



Stellenbosch University Guidelines for Off-campus Private Student Housing Accreditation 2024

Private Accommodation Office, Centre for Student Accommodation, Registrar's Division
01 November 2023

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

IMPORTANT NOTICE

In a Circular (No. 8 of 2023) on the 2023 CLOSURE AND 2024 PREPARATION, NSFAS communicated the following with all universities:

"NSFAS has embarked on the process of taking over full control of the accommodation of all NSFAS funded students in institutions of Higher learning across the country. The process is aimed at addressing over 500 000 shortages of beds across the country and seeks to resolve the safety concerns currently prevalent in private accommodation provision.

NSFAS understands that Universities have their own accreditation and lease arrangements in place for the 2024 academic year. NSFAS appreciates that the accreditation process must be concluded as soon as possible. NSFAS will conduct urgent consultations with USAF and SAUS on our proposal on how Universities should collaborate with NSFAS in a manner that accepts the vast expertise at the institutions on accommodation provision. This will imply, amongst others, a phased approach to NSFAS involvement in accommodation".

Stellenbosch University will continue with the accreditation process until further notice from NSFAS.

- 1.1 Accreditation is the regulation of off-campus privately owned student housing ("**off-campus private housing**") at South African Universities according to the regulation of the *Policy on the Minimum Norms and Standards for Student Housing at Public Universities* of September 2015 (the "**Policy**").
- 1.2 The Policy stipulates that universities should rate and differentiate off-campus private housing according to standards set by each university and that off-campus private housing providers ("**landlords**") shall establish clear and comprehensive standard lease agreements after consultation with relevant University officials and student representatives.
- 1.3 In addition, *Guidelines for the Department of Higher Education and Training Bursary Scheme for Students at Public Universities* (2019 and 2021) indicated that students living in private leased accommodation can only qualify for an accommodation allowance if they are accommodated in university accredited accommodation.
- 1.4 The purpose of this document is to provide the necessary guidelines for Stellenbosch University ("**SU**") accreditation. Landlords within proximity of any SU campus can apply to join the accreditation scheme for student housing.

- 1.5 Accreditations are done by SU's **Private Accommodation Office** (PAO) within the Centre for Applications, Student Accommodation, and Client Services. The Centre forms part of the services of the Registrar's Division.
- 1.6 The National Student Financial Aid Scheme ("**NSFAS**") provides funding for students who meet certain criteria and are studying at public universities.
- 1.7 The Minimum Norms and Standards are used as the guiding principles for accreditation of private accommodation at Stellenbosch University (SU). It is, however, important to keep in mind that SU is situated in a medium-sized town and the student community is part of the town. SU is dependent on the local community to provide adequate private accommodation and support to students. In town, there are only 2 buildings that provide accommodation for more than 200 students. The profile of the majority of providers includes flats, student houses and single dwellings.
- 1.8 In addition, *NSFAS Eligibility Criteria and Conditions for Financial Aid* (2023 academic year) is also used as guiding principles. The 2024 Eligibility Criteria and Conditions has not yet been made available. In this regard, it is important to note that the stipulations in this document are subject to change.

2. NSFAS ACCOMMODATION ALLOWANCE

- 2.1 For 2023 NSFAS introduced a cap of **R45,000.00** for accommodation excluding the meal allowance. The cap for 2024 is yet to be announced.
- 2.2 No deposits or any other costs (e.g. administration cost, wifi or transport) are covered by this NSFAS accommodation allowance.
- 2.3 At Stellenbosch University many rooms in residences, as well as private NSFAS-accredited accommodation, will cost more than the capped amount per year. For this purpose, accreditation is divided in two categories, namely accreditation within the prescribed cap and accreditation exceeding the prescribed cap.
- **Accreditation within the prescribed cap** includes accommodation that is all-inclusive and falls within the NSFAS accommodation cap.
 - **Accreditation exceeding the cap** includes accommodation that exceeds the NSFAS accommodation cap.
- 2.4 The student will be responsible for any amount that exceeds the capped amount from NSFAS.
- 2.5 The full accommodation allowance is paid in ten (10) instalments (February to November) for the Stellenbosch campus; and eleven (11) instalments (January to November) for the Tygerberg campus per year to the student.
- 2.6 The students are responsible for paying landlords on time.
- 2.7 Students must provide proof of a written lease agreement with landlords before they can receive their accommodation allowances every month.
- 2.8 SU reserves the right to request further documents to verify the legitimacy of such lease agreements.
- 2.9 In cases where more than 20 beds are provided to NSFAS students, direct monthly payments to private accredited landlords for NSFAS students can be made, provided that SU receives instruction in writing from the student and landlord to do so.

