



Housing Options

Student Housing aims to enhance the Melbourne Experience by assisting students to source and maintain affordable, safe and appropriate housing. Student Housing Advisers are available to assist with housing and tenancy enquiries by appointment in person, by phone or via email. While we are able to provide you with the resources you need to find suitable housing, we are unable to secure your housing for you. For the latest up to date information on all the topics in this publication we strongly encourage you to visit our website.

Arranging your housing

Housing availability can vary depending on the time of year and the style and location of housing you are looking for. The most affordable options are generally highest in demand, especially in the month before each semester starts. Make things easier for yourself by thinking about your housing options around two to three months before you plan to relocate. Begin your search by investigating a range of housing options and ensure that you have a back-up plan (or two) in the event that you are unsuccessful in securing your preferred accommodation.

Some housing options for students allow you to secure your long-term housing before arriving in Melbourne. If you plan on doing this, it's essential that you investigate your options as thoroughly as possible, especially if signing a tenancy agreement before inspecting the premises.

Make sure that you request floor plans, photos or other evidence of what you can expect to find when you arrive at your new home. Confirm that the room or apartment has windows (if important, check what your window looks out onto). Consider whether the premises will be big enough for you (compare floor plans to a space you know). Also consider whether it offers the facilities and services you require. Finally, make sure you get what you were promised after you arrive.

Securing your long-term housing after you arrive in Melbourne may allow you to be more informed

about your housing choice. You will need to arrive in Melbourne at least four weeks prior to Orientation to give yourself enough time to house-hunt and settle in. Have a plan of action ready for when you arrive, so that you can start house-hunting straight away.

Note that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to arrange share housing from a distance. You really need to be in Melbourne to inspect properties and meet potential house mates to see if you'll get along.

Temporary accommodation

You should organise temporary accommodation if you are going to search for long-term housing after you arrive, or if your pre-arranged housing is not available on the day of your arrival. Book your temporary accommodation before you leave home, and be aware that budget accommodation can be scarce during festivals and major sporting events, which run through the year.

There are various things to consider before you start looking for somewhere to live. We recommend that you carefully consider the following:

Finances

It's essential to prepare your budget before choosing your housing, as what you can afford directly influences where you can live. Be realistic about the amount of money you can spend on housing. As a general rule, your weekly rent should not exceed 30% of your weekly income. However, the rental market in Melbourne is quite competitive, so you may find that you are forced to spend more than this amount to secure appropriate housing.

At the start of your tenancy you will need enough money to pay both the first month's rent and the equivalent of one month's rent as bond. You may also need to pay for utilities connection, furniture



and household goods (furnished accommodation may be a cheaper option).

Making your budget balance can be tough, so we have more information about costs of living, government Bond Loans, University loans and the Housing Grant (fortnightly payments of AUD\$70 from March to December) on our website. Speaking with an Adviser in the Student Financial Aid service may also help.

Independent living skills

If you have always lived in your family home and plan to move out, it may take you some time to become accustomed to all the things required for self-sufficiency and independent living. Being self-sufficient is being able to cook, clean, and manage your time, money and expenses.

Learning how to be self-sufficient is not instantaneous; it happens over time. Balance your time between study, rest, socialising, employment and exercise to avoid the risk of running yourself down.

Location

Due to the general shortage of affordable rental properties, you should search for housing that falls within at least a 10km radius of the University campus. Read about Melbourne's different suburbs on our website. Common location considerations include: access to public transport, distance to the campus, shops and services (e.g. supermarket, doctor), and proximity to recreational and sporting facilities and friends and family.

People

Who do you want to live with – a family, or peers?
How many others are you prepared to share with?
Do you want to share expenses, cooking, meal times and social activities, or would you prefer more privacy?

The people you live with largely influence the atmosphere in your home and it's important to remember this when deciding who will be suitable to live with and whether you will get along well as housemates. If you want to live on your own, note that your living costs will probably also increase.

The place where you live will not only be a place to sleep. You need to be able to study, socialise and be at rest when at home.

Study requirements

- Do you plan to do most of your study at home?
- Will you need a fast internet connection?
- Can you concentrate with traffic noise or with noisy housemates?
- If you plan to study in your bedroom, is there space for a desk?

When you have thought about these types of factors, choose your housing so that you can get the best out of your study.

