



A Roommate Guide: Sharing Accommodation



Student Development & Wellbeing Department
Student Services
Estates Department
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Living with a roommate

Living with a roommate during your university years can be a rewarding, fun and valuable experience. It's always useful to have someone around to listen to you, or to give you good suggestions and advice. A roommate can be a great companion and a source of support. Like any relationships, there may be ups and downs, but think of the roommate experience as an opportunity for you to learn and gain insight about yourself.

An excellent roommate experience requires excellent communication, courtesy, cooperation, compromise, and commitment.

To help you prepare you for living with a roommate, we list below some useful tips that will make your roommate experience a successful one.

➤ **Knowing your Roommate**

- ✓ Find out what you have (and don't have) in common.
- ✓ Talk about your likes, your dislikes, food preferences, beliefs, your hobbies, your habits....
- ✓ Share information about your family as well as your hopes and fears for the coming academic year!
- ✓ Communicate any food allergies and their severity to your roommate so they understand how to prevent a reaction and discuss measures to avoid cross-contamination during food preparation, cooking etc.
- ✓ Be honest, open, friendly, and **listen**.
- ✓ Don't be afraid to move out of your comfort zone and learn about your roommate's culture or traditions. ASK!

Enjoy getting to understand other perspectives, points of view and belief systems: this is valuable knowledge for you as a future global healthcare practitioner.

➤ **Setting Boundaries**

- ✓ Boundaries need to be agreed and set between you to avoid misunderstandings.
- ✓ Agree what is **private space** and what is considered **common area**. Common areas normally include the kitchen, lounge and bathroom.
- ✓ Reasonable **cooperation** is expected for the use of shared appliances, such as the cooker and cooking utensils. Create a comfortable shared living space together.
- ✓ **Give each other appropriate space**. Agree on where you would like to keep things to be used by both of you. Private space is the bedroom. **Personal belongings** should be kept in private space.

It takes mutual respect, agreed boundaries and the establishment of common expectations to build a successful roommate relationship.

Setting House Rules

- ✓ Make a list of 'House Rules' that you agree on together and stick it on the wall in common space. You will need to **agree with each** other about daily **chores** and tasks such as laundry days, and who takes out the garbage!
- ✓ Agree on a common shopping list of shared items such as sugar or milk and split the cost.
- ✓ Agree when cooking can be done – it's not nice keeping someone from sleeping as there is a spicy curry being cooked at midnight! Find out what your roommate likes to eat.
- ✓ Include such things in the agreement as the maximum days and times at night **friends or family** are allowed to **visit**, and how many friends can come round at one time and for how long.
- ✓ Agree on when and for how long the **television** stays on for, or when **music** needs to be turned down at night, especially if the other roommate has an early class or clinical rotations.
- ✓ **Agree on definitions** on which expectations can be based; for example, what do you mean by '**neat**', '**clean**', or '**tidy**'.

Your life should not interfere with the **basic rights** of your roommate, for example his/her right to use the kitchen and cook food at appropriate times without interference, or the right to sleep without disturbance from guests or noise.

Roommate Agreement: The 'Business'

- ✓ We suggest making a 'Roommate Agreement' between you and your roommate, where you write down and record what you have agreed between you, such as how **costs** are shared and when rent is to be paid.
- ✓ If you are in the **Halls of Residence**, you must adhere to the rules already set down.
- ✓ You may like to share **expenses** such as laundry and dishwashing soap.
- ✓ **Finances** need to be agreed: the amount of rent to be paid, when, for how long, and always get a receipt. It is not fair to break a rental agreement and leave your roommate with all the rent to pay when you agreed to rent with him/her for a specified period. This could also result in legal issues.

Managing Disagreements

- ✓ **Behaviour.** If you do not approve or disagree with the behaviour of your roommate, discuss this with your roommate in a mature and adult way. This is the best way to avoid conflict. Don't point the finger and say things like: 'You are annoying because you leave clothes everywhere.' This will make your roommate feel defensive and argue back about what's annoying her/him about you! Do say something like: I feel bad when I have done the washing and see things that perhaps should have been in the washing basket but are spread around. Could we agree that certain things are kept in one place so that we know what's clean and what's dirty?' This puts the focus on what you are feeling, rather than blaming your roommate, and will likely provoke a more positive response.

- ✓ **Compromise:** Try and negotiate a logical compromise with your roommate. This means trying to find a middle ground that works for both of you, even if it is not ideal. You may agree to disagree on certain things, but a compromise means that there is a workable solution to an issue.
- ✓ **Concerns:** If you are worried about your roommate's behaviour or unhealthy habits, you can get confidential advice and support from the **Student Health & Wellbeing team** by emailing student-health@rcsi.com. The Student Health and Wellbeing team will provide you with advice and will know how to manage the situation in a sensitive manner.
- ✓ If you have serious concerns and your roommate's actions or behaviour is in breach of the **RCSI Code of Conduct**, please contact the **Head of Student Development & Wellbeing** by emailing wmaddison@rcsi.com.
- ✓ **Disputes:** The University cannot interfere in privately arranged agreements with your roommate, nor intervene in personal disputes with your roommate. You are expected to deal with conflict in a mature way: the best way is to tackle small problems as they arise in a mature way, so they do not grow into big issues.

