

unipol

the home of student housing

The Essential Guide to House Hunting 2010-11



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Introduction

Finding student accommodation in Nottingham can be a daunting task and too often in the past students have settled for sub standard accommodation. The aim of this guide is to help you find the best possible accommodation for your requirements.

You've probably already heard some of the myths about accommodation in Nottingham. The most popular are that there aren't sufficient houses in Nottingham to go round all the students and that the best houses are always taken before Christmas. The good news is that both of these are untrue. In reality there is plenty of student accommodation with good quality houses available right up until the start of term. Similarly the vast majority of students wait until January, after their exams, to start looking.

Despite this each year some students find themselves in poor accommodation with unco-operative landlords - Unipol aims to change this. Assisted by our partners in Nottingham we have developed a FREE searchable online database that allows you to view the market at the touch of a button and take advantage of the current surplus. If you follow the simple steps outlined in this Essential Guide you'll maximise your chances of securing good quality, safe and secure student housing provided by accredited landlords who take your welfare seriously.

The aim of Unipol is to ensure that you get the best possible student accommodation. We hope you find this Guide useful and wish you luck in your house hunting.

Unipol is supported by



02

Unipol and Student Accommodation

Unipol are a national not-for-profit organisation that has been helping students find accommodation and make informed decisions about student housing for over 30 years. In 2007 we opened our Nottingham Accommodation Bureau, offering FREE assistance to students (over 18 years of age) at the two universities and the various colleges. We now hold the largest database of student properties available in Nottingham and have assisted thousands of students to find accommodation in the city.

Here are a few important things you should know about us:

- Unlike estate agents, we have no commercial interest in promoting particular properties, as a result we always give you unbiased service
- A wide range of private landlords use Unipol to advertise their properties - giving you the best possible choice. In 2008/09 we advertised more than 13,000 bed spaces in Nottingham
- We are selective about who uses our service and won't deal with landlords who have a proven record of complaints
- Students at both Nottingham universities can easily access our services. We have FREE to use information terminals at the University of Nottingham's main campus and at Nottingham Trent Students' Union
- We can help you meet students who are also looking for accommodation and want to share
- We offer one to one advice on a variety of housing matters, including legal assistance, and provide help for students with specific housing needs



When advising students we urge them to follow a number of basic steps, which are further explained in this guide:

Be **certain** about the people you intend to live with

Know what **you** want

Wait until the official start of house hunting, which is **22nd January 2010**

Consider the **whole market** using www.unipol.org.uk/nottingham

Prioritise **Unipol DASH Code** properties

View several properties, before making a final decision

Get your **contract checked** before you sign it

We are jointly funded by the City Council, the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and the Students' Unions at both universities, and our aim is to protect tenants' rights, improve standards of student accommodation and ensure you get value for your money.



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The Unipol DASH Code

The Unipol DASH Code

As well as providing a central database of properties, Unipol also operates Nottingham's student accommodation accreditation scheme - the Unipol DASH code.

The scheme is run by Unipol with the co-operation of DASH – the Decent and Safe Homes project and has one purpose, to improve accommodation standards for students in Nottingham. Owners who sign up to the Code agree to abide by a number of conditions. These far exceed current legal requirements and ensure that you as a tenant have enhanced protection. The Code is endorsed by Nottingham City Council, the University of Nottingham, Nottingham Trent University and both universities' Students' Unions.



Key benefits of the Unipol DASH Code include:

- A clearly written contract with reasonable terms
- no catches or hidden costs
- No demands for deposits or rent before signing up
- guaranteed
- Accommodation and facilities that meet a set standard for comfortable living and studying
- Safe and secure accommodation, where reported repairs are completed quickly and efficiently
- A landlord who is courteous, professional and without prejudice in his dealings with you
- An established framework for dealing with complaints and resolving disputes



If a landlord is in breach of the Code, at any time, you can challenge them through our complaints system by contacting the Accreditation Officer. If this doesn't resolve the matter it is then referred to an Independent Tribunal that ensures owners meet their written commitment to comply with the Code. However, in most cases complaints are normally resolved before reaching this point.

Code of Standards for Larger Developments

Large developments, such as privately owned halls, are covered by a separate accreditation code and the majority in Nottingham are members of this Code. Before signing a contract with a large development you should check on the Unipol website to find out whether they are members.

**CODE OF
STANDARDS
FOR LARGER
DEVELOPMENTS**

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Student Accommodation in Nottingham

Nottingham has a vast array of different types of accommodation available. Students also choose to live in a variety of different areas. University of Nottingham students tend to cluster around the main campus and Jubilee Campus. They favour areas such as Lenton, Dunkirk, Beeston, Wollaton and Radford. Nottingham Trent and New College students based in the city centre take advantage of the City's excellent public transport links and tend to be more widely dispersed in the Arboretum, City Centre, Forest Fields and Sneinton. Students based at Nottingham Trent's Clifton campus generally live at Clifton or in areas en route such as West Bridgford.

The map opposite shows the main areas of Nottingham where students currently live.

Rent levels in Nottingham vary between areas. This is partly a result of their geographical distance from campuses but also the perceived quality of accommodation and amenities available. So if you can be flexible and the commuting isn't too costly you might get yourself a bargain. Think about how much you really want to spend on your rent and whether it's important that you live in a particular area.





