

HOUSING GUIDE

Private accommodation information
for students 2017–18

TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE
OF MUSIC & DANCE



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Disclaimer

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(Student Services 2017)

STARTING

Available options
and where to find the
relevant information

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

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

SHARED STUDENT HOUSES/FLATS

A 'house share' or 'flat share' are popular options for students not living in halls. These are often joint tenancies, so it's advisable to share with people you know or have met and get along with.

LIVING WITH A RESIDENT LANDLORD

Also known as 'lodging', this is where you live in the same house as your landlord. Your experience will vary depending on the landlord. The rent is normally cheaper and often includes bills. Other benefits can include more flexibility over the length of stay and the property normally being kept in good repair.

Disadvantages can include having less freedom to have guests or use of the communal areas. As a lodger you will normally be an "excluded occupier" in legal terms, which means you can be more easily evicted. Speak to a Student Adviser or check the Shelter website www.shelter.org.uk to find out more.

HOST FAMILIES

Host Families are resident Landlords who offer accommodation (sometimes including meals) and the opportunity to live as part of their family. A host family is a 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. You can also arrange short stays if preferred.

Homestay Accommodation
www.twinaccommodation.com
Hosts International
www.hosts-international.com

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. If you're looking for independence and privacy this v work for you, but it might be a lonely/costly experience for those moving to London for the first time.

STUDENT HALLS

If you have been unsuccessful in getting a room at McMillan student Halls but would still like to live in student halls, there are alternative options. There are a number of Student Halls in London which offer a safe and convenient option to students moving to London for the first

FINDING HOUSEMATES

If you are a current student you can place an advert on the accommodation forum on Moodle, Student Services section.

Incoming and current students should email privatehousing@trinitylaban.ac.uk and we will put you in touch with other students.

You can find students from other institutions and non-students to live with also. See:
www.spareroom.co.uk

South East Housemate co-op group: www.facebook.com/groups/158964430907173

time. The following Halls are located nearby:

Farndale Court

Based in Charlton, this student halls are not linked to Trinity Laban but some of our students live here for the academic year if McMillan Student Halls is full.

www.studentmanagementservices.co.uk

Chapter House

Based in Lewisham, these halls are new and slightly more expensive.

www.chapter-living.com/properties/lewisham

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:

Hostel World

www.hostelworld.com

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

www.travelstay.com

Air Bnb

www.airbnb.co.uk

WHEN TO LOOK

The majority of students don't secure their housing until August. Whilst in other university towns, housing markets compete for students early on in the year, Londons competitive rental sector means everything happens a bit later. However, it is recommended you start an initial search, including identifying who you might want to live with, as early as possible. Provided you are well organised, it should take around 4 weeks to find a house to rent. By contrast you may need to apply months in advance for a student hostel or private halls of residence.

WHERE TO LOOK

Online

Letting agents and landlords often advertise their properties through websites such as:

www.zoopla.com

www.rightmove.co.uk

www.primelocation.com

You can set up property alerts so you receive an email as soon as a property with your preferences becomes available.

You can also find properties to rent on www.gumtree.com there are some fake adverts on this website so make sure to check details (see Rental Scams section pg17)

Letting agents

Many landlords use letting agents to advertise and manage their property. If an agent operates in an area you are interested in and in your price range, it is worth registering with them directly. They can then contact you as soon as an appropriate property is available. Properties advertised online can be rented out fast and adverts go out of date so it is worth contacting the agents directly.

LOOKING UP AN AGENT

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

Association of Residential Letting Agents;
National Approved Letting Scheme;
National Association of Estate Agents;

All letting agents must be members of a letting agent redress scheme (an independent service for resolving disputes). Be aware that there are scam agents operating who aim to take money without finding you accommodation. Make sure not to hand over any money until you have seen the property and have something in writing, including the agent and the landlords details. See the Rental Scams section of this booklet for more information

If you are unsure about an agent, contact Student Services for help.

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/1239841916099242/>

Enrolled students can post on the Accommodation Advert forum on Moodle (moodle.trinitylaban.ac.uk/mod/forum/view.php?id=26858)

You might want to also consider using websites such as www.flatmateclick.co.uk or www.spareroom.com to assist in finding a flatmate or a room.

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

Newsagent windows can be a good source for unglamorous and good value accommodation.



PLANNING

AREA & TRANSPORT

When you are considering an area to live in, think about how long it will take and how much it will cost to get to Trinity Laban and other locations. You can look up travel information on tfl.gov.uk or citymapper.com. Savings made by in renting in zone 4 should be weighed against the additional travel costs (think about the monthly cost of travel).

