



Accommodation Handbook

Advice for students on university and private accommodation, TV Licensing, Council Tax and more...

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Accommodation Handbook

Finding a place to live whilst at University can be a complicated business. This handbook aims to give you the essential information (and contacts for further specialised advice) that you'll need to get through it!

For more information, face-to-face advice on accommodation, or any other queries you have whilst at GCU, drop into the Advice Centre on Level 1 of the Students' Association building, or contact a Student Adviser on **0141 273 1650** or at **advice@GCUstudents.co.uk**.

University Halls—Caledonian Court

Most students studying away from home for the first time choose to live in a university hall of residence to meet new friends and live in a sociable environment.

GCU's Student Halls are situated just behind the main City Campus at Caledonian Court on Dobbies Loan. There is accommodation for 660 students who share fully-furnished flats for 6–8 people in single rooms, around half with en-suite facilities. Heating, electricity and internet are included in the rent and there is a coin operated

launderette on site. Security staff and CCTV operate 24 hours-a-day.

You can get full information about how to apply for a place at Caledonian Court and the terms and conditions that apply on the GCU website, or alternatively by contacting the Accommodation Office on **0141 331 3980** or **accommodation@gcu.ac.uk**. An application pack with full information on applying is available to download from: **www.gcu.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/accommodation/howtoapply**

Private Halls

If there are no places available at Caledonian Court but you want to live in a similar environment then you could consider living in privately owned halls of residence. These offer similar facilities to traditional university-owned student accommodation for students from any university or college in Glasgow. The private halls listed here start at £105.00 per week including bills.

The main private halls close to the GCU campus are:

- **Dobbies Point:** 200 North Hanover Street, Glasgow G4 0PY **Buchanan View:** 35 Calgarey Street, Glasgow G4 0XG
Both are run by Student Roost.
www.studentroost.co.uk
- **Liberty Park:** 171 Kyle Street, Glasgow G4 0JQ
www.libertyliving.co.uk
- **Boyce Court:** 47 Kyle Street, Glasgow G4 0JQ
www.nidostudent.com

Private Rented Accommodation

After first year many students swap life in student halls for privately rented accommodation, usually sharing a flat with other students.

There are many ways of finding private accommodation; here are some ideas to get you started:

The GCU Students' Association Advice Centre Accommodation Notice Board

Check out the notice board in the Advice Centre on Level 1 of the Students' Association building for flat, room and shared accommodation adverts.

Anyone who has accommodation to advertise can use this space, including students looking for a flat-mate and private landlords. If you would like to put up an advert speak to a Student Adviser first as all adverts need to be GCU Students' Association approved or they will be removed.

Word of Mouth

Keep your ears open for opportunities to find out about rooms/flats becoming available when friends or friends-of- friends are moving out. Ask around your friends to see if any know anyone who is looking for a flatmate. You might be able to get a place before it's even advertised!

Flatshare Online Forum

There is an online flatshare advertising forum aimed at students in Glasgow:

www.glasgowstudent.net/services/flatshare/view/

This is hosted by Glasgow University's Student Representative Council (SRC) so many of that flats are in the West End of the city but there are also several closer to the city centre.

It is worth a look especially if you are looking for a room in a flat or a new flatmate.

Websites

There are lots of searchable accommodation websites online; they are a quick way of sifting through numerous adverts.

Here are some to check:

- ▶ www.accommodationforstudents.com
- ▶ www.gumtree.com/flatshare/glasgow
- ▶ www.s1homes.com
- ▶ www.rightmove.co.uk
- ▶ www.citylets.co.uk
- ▶ www.lettingweb.com
- ▶ www.spareroom.co.uk
- ▶ www.zoopla.co.uk

Letting Agencies

These are private companies that act as go-betweens between tenants and landlords—helping tenants find accommodation to rent, collecting rent and managing the everyday running/maintenance of the property for the landlord.