University of Nottingham

- 1 Jubilee Campus
- 2 University Park



Nottingham Trent University

- 1 City Centre Campus
- 2 Clifton Campus

FE Colleges

- A New College Nottingham
- B Castle College
- C South Nottingham College

Average Rents

Below are a selection of average rents (per person per week) taken from the Unipol website in 2008/09 for popular student roads.

Cromwell Street - Arboretum	£63.73
Montpelier Road - Dunkirk	£61.79
Foxhall Road - Forest Fields	£62.60
Burns Street - Arboretum	£66.40
North Sherwood Street - City Centre	£95.62
Marlborough Road - Beeston	£63.00
Lenton Boulevard - Lenton	£66.11
Rothsay Avenue - Lenton	£65.60



What types of property are available?

You will find a variety of types of private accommodation on offer in Nottingham, ranging from shared houses and flats (where the whole house is let to a group) to individual rooms (where the owner is willing to rent a house one room at a time). There is also a good selection of large developments.

Shared Houses/Flats

With this option you rent a room in a house and share the kitchen, lounge (if there is one), bathroom and toilet with other students. Shared student houses for seven or more tend to be in short supply, so bear this in mind when deciding how many people you'd like to share with.

Self-contained Flats

Flats normally have their own bathroom, toilet and kitchen so you won't have to share facilities. This is a good option for small families, couples and those who prefer a quieter lifestyle. Most self-contained flats have one or two bedrooms. Rents are usually shown per bedroom.

Bedsits

A bedsit is a room with some form of self-contained amenity, normally a small kitchen or separate washing facility. Bathrooms and toilets are usually shared with other residents.

Note: The supply of bedsits, self-contained flats and houses for two usually let quite early on. If this is the type of accommodation you are after you should start looking quite soon after the official start of house-hunting.



Private Sector Large Developments

Some returning students choose to live in large developments. These are privately owned, single developments that house 15 students or more. They're often divided into flats for 4 to 6 students with individual bedrooms (some with en-suite). The kitchen, bathroom and living space are shared and rent sometimes includes utility bills.

Room in an Owner's Home

This option can include the provision of meals and it will vary as to who you share with. House rules and regimes can also vary considerably, so it's best to talk to the resident owner-occupier about how the house works and what they would expect of you.

Managing Agent or landlord?

When renting directly from a landlord it is likely that the person you sign a contract with will be the same person you contact later in the year to resolve any problems. However, with Managing Agents this is not always the case. Some operate on a "Let Only" basis, whereby they simply find tenants for the owner and then have no further role in management of the property. If you are dealing with an agent it is worth finding out whether they fully manage the property. If they don't you may encounter difficulties later in the year when you need assistance



Above all, make sure you rent a property that is covered by the Unipol DASH code. A great many owners have already signed up to the code, whilst many others are working towards it, so you shouldn't have any problems finding a property covered by the Code. Then, if you're not satisfied with your accommodation, you can use the Code's complaint system to sort things out.

Rents and deposits vary. The average figures below were taken from the Unipol website in 2008/09

	Rent per week	Deposit
Room in a shared house	£61.07	£229.40
Self contained flat for a couple	£80.18	£248.98
Studio flat	£114.67	£250.00
Room in a large development	£85.66	£203.19

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Assessing your Needs

We're all individuals and we look for different things in the places we live. It may be that you want to share with a large group of friends, for others cost will be the overriding factor. Alternatively, you may be happy where you are at the moment – you don't have to move.

Whatever your requirements make sure you decide on what you really want before you start looking for accommodation.



The following are the sorts of things Nottingham students believe are essential when searching for accommodation:

- Unipol DASH Code accreditation
- Broadband/telephone in bedroom
- Affordability
- Kitchen facilities/fridge space
- Separate living room
- Security features
- Proximity to University
- Access to public transport
- Double beds
- Access to shops, bars, restaurants
- Closeness to either Nottingham or Beeston town centre
- Areas with low levels of crime
- Large bedrooms
- Off street car parking
- Friends living nearby
- Attractive furnishings and decoration

Sharing a house

Most students share accommodation with others and choosing how many to share with is an important decision. Our view is that between three and six is normally best. Too few people and you limit your choice of properties, too many and again you limit your choice of properties and also increase the possibilities of housemates falling out with each other. If you do choose to be in a large group and can't find a house big enough, think about splitting into two groups and look for two houses close to each other instead. Consider also the mix of the group. There is a theory that houses with a mixture of males and females work better than single sex households.

Be clear about your likes and dislikes, as well as the needs of others. If you're not up front about these from the start, difficulties can emerge later on. Most tenancies are fixed-term, so it's very difficult to get out of your contract and leave early if you are unhappy.

Is it better to rent as a group?

Most students rent as a group. It's much easier and cheaper to find accommodation if you're renting with others. In fact, this is how most owners offer their properties. The group agrees to rent a whole house between them and then signs either a joint contract or each tenant signs an individual contract. Always find out the implications of a joint contract before you actually sign one. There is a section on our website "Tenancies and Contracts - What They Mean" which you should read before signing your agreement. You should also have your contract checked at your Student's Union Advice Centre. They will soon spot if there is a problem with your contract.

What's it going to cost?