3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Responsibilities of students, including bursary recipients

- 3.1.1 It remains the responsibility of the student to ensure that they understand the content of the lease agreement, the cost of accommodation and their obligations as a lessee in terms thereof. The lease agreement is between the student and the landlord. SU is not a party to the agreement. SU will therefore not be able to intervene in matters pertaining to the contract between the landlord and the student.
- 3.1.2 The Private Accommodation Office does not allocate students to private accommodation. It remains the prerogative of the student to choose suitable off-campus private housing.
- 3.1.3 The landlord may impose his/her own accommodation rules in respect of off-campus private housing which a student must follow. It is the responsibility of the student to abide by these rules.
- 3.1.4 Should a student still be interested in residence space after securing private accommodation for the academic year, it remains the student's responsibility to comply with the stipulations of the lease agreement, specifically pertaining to cancellation of the agreement.
- 3.1.5 **Bursary recipients:**
- 3.1.5.1 NSFAS Bursary recipients must complete a living arrangement survey. This will be emailed to students from The Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans ("CUBL") once NSFAS has provided funding confirmation. NSFAS recipients are required to indicate their living arrangements.
- 3.1.5.2 Students must inform CUBL if they cancel the lease agreement, at the same time that they notify the landlord. In this regard, students need to take note of the cancellation regulations in the lease agreement. After confirmation of cancellation, the payments for that accommodation will stop. Payments will continue once a new lease agreement is provided.
- 3.1.5.3 Please keep in mind that NSFAS stipulates a deadline for changes in accommodation. For 2024, changes in accommodation may no longer be applicable, pending further communication from NSFAS.
- 3.1.5.4 The student remains liable for payments that exceed the NSFAS capped allowance.

3.2 Responsibilities of the Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans Office (CUBL)

- 3.2.1 CUBL is responsible for the financial administration of payments to the student or service provider until further notice (see Important Notice).
- 3.2.2 The CUBL will check and confirm the student's status as a NSFAS-bursary recipient and will provide written proof thereof to the student and any potential landlord (if necessary), with the consent of the student.
- 3.2.3 CUBL will send out the survey to NSFAS recipients to establish their accommodation status and addresses.
- 3.2.4 CUBL will receive lease agreements along with the survey.
- 3.2.5 CUBL will make monthly payments to students (or directly to landlords, where applicable and where the student gave consent) until NSFAS implements direct payments to service providers and/or advises differently.

3.3 Responsibilities of Landlords

- 3.3.1 The Landlord should ensure that the off-campus private housing is accredited by the **Private Accommodation Office**.
- 3.3.2 The Landlord will ensure that the prescribed application for accreditation is completed and must be submitted to SU. The application link is available on www.maties.com (> accommodation > private accommodation).
- 3.3.3 The Landlord will provide the signed lease agreement between the student and the landlord, to the student, until such a time when NSFAS will enter an agreement with the service provider on behalf of the student.
- 3.3.4 An accreditation of property cannot be transferred to any other property even if the properties are owned by the same service provider/landlord.
- 3.3.5 No private accommodation or private accredited accommodation may contain or use the name "Stellenbosch University" and/or "Stellenbosch University residence" in their listed dwelling.
- 3.3.6 The PAO must be informed of any changes to the conditions of the accredited off-campus housing and ownership of the property.
- 3.3.7 The Landlord will ensure a standard of living and comply with the guidelines throughout the year. It remains the landlord's responsibility to ensure that the off-campus private housing always complies with the original agreed standards.
- 3.3.8 Landlords should also ensure that they have the necessary mandate and authority in place (for example from a Body Corporate where the accommodation forms part of a sectional title scheme), that allows for the accommodation to be made available in off-campus private housing to students.
- 3.3.9 The Landlord's off-campus private housing must comply with all municipal and statutory requirements for accommodation. Landlords must familiarize themselves with these requirements. SU is not responsible for any non-compliance by the Landlord.

