



The Wilkes
Academy guide to
studying away from
home

Welcome to Wilkes

Our mission is to provide the best professional training available, so that our students are fully equipped in their technique to successfully gain and sustain longevity in one of the most competitive, yet rewarding of industries. We recognise that moving away from home is a huge step and want to provide you with as much advise, guidance and support as we can.

Within this guide you will find lots of useful local and readily available information that will help you make some important decisions ahead of attending Wilkes.

Please remember that with a simple 'google' search you can do your own research and we have attached a list of useful websites at the bottom of this guidance that will help you access this information.

At the Academy there is a simple philosophy that is instilled from day one: hard work breeds opportunity. We cannot wait to work with you and look forward to tracking and monitoring your professional & personal development with our fantastic staff team.

The Wilkes Academy is very quickly become one of the leading training programs for the performing artist. It is an exciting innovative college with state-of-the art facilities, offering the optimum training ground for all its students in order for them to reach their professional and personal development.

There's no doubt about it, the business is tough. The academy not only trains and nurtures the skills of its students, but it also prepares them for every aspect of their chosen career as working professionals as well as helping guide them toward becoming active citizens by guiding, teaching and nurturing our students by providing them with a wealth of advice and guidance, professional career planning, pastoral care and education.

Educational establishments are only as good as its teachers. At the Wilkes Academy, the teaching staff consists of the best working professionals possible.

Professionals that are still very much at the forefront of their working careers. Wilkes Academy does not provide accommodation and therefore do not accept responsibility/liability for it.

We will support you in ensuring you feel safe and sound but you should always liaise directly with your housing provider in the event of a housing emergency or query. Within this guidance you will see how we can help and support you during this process.

If you live outside commuting distance and want to attend the academy, you will need to think about finding local accommodation. We will do everything we can to support you in this, but we do not provide accommodation or recommend it. It is your responsibility to ensure that you have adequate lodgings that are safe and suitable.

Finding accommodation

Swindon has evolved from a small market town to one of the UK's top 10 spots to make a living! The social scene is also good but remember we do not condone our students drinking alcohol. After all that's not going to support you in reaching your potential is it? Wilkes Academy has a zero-tolerance policy to alcohol. Our students range from 16 – 24 so it is essential that you consider the laws around this when you choose to socialise in your spare time and who you socialise with! **Wilkes academy does not recommend that students under 18 share property with students over 18. Any student that shares accommodation will be required to apply for an enhanced DBS check from the moment they turn 18 if anyone else in the property is under the age of 18 in order to promote and ensure safeguarding practice.** With the M4 on its doorstep, Swindon is well connected to major hubs such as Bristol, Reading, Oxford and Bath, all of which are only 30-35 miles drive. Swindon's proximity to London, situated just 78 miles away, also makes the city an excellent base from commuters. And with Fast Growth Town status Swindon is definitely an exciting place to study. There is lots to see and do & we will support you in ensuring you feel safe and sound but you should always lease directly with your housing provider in the event of a housing emergency.

Our course is programmed Monday -Friday. Many colleges start daily classes at around 8.15-8:45am. Since we have many students who need to travel to get to us, we usually start our working day at 8:30am, and we finish at approximately 5.30pm. Of course, during productions and projects, there are increased hours and evenings to consider. Often during show term, we can commit to late evenings and early starts and during the winter months this can bring challenges for you to consider around keeping yourself safe. We will give you all the help you need in terms of safety, navigating your way around the town and sound advice and guidance however, this may prove to be a factor when selecting accommodation and the distance you are willing to travel.

Landlords vs letting agents?

Lots of websites such as Right Move and Zoopla have sections for student flats / houses. You can look on the main section of these websites as well, but many landlords will refuse to rent to students, so make sure you ask if they are willing to rent to students before you go to visit the property rather than waste your valuable time.