Rents on the Unipol website are shown per person, per week. When setting rents, owners take into account 'market forces'. So you'd expect that the better the quality and location of the house, the higher the rent. However, this isn't always the case, so remember:

- There are always bargains
- There are always over-priced houses.
- Check the duration of the contract as this can greatly affect the overall cost
- The time of year and the pressure on the student housing market affects rent levels

The front page of the Unipol website shows the current average rent in Nottingham. Use this to gauge whether you are getting a fair deal. You may well find that the closer you get to the start of term the less you will have to pay.

If you're paying rent monthly be aware that it works out at slightly more than four weeks' rent. For example:

A weekly rent of £55 will cost you $£55 \times 52$ (weeks in the year), which works out at £2,860. But if you divided that by 12 (months in the year), the monthly rent level works out at £238 (not $£55 \times 4 = £220$).

Some owners will vary rent levels and offer to improve the house or install more facilities if there's a group of tenants eager to rent the house. Some may also offer discounts on summer rent or shorter contracts. Whatever you agree, write it down and get the owner to sign it, so there's no confusion later.



Deposits

Practically all owners expect you to pay a deposit when you sign your contract. They normally hold these against any end-of tenancy rent arrears, wilful damage and additional cleaning. Get a written receipt with details of what your deposit covers. All owners should be a member of a Tenancy Deposit Scheme (see page 27).

Heating, lighting, water and telephones

Rent rarely includes gas and electricity and almost never covers phone bills. Water bills might be included in the rent but if not, they're your responsibility. If it's not clear from the agreement, ask.

You also need to look at what you're getting for your money. A good quality, well heated house (particularly with a recently installed heating system) will be much cheaper to run than a lower priced property in poor condition with electric heating. Large rooms are more expensive to heat than smaller ones. Instant hot water is something to look out for. Unlike tank systems, it means you get hot water on tap whenever you need it and you won't have to pay to heat water you don't use. Gas fired central heating with instant hot water is the cheapest and best form of heating. It costs around £3.00 to £5.00 per person per week. You should budget for an extra £8.00 per person per week, on top of rent, if electric fires are used to heat the property.

Check to see if the property advert has an Energy Performance Certificate. If you are renting as a group it should have one. EPCs offer an easy way of seeing how expensive the property is likely to be to keep warm.

Council Tax

Students generally get a fair deal on Council Tax. If only full-time students occupy your property, you'll usually be exempt from payment. But if you're living with anyone who isn't a full-time student they will have to pay 75% of the full Council Tax bill for the property.

Extra charges

Some owners or agents charge a fee for providing you with a contract and signing you up. If they do, it should be displayed as an extra charge in the advertised property details. Generally, any additional fees are simply a way of charging more money, whilst keeping the rent lower. The majority of owners don't charge additional fees, so if you are unhappy paying them have a look for something else.

In short, some houses that look cheap to run at first glance can turn out to be expensive when you add up running costs and extra fees. Others that appear more expensive could end up costing you less. Weigh up as many of the pros and cons as you can before you make up your mind.



Searching for Properties

The Official Start to House Hunting 2009

Some students will choose to look for accommodation before Christmas but Unipol, your University and your Students' Union all recommend that you wait – this is for a number of very good reasons. If you are a first year student, and new to the city, waiting until the New Year gives you sufficient time to find out which areas you would like to live in. It also means you have more time to find friends who you are comfortable living with for a year. Too often friendships formed in the first few weeks have evaporated long before groups move into houses.

The official start to House Hunting is **Friday 22nd January 2010**.

On this date Unipol will release all of its registered properties. Your Students' Unions will also be holding housing events to coincide with this date.



As previously mentioned, there is plenty of accommodation in the city and if you choose to secure a property before January 22nd, without viewing the Unipol website, you will undoubtedly be limiting your choice and not taking full advantage of your buying power.

If you are told there is a shortage of accommodation, or are put under pressure to look early by your friends or by landlords, be smart and wait for the official start of house hunting.

Using the Unipol Nottingham Website

www.unipol.org.uk/nottingham

To get the best possible deal you need to view the market as a whole and that's what the Unipol website lets you do. In effect it provides you with access to a "Virtual" Accommodation Bureau that you can visit any time of the day. This way you can view hundreds of properties without having to walk the streets knocking on doors. As a consequence not only is it a more efficient way of house hunting, it's also much safer.

If you can't access the internet just call in and use one of our information terminals at either of the universities (see page 29 for details).

Homepage

The homepage of the Unipol Nottingham site contains information on how many properties are currently being advertised and the average rent levels for Unipol DASH Code student houses, as well as average rents for properties not covered by the Code.

It also gives you access to the student to student notice board (see page 20 for further details), latest news and separate advice sections for students and landlords. To search the listings of advertised properties, on the website, choose the 'Property Search' button.



unipol
The home of student housing

UNIPOL NOTTINGHAM

Home • About Unipol • Property Search • For Students • Landlords • Training • News

Search:

SEARCH PROPERTIES available now:

Property Type	Studs	Properties
Shared Houses	729	162
Unipol Development	42	3
Shared Flats	35	12
Well-Converted Flats	8	6
Very Central Converted Houses	8	4

Average advertised rents in shared properties

Property Type	Code	Rent
Shared Properties	Code	£57.92
Not Code	Code	£56.12
Large Developments	Code	£77.88

Street/Area: Postcode:

Property size: Any Size Rooms: Any Number

Advanced Search:

NEWS

- Energy Performance Certificates are now needed
- New Code Launched
- Unipol Nottingham is now on Facebook
- Unipol/Unilife Early Day Motions
- Unipol's Forward Look 2008-2011
- Revised Large Development Code Launched
- Information for landlords: Letterbox restrictors
- Energy performance certificates

UNIPOL SERVICES

UNIPOL STUDENT HOMES
Unipol is a charity working nationally to improve training, standards and professionalism in student housing.

