

Checklist

Potential housemates – check. An idea of where you want to live – check. Now you’ve got these covered you can start viewing possible new homes. We’ve put together a checklist of what to look out for with three rows to compare viewings.

Before you go

Who manages it? Landlord/letting agency	☐	☐	☐	_____
Rent per person? £ _____ per _____	☐	☐	☐	_____
Agency fees? [box]	☐	☐	☐	_____

When you’re there

Location	☐	☐	☐	_____
How long does it take to get there?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Are there shops and services nearby?	☐	☐	☐	_____

The house

Does it come furnished?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Is there any damage?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Signs of mould or damp?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Are the windows double-glazed?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Are the rooms a good size?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Is there enough shared space?	☐	☐	☐	_____

Safety and Security

Working smoke detectors?	☐	☐	☐	_____
A working burglar alarm?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Safe external doors?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Lockable windows?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Car/bike storage?	☐	☐	☐	_____

Money

Are bills included in the rent?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Is it worth the agency fees?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Are fees negotiable?	☐	☐	☐	_____
Is it a joint or individual contract?	☐	☐	☐	_____

Step 1
When do I start looking?

You've probably heard it lots already but we can't stress it enough, take your time!

It's tempting to start looking now as the first houses start appearing on websites and especially if others around you are, but you really don't have to. In fact we recommend you don't start looking until after your January exams.

There's nothing wrong with starting to consider what it is you may want, but take the time now to be clued up on your options, what to avoid, and in January you can be fully prepared for your new, dream accommodation.

Step 2
Who do I live with?

This is a big one and probably one of the hardest decisions to make when considering your home for next year.

Alongside the buzz of who gets the larger room with the en-suite – you may want to have discussions about how you will get along... After all we all live differently and nothing proves this more than living together. Are you an early-night kind of person in a group of nocturnal owls? Prefer silence when your housemates are forming a house band? Compromise is key, so use your experience of living with new people in halls to guide you.

It's important to consider your budgets too, can everyone in your group afford where you're hoping to live? Remember you'll likely have bills on top too. Once you've signed a tenancy agreement it can be difficult to get out of it, so make sure to consider all possibilities before putting pen to paper.



Step 3
Where do I live?

Location is really important

It's important to consider:

Distance to Uni and town

Transport links

Are there shops, cafes, supermarket and gyms close by?

Does the area feel safe?

If you have a car do you need a parking permit?

Step 4
How do I find a property?

There are lots of websites where you can search for accommodation.

Good places to start your search are:

- accommodationforstudents.com
- unipol.org.uk/nottingham/accommodation
- student.spareroom.co.uk
- Rightmove

Word of mouth is also really important – speak to second and third year students about their experiences in areas you're considering.



Step 5
The Legal bit

It doesn't have to be scary! Some things to look out for though are:

Who will be managing the property – the landlord or a letting agent? Who will you be paying your rent to? Who will you report disrepair to? If it's managed by an agent, you should still ask for the landlord's full name and address.

What type of contract are you going to be signing? Joint or individual? Most student contracts are “joint”, meaning that you are all responsible for the total rent for the property (not just your share). With an “individual” contract, only you would be named on the agreement and you would only be responsible for your share of the rent

Living with your landlord? Your rights and the landlord's responsibilities will be different. Ask SU Advice for details.

Do you need a guarantor? (many landlords/agents will require one). Can everyone in your group provide one? In most cases your parents/guardians will be guarantors – have they seen a copy of the contract, and are they happy to agree to it?

What fees are payable and when? Make sure you get a written receipt and it's clear what you are paying for. A £75 agency/administration fee may sound cheap, but times this by six and what are you getting for this money?

Your landlord must put your deposit in a government-backed tenancy deposit scheme (TDP). They must be do this within 30 days of getting it. Your landlord must use a TDP scheme even if your deposit is paid by someone else, such as your parents.

Remember, **all fees** payable, including the rent are up for negotiation.

Make sure you get your contract checked with SU Advice before signing!



Step 6
Viewing properties

Just because its student accommodation doesn't mean you should accept sub-standard housing.

Take the attached checklist with you so you can compare the different houses you've viewed.

Is there any obvious disrepair to the house? Note this down to raise with the landlord/agent before signing.

Speak to the current tenants – are they happy with the landlord? Are there any issues with the property?

Does the landlord provide “notice” before they come round? (They should provide you with at least 24 hours' notice).

Be safe, don't visit on your own.

Property not built/going to be renovated/extended /redecorated? Can the work really be done in time? When are the current tenants leaving? When is the work going to take place? Discuss with the landlord/agent what happens if it's not finished? When does your tenancy start and end? Ensure that everything agreed is in writing.

Visit the area both during the day and the evening, does it feel safe?

Ask the current tenants how much the bills are. If bills are included in the rent ask the landlord if there is a cap on usage.

Make sure you view a selection of properties, but if you're on your 15th viewing, you may need to revisit your requirements.



Finding a new place

Your guide to househunting



You're starting to think about accommodation options for your next academic year and perhaps decided that private-rented accommodation is for you.

If this is the case then this is your SU guide of key information and things to consider as you start looking.

There's plenty of accommodation in Nottingham, in fact, there's more accommodation than students, so you're spoilt for choice! With this in mind, take some time to explore your options, areas of the city, find what's right for you, and most of all enjoy the experience.

You can find lots more information and tips from SU Advice at su.nottingham.ac.uk/advice or by visiting Advice on C floor, Portland Building.