There are advantages and disadvantages of using a letting agency—it is more likely that legal requirements (e.g. fire safety measures and HMO arrangements) are up to scratch and if you need something repaired in the property a letting agency should be able to sort it out promptly. However some agencies charge fees for credit checking, administration costs etc., in addition to requiring a deposit, which is unlawful. You can challenge these fees, or claim

them back if you've paid them already, using the toolkit and information from Shelter Scotland at

www.reclaimyourfees.com

All letting agents have to be signed up to the Scottish Letting Agent Register. If a letting agent is not on the register then they cannot operate as a letting agent.

If your letting agent is not on the register then they are committing a criminal offence and could face a £50000 fine, up to 6 months in prison or both.

Find out more about letting agent registration and the Letting Agent Code of Practice at:

scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/finding_a_place_to_live/renting_privately/letting_agencies

Emergency & Short-term Accommodation

If you need somewhere to stay short term in Glasgow whilst you sort out your accommodation, there are various options close to campus:

Premier Inn Glasgow City Centre

Buchanan Galleries, St. Andrew House,
141 W Nile St, Glasgow G1 2RN
0871 527 9360
www.premierinn.com

Travelodge Glasgow Central 5—

11 Hill Street, Glasgow G3 6RP
0871 984 6141
www.travelodge.co.uk/hotels/209/Glasgow-Central-hotel

Easyhotel Glasgow City

1 Hill Street, Glasgow G3 6RN
0843 902 7001
www.easyhotel.com/hotels/united-kingdom/glasgow-city

For more information on hostels, budget hotels and apartment accommodation in Glasgow, try:

Hostelbookers

www.hostelbookers.com/hostels/scotland/glasgow

Important Legal Stuff

Tenancy Agreement

This is a contract between you (the tenant) and your landlord that sets out your rights and responsibilities whilst you are living in the property and lists the terms and conditions that you both need to stick to.

You should be given a written copy of your tenancy agreement (which you should read before signing!) from your landlord before you move in.

A tenancy agreement should set out the name and address of your landlord; the address of the property you are renting; how much rent you will pay and how long you can live in the property for.

In addition to this most tenancy agreements also contain information about:

- ▶ When the rent is due and how it should be paid (e.g. by cheque, bank standing order).
- ▶ What's included in the rent—whether any bills are included (e.g. council tax) or whether there are any extra charges (e.g. cleaning or gardening).
- ▶ Information about your deposit, what it covers and under what circumstances you won't be able to get it back.
- ▶ How the tenancy can end (e.g. how much notice you will need to give the landlord if you want to move out and how much notice the landlord needs to give you if they want you to move out).

- ▶ Whether the flat is furnished/part-furnished or unfurnished.
- ▶ What responsibilities you have for internal decorations (e.g. whether you will be allowed to paint your walls etc.) Your landlord will be responsible for external and structural repairs).
- ▶ Whether you will be able to sublet, have paying lodgers or pass the tenancy on to anyone else.
- ▶ Any other relevant information or house rules, for example about pets, guests or smoking.

For more information about your and your landlord's responsibilities and about Private Residential Tenancies go to www.GCUSTUDENTS.CO.UK/PRT

Tenancy Agreements in Shared Accommodation

Most students share rented accommodation. The type of tenancy that you have will have a big impact on who is legally responsible for paying the rent and looking after the property:

- ▶ If all flatmates signed one tenancy agreement (a "joint tenancy") then everyone is responsible for paying the rent and bills. If one of you doesn't pay their share the others can be held responsible for paying.
- ▶ If everyone signed their own tenancy agreements (e.g. per room) then you have "separate tenancies" and each flatmate is only responsible for paying the amount of rent that is written in their individual agreement.

- If one flatmate signed the tenancy agreement on behalf of everyone then they have a “sole tenancy” and are solely responsible for paying all of the rent (i.e. if someone didn't pay their share the person who signed the agreement would be responsible). We would advise against signing a sole tenancy for a shared flat as this is a big financial risk that could have serious consequences for the individual concerned.

Important Tip: Before signing the contract, make sure all promised changes/plans for refurbishment and their completion dates are written into the contract.

