Private Accommodation Information 2015-2016

Information for students of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance

Dear Student,

Welcome to the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance Private Accommodation booklet.

This booklet is designed to assist you in finding accommodation, including useful tips to make the process easier. Whilst we cannot find your accommodation for you, we are here to provide help, support and advice throughout the process.

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Disclaimer

'While the information and advice offered on this page is to the best of our knowledge accurate and up-to-date, we hold no responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or inaccuracy in the information provided. Nor do we hold any responsibility for the content of any external sites hyperlinked to this page. It is your responsibility to know the law and your rights regarding renting a room or whole property of any kind - whether in University or College Halls of Residence, Private Halls of Residence, Solo Accommodation, Shared Housing or Lodging — and to take responsibility for your own decisions and consequently any arrangements made between you and a landlord, agent or other tenants'.

(Student Services 2015)

1. What type of accommodation?

Before considering where and what type of property you might want to live in, first consider the different options:

Shared student houses/flats

If you have decided that halls of residence are not for you or your application is not successful, it is likely that a shared house or flat will be your next option. A 'house share' or 'flat share' are terms used to describe when a group of people share the same house or flat, normally with their own room.

Given that it could be the first time you've shared accommodation with people who aren't your family, learning to live with others can be a new and different experience for all. It is therefore important than you choose your co-sharers carefully!

Lodging

The word 'lodging' describes accommodation where the owner(s) also live in the house and you pay rent for a room in their house. For example, it might be that a young professional, a professional couple or someone retired has a room available for rent.

If you are considering this option you must consider the pros and cons of the situation. For example, whilst you might find you save money as bills are (normally) included in the rent, you might only be given access to the room you're renting and not use of other communal living areas. As a lodger you will normally be an "excluded occupier" in legal terms, which means you can be easily evicted. Find out more here:

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get advice/sharing and subletting/excluded occupiers

Host Families

Host Families are resident Landlords who offer accommodation (sometimes inclusive of meals) and the opportunity to live as part of their family. A host family is a very popular option with some students who are new to London and for International students; it is seen as a great way to engage both with the culture and the language of the country.

Studio Flats

Studio flats are typically one room with a kitchen and a separate bathroom, either in a block of Studio Flats especially for students or as part of new housing development. Be aware that living on your own can be costly and rents can range from £200 - £400 per week (often with utility bills included). If you're looking for independence and privacy this might work for you, but it might be a lonely/costly experience for those moving to London for the first time.

Hostels

There are a number of Student Hostels around London which offer a safe and economical option to students moving to London for the first time and are normally recommended for short-term accommodation only. It is also recommended that you book spaces early as they book up quickly!

The following links are great places to start your search:

International Student House

www.ish.org.uk

Hostels (Worldwide)

http://www.hostels.com/

http://www.hostelworld.com

Temporary Accommodation

If you decide you would like to find accommodation once you've enrolled and are therefore looking for alternative temporary accommodation in London, you might find the following links useful:

Homestay Accommodation

www.twinaccommodation.com/

Hosts International

www.hosts-international.com

UK Council for International Student Affairs

www.ukcisa.org.uk

Deals for London Hotels, London B & B's and Hostels

www.travelstay.com

2. Planning

When to look

Deciding when to start your search depends on a number of factors: the type of accommodation you are looking for; the number of people you want to share with; the area you're searching in; the budget you have.

The majority of students don't secure their housing until the summer months. However, it is recommended you start an initial search, including identifying who you might want to live with, as early as possible (ideally from May/June onwards). Provided you are well organised, it should take around 4 weeks to find your housing.

If you do find a room/property months in advance of your moving-in date you may be required to provide a larger holding deposit. It is **strongly recommended** that you view any private rented accommodation you are interested in before accepting it and paying any money. Where possible, try and combine looking at a few on the same day in a similar part of London. Where this might not be possible, ask at the viewing if you can take photos to remember what you've seen and/or ask one of your co-sharers to view it for you! (Use the checklists at the back of this guide

Student Tip: "I'd always recommend friends to make sure that they look at the place they are considering living in. Sounds funny but so many friends I know accepted rooms through photos and even descriptions of the accommodation rather than checking it out first" (BA2 Dance Student)

Area & Transport

London's transport map (Tube, Docklands Light Railway (DLR), London Overground and National Rail) are divided into zones. Zone 1 and 2 are in Central London and Zones 6 to 9 cover the outer edge of the capital. The location of Deptford and Greenwich is in Greater London and is in Travelcard Zones 2 and 3.