3.4 Responsibility of the Private Accommodation Office (PAO)

- 3.4.1 The PAO will provide the guidelines for accreditation as well as the link to the applicable form for accreditation to be completed by the landlord.
- 3.4.2 The PAO will be responsible for the accreditation process as stipulated in par 4 of this document and for communicating with the Landlord in this regard.
- 3.4.3 The PAO will monitor the standard of living throughout the year and reserves the right to revoke the accreditation if the facilities are not maintained and are not meeting the agreed standard.
- 3.4.4 The PAO is responsible for listing the accredited accommodation on SU's website at www.maties.com and the office will refer students to the relevant private accommodation options. In this regard, the PAO complies with the regulations set out in the POPI Act and receives consent from the providers to publish the accredited accommodation sites.
- 3.4.5 Once applications for accreditation have been processed, PAO will provide UBL with the list of accredited accommodation.
- 3.4.6 The PAO will not be able to intervene in matters pertaining to the contract between the landlord and the student. PAO is not a party to the agreement between the student and the landlord.

3.5 Appeals process

- 3.5.1 An applicant whose application has been declined may appeal against the decision of the PAO.
- 3.5.2 An applicant must lodge an appeal with the PAO within five (5) working days after receiving the formal outcome of the application and at the same time provide the PAO with written submissions setting out fully the grounds of appeal accompanied by substantiating facts and documents.
- 3.5.3 The PAO determines its own process, which may include inspecting the premises. The PAO concludes the appeal as soon as is practically possible and reasonable. The PAO reserves the right to uphold or reject the appeal. If the appeal is upheld, the PAO can substitute the outcome of the accreditation process with another outcome that the PAO could have reached.
- 3.5.4 The decision of the PAO is final.

3.6 Complaints

- 3.6.1 A regular review of complaints received will be undertaken against any service provider subject to the guidelines managed by the PAO to determine whether such complaints are commonplace and proven.
- 3.6.2 If the PAO receives such a complaint, the PAO reserves the right to re-evaluate the accredited accommodation to establish whether it still meets the requirements set in the guidelines.
- 3.6.3 Consent will be obtained from the student to inform the landlord of the complaint and/or from the landlord to inform the student.
- 3.6.4 Should the student agree, the complaint will be sent to the landlord for feedback and vice versa.
- 3.6.5 The PAO can only act on matters pertaining to the guidelines of accreditation.
- 3.6.6 If it is found that these requirements are not met, accreditation may be reconsidered.
- 3.6.7 The University, its management, and its employees will under no circumstances be responsible for any claims that Students or the public might have against a landlord and/or service provider or owner of the land.

3.7 Disclaimer

- 3.7.1 Students who enter into a lease agreement with landlords providing off-campus private housing do so in their private capacity.
- 3.7.2 SU is not a party to any lease agreement entered into between the student and the landlord in respect of off-campus private housing. SU will not become involved in and does not accept liability for any issues arising out of the operation of the lease agreement between the student and the landlord, payment of rent, and/or disputes between the parties pertaining to the lease agreement and/or service delivery.
- 3.7.3 SU will not be involved in securing tenants and will not be held responsible for empty rooms or non-payment by students.
- 3.7.4 SU will not be involved in the collection of rentals, held responsible for any outstanding balances, damage to personal property and personal harm to students because of accreditation of the facility.
- 3.7.5 Accredited off-campus private housing will be evaluated and approved annually by SU.
- 3.7.6 Accreditation of off-campus private housing can be withdrawn if the standard drops below the prescribed minimum standards and SU will not be responsible for any loss if accreditation is withdrawn.

- 3.7.7 All accredited off-campus private housing will receive priority marketing within the structures of SU and will be identified as preferred suppliers once all the on-campus beds are filled.
- 3.7.8 This University may amend this guideline from time to time.

4. PROCEDURE

- 4.1 Application for accreditation opens on 1 October of the preceding year and closes at the end of May of the following academic year. Applications submitted after the deadline will be dealt with case by case.
- 4.2 **Accreditation status must be renewed on an annual basis.** Should the landlord fail to meet the requirements, the dwellings' accredited status will be revoked and any reference to such a landlord will be removed from the SU website.

Step 1:

Complete the online application form for accreditation of off-campus private housing.

CLICK [HERE](#) FOR THE ONLINE APPLICATION

The following documentation should also be included:

- Proof of applicable municipal zoning permit;
- Original Tax Clearance Certificate of the applicant; and
- Proof of Ownership of the property; and
- The Landlord must provide relevant mandates or authority (for example from a Body Corporate where the accommodation forms part of a sectional title scheme), that allows for the accommodation to be made available in off-campus private housing to students.

