



UFS Off-Campus Accommodation Policy

Approved at the UFS Council, 25 November 2022

POLICY STATEMENT	
<p>1. Preamble/Background</p>	<p>1.1 The University of the Free State (hereinafter referred to as the “UFS”) places a high premium on the availability of good-quality accommodation for each and every individual that is enrolled for tertiary studies and registered as a student of the UFS (the “Student(s”).</p> <p>1.2 The UFS accordingly endeavours to accredit, and make available to its students, private student housing that is of a high standard and conforms to the regulatory framework that applies to student housing in South Africa.</p> <p>1.3 Accreditation with reference to private housing and off-campus student accommodation refers to the recognition and certification by the UFS of a property, confirming that it is suitable to accommodate students and that it complies with the applicable norms and standards as contemplated below.</p> <p>1.4 In light of the aforesaid, the UFS has implemented certain specifications and conditions that apply to off-campus student accommodation in order to protect the rights and interests of both the UFS and its students. The specifications and conditions provide for the accreditation of off-campus accommodation for students of the UFS. Accredited off-campus student accommodation must conform to the provisions of the National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act, 103 of 1997, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality Property Rates By-Laws, the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality By-Laws on Student Accommodation, as published on 30 September 2021 (as may be amended from time to time), the Mangaung Local Municipality Housing Policy, the Rental Housing Act, 50 of 1999 and the Consumer Protection Act, 68 of 2008 (where applicable), and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa forms the context of the applicable legislative framework.</p> <p>1.5 The specifications and conditions contained in this policy form part of the official policies and practices of the UFS and constitute a key element in maintaining mutual and healthy relationships among the students, the UFS, the providers of off-campus student accommodation and the broader community.</p>
<p>2. Purpose</p>	<p>The purpose of this policy is to –</p> <p>2.1 Establish criteria and procedures for the accreditation of off-campus accommodation offered to students of the UFS, be it dwelling houses, communes or industrial buildings converted into habitable areas for students;</p> <p>2.2 Make provision for transparent administrative processes to ensure that accreditation processes are dealt with fairly and consistently, and</p> <p>2.3 Provide procedures to address appeals and complaints submitted by both the off-campus accommodation providers and the students.</p>

<p>3. Scope</p>	<p>3.1 The specifications and conditions contained in this policy apply to all off-campus accommodation and to students residing in such off-campus accommodation.</p>
<p>4. Definitions and Abbreviations</p>	<p>Accommodation Provider means the party referred to in clause 1.2 (<i>Parties</i>) of the service level agreement.</p> <p>Accreditation means the recognition and certification by the UFS of a property, confirming that it is suitable to accommodate students and that it complies with the applicable norms and standards, as prescribed by the UFS, and any reference to “accredit” shall have a similar meaning.</p> <p>Appeal refers to the action to be undertaken by the service provider in instances where the application for accreditation was unsuccessful.</p> <p>HRA refers to Housing and Residence Affairs.</p> <p>Inspection refers to a visit to the street address of an accommodation establishment in order to determine the status of the establishment in terms of the minimum requirements for accreditation.</p> <p>MMM refers to the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.</p> <p>NSFAS refers to the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.</p> <p>NSFAS Private Accommodation Allowance refers to the amount designated by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme for the payment of the rental amount for off-campus private accommodation.</p> <p>Off-Campus Accommodation means accommodation that is not residence-owned or managed by the University of the Free State.</p> <p>Physical Property refers to the street address of the accommodation establishment.</p> <p>Property means the property at which the off-campus accommodation will be provided, as identified in the contract information.</p> <p>Service Provider refers to an individual or entity providing a service to another party.</p>
<p>5. Guiding Principles</p>	<p>5.1 The overarching principle, as captured within the UFS Strategic Plan, is to create an environment conducive to living and learning – both on and off the campus.</p>