If you are aged 18 or over, enrolled with a participating education establishment registered on the TfL scheme (which Trinity Laban is) and enrolled on a **full-time course of study** you will be eligible to apply for an 18+ Student Oyster photo card. With this you will save 30% against the price of adult rate Travel cards and Bus & Tram Passes. To apply you will need the last 6 digits of your Trinity Laban ID number.

Further details can be found here: http://www.tfl.gov.uk/fares-and-payments/adult-discounts-and-concessions/18-student

(please note that you must be enrolled on a programme of study before submitting your Student Oyster application)

For free (downloadable) London Travel Maps for the underground, overground, DLR and buses, please click on the following link:

http://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/getting-around-london/london-maps-and-guides/free-london-travel-maps

Tip: For those of you who will have gigs/performances and will be possibly travelling at unsociable times of the day, you might find it helpful to consider the night busses available to you

Before you start looking for somewhere to live, it is advisable to find out about different areas of London. Please click on the following links for information regarding areas of London:

http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/planning/area-guide-to-london.html

http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/planning/getting-around.html

For information regarding travelling time between a potential area of London and Trinity Laban, it is advisable to read the following traveller information guide:

http://www.visitlondon.com/traveller-information/getting-around-london You can also check travel options on the TFL website, Google maps or Citymapper phone app.

Student Tip: "really consider the distance of the accommodation from Trinity/Laban.

After a long day of dancing at Laban the last thing you want is to have to spend a long time to travel home!" (BA2 Dance Student)

Budgeting

The cost of accommodation is usually the biggest element in a student's budget. It is therefore important that you establish your accommodation budget before looking for somewhere to live. Once you know approximately how much money you will have to live on for the year, you can calculate a weekly budget, and decide on the maximum rent that you can afford.

For help with this, you may wish to visit the following websites:

Budgeting Tips

http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/planning/budgeting-and-council-tax.html

Budget Calculator

http://studentcalculator.org/

On-line living costs calculator (London Student Housing Guide)

http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/planning/budgeting-and-council-tax.html#c31

Tip: To calculate your monthly rent you need to times the weekly amount by **52** and then divide it by **12** (months in the year).

Rental Costs

Rental costs vary depending on your location and choice of house. Broadly speaking, the further out from the centre of London you live the lower the rent will be. Although in recent years this has not always been the case as some 'desirable' residential areas on the outskirts of London can be more expensive than inner city accommodation. As an example, a property in Greenwich is around £500 – 700 per calendar month (pcm).

For more information on rental levels in London, have a look at the London Mayor's rents map, which provides average private sector rents for different types of homes across London: http://www.london.gov.uk/rents/

Tip: Remember when looking for a room in a private rented flat/house that alongside your rental costs you will also be required to pay various bills, such as; gas, electricity, water, internet and TV licence. Some advertised properties may include bills in the rental price; if this is the case, ensure you check which 'bills' it is referring to, as often landlords may only include the payment of water rates when stating 'bills are included'.

Furnished/Un-furnished

A 'furnished' or 'fully-furnished' property usually includes things such as kitchen appliances, beds and lounge furniture. A 'part-furnished' property usually includes the basic 'white goods' with possibly the addition of some furniture; however they often don't include beds. Lastly, 'unfurnished' would see tenants bring all their own furniture to the property.

In all instances, it is advised you check directly with the landlord as it tends to vary from one landlord to the next and is at the landlord's discretion, so to some extent it can be negotiated.

Tip: If you're needing to buy furniture for your room/house often previous tenants who are moving out are willing to sell on some of their furniture to the next set of tenants. Alternatively you can purchase reasonably priced new furniture from places such as Argos www.argos.co.uk and Ikea www.ikea.com or second hand from charity shops, Deptford Market, www.gumtree.com/london, or Freecycle.

