

Accreditation Plus

Application Guidance

Promoting Professionalism

Manchester Student Homes aims to promote high levels of professionalism amongst landlords. Through our accreditation scheme we seek to recognise and reward those landlords who achieve high standards in management and customer service, and who contribute to a strong and successful student rental market.

The 'A +' Standards

We encourage all landlords to meet the following criteria:

- A professional approach to being a landlord
- Robust policies and procedures
- A high level of organisation
- Auditable paperwork
- A reliable service for tenants
- Engagement with the landlord community and others with a stake in student rentals
- A commitment to 10 hours of volunteering and/ or continued professional development (CPD) per accreditation year
- Agreement not to charge a summer retainer without access
- Agreement not to charge any fees outside of rent or a deposit

We will award landlords who display all these qualities with 'Accreditation Plus' ('A+') status. 'A+' status gives you preferential advertising on the MSH website, as your properties will appear higher in a list of search results.

Supporting Aspirations

MSH will support all landlords who aspire to meet the 'A+' standards. Our staff can advise you on a whole host of subjects, whilst our Management Toolkit can be a valuable resource, both as a good practice guide and for reference purposes. We also offer regular training for landlords on everything from fire safety responsibilities through to business management.

How to Apply

In order to receive 'A+' status you will need to make an application, providing examples and evidence of how you meet the criteria.

We invite all landlords to read through this guidance and, if you meet the criteria, we ask that you complete the accompanying 'Accreditation Plus – Application Form'. The application form asks you a series of questions about you as a landlord, and the remainder of this document consists of guidance on how to answer.

Part One – Landlord Processes

This section asks you to detail how you go about being a landlord, how you fulfil your obligations, and how you provide a reliable service.

1. Please summarise the steps you follow from receiving a call from interested students through to granting tenancy.

We would like to know how you go about signing up tenants, what procedures you follow, the paperwork you use, and the order in which you proceed. Think about the following:

- How do you arrange viewings? When do you provide contracts?
- How long do you give people to complete the paperwork?
- When do you consider everything to be confirmed?

2. Please provide copies of all forms, emails/texts/ letters and other documentation that you use to manage tenancy deposits from receipt to return.

We would like to see how you manage this important process. We are interested to know about:

- Any details you provide on deposit protection
- Inventory forms and related letters
- Check-out reports
- How you communicate deposit deductions

3. Please summarise the provisions you have in place to ensure you fulfil your repair obligations within the timescales required by the Code of Standards.

We would like to know the arrangements you have in place. Think about the following:

- How can tenants report repairs?
- Who carries out repairs?
- How do you keep track of things?

4. Please provide copies of recent maintenance plans and logs.

We would like to see how you plan and carry out cyclical maintenance on your properties.

5. Please provide copies of standard letters/emails that you use to communicate with your tenants at key times of year.

We would like to see what you communicate to your tenants, and how you do it, and when. For example:

- Are there any welcome messages?
- What do you tell them about the end of the tenancy?
- Do you have any important seasonal messages?

6. Please summarise how you keep track of rent payments and manage arrears.

What payment method do you ask tenants to use? Do you keep a log of payments? How do you manage arrears?

7. Please provide a copy of your standard tenancy agreement.

We must check that the terms of tenancy you offer do not contradict our Code of Standards, housing and tenancy law, or OFT guidance on unfair terms.

The OFT 'Guidance on unfair terms in tenancy agreements' is also very useful.

Part Two – Engagement & Participation

This section asks you to explain how you participate in the professional activities of the private rental sector, and engage with others who have a stake in student rentals. We're interested in the following:

- Active membership of any landlord associations (e.g. the LNLA or similar)
- Membership of accreditation schemes
- Attendance at any relevant forums or events
- Membership of local commercial or community groups
- What evidence can you provide?

Part Three – Landlord or Agent Volunteering

This section sets out the criteria for approved volunteering work carried out by A+ Landlords:

- To carry out up to 10 hours of volunteering (or CPD); students and community focused opportunities is preferred.
- Wider social responsibility elements of volunteering may be accepted, on case-by-case basis, and must be agreed by MSH.
- Volunteering hours should be gained through activities organised by MSH
- 5 hours can be altruistic activities arranged independently from MSH
- Landlords and agents carrying out activities external to MSH will be required to be signed off by an event organiser and must provide an additional 600 – 800 written word account about the experience

A copy of the MSH Landlord Volunteering Policy can be found [here](#).

Part Four – Continuing Professional Development

This section sets out the criteria for continuing professional development taken by A+ Landlords:

- To carry out up to 10 hours of CPD (or volunteering) through recognised programs; housing, students and community focused programs is mandatory.

Part Five – Declarations

'A+' landlords agree not to charge fees outside of rent of a deposit. They also agree not charge retainers without access for the summer months.