Transport

Melbourne is well-served by public transport; trams, trains and buses are available. Fare prices, concession card applications, timetables and route information can be found at the Public Transport Victoria website www.ptv.vic.gov.au. The myki smart card ticketing system operates in Melbourne, for details visit: www.myki.com.au.

Riding a bicycle is a great way to save money and keep fit. Cyclists find the Bicycle Victoria website useful for information on rules and regulations, purchasing bikes and accessories, safety and path maps. Visit www.bv.com.au.

Accommodation database

You can access the University's Accommodation Database online from the Student Housing website using your student number or offer number. The database is a free service managed by Student Housing and provides numerous listings of available housing options. A convenient feature of using the database online is that you can set up and save a search function on the system and have new vacancies emailed to you.

Both students and non-students can place an advertisement on the Accommodation Database. However, only University of Melbourne students can view the advertisements. The Accommodation Database is available year-round. The number of advertisements will vary, however, depending on the time of year and the availability of housing.



University-affiliated housing

Regional & associated campuses

The University offers housing and/or housing advice at most of its associated campuses. If your chosen studies will be undertaken at an associated or regional campus you should contact your campus directly.

Residential Halls and Colleges

There are 12 Residential Halls and Colleges at the University of Melbourne, either on campus or within short walking distance. Most Colleges offer a single furnished room, with common bathrooms and recreation areas. The cost of living in College includes meals, utilities and use of many academic and extracurricular facilities. Fees generally cover semester and exam periods, but you may stay in your room during vacations for an additional fee. For further information, go to www.colleges.unimelb.edu.au. Or contact the Intercollegiate Office via phone +61 3 9347 9320 or email enquiries@colleges.unimelb.edu.au.

Student Housing Access Program (SHAP)

The Student Housing Access Program (SHAP) offers rooms in University-owned 'share houses' within walking distance of the Parkville campus. SHAP provides a transitional step to independent living and is designed to assist students who may have trouble in securing or maintaining housing at the start of, or during their studies. In light of this, eligibility criteria apply. SHAP is usually only available to University of Melbourne students who are Permanent Residents or Citizens of Australia. SHAP tenants are allocated their own lockable bedroom and sign a SHAP lease for a period of up to two semesters (approximately 12 months).

Non-University housing

Homestay / Private board

Private board or homestay means boarding with a family, couple or single person in their own home. Costs vary and usually include furnished accommodation, gas, water and electricity bills.

There are three types of boarding options: part-board (accommodation only), full-board (accommodation plus meals) and board in exchange (accommodation in exchange for household duties, e.g. cleaning, child minding).

Private board vacancies are listed on the Accommodation Database. However, if you wish to live in a more supported homestay arrangement, you can contact a homestay placement agency who will organise a placement for you (a fee may apply). In either situation, it's important to have a clear agreement, preferably in writing.

Private rental: vacant properties and shared housing

Through the private rental market you can rent a house or apartment through a real estate agent or directly from the owner of the property. You may choose to live alone, or share this property with your family or housemates. Private rental can offer you an independent lifestyle and privacy. It may also be possible to stay in this property for the duration of your course at the University.

Vacant rental properties are usually unfurnished. Price varies according to the location and condition of the property, though rental cost usually increases the closer the property is to the city centre and the University.

Share house living is usually one of the more affordable housing options as many living costs can be shared. You can move in to an established share house that has a vacancy, or start up your own. No two share houses are the same – they range in size and are organised around the rules the household sets. Each housemate has their own bedroom to furnish and care for, while the bathroom, kitchen and living room are 'common areas' for everyone. Tenants in well-functioning share houses share the burden of household chores equally and fairly.

Student apartments

There are several student apartment complexes in the city centre and close to the Parkville campus. These apartment facilities are operated by private



businesses and are designed specifically for students. Many apartment providers organise social activities and have communal spaces for residents.

Apartments are furnished and include their own private bathroom and kitchen, which offers an independent style of living. There is a range of apartment styles you can lease, such as studio, one-bedroom, one-bedroom twin-share and two-bedroom.

Students living in these apartments are usually self-sufficient, although it is possible to purchase meal plans at some facilities. Students are usually responsible for connecting utilities such as water, telephone, electricity and gas in their own name and at their own cost. The student then handles ongoing payment of utility bills.

Student hostels (Rooming houses)

Hostels are also known as rooming houses. Many privately run student hostels are located close to the University. Unlike backpacker or other hostels, student hostels often provide longer-term housing, with a student focus.