LANDLORDS
Unipol offers help and advice to Code of Standards Landlords through regular briefings, consultative and training events.

PAY UNIPOL
Owners pay fees, book training online.

UNIPOL TRAINING
Conferences and courses for the housing and educational sector.

OTHER UNIPOL SITES

- Leeds
- Professional Leeds
- Bradford

ENSURING STANDARDS

UNIPOL DASH CODE

CODE OF STANDARDS FOR LANDLORDS

Registered Users

Once in the “Property Search” screen, it’s well worth registering. This can be done via the “Log in” button at the top right hand corner of the screen. By registering you’ll be able to access a range of handy features via a **Personal Clipboard** - This allows you to add and remove properties to a clipboard. Previous “advanced search” specifications, carried out over the past two weeks, are automatically saved for you to re-use and each time you log on, you will instantly see which of your selected properties are still available to let. You can also send details of properties to your personal email account or print out your shortlist.

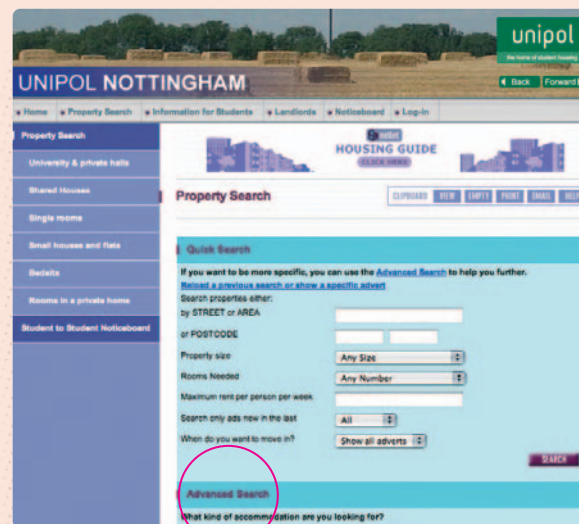
Online Property Searches

As you will see on the “Property Search” screen, the Unipol website has 3 different types of search facility:

Quick Search - allows you to search by size of property, street name, area or postcode. You can retrieve previous searches using the advert number found at the bottom of each advert. You can also find information on availability, and rent levels. Searching by street name is a ‘rough and ready’ option for finding vacancies in a street, but remember this can also show quite a range of different types of properties and lets. You will be able to compare rents in the same street by choosing this option.

Remember

- The more specific your search requirements are, the fewer properties you will find that match
- You need to register to use all of the search features on the Unipol website and output short-listed properties
- You can only add a search to your clipboard if you’re registered and logged in



Advanced Search - gives you complete control over the features you’re looking for in a property, allowing you to customise your search. As a result, hopefully, you will get exactly what you want.

Keyword Search - has 4 pre-defined searches for student groups with distinct needs. You can also specify your own “keyword”.

Search Results

Once you've decided on your search criteria, you're results will be displayed. These appear in sets of 10 mini adverts on each page along with a map showing the location of each property. The adverts have different colour surrounds according to whether they are members of the Code and also whether they are an off-street property or a large development. Properties that are members of the Code are always displayed first (a key to the different colours is shown at the top of each results page)

If you click on one of the mini adverts you'll go through to the full details of the property, including an external photo of the property and up to eight other internal images/room plans, if they have been provided by the owner. A map showing the location of the property is at the bottom of the screen and, if available, you'll also find an Energy Performance Certificate. Here's what the ads will tell you:

Location - Street and postcode only. You can get the exact location by contacting the owner.

Rent - How much it costs Per Person Per Week

Collection period - How often the rent is collected

Deposit - Make sure you know what this covers

Tenancy agreement - Used by the property owner to let the property

Property type, size and availability - If it's shown as a whole property then the owner would prefer a group of students to take on the property together

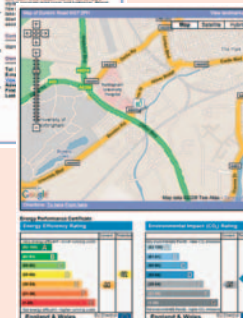
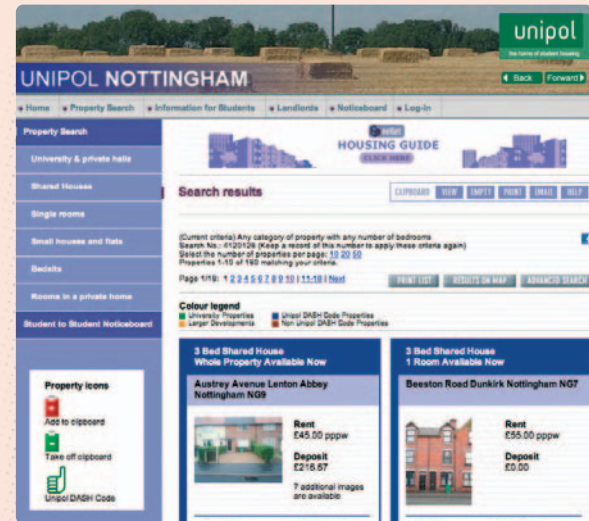
Contact and viewing details - The contact details can be for the owner, current tenants or a managing agent

Advert number - Note this down and use it in the quick search to retrieve the property

Age of the advert - Date the advert was placed

Features and facilities - Look out for details such as the type of heating or whether there's a living room

Facebook - Send details of chosen properties to friends on Facebook



Note: whilst we endeavour to keep the website up to date, at peak letting times owners may not let us know that a property has been let, so make sure that you have a good selection of properties shortlisted.

