



The University of Northampton works with landlords to signpost students to quality accommodation. We can offer landlords a range of services from property advertising and accreditation right through to full management.

Our aim is to drive up standards in student accommodation by being a beacon of good practice in the student housing market. We are also a provider of accommodation, so we fully understand the challenges landlords face.

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### **Renting to Students**

Student rentals can bring high returns, especially in a university town. However, when you rent to students, there are some specific considerations to be taken into account. Read the list below to make sure you've done everything you need to do to keep your student rental property above board.

### **Decent and Safe homes (DASH)**

DASH Landlord Accreditation is a scheme which recognises and acknowledges private sector landlords with good standards, condition and management of their properties, also good relationships with their tenants.

DASH Landlord Accreditation is solely for landlords and is not open for lettings agencies to join: the person wishing to become accredited with the scheme must be the controlling owner of the properties he or she manages.

After making an application and signing the Code of Conduct, the landlord will be required to:

- Attain a Landlord Development qualification
- Satisfy the Housing Act 2004 definition of being a fit and proper person
- Complete a 10% property sample bill of health
- Provide evidence of continued professional development

Once completed the Landlord will be awarded the schemes quality of “Accredited Landlord” and their name will be added to the public sector register of DASH Accredited Landlords. <http://www.dashservices.org.uk/Accreditation>

### **Contracts**

Generally most student landlords ask their tenants to sign a fixed term, joint and several Assured short hold tenancy agreement. Landlords who belong to trade bodies such as NLA or RLA have access to basic contracts or may prefer to ask their solicitor. Landlords who are DASH accredited can access the NSLN (Northampton Student Landlord Network) Tenancy Agreement hosted on the DASH website <http://www.dashservices.org.uk/Accreditation> Students can take confidence from the fact that it has been approved by DASH Landlords Accreditation, Northampton Borough Council, The University of Northampton.

University of Northampton suggest DASH tenancy agreement for student lets. It is the Landlords responsibility to determine which legal agreement best suits them.

Information of University Term dates can be found at:

<http://www.northampton.ac.uk/about-us/term-dates-and-closed-days/>

### **Council tax exemption**

When registered on a full time course of study, a higher education student is exempt from paying council tax. The University of Northampton gives each student a Certificate of full time student status. This enables students to claim their exemption from the local authority.

**Students are not automatically exempt and so it is important that you get copies of each student tenant’s certificate for submission to the authority**

During an academic year it is common to find the academic status of a resident will change either withdrawing from academic study or becoming a part – time student. Such changes affect liability to pay Council Tax. You should ensure that you are aware of any such changes.

### **Energy performance certificates**

It is a legal requirement that the EPC certificate is provided to all tenants before they enter into a tenancy agreement. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 the minimum energy performance rating will be E this will apply to all new lets and renewals of tenancies and will come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 for all existing tenancies. Unless an exemption is in place it will be against the law to rent a property with a performance less than an E.

Northampton Student Lets will require a copy of this certificate to advertise and let your property out.

### **Electric and Gas safety**

All properties let to tenants must have a valid Electric and Gas safety certificate. It is a legal requirement for Gas appliance's to be checked yearly and electric installations to be checked every five years. Northampton Student Lets will require evidence that the safety checks have been carried out in order to advertise and let your properties and so will require up to date certificates in order to advertise and let your property out.

### **Damage Deposits**

Deposits taken (up to the level of £100,000) taken by Landlords and Letting agents for Assured short hold tenancies in England and Wales, must be protected by a tenancy deposit protection scheme.

There are two types of tenancy deposit protection scheme available for Landlords and letting agents

- Insurance schemes
- Custodial Schemes

All schemes provide a free dispute resolution service should the situation arise where both parties are not able to agree on deposit value to be returned to the tenant at the end of the tenancy.

The schemes allow tenants to get all or part of their deposit back when they are entitled to it and encourage tenants and Landlords to make a clear agreement from the start on the condition of the property. We encourage Landlords and tenants to complete a comprehensive inventory – at the start of the tenancy and at the end.