3. Looking for a property/room to rent

Please find below a number of different ways of finding a potential property/room to rent.

The Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA)

The Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA) is the only professional self-regulating body concerned with lettings and letting agents.

To find a letting agent affiliated with ARLA in the area where you're looking to live please look here: http://www.arla.co.uk/

London Student Housing Guide

The London Student Housing Guide website is designed for prospective students studying at Higher Education Institutions in London and current students currently studying in London.

Use this site if you're considering studying in London and want to know how much it will cost, what it will be like, an area guide, getting around, staying safe and dealing with any problems (should they arise!).

This site can also be used if you need to advertise a room in your flat/house: http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/

Message boards

Some of the best housing in London is passed on from one group of students to another by word of mouth. Online flat-sharing message boards are very popular and can assist students looking for private accommodation and in finding people to share with.

If you are looking for co-shares, you might find it useful to join and post a message on our 'Trinity Laban New Students' Facebook Group, set up by the Student Union: https://www.facebook.com/groups/912787038745207/

You might want to also consider using 'Flatmate click', a free search engine to assist in finding a flatmate or a room in various locations around the country: http://www.flatmateclick.co.uk/.

Local newspapers

When looking for adverts in a local newspaper, try and look for the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme Logo, as this means that the landlord is accredited with the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) www.londonlandlords.org.uk

When answering property ads in a paper, be careful not to exchange any money before you have seen the property, met the landlord and seen the contract. Where possible, always meet with a potential landlord with someone else and never by yourself.

Letting agents

A large proportion of rented accommodation in London is advertised through letting agents. With access to a large number of properties, it can save you time in searching for the right property. Please note that you would use a letting agent when looking for a whole property and not for single room occupancy. Remember that if you do go through a letting agent, all those living in the property will come under one contract (if one of you falls behind on your rent, you are all liable!)

When choosing an agent to use, check whether they are a member of a professional body; such as:

Association of Residential Letting Agents www.arla.co.uk; National Approved Letting Scheme www.nalscheme.co.uk; National Association of Estate Agents www.naea.co.uk

Be aware that lettings agents work on commission, often resulting in rents, administration fees and holding deposits being more expensive (agency fees are roughly £200 per person in total). Furthermore, they can also make a range of additional charges, such as non-refundable holding deposits, additional credit checks and costs for acquiring references. If you and your co-sharers decide to use a letting agent, please ensure you check any 'hidden costs' before doing so.

All letting agencies must disclose upfront in their adverts and listings any fees they charge on top of the rent or deposit.

If you see a letting agent not complying, report it to Shelter (the housing charity) and they will complain to the Advertising Standards Authority

http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/fixing-private-renting/letting-agencies/report-hi-dden-letting-fees

Property websites (like Rightmove and Zoopla) are exempt from this requirement. Letting agents often advertise their properties through the following property sites:

www.propertyfinder.com www.fish4lettings.co.uk www.findaproperty.com www.moveflat.com www.zoopla.com www.rightmove.co.uk

Tip: Fraudsters do sometimes operate on some of these websites which is why you should avoid booking a privately rented room, flat or house online without viewing it or meeting the landlord in person.

Checklist Take a checklist with you for all house viewings so you don't miss anything and you can compare properties more easily. You can find a checklist for househunting (and one for moving in) at the back of this guide.

4. Estate and letting agents

Please find below a list of letting agents in the South-East London area, please note this list is not exhaustive and others can be found online. There is a larger list which can be found in the Student Services section of Moodle.

