

Accommodation Allocation Policy 2019-2020

1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1. St Mary's University ("the University") recognises the need of many students for residential student accommodation that allows them to study and to participate fully in all aspects of University life. In recognition of this, the University provides specified categories of students with a guarantee of University accommodation as outlined in this Accommodation Allocation Policy ("the Policy").
- 1.2. The Accommodation Service aims to meet students' accommodation requirements through the allocation of University accommodation, by facilitating access to privately rented accommodation and through the provision of advice and support to students regarding residential matters.
- 1.3. The Policy refers to accommodation that is applied for and allocated by the University Accommodation Service and consists of rooms either managed by the University or by a private provider or landlord, hereinafter referred to as University Accommodation. Students should refer to the University website [www.stmarys.ac.uk/accommodation] for details on University accommodation that may be applied for and allocated by the University.
- 1.4. The Policy aims to provide transparency for students in the way the University allocates University accommodation and how the demands are prioritised.
- 1.5. The policy is reviewed annually and may be subject to changes, which are communicated through the website.

2. Making an Application

- 2.1. The application and allocation process is managed by the Accommodation Service based on student data received from the Admissions Office, information received via the accommodation application, advice from the University's Wellbeing Service and the St Mary's International Office.

Application process

- 2.2. The Online Accommodation Application Process ("the online process") is due to open by late March, the specific date will be advertised through the website once confirmed. Prospective students who are eligible to apply are provided with full instructions for the online process prior to its opening via email.
- 2.3. Eligible applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible as some room types are more popular and are therefore often over-subscribed.
- 2.4. For applications to be considered the full online process must be completed and submitted, including an Application Fee Payment of £250, which comprises a £200 Deposit and £50 Booking Fee. Once an offer of accommodation is made, the Booking Fee becomes non-refundable.
- 2.5. Applicants whose Application Fee Payment is paid on their behalf by another organisation with the agreement of the Accommodation Service (such as a sending institution for international students or a local authority for care leavers), should contact the Accommodation Service.
- 2.6. Applicants are provided with application terms and condition, including a Privacy Notice, which must be agreed to as part of the application process

Allocation process

- 2.7. The allocation process commences in June and continues throughout the summer. University accommodation allocations are processed on a first come, first served basis, in accordance with section 3 of this Policy and the availability of room types at the time of allocation. Applicants are contacted from June onwards with the outcome of their application.
- 2.8. Applicants are expected to accept the offer of a room by the deadline stated in their allocation communications. If they fail to do so, their booking is automatically cancelled and the £200 Deposit is refunded.
- 2.9. If the applicant declines the particular room that has been offered, and would like to be considered for an alternative room, they must notify the Accommodation Service by the deadline provided in their offer letter.
- 2.10. If the applicant is guaranteed University Accommodation and they decline a room offer, the guarantee will be deemed as having been met. Where requested, the Accommodation Service will endeavour to provide a new room offer, subject to availability and in line with section 4.9 of this policy.
- 2.11. University Accommodation consists of rooms managed by either the University or by a private provider. Students who accept University Accommodation managed by a private provider are subject to the terms and conditions of the private provider's tenancy agreement, which may differ from the terms of the Student Accommodation Licence Agreement for University managed accommodation.

3. Allocation Priority

- 3.1. Places in University accommodation are allocated according to the University Accommodation Guarantee and the priority categories detailed below;

a) University Accommodation Guarantee

- 3.2. The University guarantees to offer a place in University Accommodation to applicants who fulfil all of the following eligibility criteria. These include applicants who:
- (i) hold either a conditional or unconditional offer and have made the University their First (Firm) choice University;
 - (ii) join the University in their first year of an undergraduate or foundation course;
 - (iii) study full-time for the duration of an accommodation licence period or tenancy contract;
 - (iv) have not previously studied at the University or lived in University Accommodation;
 - (v) have submitted an online application for accommodation by the deadline (31st May);
- 3.3. In the event the number of applicants eligible for the guarantee of University accommodation exceed the number of available rooms, the Accommodation Service will;
- (i) seek to secure additional private accommodation that would be suitable for St Mary's University students;
 - (ii) offer temporary 'twin' or 'triple' rooms in suitably sized accommodation, until an alternative room in University accommodation becomes available; or
 - (iii) Arrange temporary external accommodation that will allow students to attend the University.
- 3.4. Applicants and students who will be studying full-time, but do not meet all of the above eligibility criteria, may still apply [as per sections (d) (e) (f) (g)], however priority is given to applicants who meet all of the above eligibility criteria. The Accommodation Service endeavours to accommodate all applicants who request it, subject to availability.

