UCL STAFF ACCOMMODATION SERVICE

FAQs: Property Owners

This section looks at the questions you may have as a property owner (the term “landlord” may also be used throughout this information) letting out a room, studio, flat or house. If you cannot find the information you require here then please contact the UCL Staff Accommodation Service by e-mail at ucl-accommodation@ucl.ac.uk or phone (0)20 3108 8829 (ext: 58829).

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How does the UCL Staff Accommodation Service work?

University College London is a leading academic and research institution employing over 10,000 staff. As a large Higher Education employer, we attract academic staff and visitors from overseas and other parts of the country who seek temporary and long term accommodation.

The Human Resources Division works to assist with this search by providing this website where property owners or their representatives may advertise rooms, studios, flats and houses. There is no fee for charged this service to either property owners or prospective tenants.
By registering with this service, you will be able to enter your property information using a simple online form. Property seekers who register with this service will be able to access information on your property, and will contact you or your representative direct.

Please give a good description of your property and the area, highlighting what travel options are into UCL and surrounding area. The main campus in London is located at Gower Street WC1E 6BT. Please also be mindful of any jargon used. “Mod cons” and “WC” will not always be understood by those seeking accommodation. Unfortunately at this time, we are unable to accept property images on this website for IT security reasons. By all means make these available to any property seeker who contacts you.

The Accommodation Service cannot guarantee that your vacancy will be filled. However, leaving your details on our website will give exposure to a client group that might not otherwise be reached so directly. Please note we often need shorter letting durations from 1 month onwards. Longer letting periods are also needed but 2 - 6 month lets are often requested.

If your livelihood depends on your accommodation being rented, you are also advised to contact a letting agency or use other means of circulating your property information i.e. websites etc.

Is it important that you update the status of your property. Please go online when you have successfully let your property noting that we will also send you alerts. After a period of time, your property will be deactivated if we have not heard from you.

It is also important that any property you let is compliant with current legislation. It will be assumed when accessing this website that you are entitled to let the property and that it concurs with current health and safety laws. Please also read the terms and conditions for using this website.

Once an agreement is in place with a property seeker, you should also ensure you are abiding by the Tenancy Deposit Act.

All rental payments should be made in a way as to cause least inconvenience to both parties and would normally be actioned as a monthly cheque, standing order from a bank account or some other safe non cash paying procedure.

CODE OF PRACTICE - This can be accessed at the bottom of this section.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I COMPLETE THE ONLINE FORM?

• It will go to the staff accommodation office for checking prior to you receiving confirmation that it has been entered on the system, and from this point it will be accessed by registered property seekers.
Note: If you have more than one room or property to let please use a separate online form.

• You will be given a choice regarding what contact information you wish to give to property seekers and your information will appear on the property listings.

• The Property List is accessible to potential tenants when they complete an online form indicating what accommodation they are seeking.

**WHAT SHOULD I DO WHEN I LET MY ACCOMMODATION?**

• If you successfully let your accommodation, then please go online and deactivate your booking.

Note: This will help to limit enquiries made to you and keep our records up to date.

• Towards the end of a let, please go into the website and reactivate your listing.

**IMPORTANT NOTICE:** The Human Resources Division urges property owners to ensure that their property(ies) meet the required government safety standards and that you are fully aware of current legislation and your rights when letting property(ies)/rooms. For further information and advice contact your local Citizen’s Advice Bureau or a Solicitor.

UCL reserves absolute discretion whether to use or not to use, and how to use, information supplied, and that submission of a form to UCL does not obligate UCL to add information to the database, make use of the information or advertise any particular property; that UCL reserves the right to withdraw information about any property or landlord at any time without notice, and that nothing in the website or form is intended to create a business relation of any kind with a property owner.

In order to become a UCL registered property owner, you will need to meet the following requirement:

• Agree to abide by our Code of Good Practice for Landlords. The Code can be accessed here.

([http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/download_forms/code_of_good_practice_property_owner.doc](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/docs/download_forms/code_of_good_practice_property_owner.doc))

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?**

You will need to register and this is actioned by completing the fields of a new user. Once you have submitted this information, you will be contacted and all being well, you will
receive your user ID and password. You will need to access this each time you wish to add, delete or amend a property entry.

Once you have entered your property information and pressed “submit” your information will be checked and you will be contacted if any verification is needed. Once the check is made and approved you will be contacted and your property information will go “live” on our database and staff will be able to contact you.

**UPDATING YOUR PROPERTY DETAILS**

Your registration will be live up to the date you are offering your accommodation at which point you will get an alert asking you if you wish to keep your property entry “live”. If you do not respond you will get a series of alerts before your property is finally rendered inactive and removed from the database. It will not be deleted but moved to an inactive file where it can be accessed by you at a later date should you wish to reactivate it again. Information will be held for a year.

You can update via your online account (or if necessary by telephone or e-mail at any time).