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 buses available to you

Before you start looking for somewhere to live, it is advisable to find out about different areas of London.

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 can use

GETTING AROUND

London's train transport is divided into several 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 Zones 2 and 3.

If you are 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 on tfl.gov.uk (please note that you must be enrolled on a programme of study before submitting your Student Oyster application)

studentcalculator.org

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. For cheaper areas you may want to look at Lewisham Central, Lee, Charlton, Woolwich. For slightly higher rents you can look in Greenwich, Deptford, New Cross, Brockley. For more information on rental levels in London, have a look at the London Mayor's rents map, which provides average rents for different types of homes across London: 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'.

LIVING WITH FRIENDS

Living with someone is a big undertaking. A good friend does not necessarily make a good housemate. You should take time to think about and discuss what kind of living situation you want with potential housemates.

Think about how tidy you want the house to be, whether you like peace and quiet or a party house, what time you like to go to bed, what amount of house guests is acceptable, how much can you afford on rent and social activities, do you want the same type of accommodation?

Disputes between co-tenants can occur, if you're not sure how to manage them you can come and speak to the Student Adviser.

LOOKING

INSPECTING A PROPERTY

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 on Moodle.

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 viewing is not possible, ask one of your co-sharers or a friend to view the property and take good notes and pictures. If you are unable to do this, you can find some properties advertised which have been checked by a company for you. www.spotahome.com provides multiple pictures and videos of properties and hold the first months rent until after you are satisfied with the state of the property on your arrival. You can get a 20% discount on the booking fee by contacting Student Services.

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)

IS YOUR PROPERTY AND LANDLORD LICENSED?

If a property is a House of Multiple Occupation (multiple people living not as part of a family), it may need a licence from the local council. If a HMO has three or more storeys high and has five or more occupants it will need to be licensed. In Lewisham, if a HMO is above a commercial property it was also need a licence. The licence is intended ensure the property meets a minimum safety standard. If a landlord doesn't have a HMO licence, they can be fined by the council and you may be able to get some of your rent back.

GAS SAFETY

Unsafe gas appliances produce a highly poisonous gas called Carbon monoxide and it can be deadly. All gas appliances in the property must be checked every 12 months by a qualified engineer. You are entitled to see the gas safety certificate before you move in. If there has not been a recent inspection, ask for one to be arranged.

NEIGHBOURS

Make sure you ask the current tenants, the agent or the landlord about your neighbours. Hopefully they will be lovely but if there have been issues in the past, it is best to know beforehand.

NEGOTIATING

You should be prepared to bargain and even walk away from a deal if you are not comfortable with it. An example of what you might negotiate on is where the fridge is too small for the number of tenants, you might ask for a bigger or second fridge. If you agree on extra items to be provided or repair work to be done, make sure this is in writing.

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 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.

You will normally be asked for a reference from a previous landlord to show your new landlord that you will be a good tenant. If you are a 2nd year student who lived in halls of residence for your first year, you can ask for a reference from Student Services.

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.

CONTRACT CHECK

Contracts are legally binding documents so carefully read and check it before you sign anything or hand over money. 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 this is in writing!

If you are unsure about any terms in the contract, Student Services can check it with you.

Joint Tenancies

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. This means that you are each liable for the whole rent and for any other obligations under the 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.

Living with a landlord

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”. This means you will have fewer rights, particularly your landlord

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

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 £3.00 per search: www.landregistry.gov.uk

HOLDING DEPOSITS

A holding deposit is paid to the landlord/agent to hold the property for you once you have made an offer whilst the landlord decides whether they will let the property to you. Normally, this means they should not show the property to anyone else. If you decide to not take the property you will likely lose the holding deposit. The landlord however, does not have to agree to rent the property to you.

Make sure you get a receipt for your holding deposit and that it outlines the main terms of the offer such as; rent, length of contract, start date of tenancy. You should also try and read the proposed tenancy agreement before paying a holding deposit in case there are terms you are unhappy with.

Only pay a holding deposit if you are sure you are happy with the property.

TENANCY DEPOSITS

A tenancy deposit is a sum of money paid to the landlord or the agent at the start of the tenancy to cover the cost of any damage, unpaid rent, missing items or cleaning. An inventory check is normally carried out at the beginning and end of the tenancy to determine if any deductions should be made from your deposit.