b) Applicants with Specific Requirements

Applicants with a Disability or Medical Condition

- 3.5. Applicants who, due to the nature of their disability or medical condition, would not be able to study at the University unless they were offered University accommodation, that is suitable for their requirements, are considered a priority. Where appropriate, University Accommodation will also be available for subsequent years of study.
- 3.6. Please see the St Mary's '**University Accommodation - Disability Provision**' Policy for further information on how to apply and for our eligibility criteria.
- 3.7. Any requirement (i.e. room adaptation, location, type, dietary requirement or specialist equipment i.e. a fridge for medication) must be disclosed when completing the online process. If an applicant fails to disclose this information, or only does so after they have been allocated accommodation or have been placed on a waiting list, the Accommodation Service may not be able to make a new offer of appropriate accommodation.

Care Leavers/ Vulnerable Young Adults and Estranged students

- 3.8. Care leavers and vulnerable young adults are required to provide supporting evidence and make the Accommodation Service aware of their requirements by the deadline for completing the online process. Where appropriate, University Accommodation may be offered for subsequent years of study.
- 3.9. Year-round accommodation is made available. Applicants who require accommodation during the Christmas closure period should select 16 Strawberry Hill Road or one of the self-catered University Accommodation options as their preferences. Students requiring University Accommodation during the summer may be required to move rooms.
- 3.10. Students requiring Christmas accommodation, who select accommodation that closes during this period, should notify the Accommodation Service at the earliest opportunity. In which case, every attempt will be made to source suitable accommodation during the Christmas closure period, however this cannot be guaranteed and where accommodation is provided additional charges will apply in respect of rent for the additional stay.

Applicants Under the age of 18

- 3.11. Applicants who will be under the age of 18 when their course commences are considered a priority for suitable University accommodation provided they meet the conditions of the University accommodation guarantee, in line with the '**Admissions Guidelines for Applicants and Students under the Age of 18 Years**' .
- 3.12. Registered students under the age of 18 years will not be allocated to share a room. The University will aim to offer students under the age of 18 an en suite bathroom, but where this is not possible they will have shared bathroom facilities with other residents and their guests/visitors (who may be adults or of the opposite sex).
- 3.13. St Mary's University usually enters into contracts with students who are 18 years or over and therefore have personal legal capacity to do so. Where a student is below that age, the University requires consent to be given from the parent/guardian of the student, in respect of a guarantee agreement.

c) International Students (including Study Abroad)

- 3.14. As per section 3a of the Policy, eligible Undergraduate international students, including SMULIC students, are guaranteed University accommodation if applied for by 31st May. However eligible international students who apply after this date will be prioritised for rooms that may remain available.
- 3.15. Rooms are reserved for new first year undergraduate international students where it will be possible for them to move in early, in time for the international orientation programme.

- 3.16. Applicants requesting accommodation during the Christmas closure period are advised to select 16 Strawberry Hill Road or one of the self-catered University Accommodation options as their preference when completing the online process.
- 3.17. A limited number of International Study Abroad students studying at the University for part of the academic year can apply for certain types of accommodation managed by the University. Homestay accommodation organised by the Accommodation Service is also available.
- 3.18. Every effort will be made to meet the requests for University accommodation from Full time International students not included in the guarantee (e.g. Postgraduate, Continuing, late applicants), where this is not possible advice and assistance will be provided.

d) Postgraduate Students.

- 3.19. Prospective postgraduate students who are studying a full time course and have made the University their firm choice, may still apply for University accommodation.
- 3.20. Applications are considered, subject to availability, on a first come first served basis.

e) New Undergraduate Students –not included in the University Accommodation Guarantee

- 3.21. New undergraduate students, who join the University on the 2nd or 3rd year of a programme (level 5 or 6) and are studying a full time course, or who transfer to level 4 from a St Mary's Foundation degree may still apply for University accommodation.
- 3.22. Prospective undergraduate students who are new to the University and are studying in their first year of a full time course (level 4), holding a conditional or unconditional offer and have made the University their firm choice, but have missed the 31 May deadline, may still apply for University accommodation.
- 3.23. The online process remains open throughout the summer and applications are considered, subject to availability, on a first come first served basis. Where appropriate consideration may be given to an applicant's distance from and travel time to the University.
- 3.24. Where University accommodation is not available, the Accommodation Service informs applicants as soon as possible and will be able to assist applicants in looking for long or short term Private Sector accommodation.

