

University College Plymouth St Mark & St John

“LIVING OUT”

Guide to finding off campus accommodation and renting in the private sector.



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WHO DO I LIVE WITH

Give yourself time to sort out your grouping before you finally decide on who you are going to live with. You have only been at University for 12 weeks, can you be sure that you know each other well enough to share next year!

You will feel under pressure to get your accommodation arranged by the end of the first term however, **DO NOT**. January is soon enough to start looking for accommodation.

WHERE DO I LOOK

A list of local landlords is available from the Accommodation Office. You can also visit the letting agencies in the City or check the Herald newspaper.

Student letting agencies, Plymouth

http://www.bing.com/local/default.aspx?what=student+letting+agencies&where=Plymouth%2c+Devon&s_cid=ansPhBkYp01&mkt=en-gb&ac=false&qpvt=student+letting+agencies+in+plymouth&FORM=LARE

Herald

<http://www.thisisplymouth.co.uk/property>

HMO LICENSING

If you live with friends check with your local authority to see if your landlord needs to get a 'House in Multiple Occupation' (HMO) licence for your property.

<http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/housing/privatehousing/landlords/hmo/hmolicensing.htm>

Your house must be licensed if it has:

- 5 or more unrelated people sharing
- 3 or more storeys

The landlord of an HMO must make sure that the property is properly maintained and meets health & safety requirements at all times by:

- Giving you contact details
- Keeping fire escapes clear and maintain fire fighting
- Equipment and alarms
- Ensure that the property design and structure will not cause injury
- Provide adequate, uninterrupted water supply and drainage
- Provide adequate supply of gas (if any) and electricity
- Check annual gas safety certification (if gas supplied) and electricity safety every five years
- Keep the property and any shared gardens in good repair
- Provide suitable rubbish disposal

VIEWING A PROPERTY

Know who you want to live with, select appropriate properties and start viewing. Only view a property when the whole group are able to attend. Never go alone.

Take a good look around the property, check for obvious signs of disrepair, damp, badly fitting doors or windows, or anything that could compromise your security. Don't be afraid to take a third party with you to get their views on the property.

Make sure you are united as a group in the final decision making. Insist on seeing all areas of the premises offered. Do not be rushed into anything or be tempted to take a house that is in the process of being refurbished.

DEPOSIT & GUARANTOR

Once you have found a suitable place to rent, you need to pay a deposit. They may also ask for rent in advance.

DON'T hand over any money until you are sure you want to live in this property.

A deposit is usually held to cover missing rent or damage made to the property. Always get a written receipt for money paid to a landlord or letting agent.

Your landlord/agent has to protect your deposit by placing it in a Tenancy Deposit Protection Scheme, within fourteen days of taking it from you. You should then be given the following details:

- the contact of the tenancy deposit scheme
- the contact details of the landlord/agent
- how to apply for the release of the deposit
- information explaining the purpose of the deposit
- what to do if there is a dispute about the deposit

Your landlord may ask you to provide a guarantor who agrees to cover costs if you don't pay the rent, or cause significant damage to the property. A guarantor is usually a parent or guardian.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/PrivateRenting/Tenancies/DG_189120

TENANCY AGREEMENTS

A tenancy is a contract between a landlord and a tenant that allows the tenant to live in a property as long as they pay rent and follow the rules.

A tenancy agreement is the document agreed between a landlord and tenant, and sets out the legal terms and conditions of the rent contract. A tenancy agreement should be prepared before anyone rents the property.

Tenancy agreements help to protect your rights as a tenant and outline what your obligations will be.

Tenancy agreements can be either written or verbal, but you should use a written tenancy agreement where possible. This will avoid any disputes at a later date as all the tenancy information will be in writing. Check you understand any terms before agreeing to them.

Whatever your type of tenancy, read any paperwork involved carefully before you agree to move in or sign any written agreements. You will be required to look after your property in a reasonable way – for example, emptying bins and keeping the house tidy and clean.

Whether or not a tenancy agreement is in place, landlords and tenants still have certain rights and obligations under the housing legislation:

Rights of the tenant:

- Freedom to live in the property undisturbed
- The right to live in a property in a good state of repair – you
- landlord should make repairs and maintain the property
- The right to access information about your tenancy at any time
- Protection from unfair eviction

Rights of the landlord:

- Repossess the property when the tenancy ends
- Take back the property if it gets damaged
- Access the property by giving 24 hour's notice
- Take legal action to evict your tenant in some instances

• The most common type of tenancy is an Assured Shorthold Tenancy. Your tenancy should state the following:

- The names of all people involved
- The rental price
- The deposit amount and how it will be protected
- The property address
- The start and end date of the tenancy
- Any tenant or landlord obligations
- Which bills the tenant is responsible for
- You could also ask the following to be included:
- How to pay the rent
- Whether the tenancy can be ended early and how can this be done
- Who is responsible for minor repairs
- Whether the property can be let to someone else (sublet) or have lodgers

If in doubt **DO NOT** sign anything. If you are unsure of any terms in the agreement seek legal advice.