Landlord Registration

All private landlords must now be registered with their local council (who check that they are “fit and proper” to let out property). If your landlord isn't registered, or hasn't applied to be then it is a criminal offence if they act as landlords and they can be fined £50,000. Check if your landlord is registered at: **www.landlordregistrationscotland.gov.uk**

HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupancy)

A House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) is a property that is shared by three or more tenants who aren't members of the same family and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.

Landlords of HMOs must get a licence from the council that ensures that the

property is managed properly, meets certain safety standards and that the landlord is a fit and proper person to hold a licence. The HMO licence needs to be renewed every 3 years.

If you share a property (under the above conditions) and your landlord doesn't have an HMO licence then they are committing a criminal offence.

You can check whether your landlord is licensed by contacting Glasgow City Council's Licensing Section on **0800 027 0414** or by emailing **privatelandlordregistrationunit@glasgow.gov.uk**.

Deposit

A deposit is a sum of money paid to a landlord by the tenant(s) as security against any damage done to the property whilst they are living there. This can include the cost of any cleaning required if tenants leave the property in a poor condition, non-payment of rent or any bills left unpaid in the property after tenants leave.

The deposit is usually the amount of one month's rent but a landlord can legally ask for any amount up to the equivalent of two months rent.

To ensure you get your deposit back you should do the following:

- Get a signed receipt for the deposit from your landlord (and keep it!).
- Make sure that you (and the landlord) check and sign an agreed copy of the inventory at the start of the tenancy.
- When you move out, make sure that

everything listed on the inventory (see below) is still there and in the condition that was listed at the start of your tenancy.

- ▶ Take care of the property whilst living there (including not doing any DIY or paint jobs without checking with your landlord first).
- ▶ Thoroughly clean the whole place and remove all of your things before moving out.
- ▶ Make sure that you're up-to-date with the rent and have paid all of your final utility bills.
- ▶ Return all keys to the landlord.

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme (TDS) in Scotland requires all private landlords to register their tenant's deposits with one of three government-approved schemes within 30 days of the tenancy starting. Your landlord must also give you information about which scheme your deposit has been registered with. Deposits must be held in a TDS and protected for the length of your tenancy. At the end of your tenancy your landlord applies for the deposit to be repaid to you (minus any deductions). The TDS will contact you to see if you agree with the amount of deposit being returned, if you do it will be returned to you directly. If you do not agree and cannot resolve this with your landlord then you can apply to the dispute resolution process. Please visit Shelter Scotland website for more detailed information on this:

www.scotland.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/advice_topics/paying_for_a_home/deposits/tenancy_deposit_schemes

Inventory

This is a list of everything in the property that you are renting belonging to the landlord as well as the condition that items are in before you move in.

Once you have signed a tenancy agreement your landlord (or letting agency) should give you an inventory before you move in. If they don't, ask for one or make one yourself and get the landlord to sign it.

Once you have an inventory you should go through all the rooms in the flat/house checking that everything is there and in the condition that is stated. If anything is missing or if anything is in a worse condition than is stated on the inventory, take photos of any damage and report it in writing (email). Ask the landlord to update the list so that you are both satisfied it is accurate before you sign it.

Make sure you keep your signed copy of the inventory safe—you may need it to get your deposit back.

If you have any concerns about your tenancy agreement, problems with your landlord or letting agency you can get free specialised housing advice from Shelter Scotland, the GCU Accommodation Office or GCU Law Clinic (for legal advice). See the Useful Contacts section for details.

There is comprehensive information and guides for tenants renting in the private sector at:
www.rentingscotland.org

Bills, Bills, Bills

Essential information and tips on dealing with your household bills.

Council Tax for Full-Time Students

If you are a full-time student and live in student halls then you don't have to pay council tax. If you live in private accommodation then you are eligible to apply for a council tax exemption or discount.

You will not automatically be exempt from council tax. As soon as you move in you and all other students living in your property need to submit a Council Tax Exemption Application Form and provide proof of student status to Glasgow City Council or you will receive a council tax bill.

