Accommodation Guide for International Students
Aquinas Campus, Ballarat
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Please note
The information provided here is intended as a guide only. The accommodation facilities referred to in this guide are not owned or operated by ACU, nor do they have any affiliation with the university.

It is the student’s responsibility to make contact with providers, arrange inspections and to make their own judgment on the suitability of the accommodation being offered. ACU will not be responsible or held liable in any way to tenancy or any other negotiations between the provider and the student.

Information updated November 2016
Overview

Welcome to ACU!

Looking for accommodation, especially in unfamiliar surroundings, can be a daunting and time consuming process but be patient! It is quite common for it to take up to four weeks to find suitable accommodation.

Moving can also be an expensive process so it is better to spend time finding the right accommodation rather than to move into a place quickly and find out shortly after that it is not suitable.

The process of renting can be confusing and if you are unsure about anything, including any paperwork, GET ADVICE. Do not sign anything if you do not understand it.

Find out as much as possible about the accommodation before you commit.

Keeping safe

It may also be the first time you are living away from home so it is important that you consider your health, safety and wellbeing at all times. Information can be found here.
Temporary accommodation

Many students prefer to look for temporary accommodation on arrival in Australia and move to longer-term accommodation once they have settled in. The main types of temporary accommodation which students can organise are hostel/backpackers or Homestay.

Hostels


Other temporary accommodation

If you would like a wider range of short-term accommodation, try the following websites

*Wotif.com.au*
*www.wimdu.com.au*/
*www.findads.com.au/flatshare-rooms-for-rent*
*Stayz*

Homestay

Students can organise Homestay for both temporary and permanent accommodation through Australian Homestay Network (AHN). There is a minimum length of stay of 4 weeks for temporary bookings.

The cost of Homestay is from $305.00 per week (depending on the type of Homestay service you choose and whether or not you share a room), plus $280 booking fee.

You can also apply for AHN Homeshare where meals are NOT included. The cost is $180 per week if you share a room and $210 if you have your own room, plus $280 booking fee.

For more information and to book:
Phone: 1300 679 829
[www.homestaynetwork.org](http://www.homestaynetwork.org)

Payment must be made prior to Homestay accommodation being confirmed.
Permanent accommodation

Looking for accommodation can be time-consuming and demanding but it is better to take your time and find the accommodation which is right for you.

Factors to consider include:

Location

- How far from the university are you happy to live?
- The closer you live to the city and to ACU, the more expensive the accommodation can be.
- Will you use public transport, drive or walk?
- How close to the shops do you want to be?
- The further you live from the city the more expensive the public transport costs. If you are a driver, where will you keep your car - in a driveway, garage or parked on the road?
- Will you look for part-time work? If so, what kind of hours will you work?

It is important to think about whether your home is close to places that you could find work, such as retail stores and restaurants, and also to consider how far and at what times you will be travelling to and from work and the safety factors involved.

Type of Accommodation

- Are you with a group of students or on your own?

- If you have come to Australia with friends, you may wish to obtain a house together or alternatively you may be seeking privacy and wish to have accommodation on your own. If you are going to set up or move into a share-house then it is important that you discuss how the bills will be paid, how groceries will be shared, cleaning schedules and agreements about noise, parties and having people over.

- Do you want your own kitchen and bathroom or are you happy to share with others?
  Some student accommodation providers offer private rooms with shared kitchen and/or bathroom facilities. Share-houses are when a group of people, either friends or strangers, rent a house together, having their own bedrooms but sharing all other living areas.
Private accommodation is usually more expensive but you get to have your own kitchen and bathroom.

- Would you like to move into a fully furnished house with a family/host who would provide all/most of your meals?

Living with a family or host is called Homestay or boarding. The price can seem quite high but the amount that you pay usually includes the cost of food (usually at least breakfast and dinner is provided), utilities and rent. It is possible to book Homestay without meals which is less expensive. You also do not need to worry about organizing furniture or connection of gas/water and electricity.

- Would you prefer to live in ACU student accommodation?

Currently the University assists over 200 ACU Ballarat students with accommodation, all within an 8 km radius of the Campus. Residential Services is a team of staff dedicated to students, offering a range of independent, fully furnished residences from which to choose.

**Costs**

It is important to have a budget in mind when looking for accommodation.

Rental Costs vary depending on the suburb. Average rental costs can be found on the Residential Tenancies Authority website. Most rentals come unfurnished, so you would need to consider the cost of buying or renting furniture.