Student-to-Student Notice Board

This is a great way to search if you are looking for accommodation by yourself and you want to live in a shared house with other students. It can also be used to find another person for your group. The first page shows a list of topics posted in the last 30 days, but you can choose a longer or shorter time span. You can also narrow the list down by typing a keyword in the 'filter' box and pressing the 'show notice' buttons. To use the Student-to-Student Notice board you will need to register. Anyone can read messages but only registered users can add new messages or reply to posts.

- **Accommodation available**

Use this board if you have rooms available in your shared house that you want to fill or, alternatively, if you wish to move out of a property and need someone to replace you.

- **Accommodation wanted**

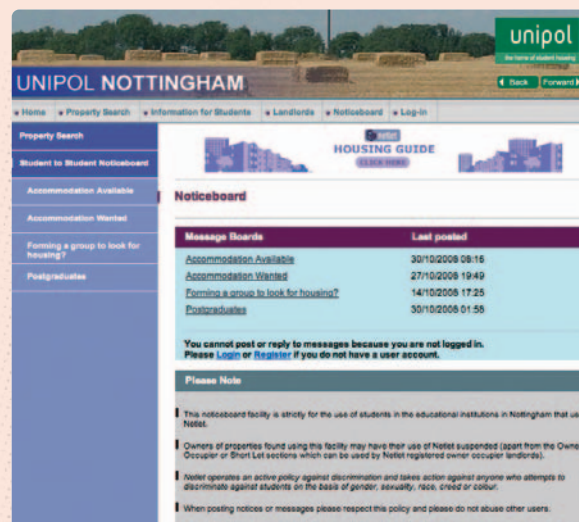
If you know the type of property you like or want to live in a specific area, but can't find anything on the Unipol website, try a message on this board.

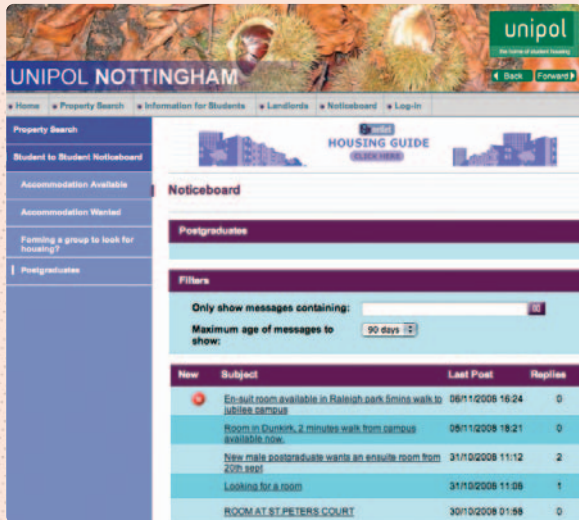
- **Forming a group to look for housing**

If you are on your own and want to share with others but don't know quite where to start, this is a great place to find students who also want to share.

- **Post-graduates**

Because post-graduates often have specific housing requirements we've created a separate message board.





Reading notices and posting replies

Just click on the topic you are interested in and if you want to post a reply, simply go to the bottom of the page or click 'Reply to notice'. Type your message and press 'Post Message'.

Creating a new notice

Go into the topic you've chosen and click 'Post New Message'. Type in the subject, add your text in the boxes and hit 'Post Message'.

Note: new messages are checked by Unipol and updated approximately every six hours.



Housing Advice online

If you want more advice on House Hunting take a look at our 'Information for Students' pages'. You'll find up-to-date information on the following topics:

- **Market conditions**

Find out about the local housing market and get the bigger picture.

- **What you need to know**

What housing is available and when, as well as how much it costs and who to live with.

- **Finding properties**

How to do it quickly and easily, plus other support services.

- **Viewing properties**

Make sure you rent a safe, secure and well-maintained property.

- **Contracts**

Different types of contracts and common issues.

- **Living in the community**

How you can make a contribution to the area you live in and avoid friction.

- **Disrepair**

Who's responsible for what, the standards required, how to get work done and sample letters you can send to your landlord.

- **Deposits**

What they are for, why owners withhold them, and how to get them back, plus checklists and sample letters for you to use.

- **Rent Levels**

You'll also find current average rent levels on the Unipol homepage. Try a quick search of any street to see how your rent compares with others available in the market.