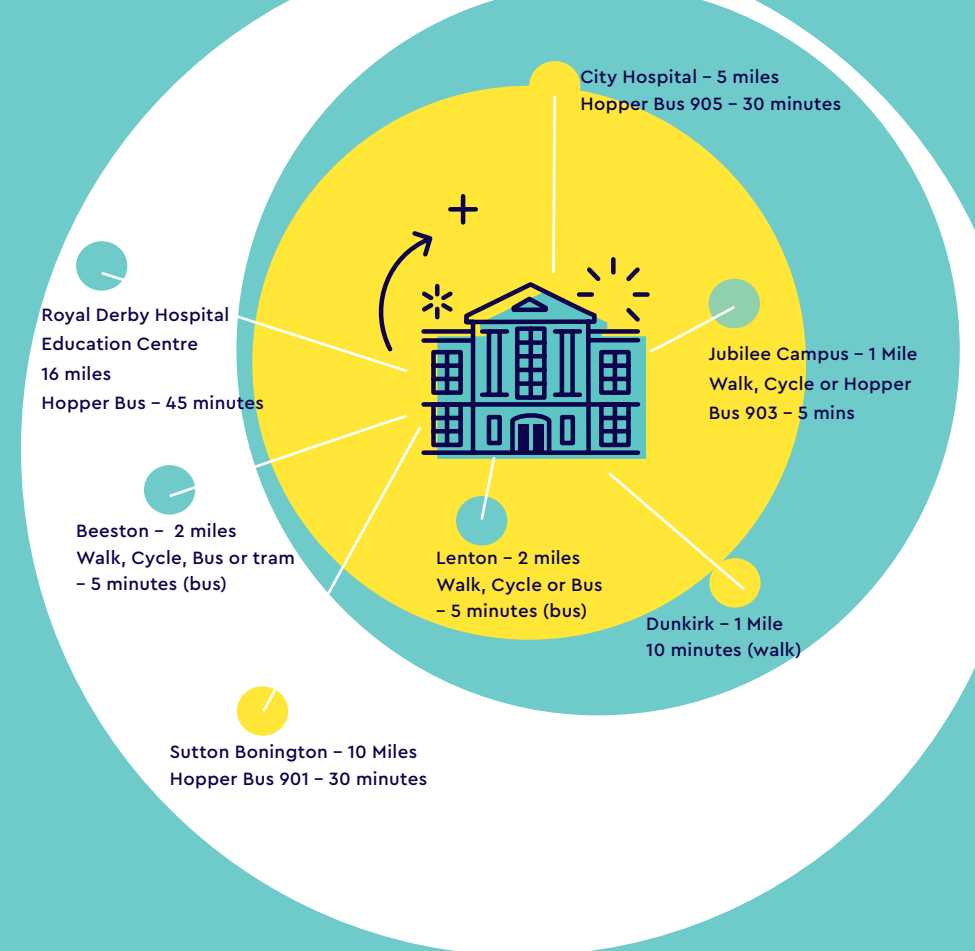


Additional considerations

Negotiations

What can you negotiate? Because there is a surplus of accommodation in Nottingham, we recommend you try to negotiate on the following:

- The amount of rent payable
- The summer retainer (if this is being asked for)
- The length of the contract
- Any administration costs
- Bills included
- Refurbishments/improvements
- Furniture/appliances



Tips

It is nearly always cheaper to pay bills directly yourselves.

Be confident (not pushy) and ask, they can only say no.

Remember, agents/landlords are just as keen to let their properties as you are to find somewhere.

You should negotiate a gap between tenancies to allow for cleaning/refurbishments.

Know the market – find out average rents and administration fees.

Be able to justify your reason for asking for a discount/reduction.

When viewing as a group, you may want to nominate a lead negotiator.

Make a good impression – landlords want responsible tenants.

Licensing and accreditation

Most properties in Nottingham fall under a licensing scheme, which sets our standards that your house has to meet.

All letting agents need to be members of a "property redress scheme". These are government authorised schemes which give you a way to escalate complaints if you're unhappy with they have been dealt

with by your letting agent. You should also

look for a property that s Nottingham Standard accredited.

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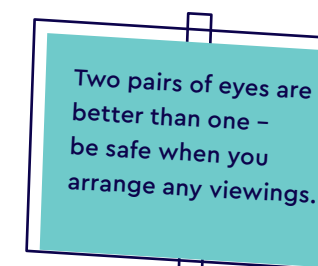
International students

Ideally, you should have viewed the property in person before you commit and pay any money.

If you need a UK based guarantor, and this is not possible, you may be asked to pay an increased amount of rent in advance. Try negotiating to minimise the upfront cost.

If you are bringing your family later in the year, don't make a long term commitment to a property that is not suitable for your family

It's not rude to ask questions and walk away if you need further advice and support before committing to a decision.



Checklist

Here's a checklist of what to look out for, with three rows to compare viewings.

Ask the landlord

- See a copy of the HMO licence (if the property has more than 5 people)
- Is the property part of the 'Nottingham Standard' accreditation
- To see a gas safety certificate
- Which deposit protection scheme do they use

Ask the current tenants

- Are repairs completed in a reasonable time?
- Does the heating work?
- Have they enjoyed living there?
- Why are they leaving?
- Are there any issues with the house?
- How is the local area?

☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐

After your visit

- Have you visited the area during the day and night?
- Contact the current tenants if you missed them earlier
- Do you require a guarantor?
- Is there a 'holding deposit'?
- Do you want to live there?

☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐
☐	☐	☐

Viewing Notes

SU Advice can provide all the advice and support you need in finding the perfect home.