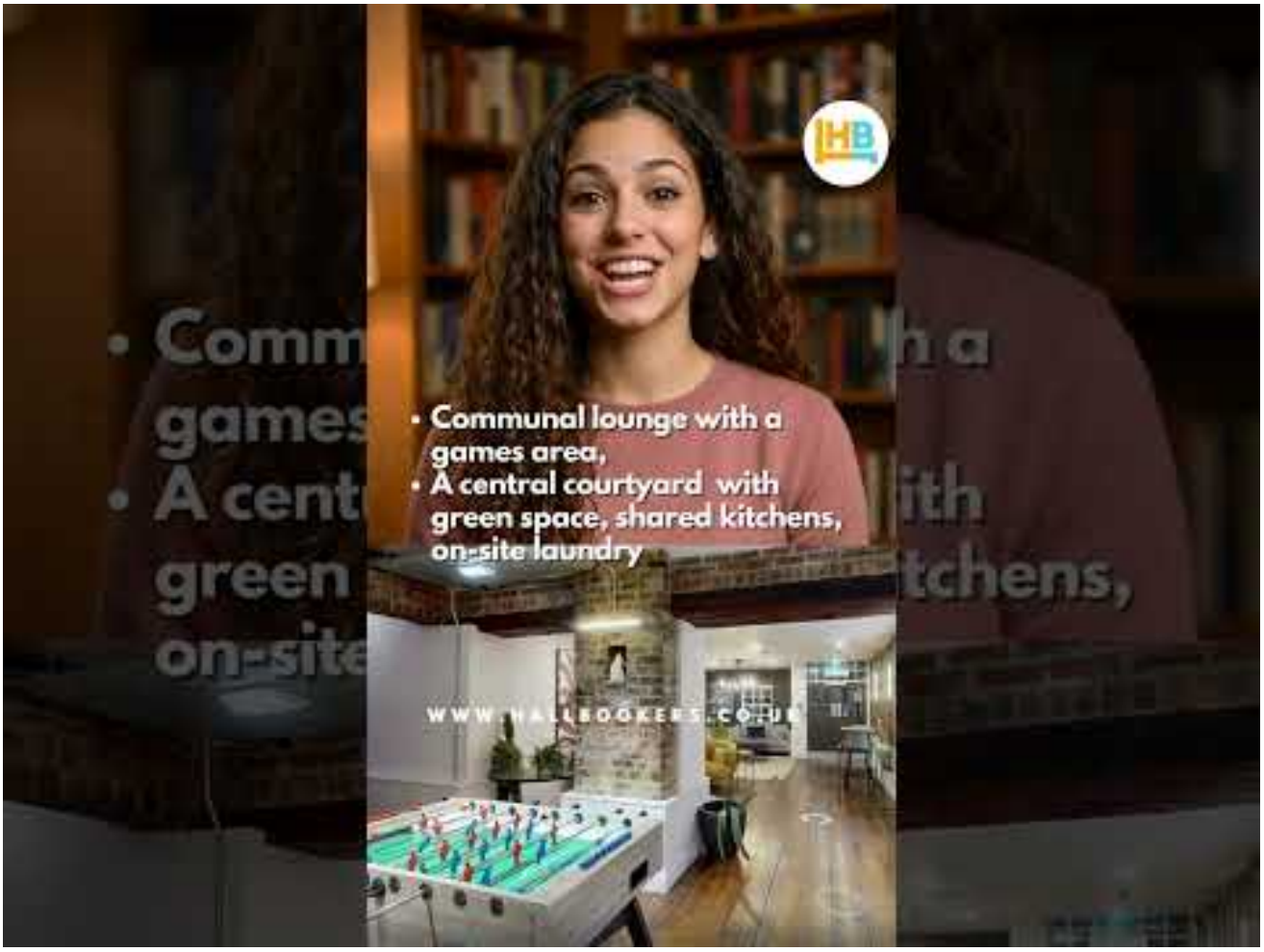
A Practical Room-by-Room Inspection Guide for Student Accommodation

Why a Viewing Checklist Matters for Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

Choosing where to live during your university years is a big decision. The room itself, the building's facilities, and the surrounding environment all shape your daily experience. A systematic approach to viewings helps you compare options clearly and avoid overlooking details that matter once you move in. This guide focuses on the key points to check when visiting purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) in UK university cities, with a practical checklist you can use during your next viewing.

Before You Go: Preparation Tips

Before stepping into any property, make a list of what matters most to you. Consider your study habits, social preferences, and budget. Think about whether you prefer a quieter building or one with more social spaces. Check the location relative to your university campus and local amenities. Having these priorities clear will help you evaluate each room and facility against your own needs rather than getting swept up in a glossy tour.



The Room Itself: Space, Comfort, and Practicality

Size and Layout

Stand in the room and imagine your daily life there. Is the floor plan efficient for studying, sleeping, and relaxing? Measure the room if possible, or at least get a sense of whether your furniture (bed, desk, chair, wardrobe) will fit comfortably. Look for enough wall space to place a desk away from the bed if you prefer separation between study and sleep areas. Check the position of power sockets and whether they are near where you would place a lamp or charge devices.

Natural Light and Ventilation

Notice the windows. Do they open easily? Is there a screen or mosquito net if needed? Good natural light can improve your mood and reduce reliance on artificial lighting during the day. However, too much direct sunlight in summer might make the room uncomfortably warm, so check if there are blinds or curtains. Ventilation is equally important; a stuffy room can affect sleep and concentration.

