



What's Most Important to Students When Choosing Accommodation?

**STUDENT
LIFE**

MEARS

Moving out of home and living independently at university is a big deal! It's a huge life change, and one that's as exciting and fun as it is daunting. But don't let the fear of the unknown hold you back.

Deciding where to live during your time at uni is one of the biggest decisions you'll make before you start your course. So how do you choose the best place for you?

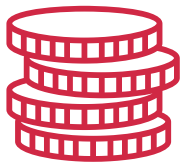
There are loads of great student-housing providers out there who offer safe, secure, and stylish accommodation in convenient locations across the UK. You can share with friends and live slap-bang in the middle of a city, or move into a flat further from campus; there are so many housing options available.

Here, we look at what our residents think are the most important factors when choosing accommodation.



COST

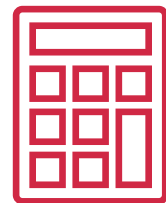
The cost of uni accommodation varies hugely from city to city (but you probably don't need us to tell you that!).



The average cost of student accommodation in 2017 was £125 per week outside of London, with students in London paying an average of £182 per week. Aside from uni-course costs, accommodation is the biggest expenditure for students in the UK.

What's your budget? Have you double-checked rental costs in the areas around your chosen university? If you want to move in with a group of friends, make sure you check out the latest deals offered by local private student halls. You might just snap up a great deal on a shared cluster flat.

Once you've found the place you want to move to, double-check that you will be able to cover both your rental payments and your monthly outgoings. Take the time to work out how much money will be coming in (via your maintenance loan, part-time job, etc.) and ask yourself if you have enough left to live comfortably once your rent is paid. Budgeting is an essential part of student living, so start as you mean to go on and be as honest as you can about all of your expenditures.



Don't forget: If you're renting privately through a landlord, you may be required to have a guarantor in case you can't cover the payments yourself. Paying a deposit? Make sure it's protected and registered with one of the UK's three government-backed deposit schemes: My Deposits, the Deposit Protection Service (DPS), or Tenancy.



TIP: Want to take some of the pressure off each month? Try to find student accommodation with all bills included.



LOCATION

Location, location, location.



Let's face it – the last thing you'll want to do when you have a 9am lecture is take two buses, a tram, and a train to your uni campus. Location matters, and living as close as possible to the main uni campus has its benefits (no 7am commutes!)

One thing that's important to keep in mind is that available student accommodation isn't always on (or close to) the main university campus. Sure, uni halls are usually slap-bang in the middle of campus (or very close by) but private halls and student housing aren't always that central.

Finding accommodation that's the perfect walking or commuting distance from your uni is one thing, but it's not just the distance from the campus you should be thinking about. What about the train station, the supermarkets, and the venues you will visit on a regular basis?



By choosing accommodation that's within easy walking or commuting distance from both your uni and local amenities, you will get the best of both worlds by slashing your travel costs and saving on your weekly shops, too.



ON-SITE FACILITIES

Although it's true that most student housing comes furnished, it's always a good idea to ask what will (and will not) be included before you sign your contract. After all, the last thing you want to discover on move-in day is that you need to head off to IKEA to stock up on pots, pans, bedding, storage, and so on.



Before you decide which student-accommodation provider to go with, take all these little extras into account. Will the kitchen be equipped with pots, pans, and crockery? Is there a microwave? How about a dining table? All of these small things contribute towards helping you feel at home. If they're not included, it's not the end of the world, but you'll need to set a little money aside in your budget to buy them when you move in. If you're moving in with a group of friends, pool your funds and help to spread the cost of buying the basics.

If there's nothing you love more than meeting new people and getting together for a Sunday lunch at the end of a long week, you might prefer to live at a location that has plenty of shared communal spaces. Shared lounges and kitchens are great at bringing people together and helping to create family-like environments.

Of course, not everyone wants to socialise on a regular basis. If you prefer privacy, you might enjoy living in a studio apartment. Most of these come with their own built-in kitchens and dining areas, so you can relax and unwind without worrying about being interrupted by housemates.



TRANSPORT LINKS

Getting to and from uni (or home when you travel to see family) shouldn't be a nightmare. Make sure you find out what kinds of transport links are available before you decide on a housing location.