With a landlord, you'll have direct contact with the property owner. Agencies, on the other hand, often manage property on the landlord's behalf. Taking the agency route gives you more security though. You can check to see if they're members of a government-approved redress scheme to deal with complaints, or a self-regulating body which means they've agreed to adhere to certain codes and practices which will give you (and your parents/carers) reassurance. However, you'll probably save some money by directly using a landlord. Agencies often add extra fees, including charges for credit checks and setting up the inventory so please be aware of this as well.



Living at home

Living at home while studying works well for many students as it can significantly cut your costs (and is the one option that doesn't involve packing up all your worldly goods and relocating). You might be concerned that this will have an impact on your ability to meet other students. While it might require a little more effort and planning, you're sure to meet plenty of people, both in and out of your lectures. Here at Wilkes our students share the same passions for performance and our student voice surveys clearly identify that the students work within a strong community of practice so rest assured you will be fine!

Where to find housemates?

If you have people in mind that you'd like to live with, great! We recognise that the world of performing arts is a relatively small one and we are always interested to see just how many of our students already know each other upon commencing their training here at the academy. **Wilkes academy does not recommend that students under 18 share property with students over 18. Any student that shares accommodation will be required to apply for an enhanced DBS check from the moment they turn 18 if anyone else in the property is under the age of 18 in order to promote and ensure safeguarding practice.**

What to look out for?

Do an inventory - Go through the entire property, making a note of furnishings and furniture that are damaged, worn or broken (take photos too, for your own record). That way, your landlord or letting agent can't hold you responsible, and you can get your full deposit back when you move out. Further down the guide we have sourced a couple of weekly checklists that will help you with this.

Safety check - Make sure all locks on doors and windows work properly. It's the landlord's responsibility to make sure there's at least one smoke alarm installed on every storey, and a carbon monoxide one in any room with a solid fuel burning

appliance – check this. Also, landlords are legally required to have a Gas Safety Certificate (CP12) for all the gas appliances in a property, and it should be renewed every 12 months.

Sort out utilities - This includes reading gas and electricity meters, shopping around for the best deals (for energy, broadband, TV and possibly landline), and sorting out whose name is going on the bill/how payments will work.

Council tax - If everyone in the property is a full-time student, you'll be exempt from paying council tax. If one or more tenants isn't a student, then a bill will be issued and they will have to pay this. Read more about council tax for students on the Citizens Advice website.

Before you visit a property make sure you do your research:

Damp : When viewing a house, check all walls and ceilings – particularly around windows, corners and behind wardrobes. Look out for flaking paint or wallpaper, black mould patches and a musky smell, as these are all tell-tale signs, too.

Pest problems: For some properties common pests include mice, slugs, fruit flies, pigeons, cockroaches and rats. This can be due to previous tenants leaving food and overflowing bins lying around in some rental spaces. Don't be afraid to check kitchen cupboards, work surfaces and around bins. Look for traps, droppings and slug trails.



The location of the property: it's important to figure out how close properties are to decent transport links including bus routes and train stations. But proximity to your place of study isn't the only thing to consider when looking at locations. On your journey to the viewing, keep an eye out for local amenities like newsagents, supermarkets, doctors and, of course, fun.

Security and safety: Security is something that every student should take seriously when viewing a property. Ask if there's a burglar alarm system and check that the doors are adequately secured – particularly that the main door to the building has secured entry. If you're worried about security, mention this to your landlord or agency. They don't want any break-ins either, so it's likely that they'll be happy to improve locks and access points to secure your custom. Do a bit of research on the area to find out how safe it is. Houses on well-lit main roads are often the most secure. Quiet areas may appeal to some students.

Also, remember to check that the property has working fire alarms, extinguishers and fire blankets. And, if you're in an HMO (house in multiple occupation), there must also be clearly marked emergency exits.

Electric appliances and white goods: Don't be afraid to check if appliances are adequate and in working order. Be clear on what's included in the tenancy agreement and inventory. If there's anything of concern, make sure you flag it to the letting agent or landlord – and if necessary have a few words added to the tenancy agreement that ensures the landlord will address them before you move in.