f) Continuing Students

- 3.25. The following categories of students are allocated to specific University Accommodation in subsequent years of study by agreement from the Accommodation Service:
- (i) Students with Specific Requirements as outlined in sections 3.5-3.9.
 - (ii) Student Senior Residents (who are appointed by the Accommodation Service).
 - (iii) Elite athletes where it is necessary to live on campus due to their training programme (selected by EPACC – criteria is included in the EPACC Handbook).
 - (iv) Any other full time student who is studying on an Undergraduate or Postgraduate course, including students repeating their first year; if University accommodation remains available after offers have been made to all priority groups named in this policy.
- 3.26. Please note, students may not be eligible to return to University Accommodation if they have any outstanding accommodation fees or it has been found that they have engaged in any serious or persistent misconduct in accordance with the St Mary's Student Disciplinary Procedure. This is including, but not limited to, breaches of the Accommodation Licence Agreement.

g) Late Applicants/Insurance Offers/Clearing Students

3.27. Applicants are advised to check the University website and/or contact the Accommodation Service directly to ask for information regarding availability of University Accommodation. The Accommodation Service endeavours to offer accommodation to all eligible applicants but those applying after the deadline should be aware that availability of accommodation varies each year and University Accommodation may not be available. In which case, applicants may choose to apply to go on the waiting list and are given advice and support regarding the availability of private rented accommodation.

4. General Information

Additional Details/ Requirements

- 4.1. All room offers are for Single occupancy only. In the case of shared rooms, individual room offers are made to each applicant, who will be of the same gender. Family or couples accommodation is not available as part of University accommodation; however, the Accommodation Service provides support and guidance to help find private sector accommodation.
- 4.2. The Accommodation Service will endeavour, where possible, to group applicants together with consideration to their course requirements, whilst obtaining a balance of genders from a range of courses in accommodation areas. If a request is made for accommodation that offers single gender only areas, these should be mentioned under 'notes' when completing the online process.
- 4.3. Some applicants may have non-standard course lengths, for example Postgraduate and Technical Theatre courses. A range of licence/tenancy lengths are available, applicants should check these carefully to ensure that they suitable for their requirements.
- 4.4. The type of rooms available for some groups of students to apply for may be restricted.
- 4.5. With the exception of 16 Strawberry Hill Road and Benedict House, residents living in accommodation managed by the University are required to vacate during the University Christmas closure period. Belongings do not need to be removed at this time and no accommodation fees are charged for days where access is not permitted. Applicants who require University Accommodation over the Christmas period should select their preferences accordingly and specify this requirement during the online process or contact the Accommodation Service before their application is processed.
- 4.6. Applicants whose course requires them to undertake a placement will not be eligible for a refund for any time spent away from their accommodation or for any meals not taken if in catered accommodation, however adjustments may be made regarding the times of day that the meal plan is available if requested via the Catering Service.
- 4.7. When accepting a room offer, applicants and students are entering a legally binding agreement. Where University accommodation is provided by a private provider or landlord, the student will be subject to the terms and conditions of the contract that they enter with the other party.

Waiting List

- 4.8. If the number of applications received exceeds the number of rooms available, a waiting list will be operated from June onwards, for students not covered by the guarantee. All applicants who have submitted an Online Application and have not been offered a place in University Accommodation will automatically be placed on the list. As rooms become available offers will be sent out to applicants on the waiting list. The University is usually able to offer all students on the waiting list accommodation, but this cannot be guaranteed. The Accommodation Service will generally not disclose precise positions on the waiting list, outside of High, Medium or Low.

Accommodation Type Preferences

4.9. Although every effort is made to place applicants according to their preferences, the high demand for certain types of accommodation and/or locations and the limited number of rooms in each type of accommodation may result in applicants not receiving their first or subsequent choices. Allocations are made on a first come, first served basis, in line with this Policy and the availability of room types at the time of allocation. Once an offer of a room has been made, students cannot transfer to a different room or residence. An applicant rejecting an offer of a place in University accommodation will lose their £50 Booking Fee (paid as part of the online process) and may only receive another room offer when offers have been made to all other unallocated applicants from the Priority groups outlined above, which might not be until after A-level results and cannot be guaranteed.

Room Transfers

4.10. Applicants will have the opportunity to request a transfer to a different room, 4 weeks after they move in, subject to availability and payment of a transfer fee (£50). All room transfers are subject to agreement and in some circumstances this may also require a replacement to be found for the current room before a room transfer can be granted. Applicants should refer to their licence/ tenancy agreement or contact the Accommodation Service for further details.

Further Information

4.11. If further information or clarification on a decision is required then students should in the first instance contact the Accommodation Service: accommodation@stmarys.ac.uk 020 8240 4034

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