	<p>5.2 The UFS Off-Campus Accommodation Policy uses as its departure point the regulations stipulated at both national and local level, here referring to:</p> <p>5.2.1 All legislation within the higher education sphere that the UFS must adhere to and prescribe as an institution of higher education, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Policy on the Minimum Norms and Standards for Student Housing at Public Universities; and b) the NSFAS guidelines in this regard, as published on an annual basis. <p>5.2.2 At a local level, referring to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality By-Laws on Student Accommodation. <p>5.3 Within the context of the above legislation, the UFS will strive to ensure that all types of off-campus accommodation provide, as far as possible, a student living and learning experience similar to that of students living in on-campus residences.</p>
<p>6. Policy</p>	<p>6.1 Criteria for Accreditation</p> <p>6.1.1 Important Documents Required for Accreditation</p> <p>The following supporting documents must accompany a completed application form in respect of each physical address/property for which accreditation is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A certified copy of the title deed pertaining to the relevant property. b) A power of attorney if an application for accreditation is submitted on behalf of the registered property owner, as indicated on the aforementioned title deed. c) An authorising resolution in the event that the application for accreditation is submitted on behalf of a company, trust or close corporation. d) A building plan that has been approved by the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality. e) A locality plan. f) A proof of residential zoning permit. g) A copy of the registered owner of the property's tax clearance certificate. h) All the documents of the registered owner of the property as required in terms of the Financial Intelligence Centre Act, 38 of 2001, including a certified copy of the property owner's identity document as well as a copy of the owner's utility bill (both not older than 3 [three] months). i) An affidavit declaring that the registered owner permanently resides on the property and/or that a full-time manager, who will reside on the property and tend to the students, has been or will be hired.

- j) An affidavit declaring that the registered owner of the property has familiarised himself/herself with the provisions of this policy, as well as all ancillary documents and legislation that relate to the provisioning of off-campus accommodation for students.
- k) A copy of the House Rules that will be applicable, as prescribed in the official Minimum Accreditation Requirements document (“Minimum Accreditation Requirements”).
- l) Official confirmation of the property owner’s banking details, on the bank’s letterhead.

6.2 Minimum Requirements

In order to qualify as an off-campus accommodation provider and obtain accreditation from the UFS, an off-campus accommodation provider, as well as the property at which the accommodation will be provided, has to meet each of the minimum accreditation requirements as detailed in the official Minimum Accreditation Requirements document and provide satisfactory proof to the UFS of compliance with the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality By-Law on Student Accommodation.

6.3 Additional Requirements

- 6.3.1 Within 7 (seven) days after an off-campus accommodation provider has received a letter of accreditation from the UFS, the off-campus accommodation provider must provide the UFS with a written declaration together with a copy of the proposed lease agreement to be entered into between the accredited off-campus accommodation provider and the students, in terms of which the accredited off-campus accommodation provider undertakes not to charge rental amounts that exceed the rental amounts as agreed upon between the accredited off-campus accommodation provider and the UFS.
- 6.3.2 The UFS also provides the off-campus accommodation provider with a written service level agreement, and the off-campus accommodation provider shall provide the UFS with a signed copy of the aforesaid service level agreement within 72 (seventy-two) hours after receipt thereof from the UFS.

6.4 General

- 6.4.1 Kindly note that accreditation is granted by the UFS in respect of the physical property, and not per applicant. Accordingly, the minimum accreditation requirements and the accreditation process will apply in respect of each property that requires accreditation.
- 6.4.2 Once the property has been accredited as suitable student accommodation, details of the accommodation will be placed on the official UFS database for off-campus student accommodation. This database will be regularly updated and made available to current and prospective students. The database will be available on the official UFS website and can be viewed at <https://www.ufs.ac.za/residences/housing-and->

[residence-affairs/off-campus-accommodation/accredited-student-addresses.](#)

6.4.3 Accreditation will be valid for one year (the year applied for, and renewable for a period of 12 months), thus running from 01 January to 31 December during each year of accreditation. The accreditation procedure (as contemplated in paragraph 6.1 of the procedure document) takes place annually and will have to be initiated annually by each off-campus accommodation provider. If accreditation is renewable, the following requirements apply:

- a) a new application form will have to be completed and submitted;
- b) a physical inspection of the property will have to take place again and the applicant will have to receive a positive recommendation; and
- c) the application will have to comply with all the Minimum Accreditation Requirements in order to obtain accreditation for a further period of 12 (twelve) months.