The budget should include everything, such as:

- Rent
- Groceries/Food
- Travel money
- Utilities (phone, gas, electricity etc)
- School fees (if applicable)
- Text books/ stationery/ photocopying etc
How to find accommodation

There are many different sources that you can use when looking for accommodation, some being specific to the type of accommodation you are looking for.

Private rental and share-house accommodation:
www.realestate.com.au  
www.domain.com.au  
www.melbourne.gumtree.com.au  
www.s-h-a.com.au

Share-house only:
www.roomz.com/rooms  
www.au.easvroommate.com  
www.share-house.com.au  
www.housesharemelbourne.com.au  
www.share-accommodation.net
Student Accommodation Providers

www.austudent.com
www.studentaccommodation.com.au

Homestay Accommodation Providers
You can apply for Homestay accommodation by going to the AHN website
www.homestaynetwork.org

Newspapers
The Ballarat Courier – Saturday Edition lists rental properties

ACU Student Accommodation – Ballarat
Residential Services is a team of staff dedicated to students, offering a range of independent, fully furnished residences from which to choose.
For information about ACU student residences please click here.
Where to live?

These are some popular suburbs for students to find affordable and accessible rental properties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alfredton</th>
<th>Black Hill</th>
<th>Redan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat Central</td>
<td>Brown Hill</td>
<td>Wendouree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballarat North</td>
<td>Delacombe</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newington</td>
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Important information about renting

Bonds

What is a bond?

A bond is a deposit that tenants (people renting accommodation) usually have to pay to the landlord (accommodation owner) that at the end of a lease or tenancy the landlord can claim money from if there is any damage to the property that was not there before you moved in.

How much is the bond?

A bond is usually equivalent to 4 weeks of rent for the property.

Who looks after the bond during the tenancy?

The bond is held by the Residential Tenancies Bond Authority for the duration of the tenancy, never by the landlord.

What if the landlord applies to keep the bond and I disagree?

If you believe that you are entitled the full bond back at the end of your tenancy then you can appeal to a tribunal who will review the case.

For more information see the bond fact sheet.

Tenancy Agreements

It is very important that you do not sign a tenancy agreement until you have inspected the accommodation and read the agreement carefully. A tenancy agreement is a legally binding contract and so it is very important that you understand all the terms and conditions.

A tenancy can be fixed-term, most commonly for 1 year, or a continuing agreement.

If you are going to be studying for less than one year, such as exchange students, then you may find it difficult to get a tenancy agreement.
IMPORTANT THINGS TO KNOW AND TO REMEMBER ABOUT LEASING

✓ To protect you, ALL agreements made with landlords and agents should be in writing.

✓ You must always keep a copy of ALL written correspondence with your landlord or agent. But, if you make a verbal agreement with your landlord you still have rights and responsibilities.

✓ Before you sign ANY agreement ensure you read very carefully through the contract.

✓ Make sure you keep all important documents like; rent payment receipts, the copy of your lease, your bond receipts, condition report, and the inventory of contents, in a safe place in case you need them in the future.

✓ Remember you can always ask for help either from the International Student Adviser or through the government information services if you have questions or problems.

Fire Safety at Home

It is sad but true that international students have been involved in fire incidents that have resulted in severe burns and even death, and worst of all most of these incidents could have been prevented by having a fire alarm on the property.

In Australia it is illegal not to have a fully operational fire alarm in your house or apartment. If you are in a rental property this is the responsibility of your landlord. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that the fire alarm batteries are charged and to check that the alarm is working at least once every six months.
Moving in

Utilities and Phone connections

For some accommodation, such as Homestay or blocks of units built specifically for students, you do not need to worry about paying or connecting utilities (electricity, gas, water) as these will be included in the price of your rent.

If you move into a private rental property or an empty share-house with friends it will be your responsibility to organise the utility connections. Utility companies usually require at least 48 hours’ notice to have the utility switched on and can sometimes charge a fee for the service. Rental agents can sometimes organise these for you and although you will have to pay a fee for the service it may be a quicker and easier option than contacting the companies yourself.

Most international students do not install landline phones and use their mobile phones for day-to-day use instead. If you do wish to install a landline it is important to remember that you are charged rental on the phone line, not just for the calls you make.

Furniture

If you are moving into an unfurnished property, finding some furniture will be a high priority when you move in.

Second-hand furniture is a great option for students trying to find cheap household goods. Op-shops (Opportunity shops) often have pre-loved tables, chairs, couches etc. that are very cheap, and so too do private garage sales.