Winkworth Estate Agents

5 Blackheath Village Blackheath SE3 9LA T: 020 8852 0999

E: blackheath@winkworth.co.uk

Foxtons

9 Lee Road, Blackheath, SE3 9RQ T: 020 8432 7200

E: Blackheath@foxtons.co.uk

Reside

257 New Cross Road London, SE14 5UL T: 020 7639 3366

Email: reside@reside.co.uk

Comber & Co

2 Montpelier Vale, Blackheath, SE3 0TA

T: 020 8463 0666

E: lettings@comberandco.co.uk

Mark Beaumont LTD

197 Lewisham High Street, Lewisham, SE13 6AA T: 020 8852 5000

Cannon Kallar Ltd

Albury Corner 186A Deptford High Street SE8 3PR

T: 020 8692 0555

E: info@cannonkallar.co.uk

Kinleigh Folkard and Hayward

25-27 Montpelier Vale Blackheath SE3 0TJ Tel: 020 3280 3507

E: <u>lbl@kfh.co.uk</u>

Felicity J Lord

23 Tranquil Vale, Blackheath, SE3 0BU

T: 020 3324 5044

E: lettings@fjlord.co.uk

5. Points to Consider

Before moving in

The following are the most common forms of letting contracts although there are some others.

Joint Tenancies

A joint tenancy means that you are each liable for the whole rent and for any other obligations under the tenancy. If a group of you are renting a property together and you are all named on the contract, it is likely that you will have what is called a joint tenancy.

Individual Tenancies

If a group of you are living in a property together, but you want to avoid the burdens of a joint tenancy, you could try and negotiate individual tenancies of your own rooms. This means that you are only liable for the rent of your room but have access to all the communal spaces (i.e. bathroom, kitchen, and lounge). However, this would be at the discretion of the landlord and those you are sharing with.

Excluded Tenancies

If you share accommodation with your landlord, either in their home as a lodger or in a converted property where you and the landlord live in different parts of the building, you will be an excluded occupier.

Tip: If you're a musician, remember to check with the landlord and/or other tenants whether you're allowed to practise at home as some contracts stipulate a timeframe, ie between the hours of 8am and 11pm

Guarantor/References

When renting in the private sector, in the majority of cases you will be asked to provide a financial guarantor who must be living in the UK (in most cases this will be a parent/guardian). Guarantor agreements give the landlord a measure of financial security and it means that whoever you nominate would be prepared to pay your rent, if you don't. Normally parents/guardians or family friends would act as a guarantor. If you're unable to provide a UK-based guarantor, you may be asked to pay 3-6 months' rent in advance.

Alternatively you can pay www.housinghand.co.uk one month's rent to act as your guarantor. You can get a partial refund (10% up to 50% depending on length of contract) at the end of your tenancy.

Your reference should impress to the landlord that you will be a good tenant and the best way to do this is to obtain references from previous landlords. If you are a 2nd year student who lived in halls of residence for your first year, you can ask for a reference from your halls.

Tip: "cross-check the references provided and find out more about the flatmate/landlord before moving in" (MA Choreography Student)

Deposit

A deposit is a sum of money paid to the landlord or the landlord's agent at the start of the tenancy; this is not a legal requirement, but is standard practice. The deposit covers the cost of any damage, outstanding utility bills or rent, and cleaning costs. A deposit is usually an amount plus one month's rent. Some landlords can ask for 3 months' rent in advance.

Near the end of your tenancy your landlord should visit to check the house with the original inventory (see below). It is at this point that you must be clear to tell him/her when you're moving out and ask when you can expect your deposit back. The landlord can hold the deposit against any possible breaches in the tenancy agreement (i.e. unpaid bills, rent, and damage to the property). After any such deductions, the landlord should return the deposit to the tenant.

The following link, providing a sample inventory form might be useful as a record of the condition of the property at the start and end of the tenancy:

http://england.shelter.org.uk/ data/assets/pdf file/0004/23359/Inventory.pdf

Your tenancy deposit must be protected in a government-backed scheme if you are an Assured Shorthold Tenant (most private tenancies). If your Landlord has not signed up to a scheme they may have to pay a penalty to you. If there is a disagreement about how much deposit should be returned, your landlord is taking too long, or not communicating with you, the scheme will help resolve the issue.

See here for further details:

https://www.gov.uk/tenancy-deposit-protection/overview

Tip: If your landlord hasn't protected your deposit within 30 days (and you are an Assured Shorthold tenant) they can be made to pay up to three times the amount of the deposit as compensation.

Licence or Tenancy Agreement?

Licensee

If you are a licensee sharing facilities with a resident landlord, or host family, you are normally entitled to a minimum period of notice equivalent to your rent period (e.g. 1 week/1 month notice). If you are a licensee but not sharing facilities with a resident landlord, you are normally entitled to a minimum period of four weeks' notice which must expire at the end of a complete rental period i.e. the day before your rent day.