You will only get a full exemption from council tax if you and everyone else in the property are full-time students. If there are non-students living in the property then they will still be liable for the council tax. If there is only one non-student living with students they can apply for a discount.

For more information and to complete the Glasgow City Council student exemption/discount form online, go to: **www.glasgow.gov.uk/ctstudentinfo**

For students at Glasgow Caledonian University who live in the Glasgow City Council area, the University will confirm your student status electronically to the council. You still need to complete the form though or you will still receive a bill.

Students in the property studying elsewhere will need to obtain a Certificate of Student Status from their university/college's Registry and include this with the form. Completed paper forms and proof of student status should be sent to **45 John Street, Glasgow, G1 1JE**.

Council Tax for Part-Time Students

Part-time students are not eligible for Council Tax exemption or discount. If you are a part-time student you can claim council tax benefit, which is an income-based benefit—contact Citizens Advice Direct on **0844 848 9600** for more information on this.

See the Useful Contacts section for Glasgow City Council Tax Department contact details.

TV Licensing

All students who watch or record television programmes as they're being shown on TV need to be covered by a TV Licence.

It makes no difference how you watch TV—whether it's on your laptop, PC, mobile phone, through a digital box, DVD recorder or good old-fashioned TV set—if you use any device to receive television programmes as they're being shown on TV, the law requires you to be covered by a TV Licence.

You also need to be covered by a TV Licence to download or watch BBC

programmes on demand, including catch up TV on BBC iPlayer. This applies to any device and provider you use.

If you live in university or private halls of residence and watch TV in your room then you need your own TV Licence—the Hall's Licence only covers TV watched in communal areas.

If you live in shared accommodation and have a “joint tenancy” agreement (see legal section above) then you only need one TV Licence to cover all the TVs in the property, so can share the cost. If you all have “separate tenancy” agreements then you each need your own TV Licence to watch TV in your private rooms. These will also cover any TVs in communal areas of the flat/house.

Your parents' TV Licence will only cover you in student accommodation if you only watch TV on a TV powered by internal batteries that is never plugged into the mains or an aerial and your parents address is your permanent address. This isn't very common.

If you get a TV Licence right at the start of term (in Sept/Oct) then you may be able to apply for a refund if you don't need your TV Licence for any full three-month period of cover (e.g. if you are moving out of halls or your flat for 3 full months over the summer break).

You can apply for a colour or black and white licence, and there are various ways to pay. All details of costs and ways to pay can be found at:

www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Utility Bills

Unless your rent includes your utility bills (unlikely unless you're living in student halls) you and your flat-mates will need to sort out (and pay) your gas, electricity and telephone/broadband/TV bills. Keep in mind that flats with “all inclusive” deals may not always work out the cheapest, and check for “fair usage clauses.”

As soon as you move in take a note of the electricity and gas meter readings and give them, with your move-in date and name(s), to the suppliers (find out who these are from your landlord) so that you are only billed from the time you move in. Contact BT to get your landline phone connected (phone 150).

You'll need to decide at the start of your tenancy how you are going to work out sharing your household bills. E.g. you could take responsibility for dealing with one bill each (getting it paid on time and chasing everyone for their share) or you could set up a joint bank account that you all pay into each month by standing order to cover all bills.

Make sure that you are organised and everyone knows what's expected of them—are you going to be paying all bills monthly or quarterly? By Direct Debit, cheques or payment cards?

Before you move in is also a good time to think about insurance for your belongings—in a flat share it's likely that you'll each only insure your own items (e.g. laptop, TV, stereo). Some insurance companies offer reduced rates and specific policies for students, so shop around for a good deal.

Accommodation Safety

Fire Safety

When viewing a flat, make sure that you check for the following:

- ▶ Are there smoke detectors in each room? Do they work? All landlords have a legal obligation to supply fire detection equipment such as smoke alarms.
- ▶ Are the electric sockets in good condition? Are there enough of them (or are multiple adaptors being used?). Are there any other hazards that could be dangerous?