Student hostels generally offer lockable single or shared furnished bedrooms, and communal lounge, bathroom, kitchen and laundry facilities. Some hostels may have bedrooms with ensuite bathrooms.

Rent generally includes utility costs like water, gas and electricity. Lease arrangements vary from hostel to hostel. Some offer 6- or 12-month leases, while others offer semester-based contracts. Check with the hostel as to what lease arrangements are offered and make sure it suits you before you sign anything.

Scams

Scams are unfortunately common. So it's important to be vigilant when you are searching for a place to live, especially if arranging from a distance.

One common scam involves the scammer placing an advertisement for a vacant property or a room to rent on online housing databases. Once you respond to this advertisement, the scammer will then typically ask you to deposit money into a

non-Australian bank account or to mail a cheque or money order to a non-Australian address. In exchange for this up-front payment, the scammer assures you that keys to the property will be mailed to you shortly. The keys will never arrive and you will have lost your money.

Recognising scams can help protect you from losing your money. Reporting scams can help protect others from losing their money. Even if you are unsure about whether something is a scam, we strongly encourage you to contact Student Housing to get advice about housing arrangements you suspect to be untrustworthy. Contact us before sending any money.

Housing arrangements and the law

Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic)

As a tenant, you are generally covered by Victoria's tenancy law. This means that there are rules and procedures that cover how you and your landlord or agent manage your rental arrangements.

The Residential Tenancies Act 1997 (Vic), or RTA, regulates the rental market and rooming house (hostel) arrangements. Your rights and duties as a tenant vary slightly with each of these housing options.

Legal coverage when the RTA doesn't apply

There are some situations when the RTA doesn't cover a housing arrangement, for example:

- Housing that is owned or formally (in writing) affiliated with an educational institution
- Agreements between co-tenants within a share house
- Homestay / private boarding situations, when you live with the landlord in their own home

The Fair Trading Act 1999 still provides consumer protection if you live in homestay / private board or university-owned or university-affiliated housing. It is important that you have a clear and



fair contract in place with your housing provider, preferably in writing.

If you're considering share housing, note that under the RTA, co-tenants are considered jointly responsible for the tenancy agreement, and for each other's actions. For example, if an individual housemate defaults on a rental payment, the entire household may be held responsible by the landlord. The landlord is not legally responsible for your internal share house arrangements. So, again, choose your housemates wisely.

Tenancy agreements

A tenancy agreement can also be referred to as a lease or contract. Tenancy agreements can be written or verbal, however we advise that you formalise arrangements in writing so that both you and your landlord are clear about the arrangements in place.

Tenancy agreements are legally-binding, so you should never sign blank documents or leave blank spaces on paperwork.

If you plan to leave your housing earlier than the end of the lease, be aware that there may be financial and other implications. Make sure you read all the fine print and know all the costs involved in each housing option, including hidden and/or unexpected costs. Considerations should include the flexibility and security of the lease term.

The onus of responsibility is on you to assess that housing options are suitable for your needs. Any arrangements with housing providers, financial or otherwise, are strictly between you and the provider of the housing. In other words, housing is your responsibility and you need to be fully aware of your rights and duties. Be very clear about the type of housing agreement you have with a housing provider.

Understand your legal rights and responsibilities

The rights and responsibilities described in the RTA apply equally to anyone holding a tenancy or rooming house agreement. The RTA does not distinguish between Australian and International students. Read the resources that are available to you so that you understand your rights and responsibilities, and know how to act on them.

Consumer Affairs Victoria produces a red booklet titled, 'Renting a home: A guide for tenants', which is a basic guide to the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants. Hard copies are available from Student Housing, or go to:

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Useful Fact Sheets are also available on the Tenants Union of Victoria website:

www.tuv.org.au

What if things go wrong?

- Research all housing options.
- Think about your needs regarding housing.
- Don't rely on just one housing option when house-hunting. Keep looking until you've secured a suitable option.
- Never sign tenancy documents unless you understand them and agree to their terms and conditions.
- Never sign blank documents or leave blank spaces on paperwork.
- Don't live out of a suitcase - you're more likely to do best at uni when you have reliable housing.
- Seek advice early!

Come and speak to a Student Housing Adviser if you have any concerns or questions about your housing options or a tenancy matter. Emergency housing may be available in crisis situations.