**What kinds of property are university staff looking for?**

Accommodation requirements for staff vary hugely and are dependent on a number of factors. Most staff come from overseas, but a large number are also from the UK. Many staff are alone, but some come with partners and families and depending on the their UCL contract (which may be temporary or permanent) and their budget, there is demand for a range of furnished accommodation. Occasionally mature and postgraduate students come to London looking for studio or one bedroom flats for themselves, or sometimes accommodation for their partners and children as well. We will also assist them if we can.

Budgets vary widely, with some staff able to afford £100 a week for a room while other staff can afford as much as £500 a week for a 2 or 3 bedroomed property but please note that this latter group is very much in the minority. The greatest demand is for rooms with studios and 1 bedroomed flats in high demand. Overall, budgets for rooms are usually from £400 - £900 a month, studio budgets are £600 - £1200 a month on average, 1 bedroomed properties £800 - £1600 a month and 2 bedroomed £1000 - £1700. Furnished accommodation is usually required. Very occasionally we are asked for unfurnished property but this is rare.

Staff require accommodation for varying durations. From 1 week to 2 years so if you can be flexible this is helpful. Many staff want accommodation for just 1 term (3-4 months) but many also want accommodation for 6 months or a full academic year. The
following are types of accommodation that staff will consider when looking in the private sector, all of which can be advertised to staff through our service.

- Self-contained flats or houses
- A studio or one-bedroom flat for an individual or couple
- A room in a shared flat or house
- A room with a resident property owner

Where do staff wish to live in London?

For most staff, location is the number one priority. Most staff want to live as close as possible to UCL, preferably within walking distance, and are often willing to pay a higher rent to do so than if they have to take the tube or a bus to UCL.

However, in reality many staff are not able to afford the higher costs or they are unable to find accommodation in Bloomsbury, so staff do live in all different areas of London. This makes information on transport links from your property important. Giving information on bus, tube and rail options from your property to UCL (located at Gower Street) will be a key factor in how quickly your property is let through this website.

When do staff look for accommodation?

The busiest time of year for staff lettings in London is between May-October, with the majority hoping to move into accommodation in September in time for the start of the academic year. Although these are the busiest times, staff are still looking for accommodation throughout the year.

Why let to UCL staff?

Many property owners actively seek to let their properties to university staff for a number of reasons. The temporary nature of staff accommodation requirements can be appealing and staff are generally mature and will respect a property and its contents for the duration of their stay. **UCL can also confirm the employment status of an employee to property owners but please note that they will not as a guarantor.**

Other reasons are:

**Demand**
Staff will always require accommodation and due to lack of institutional housing, there is always a need for private accommodation.
Costs
Staff do not always have big budgets but you will know that they have an income as UCL employees so will be able to meet their responsibilities. Some senior staff members are eligible for relocation expenses which helps them fund their accommodation needs.

Duration of stay
Staff generally will be in need of accommodation for at least a term or the academic year and are therefore unlikely to want to move out early. Staff are able to predict much more accurately how long they will need to stay at a property and are unlikely to need to break the terms of their lease as a result.

Agreement between Property Owner and Tenant
UCL Staff Accommodation Service requires any Property Owner or Agent wishing to become part of the Registration scheme, to have a written agreement with their tenants or lodgers.

We feel it is essential for both parties to have a written arrangement and avoid, at all costs, verbal agreements, which can easily lead to disputes.

Extra Information for Property Owners
This following areas will assist you as a property owner to be compliant with the law, not only to protect yourself but also that of your tenant. This web site does have links to the websites of other organisations and should you use these you do so at your own risk.

- **Gas Safety**
A summary of the Gas Safety regulations for property owners and details of how you can find a Gas Safe registered engineer in your area.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulation 1998 deal with the landlords’ duties regarding gas safety.

A property owner is responsible for ensuring that an annual gas safety check is carried out by a Gas Safe registered engineer, this will include a check of any gas appliances, flues and pipework. You must keep a record of the safety check for at least 2 years and issue a copy of the gas safety certificate to each existing tenant within 28 days of the check being completed and issue a copy to any new tenant before they move in. UCL also advise that you fit a Carbon Monoxide detector in the property.
All Gas Safe registered engineers will carry an ID card. You can also confirm or find a Gas Safe registered engineer on the Gas Safe Website www.gassaferegister.co.uk. Failure to comply with these regulations is a criminal offence and property owners who do not comply could receive an unlimited fine and/or custodial sentence.

- **Deposit Protection**
  This section provides information on deposit protection requirements, including links to each of the deposit protection schemes' websites.

Since 6th April 2007, any damage deposit taken in relation to an Assured Short hold Tenancy (AST) must be protected in one of the three Government authorised schemes. Following the introduction of the Localism Act 2011 which came into effect on 6 April 2012, this must be done within 30 days.

As well as protecting a tenant's deposit, you must also provide the tenant with certain information about how the tenancy is protected; this is known as the prescribed information and can be included in the tenancy agreement. This includes:

- Contact details for the chosen scheme
- How the tenant can apply for a release of the deposit, and
- What should happen if there is a dispute about the deposit

The process of protecting your tenants' deposits is a straightforward one and can be done online. The custodial scheme is also free of charge.