Once agreed both tenant and landlord should sign the agreement and both parties should have a copy to keep.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/HomeAndCommunity/PrivateRenting/Tenancies/DG_189101

ARRIVAL AT YOUR ACCOMMODATION

Know your address. Get a telephone contact for your landlord/agent. Find out exactly when and where you get the keys. Your landlord/agent should be at the property to check the Inventory with you, read the meters, and deal with any property advice/instructions on your arrival.

BATHROOM/SHOWER/TOILET FACILITIES

The requirement for 4 or fewer occupiers is a bathroom with a fixed bath/shower and a toilet.

Every 5 occupiers is a bathroom with a fixed bath/shower with a separate toilet and wash hand basin.

5 occupiers or more is a bathroom with a fixed bath/shower with a separate toilet and wash hand basin and a wash hand basin in each housing unit.

No bath, shower room or toilet should be more than one floor away from any user. Neither a bath nor shower can be provided in a kitchen area, neither can a kitchen door open directly into a bathroom/toilet area. External WC's are not acceptable and cannot be included in the above ratio.

BILLS

Be prepared! The average cost of bills is approximately £7 per person per week. You must have light, warmth and hot water. By placing approximately £7 per person per week aside towards payment, the kitty, will help soften the blow when bills come pouring in. There are always more payments than you think!

BURGLARY

The Police ask that you mark your belongings with an ultra violet marker with your postcode and student number. The Accommodation Officer advises you to take home with you all items of value and items valuable to you during a period of absence; particularly vacation times; and place all other items remaining in your accommodation out of sight, where possible, in cupboards, etc.

Houses with alarms are far less likely to be the target for burglars.

CATERING

Students can purchase meals at the University College and also buy into the Dining-In-Scheme. Contact the College Catering Department 01752 636862 for further information.

COOKING

Approved standard size gas or electric appliances must be provided.

COMMON ROOM

If possible rent a house with a lounge/communal area.

COUNCIL TAX

A house that is solely for the occupation of students attending a full time course in Higher Education is normally exempt from Council Tax charges. Council Tax enquiries office is 01752 668000 revenues@Plymouth.gov.uk

CURTAINS & CARPETS

All rooms should be suitably supplied.

DAMAGE

It is always advisable to inform your landlord/agent immediately of any damage to the property, fixture, fittings, during the period of your tenancy. Any concerns should be dealt with to avoid any misunderstanding at the termination of a tenancy. Inventories should also be amended accordingly.

DECORATION

Do not attempt any redecoration or structural alterations to the property. Always consult your landlord/agent in the first instance.

ELECTRICITY

Unless otherwise stated you will be responsible for all electricity consumed plus quarterly charges during the period of your tenancy. Always take a meter reading on arrival, keep a safe record and inform the supplier of the reading, date and tenants names immediately you take up a tenancy. Make sure your landlord/agent has a current safety certificate for all the electrical appliances.

FINANCE

All financial arrangements are between you and the landlord/agent. The University College cannot enter into any negotiations in this matter and assume no responsibility.

FIRE

A fire extinguisher and fire blanket must be provided as appropriate to the type and size of property. Make sure you are aware of emergency escape routes, discuss this with your landlord/agent and know how to call the Fire Brigade.

Some precautions

- Never leave a chip pan unattended with the heat on.
- Never leave clothes on top of any gas fire or electrical appliance.
- Never leave an electric iron on unattended.
- Never empty an ashtray into a waste bin last thing at night.
- Never cook late at night.

FOOD STORAGE

Each occupant should be provided food storage space, preferably wall mounted [space below a sink unit is not accepted as food storage space].

FURNITURE

Upholstered furniture must comply with the Regulations covering flammability and should have a label stating this.

GAS

It is required by Law for a landlord/agent to have gas appliances checked for safety at least once a year by a gas Safe registered gas installer. You must ask your landlord/agent for proof of inspection and safety.