Storage and Furniture

Open every cupboard and drawer. Is the wardrobe deep enough for hanging clothes? Is there shelving for books or personal items? Check the condition of the mattress, desk, and chair. A wobbly desk or a worn mattress can be frustrating. Ask whether the furniture is provided by the accommodation or if you need to bring your own. Some PBSA buildings offer furnished rooms with modern fittings, while others may be semi-furnished.

Noise Levels

During the viewing, listen carefully. Can you hear traffic from nearby roads? Are there sounds from a lift, communal corridor, or bin chute? If the room is above a common room or gym, consider potential noise during social hours. If possible, visit at different times of day to gauge noise variation. Purpose-built student accommodation often has soundproofing standards, but it is worth checking for yourself.



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Facilities Within the Building

Modern PBSA developments typically offer a range of shared facilities. Knowing what is available and in what condition helps you gauge the overall living experience.

Kitchen and Dining Areas

If the room has a shared kitchen, inspect the appliances. Are the hob, oven, microwave, and fridge in working order? Check the cleanliness of the kitchen and the general state of the cupboards. Is there enough counter space for meal preparation? Look for a dining area with enough seating for all flatmates. A well-maintained kitchen often signals attentive management.

Laundry Facilities

Find out where the laundry room is located and how the machines work. Are they coin-operated, card-based, or app-based? Visit the laundry area to see if machines look modern and well-maintained. Dirty or broken machines can be a hassle, especially during peak study times.

Social and Study Spaces

Many PBSA buildings include common rooms, study lounges, or rooftop terraces. Walk through these areas. Are they clean, well-furnished, and inviting? A good social space encourages community, while a dedicated study area can help you focus without going to the library. Check the opening hours: some study lounges are accessible 24/7, while others close in the evening.

Gym, Cinema, and Other Extras

Some student accommodation blocks offer on-site gyms, private cinema rooms, games rooms, or even swimming pools. If these matter to you, inspect them carefully. Ask about membership fees or booking systems. A free gym can save you money and time, but a poorly equipped one may not be worth the hype.

Internet and Connectivity

Reliable internet is essential for studying and relaxing. Ask about the internet provider, speed, and any data caps. Test the Wi-Fi signal in the room if possible. Some buildings offer wired connections in study areas. A slow or unreliable connection can cause frustration, especially if you stream lectures or work on group projects online.

Building Management and Security

Knowing how the building is run gives you confidence about day-to-day living.

Reception and Staff

Visit the reception area. Is it staffed during the day? Are the staff friendly and helpful? A responsive management team can resolve issues quickly, from a broken shower to a lost key. Ask about out-of-hours contact numbers for emergencies.



Safety and Security

Check for secure entry systems, CCTV coverage, and fire safety measures. Are there smoke detectors in the room and corridors? Is the building well-lit at night? Purpose-built student accommodation typically has stricter security than private rented housing, but it is worth verifying the level of surveillance and access control.

Maintenance and Repairs

Ask how maintenance requests are handled. Is there an online portal or a phone line? What is the typical response time for urgent repairs? Look at the condition of common areas: peeling paint, broken light fixtures, or grubby carpets may indicate that maintenance is slow.

Location and Surroundings

The building's location affects your commute, social life, and access to shops.

Proximity to Campus

Check the walking distance to your main campus or faculty buildings. If you have early lectures, a short walk can make a big difference. Also consider public transport links for reaching other parts of the city.

Local Amenities

Walk around the neighbourhood. Are there supermarkets, pharmacies, launderettes, and eateries within easy reach? Check if the area feels safe and well-maintained. Visit at different times of day to see how busy or quiet it gets.

Noise and Activity

If you are a light sleeper, avoid rooms facing a busy road or near a nightlife area. Conversely, if you enjoy being close to cafes and bars, a central location might suit you better. Purpose-built student accommodation is often located in student-friendly zones, but individual buildings vary in their immediate surroundings.

Comparing Different Accommodations

When you have viewed several properties, a checklist helps you compare them side by side. Create a simple table or spreadsheet with columns for each key factor: room size, natural light, kitchen quality, social spaces, internet speed, security, distance to campus, and overall impression. Rate each factor on a simple scale (e.g., poor, fair, good, excellent). This method ensures you base your decision on concrete observations rather than the order in which you saw the buildings.

For a comprehensive comparison, consider using a platform like hallbookers.co.uk. It allows you to search, compare, and contact private purpose-built student accommodation across UK university cities, saving you time during your search. While the platform provides a wide range of listings, your personal checklist remains the most reliable tool for evaluating each room and facility against your own priorities. After your viewings, return to the site to refine your shortlist based on what you have seen.

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Final Thoughts: Trust Your Instincts, But Verify

A checklist gives structure, but your gut feeling also matters. If a room feels cramped or the building feels unwelcoming, trust that impression. However, always back it up with the facts you have gathered. Ask questions, take photos (with permission), and note down any concerns. Remember that the accommodation you choose will be your home for at least one academic year, so it is worth investing time in the viewing process.

Hallbookers, Student Accommodation UK is a resource you can use to find and compare PBSA options. Use their listings alongside your checklist to make an informed choice. Whether you prioritise a spacious ensuite, a fully equipped gym, or a quiet study lounge, a thorough viewing will help you find the right fit. And if something seems too good to be true, ask for clarification. The best decisions come from combining careful observation with your own preferences.

In summary, approach each viewing with a clear plan. Focus on the room's practical features, the building's facilities, the management quality, and the location. Use your checklist to record observations, and compare options systematically. With this method, you will be well equipped to choose student accommodation that supports your studies and enhances your university experience.

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