Deposit protection is a legal requirement and there are penalties for non compliance. More information on Deposit Protection can be found on the Directgov website.

Below are the links to each of the four deposit protection schemes:

**Custodial Scheme**

**Insurance Based Schemes**
My Deposits: [http://www.mydeposits.co.uk/](http://www.mydeposits.co.uk/)

The Dispute Service (only available to letting agents) [http://www.thedisputeservice.co.uk/](http://www.thedisputeservice.co.uk/)

Deposit Guard (only available to members of the Residential Landlord Association) [http://www.rla.org.uk/landlord/tenancy_deposit_scheme/deposit_guard.shtml](http://www.rla.org.uk/landlord/tenancy_deposit_scheme/deposit_guard.shtml)
Types of Letting Contract

What type of contract should you use? What is the notice required to end the contract? This section is designed to answer all these questions.

If you are not sure which agreement you should be using, we would encourage you to seek legal advice.

Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement (AST)
These are the most common form of contract and are used where a tenant has exclusive possession of a property or a room. This type of tenancy grants a tenant the right to live in the property for a period of time, either for a fixed term period or on a week by week or month by month rolling contract, which is known as a periodic tenancy. The legal notice that a landlord is required to issue to bring an AST to an end is a Section 21 Notice, which gives the tenant at least two months notice. Where a tenant has an AST, their deposit must be protected.

Bare Contractual Tenancy Agreement
A Bare Contractual Tenancy is used when it is legally impossible for an AST to exist. This could be because a property owner lives in another flat in the same building as his tenant (unless it is a purpose built block of flats) or the annual rent is more than £100,000 per annum.

To bring a bare contractual tenancy to an end the property owner must serve a Notice to Quit in the prescribed form. The period of notice depends on the agreement but if it is silent, then a minimum of 4 weeks or one full periods length of tenancy (if longer) and the notice must expire on the last or first day of a period of the tenancy. There is no obligation on the property owner to protect the deposit.

Licence Agreement
This is a less formal occupation agreement and is used when the occupier is sharing the accommodation with the property owner or they are paying guests of other tenants. In order to bring a licence to an end, the property owner or tenant should give notice in writing. Where a tenant pays the rent monthly then the property owner and tenant should give one months notice and where the rent is paid weekly then the notice period is a week. There is no obligation on the property owner to protect the deposit.

Electrical Safety

What are a property owner's requirements with regards to electrical safety?

With the exception of HMOs there is no statutory requirement to have safety checks on electrical installations. However, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires that the property owner ensures the electrical installation is safe when the tenancy begins and that it is maintained in a safe condition throughout that tenancy.
Fixed installations include the fixed wires, wall sockets, light fittings & switches etc. Items such as cookers and wall heaters are also considered part of the fixed installation if they are permanently wired in, rather than having a plug fitted for connection to a wall socket.

There are additional requirements for HMOs (whether licensable or not), which includes an inspection of the fixed installation by a competent person (generally a qualified electrician) to ensure safety and that the electrical system complies with current electrical regulations. This must be carried out at intervals of no more than five years and you must obtain a copy of the certificate, specifying the results of the test.

It is regarded as good practice for property owners to adopt a similar approach to other, non HMO lettings.

**Fire Safety**

What are a property owner’s fire safety requirements? Where can you get further information on this?

The underlying principle for modern fire safety is eliminating and minimising fire risks in the home. That relies on proper identification of the fire risks that exist in the property owner’s property.

Whilst Fire Inspection Certificates do not exist anymore, property owners should regularly check any fire safety equipment, from smoke alarms to fire extinguishers. Property owners should only pay attention to the manufacturer’s advice for testing and checking equipment. They can also use the Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACORS) guidance.

The National Landlord Association (NLA) and LACORS have jointly developed a useful guide for fire safety in homes which will help landlords know what they have to do to ensure fire safety [http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?id=19844](http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?id=19844)

Please note that a HMO license may contain additional fire safety license conditions depending on the property.

**Furniture and Furnishings**

What do the Furniture and Furnishings Regulations cover? Where can I find more information on this?

If you supply furniture or furnishings, you must ensure that they meet the fire resistance requirements of the 1993 amendments to the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire)(Safety)
Regulations 1988. Some materials used to fill or cover furniture, particularly older and second hand furniture may be a fire risk and often produces poisonous gases when burning, such as cyanide or carbon monoxide. These regulations are enforced by local Trading Standards Officers and there are severe penalties for non-compliance.

Advice

Not sure which type of contract to use, which notice to serve, or having problems with a tenant? Click here to find out where you can receive support and advice as a property owner.

We regret that we are unable to offer registered Property Owners advice where they have a problem with a tenant. The information below provides details of where you can receive legal advice and support as a Property Owner.

Other Web links

- National Landlords Association (NLA) [http://www.landlords.org.uk/](http://www.landlords.org.uk/)
- Residential Landlords Association (RLA) [http://www.rla.org.uk/index.shtml](http://www.rla.org.uk/index.shtml)