Unless otherwise stated you will be responsible for all gas consumed plus the quarterly charge during the period of your tenancy. Always take a meter reading on arrival, keep a safe record and inform the supplier of the reading, date and tenants names immediately you take up a tenancy.

GOOD CONDUCT

Good conduct and student discipline apply as agreed by The Council of Management of the University College. Please refer to the current Student Regulations Framework.

<http://ucpmarjon.ac.uk/aboutmarjon/institutional%20documents/studentregulationsframework2011-12/>

HEATING

All habitable rooms shall be adequately heated by a fixed space heating appliance of either gas or electricity.

INSURANCE-CONTENTS

Each student is strongly advised to take out their own adequate contents insurance cover.

INSURANCE—PROPERTY

Property insurance is not the responsibility of a student. This should be undertaken by your landlord/agent - make sure it is.

INVENTORY

This should be provided to each tenant detailing the contents of each individual room and all communal areas. Check this document with care at the commencement of a tenancy and write any queries, amendments, discrepancies, breakages, damage, you come across and point all these out, in writing, to your landlord/agent immediately. Time spent doing this at the commencement of a tenancy will avoid misunderstanding or dispute at the end of a tenancy when you check the items again, and need to negotiate your deposit refund.

KEYS

Each tenant should receive a set of keys.

KITCHEN & COOKING FACILITIES

Cooker, refrigerator/freezer, pots, pans, cutlery, crockery, kettle, iron and waste bin are standard items. Check this is so prior to accepting a property. Also find out when your refuse collection day is.

LEGAL POSIOTION

If you are not clear about your legal position, get advice.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau will assist you. <http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

or Shelter <http://www.shelter.org.uk>

MAINTENANCE

Find out what to do if you require maintenance (blocked toilet, broken tap, lights out). Most landlords/agents have cover in place. At all times contact your landlord/agent for advice before taking any action.

POSTERS

Normal procedure is to have permission from your landlord/agent to place posters on internal walls of the accommodation. Placing posters without permission could affect your deposit.

QUIET ENJOYMENT

In order to safeguard your privacy it is normal to ask your landlord/agent to give 24 hours notice of entry and the personal permission of a tenant to enter his/her own room, except in cases of emergency.

SECURITY

At all times make security a priority and habit in your home. Keep doors into the property locked at all times. You will be held responsible for your accommodation and the behaviour of other people entering that accommodation.

SMOKE DETECTORS

It is essential that smoke detectors/alarms are fitted in your accommodation and should be linked to each other via the mains electricity.

STUDY BEDROOM

Your room should be suitably heated and adequately furnished to provide a study/bedroom, including a worktable/desk and desk chair [both essential], easy chair [space allowing], wardrobe, drawer space/chest of drawers, bed, bedside table, shelving for books, waste bin and mirror. The room must be carpeted and curtained and have a acceptable form of heating.

TELEPHONE

In most cases the telephone is entirely the responsibility of tenants.

TELEVISION

You must have a TV Licence to use a set within your room. The penalty for not being able to produce a valid TV Licence could lead to a fine. A TV Licence is the responsibility of tenants. You can refer to customer enquiries at www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

VACATIONS

It is standard practice that full weekly rental is payable during both the Christmas and Easter vacation periods. You are, of course, entitled to use your accommodation while you are paying full rent.

VENTILATION

All habitable rooms shall be ventilated directly to the external air by a window. Kitchen, bathroom, water closet, that have no external window should be provided with mechanical ventilation

WATER CHARGES

Some tenants are liable for the water rate for the duration of a tenancy. This charge can be costly. You must find out whether you are liable and how much the quarterly charge is before signing your Agreement. Ask to see the cost of charges incurred previously. You are strongly encouraged to arrange for this payment to be made by your landlord/agent.

CONTACTS

Accommodation Office	01752 636711 www.ucpmarjon.ac.uk/facilities/accommodation
Citizens Advice Bureau	www.citizensadvice.org.uk
Council Tax	www.plymouth.gov.uk
Electrical Emergency	0800 365 900
Emergency Services	999 or 112 (from a mobile)
Gas Emergency	0800 111 999
Plymouth City Council department]	01752 668000 [main switchboard ask for respective www.plymouth.gov.uk or www.direct.gov.uk
Police	emergency 999 non emergency 101
South West Water	www.southwestwater.co.uk
Traveline	www.traveline.org.uk
TV Licensing Authority	www.tvlicensing.co.uk
UCP Marjon department]	01752 636700 [main switchboard ask for respective www.ucpmarjon.ac.uk

DISCLAIMER

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