

Parents' and supporters' guide to...

Accommodation

A big part of moving to university is choosing a place to live. There are three main options for students. We have laid out the pros and cons of each here, but the right choice is different for every person.

Halls of Residence

This refers to accommodation provided by and managed by the university itself. Halls can be catered (meaning meals are provided as part of the cost) or self catered (where students will cook for themselves). Newer accommodation is often divided into flats, where several rooms share a kitchen or bathroom. Halls can be single sex or mixed, undergraduate or postgraduate, single beds or double beds, shared rooms or individual rooms. Students may opt for an en suite bathroom or share one with others. We would recommend looking at as many different types of room as possible to make a decision. Another thing to consider is the length of tenancy. Some halls require students to move out during holidays, which can be a hassle, but this will often be cheaper.

The application process varies between university. Usually, students will be able to apply online once they have made the university their firm choice.

Pros

Social: Halls are a great way to meet new people.

Bills included: Makes life simpler and potentially cheaper.

Reliable landlord: Maintenance is reliable and the university will respond quickly to issues that may arise. Pastoral care and security will often be provided by the university in the form of wardens or residential support assistants giving added peace of mind.

Cons

Price: Halls can be more expensive, however bear in mind that the price does usually include all utility bills.

Busy: Living in halls comes with a built in social life which may be initially overwhelming for some.

Availability: May only be an option in first year. Some universities cannot guarantee accommodation for everyone.

Living at home

Many students are choosing to live at home or with family or friends to cut costs. Given the number of higher education providers in the UK, this is a viable option for many students.

Pros

Familiar area: Living at home means that your child will already know the area and transport links as well as having a local support network of family and friends.

Cheaper: Depending on the amount of rent charged by family or friends, students can save a lot of money by living at home. Bear in mind though that students won't be eligible for the full maintenance loan if living at home.

Cons

Less independent: By living at home, students may not get the full university experience of living independently.

Social restrictions: It may be harder for students to immerse themselves in the social side of university, although many students do have a full and active social life at university whilst living at home.

Private rented accommodation

Most students will move out into private accommodation after their first year. This comes in all shapes and sizes: from a single studio to a 9 bedroom house share.

Pros

Independent living: This is a true opportunity to live independently: paying bills, shopping and cooking, and remembering to put the bins out!

Housemates: Students can choose exactly who they will be living with.

Cons

Distance from university: Students may need to move further away from campus to find affordable accommodation.

Paying own utilities: This is an added complication and may be more expensive.

Landlords: Can vary in quality!

Accommodation support

Whether students decide to live on or off campus, the university will usually offer an accommodation service to check contracts, help students find housemates or places to live, and help to solve any issues that arise during the tenancy.