Tenant

If you are a tenant (most house and flat-sharers without a resident landlord are), your tenancy can end by running its entire term (coming to a natural end); by bringing the tenancy agreement to an end yourself (this normally applies after six or twelve months of the contract); or by there being a provision in the agreement by which your landlord can terminate the contract, by giving you notice.

Contracts

Once you have seen and agreed on where you want to live, the next stage is to ask your landlord or letting agent for a written contract (referred to as a tenancy agreement). This document will give you details of the agreement between yourself and your landlord and should clearly lay out your rights and responsibilities.

Contracts are **legally binding** documents so ensure before you sign anything that you have carefully read and checked it before signing. In addition to this, you must ensure any verbal agreements are reflected in the written contract. For example, if the monthly rental due date is amended or the landlord promises the washing machine will be fixed, ensure it is in writing! You might also be required to have a witness with you when signing the contract, check this with your landlord before going to sign it.

Contact Student Services if you are unsure about anything in your contract.

Tip: If you're a Music student, remember to check if your contract will allow you to practice in the house!

Inventories

An inventory is a list of everything supplied with the property for the tenants to use; it will also describe the condition of the property. An inventory is helpful in avoiding disputes between landlords and tenants over deposits and it is in the interests of both parties to have a detailed written record of the condition the property was in at the start of the tenancy, including details of anything that was already damaged and worn. You should check the inventory at the beginning of your tenancy and ask to amend it where there are inaccuracies.

At the end of the tenancy, the landlord or agent(s) will carry out a final inspection with you present, to determine the current condition of the property and see if any items from the inventory are broken or missing.

In the case of an inventory not being issued at the start of the tenancy, it is essential you take photographs of the condition of the property at both the beginning and end of the tenancy (dating the photographs where possible). It is strongly advisable that you make a photocopy of the inventory for proof and your records.

Tip: "check the windows! I lived in a house in my first year that had terrible insulation and no double glazing, meaning it was freezing all the time!" (BA2 Dance Student)

Paying your rent

When you find somewhere you're interested in make sure you ask how much the rent is, whether it is paid weekly or monthly, how your rent should be paid. It is advisable that you pay rent by Standing Order, where you set up the monthly payments to go out of your account and where the Landlord cannot vary the amount paid, as is the case with Direct Debits.

While we advise that you (ideally) do not pay your rent by cash/cheque, if you do pay your rent in this way you must ensure you ask for a written receipt as proof of payment.

6. Useful Websites

Student housing forum

Why not sign up to the student housing forum to meet other students to go house-hunting with, to find flatmates to live with and share stories of where to live in London: http://housing.lon.ac.uk/sclnew/scl_home.php

Shelter

Shelter is a charity that works to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing. Shelter provides free, confidential advice to people with all kinds of housing problems through their online housing information and local services.

Use the shelter website for advice on renting, looking for somewhere to live, repairs and bad conditions, complaints and legal issues http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice
Free Advice Helpline: 0808 800 4444

Tips for housing and moving away for the first-time

Visit the links below for further tips on housing and sharing with others:

www.endsleigh.co.uk/housing

http://www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/housing-advice/

House Insurance

http://www.endsleigh.co.uk/Home/Pages/home-and-contents-insurance.aspx

Fire Safety

These websites are all about what you can do to reduce fire risks:

http://england.shelter.org.uk/get advice/repairs and bad conditions/home safety/fire sa fety/reducing fire risks

http://www.fireservice.co.uk/safety

Gas Safety

Your landlord has a legal responsibility to ensure that all gas appliances in the property are serviced every 12 months by a qualified engineer. You are entitled to see the gas safety certificate. If there has not been a recent inspection, ask for one to be arranged. To check registration you can use the <u>Gas Safe Register webpages</u>.

