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## COVENTRY UNIVERSITY SUSPENDS STUDENT PROPERTY LISTS WITH ADVERSE IMPLICATIONS FOR STUDENTS AND LANDLORDS

*– accommodationforstudents.com becomes a necessary  
alternative for student accommodation –*

(Coventry, 23/4/03) Coventry University Accommodation Office has recently written to its landlord contacts to announce the suspension of the availability of university student property lists with immediate effect. For an annual fee, this has historically been an effective way of matching up students with available rented accommodation. However, due to a surplus of rental properties this is no longer considered a viable course of action. Instead landlords are being encouraged to join the University's Managed Property Scheme whereby the University undertakes to monitor the quality of properties, and do the administration associated with fixing up students with their accommodation. This has resulted in students paying higher rents. Properties which would have previously cost a student £25 a week to rent direct have now gone up to £40 a week in the Managed Property Scheme.

John Foster, a Coventry landlord who has traditionally paid a small annual fee to be on the property list, sees the university as using its new approach purely as a way of driving revenues:

“I have submitted some of my properties to the new Scheme but it seems just to be an excuse for the university to add on a big margin, up to 30%, to student rents, greatly adding to students’ living costs.

“I’ve talked to some of my student tenants and agreed to rent to them direct when the agreement runs out. They have happily agreed. That way both student and landlord are better off. The University Scheme is providing no added value, only adding an extra unnecessary commission.”

In desperation Foster has turned to the free student accommodation website, [Accommodation for Students \(www.accommodationforstudents.com\)](http://www.accommodationforstudents.com) to attract student tenants:

“Not only is the University now proving an unrealistic option but the alternative of going to letting agents is also unattractive. Students get charged £80 just to register and I have to pay a fee of about £500 (half a month’s rent) plus expenses.

I was lucky and managed to come across Accommodation for Students and have been delighted at the response. So far I have let out two houses through the website. My tenants are just as pleased as I am as the service is free to both of us. The University certainly has something to learn.”

William Berry, co-founder and director of Accommodation for Students, said:

“Accommodation for Students has one simple objective, to help bring together students and landlords to maximise accommodation availability in as simple and effective a way as possible.

Students can specify property requirements from the widest accommodation criteria available, right down to the provision of satellite TV. Private landlords have their own admin suite that allows them to upload and edit properties directly. Uniquely, they can also measure their performance in terms of student hits, enquiries, viewings etc – and the service is free.”

Accommodation for Students has 20,000 properties across the UK on its website, including larger student private housing schemes, such as those provided by UNITE and Jarvis UPP, as well as private rented sector properties. The site, at its peak, attracts over 80,000 unique student visitors a month.

### **About Accommodation for Students**

Accommodation for Students Ltd. was founded by William Berry and Simon Thompson, ex-students from Manchester, in June 2000. The site went live in test phase in June 2001, prior to its full launch in January 2002.

The site's features include:

#### **For students**

- A powerful search engine accessing a nationwide database of student accommodation properties
- An easy-to-use, comprehensive set of accommodation criteria, including geographical location, number of rooms (including required size of room), rent, interior facilities (from satellite/cable

television to dishwasher), exterior facilities (from garden to off-street parking) and service facilities (eg CORGI registered gas central heating)

- Notice board facility
- Clipboard facility to save accommodation details
- Landlord email facility which sends an email to the landlord with one click when a student finds a property they like. The email specifies the house and student details and effects an introduction between the student and landlord.
- Chatroom to allow potential housemates to talk to each other and review house options.

#### **For Landlords**

- Sophisticated, user-friendly '**landlord admin suite**' which allows landlords to directly upload and edit their property details and pictures on the Accommodation for Students website. The unique measurement facility allows landlords to judge the effectiveness of the website in attracting student interest to their properties and ultimately their letting.
- Easy contact system: Accommodation for Students '**email landlord service**'. This service enables students to send a generic email of interest to a landlord with one click. This also ensures the privacy of landlord email addresses.

#### **Accommodation for Students Accolades**

- Highly Commended in the Best Industry Innovation category at the inaugural 2002 Property Business Awards
- New Millennium Silver Award  
"Accommodation for Students has been awarded the Silver Award. Good luck in the future and keep helping the students in the UK ",  
Corey Huffman, CEO, New Millennium's Award Programme
- EyeCatcher Bronze Award – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2001  
83% score on Design, Creativity, Coding and Originality
- Best Of The Web 2001 Bronze Award  
"I enjoyed surfing your site, and I am sure everybody else will too",  
Eric Nielsen, NEOVIZION, Inc
- Critical Mass Award

"Congratulations! Your site definitely qualifies for the "Critical Mass Award". A very nice site, excellent design, tasteful original graphics, and you have provided visitors with content that is informative, entertaining, well-presented and easy to access. A worthy enterprise and a positive contribution to the Web", Bill Darling, Critical Mass

- Golden Web Award 2001–2002  
"Congratulations on having your site selected to receive the 2001–2002 Golden Web Award!"
- Ranked joint Number 1 in the Student Accommodation Advice website review of student accommodation sites.

– ENDS –

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