

What if Your University Doesn't Own or Run Student Accommodation?

The Blueprint for a #HomeAtUniversity

The Big Idea

At first glance, some parts of the Blueprint can seem difficult to apply at universities that don't own or operate student accommodation. After all, how can you influence accommodation policy if your university doesn't run any accommodation?

The answer is simple: The Blueprint is about outcomes, not ownership.

The eight rooms are designed to create a safe and stable #HomeAtUniversity. While some institutions deliver this through university-owned halls, others may need to work through partnerships, accommodation providers, Students' Unions, charities, local authorities, or the private rented sector.

The question isn't:

"Do we own accommodation?"

It's:

"How do we help students access a safe and stable home?"

Room 1: Guaranteed Year-Round Accommodation

What stays the same?

Students still need somewhere safe to live throughout the year.

What might look different?

Instead of providing accommodation directly, universities might:

 Build relationships with local accommodation providers

 Secure nomination agreements with halls providers



Negotiate year-round tenancy options



Develop emergency accommodation partnerships



Ensure students know what options are available



The principle is the same: reducing the risk that students are left without somewhere to live.

Room 2: Personal Housing Plan

What stays the same?

Every student needs the opportunity to discuss and plan their housing journey.

What might look different?

Universities can:



Hold regular housing check-ins



Discuss housing during support appointments



Create personalised housing action plans



Connect students to external housing providers and support services



You don't need to own accommodation to help students plan for it.

Room 3: Record Keeping

What stays the same?

Universities should understand who is accessing services and whether it is making a difference.

What might look different?

Not much at all. This room is often one of the easiest to implement regardless of accommodation ownership. Universities can:



Track housing-related interventions



Record accommodation needs and outcomes



Review student retention and progression data



Assess the impact of accommodation support initiatives



Good data helps universities understand where services are needed.

Room 4: Removing the Rent Guarantor Barrier

What stays the same?

A lot. Students should not be prevented from accessing accommodation because they cannot provide a guarantor and most of the university in-house and commercial services cover all accommodation

What might look different?

Not much is different at all, Universities without their own accommodation can still:

-  Operate a university-backed guarantor scheme
-  Partner with external guarantor providers
-  Improve awareness of existing schemes
-  Support students navigating rental requirements

Even where accommodation is externally owned, universities can still help remove this barrier.



Whoever owns student accommodation, the principle of removing the rent guarantor barrier remains unchanged.

Room 5: Additional Support on Arrival

What stays the same?

Students should receive practical support during their transition to university.

What might look different?

Universities can:

-  Communicate housing information and assess need before arrival
-  Support students with moving and settling in
-  Introduce practical support services early
-  Resolve housing and finance issues quickly
-  Coordinate with accommodation partners



Students care about the experience of arriving, not who owns the building.



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Room 6: Student Community Through Belonging

What stays the same?

Students benefit from being 'seen' and connecting with others of similar experiences.

What might look different?

Universities may not own accommodation, but community can still be promoted by:

 Connecting students with the All of Us student community

 Supporting care-experienced and estranged student networks or societies

 Partnering with the Students' Union to support inclusive student activities

 Providing opportunities to connect during quieter periods such as the Winter and Summer holidays

 Working with accommodation providers to host student-led activities

 Promoting opportunities to connect both on campus and beyond it



The goal is ensuring care-experienced and estranged students feel connected, supported, and part of a community, regardless of where they live.

Room 7: Compassionate Communication

What stays the same?

The university cares how their students are communicated with about housing.

What might look different?

Universities may not own accommodation, but accommodation providers can still be influenced to improve inclusion:

 Audit commissioned or 'recommended' accommodation provider communications

 Create clear routes for students to raise concerns about housing communications

 Build accommodation provider awareness to build empathy and improved sector practice

 Share information on support available to care-experienced and estranged students



The goal is improving communications that come from any accommodation supplier and being an ally to care experienced and estranged students.

Room 8: Accommodation Scholarships

What stays the same?

Housing costs should not prevent care-experienced and estranged students from succeeding.

What might look different?

Universities may not own accommodation, but scholarships can still be delivered through:

 Partnerships with accommodation providers

 Agreements with private halls operators

 Places reserved within purpose-built student accommodation

 Funding support for accommodation costs

The Unite Foundation scheme demonstrates that accommodation scholarships can be delivered successfully through partnership models.

Students benefiting from Unite Foundation scholarships stay in Unite Students accommodation or University-run accommodation, showing that ownership is not a requirement for impact.



The goal is reducing financial pressure and increasing stability, regardless of delivery model.

What Good Looks Like

Universities without their own accommodation often have more influence than they realise.

Good practice might include:

 Strong partnerships with accommodation providers

 Institutional advocacy on behalf of students

 Clear communication and signposting

 Housing services embedded within student support services

 Monitoring need and outcomes

In many cases, the university's role becomes one of **connector, coordinator, and advocate**.



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What This Means For SU Officers

If your university doesn't own accommodation, don't assume the Blueprint isn't relevant.

Instead, ask:

- ? Who are our accommodation partners and university colleagues?
- ? How do students access year-round accommodation?
- ? What support exists if housing arrangements break down?
- ? How are we identifying and supporting care-experienced and estranged students?
- ? Which rooms could we strengthen without any accommodation ownership at all?

In many institutions, Rooms 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 can be significantly enhanced without changing accommodation provision itself. And even Rooms 1, 4, and 8 can often be delivered through partnerships rather than ownership.

Key Takeaway

The Blueprint is not a blueprint for buildings. It's a blueprint for student support. Universities don't need to own accommodation to:



Improve housing stability



Help students plan ahead



Understand outcomes



Remove barriers



Improve transition experiences



Communicate compassionately



Build connection



Reduce financial pressure



Ownership may change the delivery model. It shouldn't change the ambition.