How far from the local train station or bus station are you? Is there a bus route to your uni from your housing? Or a safe bike lane? When you're rushing to a lecture, every minute counts. You might not see a problem with catching two buses to get to campus now, but you might think very differently in a few months!

As a student, you'll qualify for reduced bus fares and train fares with many providers. Don't forget to see what kinds of discounts are available in your university town or city. Sign up and start making savings straight away.

TIP: Want to get from A to B for less? Why not try car-sharing? Many universities offer student car-share or lift-share schemes to students and staff.



SECURITY

Security is a major concern for students. Moving out of home for the first time is a huge leap, so it's important that you feel safe in your new home.



University-provided accommodation typically sits on campus, and is monitored by CCTV and closely supervised by security guards. Private student accommodation is just as secure, and there will often be members of staff on-site to support students 24/7.

Before you decide which student housing to book, it's important to visit and take a look around the physical site itself. How secure is the access? Do you have a fob or keycode entry? Are staff members on-site throughout the day? How easy would it be for you to report any security concerns to staff? Take all of these things into account when looking around, and be sure to ask the student-support team any questions you can think of during your tour. If you forget something, follow up with a phone call or an email.



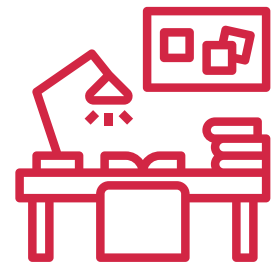
COMFORT

This is the start of your next big adventure. Comfort matters!



Comfort means different things to different people. For some, an extra-large bed is a must. For others, a power-shower is a top priority. Whatever comfort means to you, it's important to find a student-housing provider that values comfort as much as you do.

A high-quality student room should include a comfortable bed, large desk for late-night study sessions, and plenty of storage for clothes, books, and food. Make sure that when you tour locations that you ask to see a variety of the rooms on offer. This way, you can compare the standard of furniture and fixtures and be confident that all of the rooms available at the residence are of a high standard.



COMFORT



Comfort Tips:



- Invest in a brand-new duvet and fresh, crisp bed-sheets – there's no better feeling than falling back onto a fluffy, clean bed after a long day at uni.
- Mood lighting is a must. For safety reasons, candles aren't allowed in most residences, but you can create a calming atmosphere using battery-operated candles and fairy lights.
- Love listening to music when you're getting ready or winding down for the day? Don't forget to pack your wireless speakers to help you set the mood and dance away the revision blues.
- Decorate your room with pictures, posters, and inspirational quotes. You don't have to nail anything into the wall: just pick up some adhesive picture hooks and you're good to go. They're really easy to install and they won't leave a mark when the time comes for you to remove them when you're moving out.



FRIENDLY STAFF

The on-site student support team can make or break your student experience. After all, you will be living in your first student-housing location for at least a year, and if the management team isn't involved or interested in the students living there, then it shows!



Reach out to the housing providers that you're interested in and see how quickly they respond to your questions and queries. If they don't get back to you within a day or two, it might be a sign that they'd be slow to respond to you if you were to have any problems while you're living with them. The last thing you want if you have a problem with your housing is to battle to be heard, so think carefully before you sign on the dotted line with a company that you have to fight to communicate with.

Of course, the best way to get a feel for the on-site support staff is to pay each of your shortlisted locations a visit and meet the team face-to-face. If there is an on-site office, find out when it is staffed.



COMMUNITY

University life is a time of discovery. New friends. New experiences. New life-skills.



When you move into your student housing, you're essentially moving into a ready-built community. But how will you know if it's going to be the right fit for you? Many student-accommodation companies promote regular social events, so take a look and see if you can find any information on their websites or social media accounts.

Don't forget to look out for event flyers and promotions recommended by the on-site staff, too. Remember: the support team is there to help you, so whether you want some advice on where to head for a full English breakfast, or you'd like some advice on the best open-mic nights in town, don't be afraid to ask!



CONTACT MEARS

Both academic and social success starts at home, in the environment where you'll spend the majority of your time. For that reason, why settle? Live in a first-rate student accommodation, with everything you need on your doorstep.

Looking for high-quality student accommodation in Plymouth, Salford, or Dundee? Choose Mears Student Life. To secure your room for the 2018/19 term, get in touch with our team today.

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