The following websites cover the dangers of carbon monoxide and Health and Safety executives:

http://www.hse.gov.uk/press/2010/coi-sw-ww678sww.htm

http://www.hse.gov.uk/gas/

Personal Safety

Your personal safety is essential and for simple tips and advice to make you feel more secure please have a look at the following:

http://www.studenthousing.lon.ac.uk/planning/staying-safe.html

Ownership

It is sometimes a good idea to check the ownership of the property before you sign the contract as a way of making sure the person claiming to be the landlord does indeed own the property and has the right to let it.

If you want to check that your landlord actually owns the property that he is renting, you can do a Land Registry search.

This will cost £4.00 per search: www.landregisteronline.gov.uk/

Council Tax

Council Tax is a charge made by Local Authorities on residential properties to pay for local public services; it is not a tax on an individual. Only properties occupied by students who are all on full-time programmes of study are exempt from paying council-tax. A full-time course of education is defined as one which requires on average at least 21 hours of study a week and 24 weeks of attendance each year. Part-time students and students with dependent children may be entitled to Council Tax Benefit, based on their circumstances, but they should contact their local council to discuss their situation. Trinity Laban will not issue exemption letters for students on part-time programmes.

Where students share with part-time or non-students, the full-time students will be disregarded for the purposes of calculating the household's bill. However, it is for the members of the household to decide how the bill should be apportioned and paid as with any other household bill.

Questions?

For any 'Private Accommodation' enquiries, please contact privatehousing@trinitylaban.ac.uk

Househunting Checklist

	100000 market		MATERIAL CONTRACTOR CO
	House 1	House 2	House 3
Gas and electricity			
Is the heating in the house adequate (imagine the middle of winter)?			
Do the electric/gas fires work? Does the cooker work?			
Have you asked to see a copy of a Gas Safe Register safety record?			
Plumbing		v.	
Does the plumbing work?			
Have you tried all the taps?			
Do the sinks drain?			
Does the toilet flush or leak?			
Are there any signs of pests (mouse droppings, slug trails, fleas) in the house?			
Security / Safety			
Is there a working burglar alarm?			
Are all the external doors solid?			
Have all external doors been fitted with a five-lever mortise lock (Chubb Lock)?			
Do all ground floor windows have security catches?			
Are smoke detectors or fire alarms fitted?			
Has the house any fire doors?			
In the event of fire in the main access passageways of the house, could you get out of the house?			
Furniture			
Has the house got enough furniture for the occupants?			
Is there sufficient space in the kitchen to store and prepare food stuff?			
Is any of the existing furniture the property of existing tenants?			
Is all the furniture in good condition? Will the landlord replace it if not?			
Money			
What are you paying for in your rent? How does it compare to other rents?			
If you paid a deposit, is it protected by a tenancy deposit protection scheme?			
Have you got a receipt for what you have paid?			
Are you or the owner responsible for water charges?			
Outside the property			
Does the roof look sound? (check for damp from the inside of the house)			
Have the gutters got plants growing out of them?			
Are the drains clear?			
Is any of the woodwork rotting or unsafe?			

Moving in Checklist

	House 1	House 2	House 3
Agreements			
Will you pay a holding deposit or agency fees? Make sure these are explained in writing and you get a receipt.			
Do you know what your contract means? Check with Student Services if unsure.			
Have you been given a copy of the contract to sign?			
Are you jointly liable with the other tenants?			
Landlord / Letting Agent			
Have you met the landlord?			
Is the landlord or letting agent part of an accreditation scheme?			
Have you talked to the previous occupants of the house and asked them if they have any comments that would help you?			
Cleaning / Repairs			
Was the house clean when you viewed it?			
If not, have you told the owner what the condition was in writing?			
Do any repairs need doing?			
Have you told the owner in writing what needs doing?			
Decorating			
Does any decorating need doing?			
If so, who is doing it and who is paying? Has the owner set any upper limit if you are decorating the house yourself? Get confirmation in writing.			
Inventory			
Will there be a check-in inventory when you move in?			
Make sure you check it and make amendments if inaccurate before signing.			
Take your own photos of the property when you move in.			
Have you got a certificate for your protected deposit?			
Other			
Have you had your gas and electricity meters read immediately after you have taken responsibility for the property?			
Have you seen a copy of a Gas Safe Register safety record for the gas appliances?			
Do you wish to have your home contents insured?			