



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

ACCOMMODATION SERVICES



Private Sector Accommodation Guide

A guide to finding accommodation in Edinburgh

Whether you are moving away from home for the first time or just new to Edinburgh, choosing your accommodation is a big decision. Fortunately Edinburgh has a large student population and there are variety of options when it comes to rental accommodation in the many student friendly neighbourhoods across the city. This guide aims to give you all the information you need to find a suitable place to live in Edinburgh.

QMU ACCOMMODATION WAITING LIST

When there is no availability in University accommodation a waiting list is likely to open up, however, this varies from year to year. Please contact us at accommodation@qmu.ac.uk to enquire about the waiting list and the possibility of adding your name.

Please note that being placed on the waiting list does **not** guarantee a place in University accommodation and we always recommend that you continue to search for a room in the private sector.

SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION

If you are moving from outside the UK it can be difficult to find long-term accommodation before you arrive. You should arrange temporary accommodation so that you have somewhere to stay when you first arrive in Edinburgh. You can then familiarise yourself with the city and search for a long-term place to live. This will give you the opportunity to view any long-term accommodation prior to a contract being signed. Never transfer money unless you are sure that the situation is authentic. If you are in any doubt, contact us for advice immediately

For short-term accommodation, hostels are the cheapest option and Edinburgh offers many clean and centrally located hostels.

If you are staying for an extended amount of time, ask if they can give you a weekly rate. There are also plenty of hotels and bed and breakfasts around the city.

Some links to hostels are listed below:

www.edinburghhostels.com
www.hostelbookers.com
www.hostelworld.com/hostels/Edinburgh
www.booking.com/hostels/city/gb/edinburgh

You can also search for hotels or B&Bs in Edinburgh on:

www.trivago.co.uk
www.booking.com
www.kayak.co.uk
www.lodging-world.com

PRIVATE SECTOR ACCOMMODATION

Private sector accommodation in the city generally consists of 3, 4 and 5 bedroom flats located in tenement style buildings, which are very common in Edinburgh.

Flats are usually rented to tenants either by the home owner (usually the landlord) or through a letting agent.

In some cases you may find lodgings where the home owner lives in the same property and rents out rooms to tenants. This option of housing is less common and not suitable if you are sharing with a number of people. Lodgings are usually let on a self-catered basis, meaning that you will provide your own food and share the kitchen with the owner.



FINDING A FLAT

While Edinburgh has a large number of properties available for rent there are also a lot of people looking for properties. We therefore suggest that you start searching for a flat as early as possible prior to the start of your course.

There are a number of points to consider before starting your search for a prospective property:

- **What is your budget?**
- **What area do you want to live in?**
- **How accessible are the public transport links?**
- **Are there shops and other local amenities close by?**
- **Is the prospective flat in close proximity to the university campus?**
- **How long do you plan to live there?**

The best place to start looking is online. Here are a few sites to get you started – most will be updated regularly with new properties. Searching for a private flat can be quite time consuming so be prepared to do a lot of browsing online:

Join the Facebook Group

To get in touch with other QMU students looking for shared accommodation in Edinburgh you can join the 'QMU Students Flatmate Finder' Facebook group:

www.facebook.com/groups/732638296878015/

USEFUL WEBSITES

This site contains University and private sector accommodation. Use the message board if you are looking for flatmates to share with. This site is useful if you want to stay with a family.

www.edinburghstudentpad.co.uk

Privately owned student-style accommodation, not associated with any university, but set up like student halls.

www.mystudenthalls.com/student-accommodation/edinburgh/

www.unitestudents.com

www.yugo.com

www.crm-students.com

www.iqstudentaccommodation.com

Search for flats with students who are studying at other universities in Edinburgh

www.homesforstudents.co.uk

Search for student flats as well as individual rooms

<https://www.onthemarket.com/student/property/queen-margaret-university/>

<http://www.rightmove.co.uk/student-accommodation>

LETTING AGENTS

Not all flats will be rented by the home owner. In some cases the home owner will employ a letting agent to manage their properties. The letting agent will manage the rental process, including legal formalities from signing a lease to dealing with repairs and maintenance. The main letting agents advertise on the following sites:

- www.espc.com
- www.lettingweb.com
- www.citylets.co.uk
- www.s1homes.com

Visit www.google.co.uk/ and search for Estate agents or Letting Agencies in Edinburgh for a full list.

Guarantors

Need a Guarantor but don't have one? Housing Hand are the UK's first and only award-winning insured Guarantor Service for students both domestic and international, who may, for various reasons fail to

provide a qualifying UK guarantor when renting in the private sector. For more information, please click [here](#).



FLATSHARE WEBSITES

There are many online sites where people advertise for flatmates to live with them. You'll need to register with these sites, but you can look for a room to rent, as well as post a profile of yourself – be honest! They are quick and easy to search and generally no calls need to be made initially since most of the communication is done via email which makes the process a bit less daunting if English is not your first language.