If you live in an HMO licensed property you should also check the following before signing a tenancy agreement:

- ▶ Is there a fire blanket in the kitchen? Are there fire extinguishers on every floor? Do you know how to work them? Have they been checked regularly?
- ▶ Can you see a clear fire escape route to get out of the flat safely if there was a fire?
- ▶ Check that your landlord has: an up-to-date Gas Safety record less than one year old; Portable Electrical Appliance certificates less than three years old; a General Electrical certificate for the property less than three years old. Ask to see copies of all certificates.

If you think your landlord is not fulfilling their responsibilities regarding fire, contact Glasgow City Council or the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (see Useful Contacts for details).

For more information on fire safety and to get a free safety visit and smoke alarm, visit:

www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-safety/for-householders/home-fire-safety-visit.aspx

Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide gas is invisible and has no smell. It's very poisonous and can kill quickly. Carbon monoxide can be produced if gas appliances are not installed or maintained properly, if they are broken, if chimneys/flues get blocked, or if rooms are not adequately ventilated.

Danger signs to watch out for:

- ▶ stains, soot or discoloration around a gas fire or the top of a gas water heater;
- ▶ yellow or orange flames in the fire or water heater burners;
- ▶ a strong smell when the gas appliance is running.

If there are gas appliances or central heating in your property your landlord has a legal responsibility to have a valid Gas Safety record and to supply tenants with a copy. Gas Safety records are valid for 12 months and can only be issued by Gas Safe Register gas operatives. In order to give a Gas Safety record, the gas operative must carry out a Gas Safety check.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are similar to those of flu and include: tiredness, headaches, nausea,

chest pains, sudden faintness, erratic behaviour, diarrhoea and stomach pains.

If you are suffering from these symptoms and believe it could be due to carbon monoxide poisoning, you should:

- ▶ switch off all gas appliances—don't turn them on again until they've been checked;
- ▶ see a GP straightaway (and tell them you have reason to suspect your symptoms could be caused by carbon monoxide poisoning);
- ▶ inform your landlord immediately.

Personal Safety

Some tips to keep yourself safe:

- ▶ Never go alone to view a property. Take a friend and make sure someone knows where you are going.
- ▶ When viewing a property make sure you take into account what the area is like. Do you feel safe? Is the area properly lit? Would you feel safe arriving home after dark?
- ▶ Look for a phone secure entry system in flats with a shared entrance. Check it's maintained and used properly (was it propped open when you arrived to view the property?).
- ▶ Always lock your door and check that your windows are closed and locked—particularly if you live on the ground floor.

Property Safety

Some tips to help safeguard your home and possessions from theft:

- ▶ Always lock your door. If you don't think the lock is secure enough ask your landlord to fit a five-lever mortice lock.
- ▶ If you have a spy hole and chain, use them. If you don't, ask your landlord to fit them.
- ▶ Use phone entry systems properly—don't let in anyone you don't know or leave the door propped open.
- ▶ Use window locks if you have them and close windows before going out.
- ▶ Don't leave a spare key in a hiding place near the door (under the doormat, in a plant pot...).
- ▶ Get insurance for your valuables. If you rent furnished accommodation. Your landlord's insurance should cover anything that belongs to them, but you will still need your own insurance for your possessions.
- ▶ If you are broken-into call the police straight away. Call 999 if you think the burglars are still nearby, otherwise phone your local police station (see Useful Contacts). Don't clear up any mess left by the burglars until the police have checked it as you might destroy evidence.
- ▶ You can help to make your valuables more traceable by police in case of theft by using UV pens to mark your name and address on them or by taking photos of any valuables that you can't mark. Take a note of the make, model and serial number of any electrical goods.

