

Knowledge is key

Landlord's guide to renting to students

Use this guide to make sure you're informed and stay compliant with rental law.



1. Know what type of accommodation you are letting

Student specific accommodation (SSA): housing used solely for providing accommodation to students during the academic term. This includes SSA provided by universities and private companies.

SSA tenancies and licences are under the RTB's remit. For student accommodation on campus with shared facilities, each individual licence must be registered.

Private residential tenancy: this is an agreement or lease between a landlord (who can be an individual, company, or trustee) and a tenant. The tenant pays rent in exchange for the right to live in the property.

'Digs' or Rent a Room style student accommodation: this is where you rent out a room in your house. This is called a licence agreement and is outside the RTB's remit. They do not have to be registered and are not covered by the RTB's dispute resolution service.

Short-term lets: are also outside the RTB's remit.

2. Know the difference: lease vs licence

Simply calling an agreement a "licence" doesn't make it one. Whether an agreement is a lease or licence depends on the actual arrangement, not just the name.

The RTB considers:

- The nature of the agreement.
- If the property is shared with the landlord.
- The level of control or independence given to the tenant.
- The intention of both parties.

3. Checklist for setting up a student tenancy

- **Use our Starting a Tenancy Checklist** to set the tenancy up for success and avoid any problems later on.
- **Sign a written tenancy agreement:** use our sample tenancy agreement (for private tenancies only).
- **Get a deposit** and provide a receipt to the tenant.
- **Do an inventory report** with dated photos of contents and their condition.
- **Keep clear records** of all payments and communications.

4. Registering the tenancy

All private and SSA tenancies must be registered with the RTB:

- Register within one month of the tenancy start date.
- Register every year after this, on the anniversary of the tenancy start date.

5. Special rules for SSA

If you provide SSA, the following specific rules apply:

- **Maximum advance payments:** you cannot ask a tenant to pay more than one month's rent in advance to secure a tenancy. This is in addition to the deposit amount.
- **Exception:** A tenant can only pay more than one month's rent in advance and one month's rent as deposit where rent and tuition fees are paid to the same relevant provider.
- **Tenancy duration:** A tenancy or licence arrangement should not be more than 41 weeks, unless the tenant requests a longer agreement.
- **Registration:** SSA tenancies have different registration rules compared to other private tenancies.
- **Ending tenancies:** There are some different rules for tenants about ending an SSA tenancy.

6. Landlord rights and responsibilities

As a landlord, you have legal rights and responsibilities.

Your rights include:

- Receive rent in full and on time.
- Know who is living in the property and to decide if subletting or assignment is allowed. Subletting or assignment is not allowed in student specific accommodation tenancies.
- Be told about necessary repairs and to access the property with reasonable notice to fix them.
- Refer disputes to us if the tenancy is legally registered.

Your responsibilities include:

- Allow the tenant to have peaceful and exclusive occupation of the property.
- Set the rent in line with rental law.
- Complete necessary repairs within a reasonable time.
- Provide suitable bins for rubbish and waste outside the property, where possible.
- Return the deposit as soon as possible at the end of the tenancy.
- Provide tenants with your contact details or for your agent.
- Set rent correctly.

- Register the tenancy within one month of the start date and annually on the anniversary of the start date.
- Give your tenant a rent receipt or statement acknowledging rent payments.
- Make sure the property is in good condition and meets minimum standards.
- End the tenancy in line with the law and give proper notice.
- Give tenants notice of any property inspections.

7. Ending the tenancy

Landlords and tenants must give written notice to end a tenancy.

Visit rtb.ie to learn about the correct notice periods and how to give notice correctly.

Returning the deposit:

You must return the deposit in full as soon as possible at the end of the tenancy, unless you need to make deductions for unpaid rent, bills, or damage beyond normal wear and tear.

8. If things go wrong

Try talking to your tenant first. If unresolved, contact the RTB for dispute resolution.

9. Investigations and sanctions

Landlords who breach their obligations under rental law can be investigated by the RTB, sanctioned and directed to pay a fine up to €15,000, in addition to costs up to €15,000.

You can find more information on Investigations and Sanctions on the Compliance section of our website or in Part 7A of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004.



Need more help?

The RTB is here to help you. By staying informed and compliant, you can reduce disputes, retain tenants, and support students' access to safe, fair housing.

Visit rtb.ie for full information on all the topics covered here and for checklists, sample letters and video explainers.



Bord um Thionóntachtaí Cónaithe
Residential Tenancies Board