Find Op-shops around Ballarat:  [www.opshop.org](http://www.opshop.org)
The Salvation Army - [www.salvosstores.salvos.org.au](http://www.salvosstores.salvos.org.au)
St Vincent de Paul Society - [www.vinnies.org.au](http://www.vinnies.org.au)

Find garage sales around Ballarat on Facebook by searching: “garage sales ballarat”

Very popular online sites for buying and selling second hand goods in Australia are:
If you prefer to buy brand new goods there are also many stores that sell affordable household items:

- www.kmart.com.au
- www.target.com.au
- www.bunnings.com.au
- www.bigW.com.au
- www.ikea.com.au

It is worthwhile to visiting a number of different shops before you choose one. You will find that the price and quality of the items will vary quite substantially between different retailers. While it is expensive initially to set up your home with furniture, remember that when you leave it is possible for you to sell them to other students or to second hand shops/disposals or even to advertise them in the local newspaper.

**Connecting Services**

Unless someone is already living in the accommodation, the new tenant must organize utility services, such as telephone, electricity, gas and water. This requires contacting each individual company and arranging for the services to be connected from a specified date. The companies providing these utilities also require a small security deposit.

Instead of making numerous calls to different companies, there are utility provider companies who do all the work for you. If someone has vacated the property before you, contacting these utility companies for connection of services will ensure all previous accounts have been finalised and paid for by the previous tenant.

There are a number of these companies who will help you by arranging your phone, electricity, gas, water, internet and pay TV. This company does not charge for its services; however you will have to pay connection fees for the utilities you require. You can contact each of the various utility suppliers yourself if you prefer e.g. Origin Energy for gas and electricity, or Optus or Telstra for phone and internet connections etc.

- Connectnow - www.connectnow.com.au
- eMove - www.emove.com.au
- FastConnect - www.fastconnect.com.au
- Origin - www.origineenergy.com.au
- Energy Australia - www.energyaustralia.com.au
- Telstra - www.telstra.com.au
- Optus - www.optus.net.au

**Paying Bills**

There are a few different ways that you can pay your bills in Australia. Check with the service provider or read your bill to check which payment options they accept. Some of the options are:
Australia Post Office - if you want to pay by savings card or with cash this is a good option, but check with the provider as some companies charge a fee for paying with Australia Post.

BPAY – where you use internet banking to pay bills using a customer reference number and company billing number. Ask your bank for more details, but generally this is a safe and easy way to pay your bills.

Credit Card – If you have one it can be an easy way to pay bills (usually by phone or internet).

Direct Debit – You can set up a direct debit from your bank account so the money is debited every month, but the money needs to be in the account otherwise fees occur.

Cheque – You generally have the option to pay by cheque by attaching your cheque to a tear-off slip from the bill and mailing it to the company. Make sure you are very careful in addressing the envelope to avoid your cheque to get lost in the mail.

Housemates
It is important to be open and honest about what you expect from your fellow housemates when you initially move in. You should discuss things such as cleaning schedules, bill payments, gardening (if applicable), grocery shopping (such as who buys the toilet paper/cleaning products etc). You should also discuss things like appropriate time for music/TV to be switched off, a policy on having visitors and depending on the size of the house, a bathroom schedule. Talking about this at the beginning will hopefully eliminate difficult situations later down the track.

For more information about planning to live in a share house see the Tenancy Union of Victoria’s factsheet: Keeping the Mates in Housemates
USEFUL CONTACTS

There are several free services to assist people having issues with their accommodation:

The Tenancy Union of Victoria
The Tenancy Union can provide you with advice about all areas of accommodation, and can advocate for tenants who have having problems with their landlord or estate agent.

Tel: (03) 9416 2577
www.tuv.org.au

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9am to 4pm and Wednesday 12.30 pm to 7 pm, except on public holidays)

Office hours for consultations:

9.00am to 4.30pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday,
Friday 12:30 pm to 7:30pm Wednesday

Address: 55 Johnston Street, Fitzroy.

Consumer Affairs Victoria
Consumer Affairs is a government body whose sole purpose is to protect the interests and rights of all consumers, including tenants and accommodation renters.

Tel: 1300 55 81 81 (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)
www.consumer.vic.gov.au
Email: consumer@justice.vic.gov.au

National

Commonwealth Ombudsman
The Commonwealth Ombudsman safeguards the community in its dealings with Australian Government agencies.

Tel: 1300 55 81 81
www.comb.gov.au