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

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.

AGENCY CHARGES

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). They can also make a range of additional charges, such as non-refundable holding deposits, additional credit checks and costs for acquiring references. However, they cannot charge you just to show you accommodation. There may also be a charge for the inventory check at the start or the end of the tenancy (there should not be a charge for both). Other charges will normally be made for key replacement, late rent etc. There is sometimes a fixed cleaning charge for the end of the tenancy, you may want to negotiate this contract term if you would prefer to clean the property yourself.

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.

MOVING IN

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 settling 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. You should check the inventory at the beginning of your tenancy and ask to amend it where there are inaccuracies or missing details.

At the end of the tenancy, the landlord or agent 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.

It is strongly advisable that you make a photocopy of the inventory for proof and your records. 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).

Student 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)

UTILITY COMPANIES

When you move into the property, you will need to arrange for the supply of water, electricity and gas to be transferred into your names unless they are included in your rent. This is a relatively straightforward process. For the gas and electricity, you will simply need to contact the current suppliers and provide meter readings. The water is not usually metered so it is just a case of contacting the supplier and transferring the account into your name.

You may be able to save money by transferring suppliers but you must get permission from your landlord before doing so. Many savings are gained over a 12 month period so make sure you look into this at the beginning of the tenancy.

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 does not issue exemption letters for students on part-time programmes.

Where students are joint-tenants 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.

RENTAL SCAMS

Whilst most properties advertised are genuine, there are some people who pretend to be landlords or agents to get money from you when they have no property to rent. Here are some key things to watch out for.

ADVERTS

Have you noticed another advert for the same property, using different language or pictures? Does the same phone number, email address or contact name appear in different adverts?

LETTING AGENTS

Sometimes fake Letting Agencies are set up on the internet, so avoid an agency which doesn't have a physical shop you can visit, or offices.

Check if an agent is a member of a professional body. Even when a Letting Agent is approved, you can't protect against individuals being dishonest, so never completely trust anyone – always check everything you can, yourself.

PRICE

Be cautious of any prices which seem too good to be true.

PICTURES

It is not a good sign if pictures on the advert are different from the property you are shown. Sometimes agents show people a property they don't have the permission to rent, which may mean they don't have regular access to take pictures of it (hence the wrong pictures online).

WEAK CONTACT DETAILS

Make sure you have more than just a mobile number for an agent or landlord. A landline, address (for the landlord especially) and a business email address will help you verify a genuine landlord/agent and will help down the line if you have any issues with the property.

MONEY UPFRONT

Never pay anything upfront. Scammers mostly try and take money off you upfront, before a viewing, either online or in cash. A genuine landlord or agent would never ask of this; the only time you pay anything before signing a contract is for a holding deposit and admin charges related to reference checks and credit checks.

Never pay for this until you have viewed the property twice, agreed to a rental price and feel sure the landlord or agent is real.

GOOGLE THE LANDLORD, AGENT AND PROPERTY

Searching the net for the landlords name, phone number, the landlords own address (always ask for this) as well as the property address can turn up discrepancies. You might find the property listed somewhere else by the genuine letting agent or landlord. If a letting agent has been found to be involved in scams before, you may find references to this – if in doubt, move on!

NO VIEWINGS ALLOWED

Never rent a property that you are not allowed to view at least twice. A fake landlord or agent will use excuses for why you can't view the property. If you live outside London or abroad you should either make time to view or have someone view for you.

PAYMENT

When dealing with private landlords, ask them to show ID such as driving licence and a utility bill (both have addresses on them), perhaps on your second viewing to 'establish they are genuine.' Of course check the picture matches, and check the address matches the one they have given you as their home address.

Always pay by credit card where you can, as you will have some protection from the card company. Especially for reference checks and credit checks (Landlords often have you pay, in case you fail the checks) – tell the landlord to get those companies to contact you and you will pay them directly by credit card.

Never pay by money transfer (Western Union etc.) – scammers use these services as it's easy to get the money out of the country where it's hard to get back.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Alex Iossifidis, Student Adviser, Trinity Laban

Face-to-face, phone and email advice and guidance

a.iossifidis@trinitylaban.ac.uk – 020 8305 4412

moodle.trinitylaban.ac.uk – Student Services > Accommodation

www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/accommodation

Shelter

Advice for housing issues – www.england.shelter.org.uk

Telephone advice - 0344 515 1212

Citizens Advice Bureau

Guidance and information – www.citizensadvice.org.uk

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