The Golden Rules of House Hunting

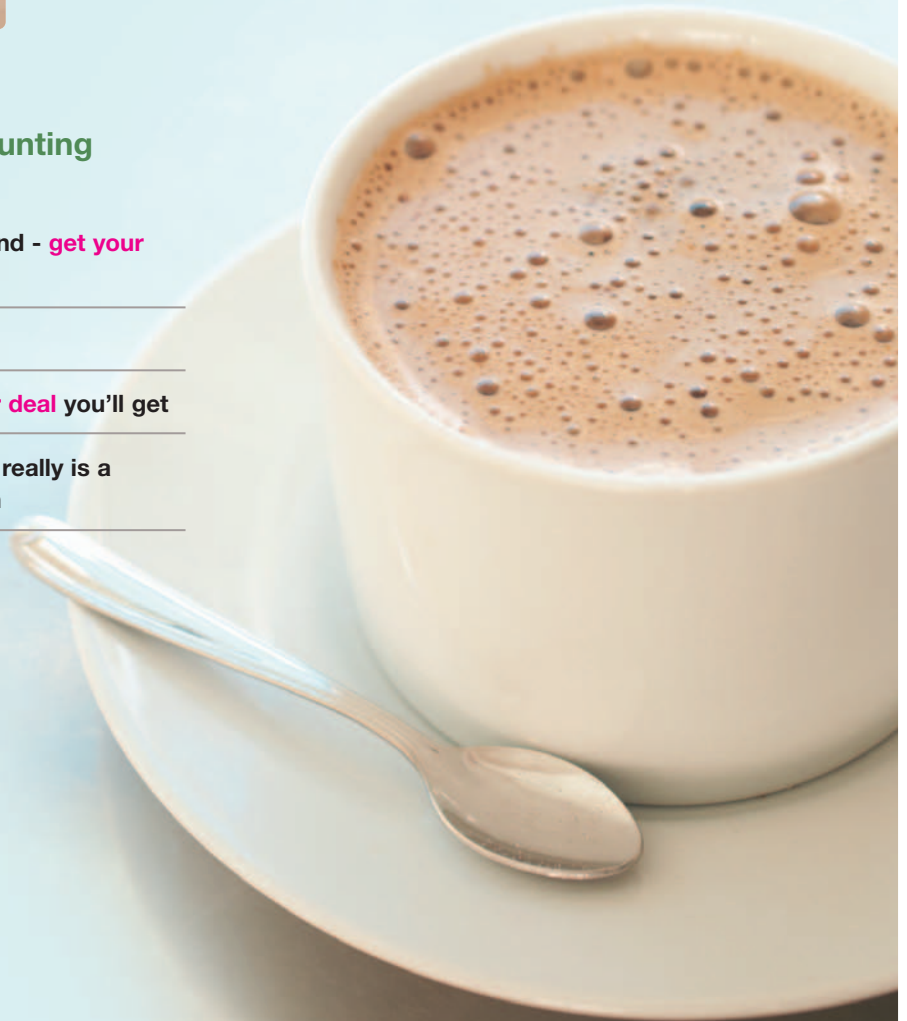
Never sign anything you don't understand - **get your contract checked**

Don't hold **unrealistic expectations**

The more properties you see, the **better deal** you'll get

Don't panic or rush into anything; there really is a surplus of good quality accommodation

Know your budget and stick to it



22

Viewing Properties

The work doesn't stop once you think you've found your ideal house. Before you decide a place is right for you, check it out thoroughly. Here's what you should look out for when you view a property:

Outside the property

First impressions really do matter. If there's a front garden, how well has it been maintained and who's responsibility is it to look after it? If it's up to you, will you be provided with tools? Similarly, is the external paintwork in a good state of repair. It's rare to find a house that is scruffy outside and smart on the inside.

Look at the house from across the road. Check the roof for signs of damage like missing slates, leaking gutters, wet brickwork and loose flashing. These can all lead to damp inside the house. Is there somewhere to store the dustbin? You can be fined if you leave your bin on the street.

Inside the property

If the existing tenants are there when you view the property it does no harm to ask them about their views on the property, the landlord and their reasons for moving out

Gas Appliances - It is a legal requirement for all gas appliances to be serviced annually by a GAS SAFE REGISTER registered engineer. The engineer will indicate which appliances are safe to use and which aren't. Ask to see the Gas Safety Record and check that all gas appliances in the property are listed (including gas boilers and cookers) and that they're safe to use. If anyone refuses to show you a certificate or says it has just run out, rent somewhere else. Also don't forget to ask to be shown how to light any gas water heater or central heating system in the property you rent.

Double Glazing - Are the windows glazed as described in the advert?

Electrics - Check appliances (particularly the vacuum cleaner) to make sure they work. If there's no other source of heating, are there sufficient sockets in the room to run an electric fire as well as other appliances? Put the electric fire on for a few minutes and check the plug doesn't get hot - if it does it's a sign of faulty wiring. All properties advertised on the Unipol website should have an electrical safety certificate, so make sure you ask to see it.

Central Heating - This can be the cheapest and most effective way of keeping warm and it reduces dampness and condensation.



Damp - If you view a house in the spring/summer it could be in much better condition than during the winter. Check the top floor for signs of a leaking roof or damaged plaster. Inspect the side of attic dormer windows for signs of water penetration.

Living Rooms or Shared Space -

If the property you are viewing has a living room, it will mean you can rent or buy a TV together, keeping sleep and work areas separate if you want to. Many houses also have a kitchen that's large enough to eat in. Check that there are enough soft furnishings for all the occupants and if there is a sofa look for a fire regulations label. If there is no label you should ask the owner to replace the sofa - unless they can prove that it does meet the soft furnishing regulations.