Useful Contacts for Further Advice

Housing Law Advice and Information

Shelter Scotland

0808 800 4444 (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm).
For in depth information and email advice facility, visit: www.scotland.shelter.org.uk/about_us/contact_us

Renting Scotland

Scottish Government funded comprehensive guide to renting in Scotland: www.rentingscotland.org/tenants-guide

Citizens' Advice Scotland

Online advice or search for a local face-to-face service (Citizens Advice Bureau): www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/

Advice.scot

Consumer advice by phone 0808 800 9060 Mon–Fri 9am–6pm, or online at www.advice.scot

GCU Law Clinic

0141 331 8070/8098
lawclinic@gcu.ac.uk
www.gcu.ac.uk/lawclinic

University Accommodation Contacts

GCU Accommodation Office

0141 331 3980
accommodation@gcu.ac.uk

Caledonian Court 24 Hours Security (Emergency Contact)

0141 331 3958

GCU Emergency Number (First Aid on campus)

Dial 2222 from any phone on campus

Glasgow City Council and TV Licensing Contacts

Main Switchboard

0141 287 2000
www.glasgow.gov.uk

Landlord Licensing Section

0300 343 0414
privatelandlordregistrationunit@glasgow.gov.uk

Council Tax Department

Council Tax Helpline
0141 287 5050 (Mon–Fri 8.30am–6pm)

Queries in person

45 John Street, Glasgow G1 1JE (Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm)

Search for 'students and council tax' at www.glasgow.gov.uk

TV Licensing

0300 790 6144 (quote GAL)
www.tvlicensing.co.uk

Local Safety Contacts (non-emergency)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

0141 646 4501
www.firescotland.gov.uk

Glasgow City Centre Police Office

(Open 24 hours)
Tel: 101
50 Stewart Street, Glasgow, G4 0HY

In an emergency, dial 999.

GCU Students' Association Advice Centre Contacts

GCU Students' Association Advice Centre Student Advisers

0141 273 1650

advice@GCUstudents.co.uk

Nightline

Confidential and supportive listening and information service available Mon–Fri, all night 7pm–7am during term time.

Helpline: 0141 55 22 555

Online chat: www.scnightline.com

Text service: 07982 107 920

Rental Ad Jargon

GCH = Gas Central Heating

WM = White Meter for electricity

WC = Water Closet (toilet)

N/S = No Smoking

No DSS = Department for Social Security. Usually prefixed by the word 'sorry', this means that the landlord doesn't want tenants who will be claiming housing benefit

DG = Double Glazing

EPC = Energy Performance Certificate. This must also be included in adverts for private rented housing and should give you an idea of how expensive the property might be to heat.

LR = Landlord Registration

CT = Council Tax

PCM = Per Calendar Month

PW = Per Week

lge = large

sm = small

rm = room

Glasgow Postcodes

City Centre

- G1** Merchant City, Argyle Street
- G2** Charing Cross
- G3** Finnieston, Garnethill, Woodlands
- G4** Cowcaddens, St. Georges Cross
- G5** Kingston

West End

- G11** Partick, Thornwood
- G12** Hyndland, Hillhead
- G13** Jordanhill, Knightswood
- G14** Scotstoun, Whiteinch
- G20** North Kelvinside
- G60** Old Kilpatrick
- G81** Clydebank
- G84** Helensburgh

East End

- G31** Dennistoun
- G32** Tollcross
- G33** Stepps
- G38** Dennistoun
- G40** Bridgeton
- G69** Baillieston

South Side

- G41** Pollokshields, Shawlands
- G42** Govanhill, Mount Florida
- G43** Pollokshaws
- G44** Cathcart
- G46** Giffnock
- G51** Kinning Park, Ibrox
- G52** Cardonald
- G53** Crookston
- G57** Ibrox
- G71** Uddingston
- G72** Cambuslang, Blantyre
- G73** Rutherglen
- G76** Clarkston
- G77** Newton Mearns
- G78** Neilston

North

- G21** Springburn
- G22** Hamiltonhill
- G23** Summerston
- G61** Bearsden
- G62** Milngavie
- G63** Drymen
- G64** Bishopbriggs
- G65** Kilsyth
- G66** Kirkintilloch



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Scottish Charity number: SC022887