Furnishings and fittings: As mentioned above, make sure you have a clear idea of what's included in the inventory and what's not. The last thing you need is to be furniture hunting when you didn't expect to have to.

Check that the house is well-insulated

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Everyone knows that energy bills are one of the biggest costs as a student (if you don't have them included in your rent). Making sure that the house is well insulated could make a difference of £100s in bills throughout the year. Does the property have double-glazed windows, secure doors, a good heating system and a lack of draft spots. There's also no harm in taking a look at the roof from outside the house to check if any tiles are missing. If there are, this could lead to leaks throughout the year. Talk to the current tenants & understand the area. Nobody has a better idea of what a house is like to live in than its current tenants. They're likely to offer an unbiased and realistic account, as they've got nothing to gain (or lose) by telling you any different. You can gain a decent insight by asking one simple question: "So, what's the best and worst thing about this house? "Are there shops nearby? Will you access to the things you want and need? They will also be able to tell you if the social scene is good and access to everything you need is available and close to where you choose to stay.



Student Safety & Wellbeing

At Wilkes Safeguarding is everyone's business...

We have a designated safeguarding lead and student welfare team who will help and support you in relation to your safety and wellbeing. Throughout the academic year you will spend time with the wellbeing staff who will deliver workshops, tutorials and be available for one to one support for just about anything that you are finding challenging. We also have a counsellor and physiotherapist available who can health you both physically and mentally.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



Charities & Organisations

There are many charities and organisations dedicated to supporting mental health and wellbeing. Here's a sample...

Mind

mind.org.uk

020 8519 2122

supporterservices@mind.org.uk

"We provide advice and support to empower anyone experiencing a mental health problem. We campaign to improve services, raise awareness and promote understanding. We won't give up until everyone experiencing a mental health problem gets support and respect."

Rethink

rethink.org

0300 5000 927

info@rethink.org

"A charity that believes a better life is possible for the millions of people affected by mental illness. For 40 years we have brought people together to support each other through our services, groups and campaigns."

The Mental Health Foundation

mentalhealth.org.uk

0207 8031100

"Our vision is for a world with good mental health for all. Our mission is to help people understand, protect and sustain their mental health. Prevention is at the heart of what we do."

Be Mindful

bemindful.co.uk

"Mindfulness is part of the Mental Health Foundation's strategy for a fresh emphasis on prevention, focusing on solutions that work and have impact"

Mental Health UK

mentalhealth-uk.org

020 7840 3008

info@mentalhealth-uk.org

“Mental Health UK brings together four national mental health charities [from England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland] working across the UK.” *“pain Against Living Miserably (CALM) is an award-winning charity dedicated to preventing male suicide, the single biggest killer of men under the age of 45 in the UK. In 2015, 75% of all UK suicides were male.”*

Anxiety UK

anxietyuk.org.uk

08444 775774

support@anxietyuk.org.uk

“Offers a range of innovative and high quality services delivered by professionals; supported by staff and volunteers with personal experience of anxiety, stress, and anxiety based depression.”

Triumph Over Phobia (TOPUK)

topuk.org

01225 422705

info@topuk.org

“UK registered charity which aims to help sufferers of phobias, obsessive compulsive disorder and other related anxiety disorders to overcome their fears and become ex-sufferers. We do this by running a network of self-help therapy groups.”

No Panic

nopanic.org.uk

0844 9674848

admin@nopanic.org.uk

“A registered charity which helps people who suffer from panic attacks, phobias, obsessive compulsive disorders and other related anxiety disorders including those people who are trying to give up Tranquilizers. No Panic also provides support for the carers of people who suffer from anxiety disorders.”