Baths, Showers and Plumbing -

Are there enough washing facilities and are they separate from the toilet? Suppose everyone wants a bath in the morning – is it possible without a shower? If there is a shower, does it work and is the water pressure good enough? Is there hot and cold running water? Check sinks aren't cracked and that the toilets flush properly.

Kitchens - Make sure there's enough storage space in the kitchen and that there's enough room if two or more of you want to cook at the same time. Similarly, are the fridge and freezer large enough for everyone? If either has iced up excessively, check to see how old they are - it may mean they are faulty.

Cookers and Microwaves - Is there a good cooker? Does it have shelves and a grill pan? Microwaves can be cheaper to run than conventional ovens, but they're not a viable alternative to a cooker.

Washing Machines - Electrical stores charge around £30 a month to rent one, so if you're in a group it may be worth considering. Is there plumbing for a machine? If there isn't, find out whether the owner will meet the cost of this and any electrical work that may need doing. If not, check where the nearest launderette is.

Carpets and Curtains - Properties should have carpets and curtains. If there's a bedroom on the ground floor, the curtains should preferably be thick or lined. Worn carpets, especially on stairs, are dangerous - ask the owner to replace them.

Furniture - Some students add to the furniture that's provided with their own personal items. Find out which furniture belongs to the tenants and which to the owner. You should be provided with a bed, desk, wardrobe, chest of drawers (or built-in cupboard/wardrobe) and chair. Have a good look at the bed and mattress - you'll soon know if they're past their best.

Television - It's unlikely that you'll have a TV provided, but if there is one, or you bring your own, remember you'll need a TV licence.



Property Checklist

If you hadn't realised before, you will have by now - there's a lot to remember when you're house hunting. Don't panic, we've produced a checklist to help you. Running through it will give you a reasonably thorough survey of any house you're thinking of renting. And don't forget, the more properties you look at (try to see at least 3 or 4), the better idea you'll have of what's out there.

Address 1
Address 2
Address 3



Gas & Electricity

1. Is there a copy of a GAS SAFE REGISTER safety certificate for the gas appliances?
2. Is the heating in the house adequate (think of the winter temperature)?
3. Do the electric/gas fires work?
4. Are there enough sockets in each room?
5. Do any of the plugs get very hot, indicating dangerous wiring?
6. Does the cooker work?

Address	1	2	3
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Plumbing

7. Do all the sinks drain?
8. Have you tried all the taps?
9. Does the toilet flush or leak?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Security

10. Does the property have a working burglar alarm?
11. Is the house secure?
12. Are all the external doors solid?
13. Do all the external doors have five-lever mortice locks and the downstairs windows have locks?
14. Are the ground floor bedroom curtains lined or thick enough?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Insurance

15. Do you want to be insured?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Furniture

- 16. Has the house got enough furniture for the occupants?
- 17. Does any of the furniture belong to the existing tenants?
- 18. Is all the furniture in good condition?
- 19. Does the sofa meet with the fire regulations?
- 20. Is there enough space in the kitchen to store and prepare food?
- 21. Is the fridge/freezer big enough?
- 22. Are there any signs of pests (mouse droppings, slug trails, fleas)?

Address	1	2	3
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Money

- 23. What are you paying for in your rent and is it clear from your contract?
- 24. Have you paid a deposit? If so, what is it for?
- 25. Have you got a receipt for what you've paid?
- 26. Who is responsible for the water charges?
- 27. How much will it cost to heat the house?
- 28. Are you jointly liable for rent with the other tenants?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Services

- 29. What services is the owner providing for you, if any? Window cleaning, gardening, lighting of common parts, dustbin and refuse disposal?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Agreements

- 30. Do you know what the contract means?
- 31. If so what type of contract is it?
- 32. Have you talked to the previous tenants about any problems?
- 33. Have you been given a copy of the contract you've signed?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Owner

- 34. Have you checked the owner is a member of the Unipol DASH Code of Standards?
- 35. Do you know the owner's name, address and phone number?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Outside the property

- 36. Does the roof look sound (you can check for damp from inside the house)?
- 37. Have the gutters got plants growing out of them?
- 38. Are the drains clear?
- 39. Is any of the woodwork rotting or unsafe?

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



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Signing Contracts

Most owners use the Assured Shorthold Tenancy contract. You'll find information on our website in the 'Tenancies & Contracts' section that explains in detail the legal aspects of this sort of contract. Staff in the Advice Centres at the University of Nottingham's Students' Union and Nottingham Trent Students' Union will also be happy to look through your contract and explain the implications of signing it.

The golden rule is: never sign anything before the Student Advice Centre have checked it.

Always seek advice about what you're signing. Most owners are quite happy to let you keep an agreement to check for at least 24 hours before you have to decide whether or not to sign it.

Will I be able to leave the contract if I want to?

Specific clauses in contracts saying you can leave are rare. If you leave the property within the contractual term you'll be liable for the rent until the end of the contract. Of course, you can ask the owner if it's okay to leave. But if they refuse, assume you'll be held to the contract, through court action if necessary, which means paying rent until the last day of the contract. Most students who want to leave a house have to find someone else to take their place. One way of doing this is to place an advert on the student notice board. If you leave a contract and your parents have signed as guarantors they may be liable for your rent, so seek advice before you do anything.

