find it, ask the landlord or agent for a copy. Make sure that all of the items on the inventory are in the same condition as when you moved in. If any have been damaged or are missing, at least you can be prepared for any charges that might be coming your way.

The landlord or agent will do a formal ‘check out’ when they come to the property to inspect it and check against the inventory. If you are there when this takes place, you can challenge any issues there and then and hopefully avoid you being charged unfairly for anything. If you really can’t be present, take photos before you leave.

Settling bills

Ring all the utility companies with final readings and make sure you pay the bills properly. Failure to do so may affect your future credit rating.
Getting your deposit back

In most cases, you won’t have a problem getting your deposit back properly, especially if you’ve signed up with a reputable landlord or agent. Deposits should be lodged with a deposit protection scheme and they will make an independent judgement in any cases where disputes arise.

After leaving your property, your landlord should write to you to advise of any deductions they wish to make. If these seem reasonable, just write back and agree. The balance of your deposit will then be returned to you.

If you disagree with the deductions, it’s absolutely fine for you to contest. Try and come to some agreement with the landlord but in cases where it can’t be resolved between you, you can also write to your deposit protection service who can make a judgement on the case.

If you are in dispute and you have referred it to your deposit protection service, the landlord should return any undisputed amounts to you, and will simply withhold the sum that he/she is seeking to claim. The deposit protection service will then adjudicate. In the event of a disagreement, you may need to raise it with the deposit protection service quickly as there is usually a timescale within which you are required to submit a case.

Handy contacts

Sulets
0116 223 1173
enquiries@sulets.com
www.sulets.com

University of Leicester Accommodation Office
0116 252 2428
accommodation@le.ac.uk
www.le.ac.uk/accommodation

Pro Bono Legal Clinic (for free advice on tenancy contracts)
probono@le.ac.uk

Student Support Service
0116 223 1185
welfare@le.ac.uk

Roisin Gallagher
SU elected Wellbeing Officer
rg229@le.ac.uk