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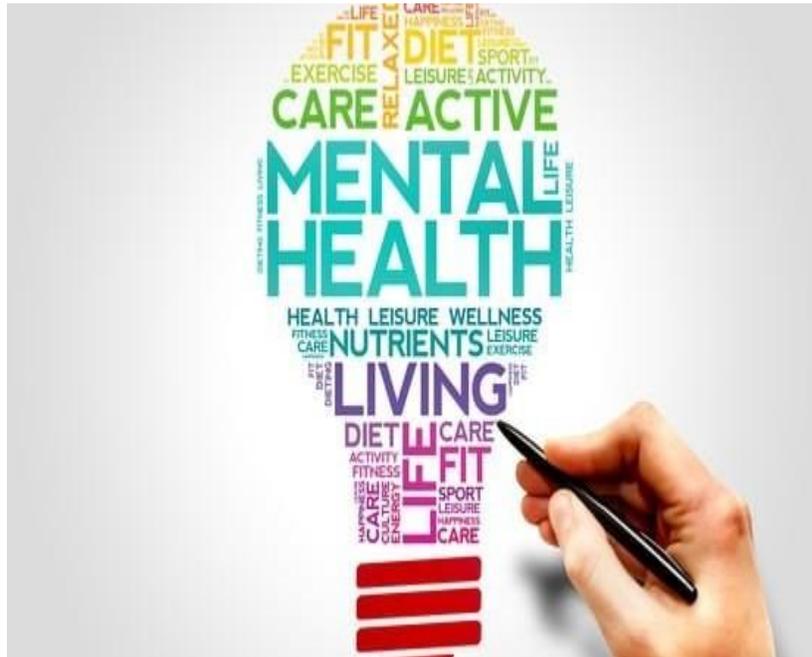
Mental Health Matters

mentalhealthmatters.com

0191 5163500

nfo@mh.org.uk

“We provide support to thousands of people every year, covering many aspects of their lives: from psychological and well-being therapeutic recovery interventions through to everyday employment, housing, independent and community support needs. We aim to enable each individual to recover and / or move towards their own independence and well-being.” This contains information about all mental and physical health conditions, treatments, local services and healthy lives





If you're looking for a therapy that breaks away from the conventional, you might be interested in alternative therapies. Even though their approaches differ, most practices aim to treat both mental and physical ailments: need and succeed

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Apps & Extra

Mindful meditations to help with the stresses in everyday life...



Headspace



Calm



SmilingMind



Budhiffy



Sleep Easy Meditation



Relax Melodies



Guided Meditation



Yoga 4 Beginners





When socialising it's important that everyone understand the ins and outs of drinking in while out socialising. If you share a property or residence with someone that is under 18 please understand that they are not allowed to do the same things as 18-year olds

(remember we don't approve of alcohol consumption anyway). If you share with 17-year-old students and you are 17 then you need to understand the laws around drinking and where you can go. We will help you with this. *Know your own limits—and don't push them. Wilkes academy does not recommend that students under 18 share property with students over 18. Any student that shares accommodation will be required to apply for an enhanced DBS check from the moment they turn 18 if anyone else in the property is under the age of 18 in order to promote and ensure safeguarding practice.*

If you have to drink (which you don't) it can be easy to have one or three drinks too many when you're surrounded by people who are doing the same. If you haven't had a lot of experience with alcohol (or even if you have!) don't go overboard. One or two drinks is plenty for anyone. You should also be aware of what constitutes a single drink and the factors, like weight and gender, which impact the absorption of alcohol into your bloodstream. If you take any medications for any reason (including over-the-counter cold and allergy meds!), be aware of the effects of mixing them with alcohol.

Think about the "why"

Before going out on the town, take a second to consider why you're drinking. Is it just a nice way to enjoy socialising or does it feel like you can't have a good time unless you have a drink in hand? Maybe you find that after a stressful week, the only thing that can help you unwind is a couple of drinks. If you feel like you can't make it through the day without alcohol, you find yourself getting

very drunk on a regular basis or you can only relax by drinking, you might be abusing alcohol. If this applies to you, do what you can to break the cycle: head over to the safeguarding team who can help you access counselling services and learn what they can do to help you discover the reason why you're abusing alcohol and help you overcome the behaviour.

Private Rented Housing – Viewing Checklist

Using this Checklist will give you a good idea of the condition of any property you are thinking of renting.