How long should I expect the contract to be for?

Most owners now use fixed-term contracts for a set period of time. Some owners may make rent concessions (normally half rent) for July and August. Raise this with them - it's always worth negotiating about the precise date you start paying full rent.

Guarantors

Some owners or agents may ask your parents or guardians to become guarantors. If your parent signs a guarantor form they become liable for your financial responsibilities under the terms of the contract. That means they'll have to pay your rent if you don't.

If you're signing a joint contract with other students, your guarantor could also be asked to pay the rent of another tenant if they default (unless the agreement they sign specifically mentions that they are responsible, e.g. in a house for four, one quarter of their son or daughter's liability). Many students don't like asking their parents to sign guarantor forms. If you're not happy about finding a guarantor, rent somewhere else. Unipol produces a standard guarantor agreement form, which your landlord can use, that limits a parent's liability for only their child's rent arrears and not those of the other joint tenants.

Think carefully before you sign - you could be locked into your contract for up to a year.

The Tenancy Deposit Scheme

Landlords entering into new tenancy agreements are required, by law, to protect deposits with a Government authorised scheme. This safeguards your money and offers independent adjudication in the event of a dispute. As a consequence, if you have kept the property you have rented in good condition, you can be confident that you will not have all or part of your deposit withheld on spurious grounds.

The existence of the Alternative Dispute Resolution service (ADR) also encourages tenants and landlords to have in place, from the outset, clear agreement on the condition of the property through use of inventories, and agreement on the condition of the property through use of inventories - this ensures that both students and landlords are protected.

When thinking of signing for accommodation, make sure you ask the landlord to explain which scheme they are part of and how your deposit is protected. Be wary of landlords who aren't forthcoming about how they operate the Tenancy Deposit Scheme.

Useful Contacts

As well as Unipol there are a range of agencies that can help make your time in private rented accommodation more enjoyable. Below are contact details for just some of them.

General Housing Advice and Guidance

Unipol Student Homes	0115 846 8599	www.unipol.org.uk/nottingham
Student Advice & Representation Centre, University of Nottingham Students' Union	0115 846 8730	www.su.nottingham.ac.uk/advicesupport
Student Advice Centre, Nottingham Trent Students' Union	0115 848 6200	www.trentstudents.org/advice

Council Tax, Refuse Collection, Parking, Pest Control and Noise Control

Nottingham City Council	0115 915 5555	www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Broxtowe Borough Council	0115 917 7777	www.broxtowe.gov.uk
Newark & Sherwood District Council	01636 650000	www.newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk
Rushcliffe Borough Council	0115 981 9911	www.rushcliffe.gov.uk

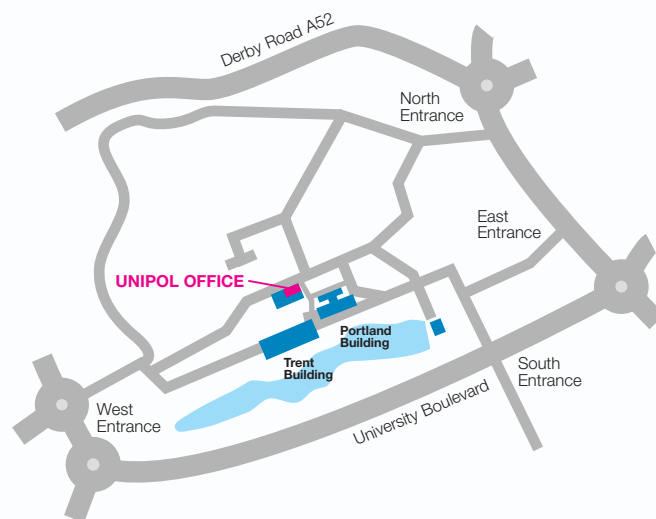
Emergency Services

Nottinghamshire Police	0115 967 0999	www.nottinghamshire.police.uk
Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service	0115 967 0880	www.notts-fire.gov.uk



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The Accommodation Bureau



How to find us

The Accommodation Bureau is located on Cut-Through Lane, opposite the Hallward Library, on the University of Nottingham's University Park Campus. Our normal working hours are:

Monday to Friday 9.15am to 4.45pm

However, at peak times of the year we extend our hours. You can check opening hours, as well as how many vacant bed spaces we currently have advertised, and average rent levels, by calling 0115 846 8230 (local call rates apply within the UK).

As well as access to computer terminals, the bureau also holds a range of advice clinics and offers face to face advice and can be used as your base for house hunting.

If you're registered you can print off your shortlisted properties at the bureau. Remember to bring along your login name and password. To help us keep the site up to date please inform staff if a landlord tells you a property on your list has already been let.

Unipol at Nottingham Trent Students Union

Nottingham Trent students can access Unipol's services via our information terminals at the Student's Union. For further details contact the Union on 0115 848 6200 or contact Unipol either on 0115 846 8599 or info@nottingham.unipol.org.uk.

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www.unipol.org.uk/nottingham

Unipol Student Homes

Cut-Through Lane, University Park, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD

0115 846 8599

info@nottingham.unipol.org.uk

If you need house hunting help or advice, go to www.unipol.org.uk/nottingham

Call the Daily Recorded Information Services on 0115 846 8230 for the latest opening hours

(local call rate within the UK)