- www.roomgo.co.uk
- www.roombuddy.co.uk
- www.accommodationforstudents.com
- www.studentpad.co.uk
- www.spareroom.co.uk

In addition to the above, the following websites provide good advice and guidance:

- https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice
- <http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20054/housing>
- www.citizensadvice.org.uk

BE SAFE!

Remember, when you go to view potential flats to rent, always follow these safety guidelines:

- Don't go on your own. Always take someone with you when you visit a flat.
- Always let other people know where you're going, who you're meeting and when you should be back.
- Arrange to call someone afterwards to let them know you're safe.
- If you arrange to meet someone over the internet to view a property, be doubly cautious - people on the internet aren't necessarily who they say they are.
- Don't pay any monies prior to viewing the flat and signing your tenancy agreement
- It is advisable to make payments via a bank transfer, cheque or debit/credit card

- Always try and get the names of people you speak to on the phone and keep all correspondence, e.g. letters and emails.

LANDLORD ACCREDITATION

If you're looking for a place to rent, it's a good idea to ensure that the landlord is accredited by Landlord Accreditation Scotland. This means that they offer good quality accommodation and operate to higher standards than other landlords and letting agents. Further information is available at:

www.landlordaccreditationscotland.com

POPULAR STUDENT AREAS

The QMU campus is located just outside the City of Edinburgh right in Musselburgh. The easiest way to travel to campus is by train. Trains depart from both Edinburgh Waverley and Haymarket stations regularly throughout the day. The Musselburgh train station is located a 3 minute walk from the main campus building. Therefore, any accommodation in the city that allows you easy access to the main train stations would be beneficial.

The number 30 and 45 Lothian Bus services also travel direct to the QMU campus very regularly and so accommodation located near these bus routes are also ideal.

For the route maps, see here:

<http://lothianbuses.com/timetables-and-maps/route-maps>

Recommended student areas within the city include (but not limited to):

- The Meadows
- Bruntsfield
- Marchmont
- Tollcross
- Newington
- Easter Road (and surrounding area)
- London Road (and surrounding area)
- Lothian Road (and surrounding area)
- Haymarket and the West End
- Abbey Hill
- Leith Walk and surrounding areas
- Meadowbank area
- Dalkeith Road / Prestonfield area
- Musselburgh
- Portobello

Visit <https://edinburgh.org/travel/> for useful information or <http://maps.google.co.uk> for an online map of the city



HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Rents will vary depending on the size, location and condition of the flat. Most single bedrooms in a shared student flat can cost between £450 - £700 per month. All students will have to pay gas and electricity bills. In addition you may want to factor in other costs including telephone, internet and a TV licence as these will not be included in the rent. Please note that most landlords will request one month rent in advance in addition to your deposit.

DEPOSIT

Due to concerns that some private landlords unfairly withhold tenants' deposits, since 2011 the Scottish Government has introduced the "Tenancy Deposit Schemes (Scotland) Regulations 2011".

Under this legislation the method by which a deposit is taken and held by landlords has changed. All private landlords must now place the deposit paid into a tenancy deposit scheme.

The deposit resides within the deposit scheme and is repaid to the tenant by the scheme administrator should there be no dispute at the end of the lease. In the case of a dispute the scheme will provide a resolution service. This means the tenant can ask for the case to be referred to an independent adjudicator. The adjudicator will make a decision about how the deposit should be repaid, based on the evidence provided by both parties.

For further information see:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/privaterent/landlords/tenancy-deposit-schemes>

MAKE SURE YOU KEEP A RECEIPT FOR ALL FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS FROM YOUR LANDLORD.

I'VE FOUND A FLAT I AM INTERESTED IN!

Once you have found a flat or flats you are interested in, you will need to arrange a flat-viewing which will allow you to see the flat in person. In the interest of safety it is advisable to view the flat with a friend. If you are going to view a property on your own, you should let someone know the time and location of your viewing.

NEVER PAY ANY MONEY WITHOUT SEEING THE FLAT!

The Flat Hunting Checklist section of this guide will advise you on what to look for, and what questions to ask during the viewing.

FLAT HUNTING CHECKLIST

These are just some questions that you might want to consider when looking at possible properties but don't be afraid to ask lots more!

Furniture

- Is there enough furniture for everyone?
- Does it meet current fire safety regulations?
- Will all the furniture be there when I rent the flat?
- Are there enough kitchen cupboards?

Gas and Electricity

- Is there heating in the house?
- Do the gas / electric fires work?
- Is the electrical wiring safe? No exposed wires or hot plugs
- Does the cooker work?
- Have the electrical appliances been checked within the last year for safety
- Ask the landlord to show you a current gas safety certificate.

Sanitation and Hygiene

- Do all the taps work?
- Does the toilet flush or leak?
- How is the water heated?
- Are there any pests in the house? (mouse droppings, fleas, bed bugs)
- Is there any sign of dampness?