Even if you don't use accredited property housing lists, make sure you read this before viewing any properties!

Safety – Comes First!

Are smoke detectors or fire alarms fitted? Do they work?

In the event of fire in the main access passageways of the house, could you get out of the house?

Is there emergency lighting in escape routes (i.e. corridors)?

Does the house have fire doors?

Can you open all the exit doors from inside without a key?

Is there a heat detector in the kitchen?

Is there a fire blanket in your kitchen?

Gas and electricity – is everything checked and tested? Ask to see a copy of a GAS safe safety record for the gas appliances – all the gas appliances in the property should be listed on this, with no faults.

Does the cooker work? If the cooker is a gas cooker, does the thermostat work?

Is the heating in the house adequate – will it be ok in the middle of winter?

Do the electric/gas fires work?

Ensure you have read your gas and electricity meters immediately after you have taken responsibility for the property, and keep a note of the readings in a safe place.

GAS;

ELECTRIC:

Is there a burglar alarm that works?

Are all the external doors solid?

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Have all external doors been fitted with strong and secure locks?

Are ground floor windows fitted with security catches?

Have you identified your own possessions with your home postcode on all your valuables?

Are the ground floor bed- room curtains lined or thick enough?

Is transport easily available?



Is any of the furniture the property of existing tenants?

Personal Possessions Insurance – We recommend you consider cover . . .

Should you be insured? The Students Union Advice Information Centre can advise you on cover.

Money – It’s yours, so spend it wisely!

What are you paying for in your rent? How does it compare to other rents?
Have you paid a deposit? If so what is it for? Have you got a receipt for what you have paid? Do you, and your landlord, know about the Tenancy Deposit Scheme? This is a legal requirement, so please see our guide (“Tenancy Deposit Protection”) and also www.communities.gov.uk for further information.

Are you responsible for water charges?
How much will heating the house cost?

Services – Check out what’s on offer . . .

What services is the owner providing for you, if any? (Window cleaning, gardening, lighting of common parts, refuse disposal)

What are the parking arrangements – do you need a permit, and how easy are these to get?

Agreements – Make sure you have one!

Do you know what your contract means? Read the Residences Service “Private Rented Housing – Contract Guide”, and speak to them or the Advice Centre if you have any questions before you sign the contract!

Have you talked to the previous occupants of the house and asked them if they have any comments that would help you?

Staying in an HMO

Items/Installations	Expected Standard
<u>Automatic Fire Detection, Emergency Lighting, Fire Fighting Equipment (fire blankets and extinguishers)</u>	<p>Completed log- book showing at least monthly test sounding and visual inspection of system and equipment, including identified faults and remedies produced at time of inspection.</p> <p>Landlord to demonstrate testing of the automatic fire detection system to inspecting officer at time of inspection.</p> <p>Original service (within last 12mths) records produced at time of inspection.</p> <p>Automatic fire detection system fully operational at time of inspection.</p>
<u>Fire Doors and Protected Means of Escape</u>	<p>All fire doors MUST close under their own power when released from any point in their arc, and latch past any mechanism fitted at time of inspection.</p> <p>Intumescent strips and smoke seals fitted around entirety of both sides and the head of each door. Smoke seals to touch the frames around the whole circumference when closed at time of inspection.</p> <p>All walls forming the protected means of escape to be in good order at time of inspection.</p> <p>Any escapable windows to be operable and clear of obstruction at time of inspection.</p> <p>Escape route must be free from stored items and obstructions at time of inspection.</p>
<u>Common Bathrooms</u>	<p>Hot and cold running water available at all wash hand basins, baths and showers at time of inspection.</p> <p>All appliances to be in good repair and clean at time of inspection. All wash hand basins and baths/shower trays to have a silicone seal installed which is intact and impervious to water ingress along its entire length at time of inspection.</p> <p>Any extractor fans fitted to be working, toilet seat fitted and in repair at time of inspection.</p> <p>All bathrooms are to be free of mould to wall and ceiling surfaces at time of inspection.</p>