All students must follow the RCSI Code of Conduct, whether on or off campus. Breach of the Code can lead to disciplinary action.

Frequently Asked Questions

How can I find a roommate?

Student Services holds a **Roommate Register** and you can find students who are also looking for roommates on that list. However, please note that Student Services are not involved in the matching process of roommates in private accommodation. Their role is to provide a communication link between students looking for roommates. You can also put an announcement on the VLE or ask assistance from Student Council.

Who can guide me about what my Lease Agreement means?

Student Services can provide you guidance in relation to your rental or **Lease Agreement**. It is important to note the duration of the lease and the notice period you must give for **cancellation** of your lease, as well as the arrangements for **electricity and water bills**. Some landlords cover up to a certain amount and then you pay the rest, others do not cover at all. This amount therefore would have to be shared between you and your roommate. Make sure the landlord includes a good **Wifi / internet connection** in the building. Make sure you are aware of all facts before committing to signing a lease agreement, which is a legal and binding document. Student Services will be happy to advise you.

What if I feel unwell?

- ✓ For medical emergencies, please go to **King Hamad Hospital (KHUH) Emergency Unit**. King Hamad Hospital is one of the university's teaching hospitals, next to the university. It provides a wide range of medical specialties.
- ✓ **KIMS** medical clinic, in Muharraq, is about 5 minutes from the university.
- ✓ All international students must have medical insurance, either their own which is valid for Bahrain, or belong to the university's group medical insurance scheme for students. For minor ailments and GP consultations you can attend any of the private hospitals across Bahrain which accept your health insurance. For more information on which hospitals you can attend, please review the health insurance information on the VLE: <https://vle.rcsi.com/course/view.php?id=7095>
- ✓ You can obtain confidential **health and lifestyle advice** from the **Student Health & Wellbeing Unit**. A **confidential counselling service** is also available through the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit as well as a referral system to an **External Counsellor**. External Counsellor services are located in clinics outside the university. Information is available on the VLE on the Student Health & Wellbeing page, or email: student-health@rcsi-mub.com.
- ✓ If you are hospitalized or develop a medical condition that was not declared when you applied to the university, please let the Student Health & Wellbeing Unit know as soon as possible on the email above so you can be supported.

What do I do in an emergency situation?

If you are staying in the Halls of Residence, contact the 24-hour security desk at reception or the Supervisor of the Halls in Apartment #34.

If you are in other accommodation or have an emergency when you are out and about around Bahrain, call the emergency services numbers listed below.

I have a severe food allergy; how can I communicate this to my roommate?

From the beginning, you should communicate any food allergies and their severity to your roommate, so they understand how to prevent a reaction. It may also be a good idea to share the emergency care plan with them and demonstrate how to use epinephrine auto-injectors in case of an accident. To prevent allergen cross-contamination, it is a good idea to have an identifiable set of cooking utensils and ask your housemate not to use them. This way, you can be sure that your equipment is clean and unlikely to contain any trace of certain allergens. If you would like further information and guidance on managing your food allergy in shared accommodation, you can contact the Student Health and Wellbeing team student-health@rcsi-mub.com

I have a maintenance issue in my apartment, what do I do?

If you are in the Halls of Residence, you can contact Facilities and Estates Department (fmhelpdesk@rcsi-mub.com).

If you are in other accommodation, you need to contact your landlord.

What if I have an issue with my roommate?

As mentioned earlier, communication is key. In the first instance, address the issue

objectively with your roommate as advised above, and try and reach resolution or compromise in a mature way. The university cannot interfere in private roommate arrangements. If you have concerns about your roommate's behaviour under the Code of Conduct, you can talk confidentially to the Head of Student Development & Wellbeing or a member of the Student Health and Wellbeing Unit.

What can I do if my roommate doesn't pay their share of the rent?

We advise that prior to taking a roommate, it is clear how expenses are to be shared, and what the ground rules are, as described above. Include these in your roommate agreement. Always keep a receipt of any monies paid. Understand your commitment; if you break a lease agreement, there may be legal consequences.

IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Bahrain Emergency Services (**police/fire/ambulance**) **999**

Traffic Police (road accidents) **199**

On campus:

Facilities Management Helpdesk (campus hours) 16660051

Student Services 16660200/16660201

Student Health & Wellbeing 16660071

Campus Security 16660075

Campus Main Gate 16660071 (24 hours)

Campus Reception 16660166 (24 hours)

Halls of Residence: Security at reception: report in person (24 hours)