Money

- Have you calculated the rent?
- What is included in the rent?
(bills, service charges)
- How is rent paid to the landlord?
- Do you require a guarantor? Most private landlords and agencies will require a UK guarantor. If you don't have one, companies

such as www.housinghand.co.uk may be able to help.

- Does anyone in the house have to pay council tax?

Safety

- How do you get out of the house in the event of a fire?
- Are there smoke detectors fitted and do they work?
- Are the main doors fire doors?
- Does the property need a House of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) licence? If so does it have one?

Agreement

- Have you read the contract/lease?
- Do you understand it?
- Have you kept a copy?
- Have you obtained a receipt for everything you have paid?
- How long is the lease for?
- Can you stay longer?
- Can you leave early?

Services

- Who maintains the garden?
- Who cleans the windows and communal stair?
- Is there an extra charge for services?
- Who does the repairs?
- Who pays for repairs?
- How do you report repairs and how long will it take for them to be completed?

Most of all – does it feel like 'home' and would you feel safe living here?



THE LEGAL STUFF

Tenancy Agreement

When you move into a privately rented property, your landlord should ask you to sign a tenancy agreement outlining the terms of your stay. A tenancy agreement is a contract between you and your landlord that sets out your rights to live in a rented property.

Renting from a private owner, letting agency or moving in with other people that already have a flat will give you flexibility in choosing how long you stay. It is important that you fully read and understand your tenancy agreement.

A tenancy agreement must include:

- The name of the landlord and the name of the tenant
- The address of the property to be rented
- The amount of rent to pay
- How long the lease is for (if this isn't specified it will be assumed to be one year).

How can I make sure my tenancy agreement is fair?

Your tenancy agreement should be written in simple language that you can easily understand. It shouldn't contain any unfair terms. Examples of unfair terms might be:

- A sentence stating that your landlord can change the terms of the tenancy agreement whenever they like and that you will have to accept the new terms
- A sentence saying that the you have to pay for repairs that should be your landlord's responsibility
- A sentence saying that your landlord can enter the property whenever they like, without giving you notice.

Your Rights & Responsibilities

The property which you live in is your home. This gives you certain rights.

- You have a right to 'quiet enjoyment' of your home. This means that the landlord must give you 24 hours written notice if s/he requires access. The landlord cannot let himself/herself in with a key without your permission unless you have signed an agreement allowing this.

- Security of Tenure. You can stay in the property unless the landlord follows the correct procedure to evict you. If you require advice on this contact the Citizen's Advice Bureau or a legal advisor.
- The Right to Repair. The Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires the landlord to keep essential services, water, gas, electricity, sanitation in a state of repair and also the exterior and structure of the property in good repair. Make sure you ask your landlord for repairs in writing and keep copies of all correspondence.
- Safety. The landlord must have all electrical appliances tested on an annual basis by a competent person and have a gas safety certificate for any gas installations. Any soft furnishings must also comply with fire safety regulations.
- Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO). The regulations compel landlords renting flats to 3 or more unrelated persons to meet a range of fire safety and management standards dictated by Edinburgh City Council. An HMO licence is not required if a flat is let to a couple and a friend, as the couple will count as one person. If in doubt, you require more information or want to check if your landlord has an HMO licence, contact the City of Edinburgh Council on +44 (0)131 200 2000.

Along with rights come responsibilities.

- You must act in a 'tenant-like' manner. This means that you must take care of the property and avoid causing a nuisance to neighbours.
- You are responsible for paying the rent as agreed with the landlord. If you do not pay the landlord will be able to take action to evict you.
- You will also be responsible for paying the bills in the flat. Gas, electricity, telephone must all be paid. Students are not normally liable for Council Tax, but if you share with a non-student you should contact the City of Edinburgh Council for up-to-date advice.

I'VE MOVED IN, NOW WHAT?

Utilities

You will need to record the electric and gas meter readings when you move in and where appropriate, register the bills in your names. The easiest way to do this is over the phone or on the provider's website e.g. Scottish Gas, Scottish Hydro Electric etc.

Internet

Broadband internet is affordable and can be obtained from many different service providers such as Virgin Media, O2, and BT. Check with your landlord before installing any phone lines as alterations may require written permission.

Bills

Decide TOGETHER with your flatmates whose name will go on all the bills (e.g. gas, electricity, internet/television, etc.). Make sure everybody agrees on the payment system and that there are no surprises.

Pay the agreed deposit and rental payments on time and in the event of genuine difficulties inform the landlord.

Inventory

An inventory of the contents of the flat will usually be provided. However, if it is not then request this from the landlord before you move in. This may save any disputes later.

Council Tax

Students attending a course of at least 24 weeks' duration in an academic session and 21 hours' tuition weekly are likely to be exempt from paying Council Tax. Single-semester students may not be eligible for council tax exemption but it depends on the length of their course.

Queen Margaret University does not endorse any sites or publications that appear in this document, nor can we guarantee the accuracy of any information contained in them.



CONTACT US

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