<p><u>Common Kitchens</u></p> <p>place letter here</p>	<p>Hot and cold running water available at all sinks at time of inspection.</p> <p>All sinks and worktops to have a silicone seal installed which is intact and impervious to water ingress along its entire length/ circumference at time of inspection.</p> <p>All landlord-supplied appliances to have an electrical safety test report (PAT test) within the last 12 months, produced at time of inspection.</p> <p>All gas cookers and hobs, boilers and heaters etc to have a Gas Safety Certificate issued within the last 12 months produced at time of inspection.</p> <p>All landlord supplied appliances (microwaves, fridges, cookers etc.) to be clean and fit for purpose at time of inspection.</p> <p>All kitchens are to be free of mould to wall and ceiling surfaces at time of inspection.</p>
<p><u>Primary Lighting</u></p>	<p>All areas of common parts and circulation spaces to be able to be lit at any hour. All fittings to be operable and have working bulbs at time of inspection.</p>
<p><u>Common Parts (shared living rooms, hallways, stairs etc)</u></p>	<p>All common parts to be in fair decorative order at time of inspection.</p> <p>All common parts to be clean at time of inspection.</p> <p>All floor coverings to be in good repair and properly fixed at time of inspection.</p>
<p><u>Yards/Gardens</u></p>	<p>All lawns and vegetation to be suitably trimmed so as to not provide harbourage to pests at time of inspection.</p> <p>All yards and gardens to be free of litter, and any stored refuse to be contained in bins with close fitting lids at time of inspection.</p>
<p><u>Drainage</u></p>	<p>All appliances, sinks and drains at the property to be running freely and free of leaks</p>

<u>Pests and Vermin</u>	Property to be free of pest or vermin infestation (such as rats, mice, cockroaches or bed bugs) at time of inspection. 18
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HMO standards and HMO Licensing

For some landlords there properties may be defined as a House in Multiple Occupation and furthermore, that it was subject to Licensing. When seeking accommodation ensure you check that they know. This information will help you ensure that source safe accommodation. Make sure you inspect them prior to your move.

HMO standards and Licensing A House in Multiple occupation (HMO) is defined by Housing Act 2004 across Sections 254 to 260 This definition from the legislation is summarised below;

Any building occupied by 3 or more persons who form 2 or more households who share amenities (Bathroom/kitchen etc). Each individual student will be regarded as a separate household unless they are siblings or immediate family members.

Any building converted to flats, which is at least 2/3rd privately rented and does not meet current Building Control standards and/or lack approval.

All HMO's will be subject to increased fire precautions and all relevant HMO standards for space and amenity. All HMO's are subject to [Minimum Management standards and Regulations](#) which must be complied with at all times.

All guidance and Regulations cited above, with information on minimum standards for space amenity and management can be found via the Swindon borough council [webpage](#) here:

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20025/homes_and_property/236/houses_in_multiple_occupation/2

HMO Licensing

Any HMO (as defined above) that is occupied by **5 or more persons** is subject to **HMO Licensing** under [Section 55 Housing Act 2004](#). The owner must apply for a HMO Licence prior to occupying the property with 5 or more students/ persons. Operating a Licensable HMO without such a Licence is a criminal offence.

More information on when a HMO License is required and how to apply for such a licence can be found on Swindon Borough Council webpages here;

https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20025/homes_and_property/236/houses_in_multiple_occupation



Your duty of care

Congratulations on becoming a student of Wilkes! It is vital that you respect the rules and value your opportunity and of course, make the most of it! We will do everything we can to ensure that the student experience and your welfare is positive.

You can help us by following the rules, engaging with us in a positive way and doing your best to ensure you represent yourself, your family and Wilkes Academy in the most positive and professional way you can.

Standards are everything at Wilkes and professionalism as well as personal development are the corner stones of what we do. Upon enrolment you will be issued with a student code of conduct and a copy of our behaviour policy which will make it clear what your responsibilities are.



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