You can access more information about tenancy deposits schemes by visiting [www.direct.gov.uk/en/tenancydeposit/index.htm](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/tenancydeposit/index.htm)

## Facilities

Students will more often than not expect a property to be let as fully furnished. We suggest that Landlords consider the following as a rough guide to the kind of furniture they should provide.

Bed / Study room	Bed, Chest of draws, Wardrobe or clothes rail, Desk with a chair, waste bin, curtains
Sitting / Communal area	Dining table, Sofa / Easy Chair(s)
Kitchen	Cupboard space, Fridge and freezer shelf per tenant, Hob, Oven, Washing machine, Microwave, Toasters, Kettle, ironing board, Dustbin,

All furniture provided must comply with the Furniture and Furnishings regulations 1988

Please check that all chairs, sofas, and mattress have a permanent label attached that states the furniture complies with the 1988 regulations.

In many cases students are expected to provide their own bedding and utensils.

It is suggested that as a Landlord you do provide the household with a vacuum cleaner that is in good working order unless you are providing a cleaning service. If students have the responsibility for the external area then appropriate equipment should be provided, for example a lawn mower.

## Insurance

The responsibility of insuring the property and the items that are left in it for the tenants to use is the landlords. Students should be advised that they will need to find their own insurance for their personal belongings.

## Housing Health and safety rating system - HHSRS

As a Landlord you will need to ensure that your property is safe for your tenants. The housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS) introduced a new risk assessment system. The principle is towards identifying and addressing those hazards which are most likely to be present in houses.

In total there are 29 Hazards which are identified within the HHSRS including dampness, poor hygiene and pollutants.

You can find out more information by visiting the website

<http://www.dashservices.org.uk/acreditation>

<http://www.northampton.gov.uk/info/20144/privatesectorlandlords/1286/housinghealthandsafetyratingsystem>

### **Summer retainers**

Summer retainers are not mandatory and some Landlords may choose to let for the full year (52 weeks) which would entitle the student to full access. Other Landlords charge a retainer fee to 'Hold' the property over the summer break. Payment of the retainer should enable student tenants to store their belongings at the property and allow reasonable access depending on the amount charged.

Student tenants may often want to occupy the property earlier, especially if they are working in Northampton over the summer break. This arrangement is at your discretion. Even if the property is empty over the summer months, you should NOT re let it once you are receiving a retainer for full rent.

### **Wear and tear**

We recommend that a detailed inventory including photographs is drawn up and agreed by you and the tenants. You should include details of all furniture that is in the property and its condition with pictures. This list should also have details and pictures of the general condition of the property.

We recommend that students take their own photographs of any damages that they are aware of that need attention either before or when they are moving in to the property. This serves as a good visual record of what maintenance (if any) is outstanding.

### **Withdrawals and terminations**

Sometimes students may lose their student status for a number of reasons. We always advise students that they need to contact their landlord if this happens. We understand that there are many issues that can threaten the tenancy. We are available to offer support to students, however, in such circumstances we will explain the student's obligations and will not undermine the agreement between landlord and tenant.

Landlords are under no legal obligation to agree to release a student from the tenancy but in such circumstances where staying in the property is not viable, we encourage students to seek the landlords permission to be released from the contract or to find a replacement tenant. Replacements must satisfy the landlord's requirements.

### **Useful links**

- DASH Accreditation scheme (Decent and safe homes East Midlands)



Guidance and information on renting in the private sector and information in the DASH landlord's accreditation scheme

<http://www.dashservices.org.uk/accreditation>

<http://dashtraining.org.uk>

- Northampton Borough Council (NBC)

Guidance and information on renting in the private sector and statutory compliance

<http://northampton.gov.uk/housing>

- Northampton Landlords Association (NLA)

<http://www.landlords.org.uk/in-my-area/east-midlands/nla-northampton>