The University will only consider applications in respect of which:

- (a) application forms have been completed in full;
- (b) all the required information has been provided;
- (c) all relevant documents have been furnished;
- (d) the time period for the validity of the documents has not expired;

Step 2: The Private Accommodation Office will confirm the submission of the completed application via email.

Step 3: Based on the completed application, **provisional accreditation** may be granted and listed on the SU website if the dwelling meets the guidelines as set out in this document.

Step 4: The Private Accommodation Office will arrange a **site visit** with the landlord to verify the information on the accreditation application form.

Step 5: If all criteria are met during the site visit, the accreditation will be confirmed in writing.

In cases where some matters might be outstanding, the accreditation will be pending. Accreditation will be granted as soon as the pending matter has been resolved.

5. CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

- 5.1 Accreditation is divided into two categories, namely accreditation within the prescribed cap and accreditation exceeding the prescribed cap. **Accreditation within the prescribed cap** includes accommodation that is all-inclusive and falls within the NSFAS accommodation cap.
- 5.2 **Accreditation exceeding the cap** includes accommodation that exceeds the NSFAS accommodation cap. The student will be responsible for any amount that exceeds the capped amount from NSFAS.

ACCREDITATION

Number of beds

- Accreditation is applicable to any number of beds within one facility that meets the set accreditation criteria.

Distance and transport

- Dwelling should be situated in Stellenbosch or, in the case of Tygerberg campus, in the surrounding area.
- The accommodation should be within a 3 km walking distance from the Stellenbosch campus. Students can make use of campus shuttle service at various pick-up points on campus. Accommodation should not exceed 5km from the Tygerberg campus.
- If accommodation exceeds 3 km for the Stellenbosch campus or 5km for the Tygerberg campus, NSFAS accreditation requires that the landlord should provide reliable transport running between the off-campus private housing and the relevant campus at regular intervals from 06h00 to 22h00.
- If students have their own transport, no provision for transport will be required.
- Where transport is provided, the accommodation should not exceed 20 km distance from campus.

Facilities

- Student double rooms (2 beds per room) should be **no smaller than 14m²**, and a single room (1 bed per room) should be a **minimum of 8m²**.
- Rooms should be furnished with at least:
 - ✓ lockable closets;
 - ✓ a single bed steel or wooden frames including mattress/sponge;
 - ✓ a study desk;
 - ✓ a chair; and
 - ✓ a bookshelf.
- A double room should be furnished with two of the above-listed.
- No more than four (4) students should share a bath or shower and toilet.
- Kitchen or kitchenette:
 - ✓ Cooking inside student rooms should not be permitted;
 - ✓ Suitable student storage, preparation and kitchen space should be provided;
 - ✓ Stove – one (1) per four (4) student residents;

- ✓ Sink – one (1) per 10 students in commune dwellings and 15 student residents in high rise buildings;
- ✓ Lockable cupboards – one (1) per student resident;
- ✓ Microwave oven – one (1) per eight (8) student residents in commune dwellings and 12 in high rise building;
- ✓ Countertop space – sufficient for eight (8) students' in commune dwellings and 12 students' in high rise buildings; and
- ✓ A minimum provision of cold storage, 210 liters per five (5) students.
- In cases where a student could provide their own furniture, for example for an unfurnished flat, accreditation could still be considered.
- A communal area should preferably be available.
- If applicable, the parking norm provision of one (1) parking bay per two tenants for residential developments shall be applicable to off-campus accommodation.
- The necessary safety measures should be in place, e.g. fire alarm, fire extinguisher and/or fire blanket. The accommodation should be a conducive environment for learning and living.

Services

- Students are to clean their own rooms or flats (if applicable).
- The landlord is responsible for the cleaning of all communal areas, and ablution areas in larger facilities on a regular basis.
- Laundry facilities must be provided at the off-campus private housing or laundromat facilities should be accessible near it.
- Wi-Fi access must be available on-site.

Rent

- **Accreditation within the prescribed cap:** The bed tariff meets the NSFAS accommodation allowance cap. The rental charge per student should include Wi-Fi and, as far as possible, water and electricity.
 - ✓ No upfront deposit or admin fees are required upon proof of NSFAS funding.
 - ✓ Please note that NSFAS rental payments are allocated over a 10-month period (and not 12 months)
- **Accreditation exceeding the prescribed cap:** NSFAS students will be responsible for the amount that exceeds the NSFAS allowance cap and all other expenses that is not included in the rent, e.g Wi-Fi, deposit, parking, etc.