Accredited accommodation will be monitored and evaluated annually to ensure that accommodation standards are adhered to in terms of the legislated criteria.

6.4.4 Notices advertising accredited off-campus student accommodation may be placed on UFS notice boards situated on UFS campuses only with the approval of the Senior Director of HRA, in consultation with the Director: Communication and Marketing. Only accredited student accommodation may be advertised on the UFS notice boards.

6.5 It shall be the sole responsibility of the off-campus accommodation provider to familiarise itself with the provisions of this policy and all ancillary documents of the UFS that relate to the provisioning of off-campus accommodation, and which can be obtained from the HRA offices on the applicable UFS campus in hard-copy format and at <https://www.ufs.ac.za/residences/housing-and-residence-affairs/off-campus-accommodation/application-procedure> in soft-copy format.

6.6 Deaccreditation of Off-Campus Accommodation

6.6.1 Should it be found and/or reported that the accredited property no longer meets the requirements prescribed by this policy or that the off-campus accommodation provider is in breach of any provisions set out herein, the designated officer for Off-Campus Accommodation will investigate and present the Senior Director of HRA with evidence thereof, as well as a recommendation for deaccreditation.

6.6.2 The investigation envisaged in paragraph 6.6.1 above may include, without limitation, physical inspections of the property with prior notice to the off-campus accommodation provider, as well as interviewing the students and/or the accommodation manager residing at the property.

	<p>6.6.3 The UFS will furnish the off-campus accommodation provider with directions as to how the shortcomings must be addressed, by virtue of an inspection report, and the off-campus accommodation provider will be afforded an opportunity to address the shortcomings and comply with the inspection report in order to prevent deaccreditation, within a reasonable time frame agreed upon between the off-campus accommodation provider and the Senior Director of HRA. The off-campus accommodation provider shall provide the UFS with written or documentary proof that the shortcomings have been addressed in accordance with the directions of the UFS.</p> <p>6.6.4 If the off-campus accommodation provider does not succeed in addressing the shortcomings to the satisfaction of the UFS and within the timeframes agreed upon, the accreditation will be withdrawn and the property shall be removed from the UFS database of accredited accommodation providers, as well as all other platforms where accredited off-campus accommodation may be promoted or advertised.</p> <p>6.6.5 The off-campus accommodation provider has the right to appeal against the deaccreditation decision of the Senior Director of HRA, in which case the same procedure as described in paragraph 6.3.3 of the Appeal Procedure (Procedure document) shall be followed.</p> <p>6.6.6 The UFS will not get involved in any dispute of whatever nature between off-campus accommodation providers, and the platforms offered by the UFS shall not be available to resolve disputes of this nature.</p> <p>6.6.7 The UFS shall be entitled to immediately withdrawing accreditation where clear evidence has been found by HRA that the providers of the relevant off-campus student accommodation solicit staff or students of the UFS through inducements, whether monetary or otherwise, to support their provision of off-campus student accommodation.</p> <p>6.6.8 Should any provision of this policy and ancillary documents be contravened after the accreditation, HRA has the right to withdraw the accreditation of an accredited off-campus accommodation provider and suspend such an off-campus accommodation provider for a period of 1 (one) year.</p> <p>6.7 NSFAS Funding for Accredited Off-Campus Accommodation</p> <p>6.7.1 In the event that a student applies for financial aid from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (“NSFAS”) and enquires about off-campus accommodation, the Finance Department of the UFS will provide the student with a list of accredited off-campus accommodation providers and their contact details so that the student can contact the off-campus accommodation providers directly and make an informed decision.</p> <p>6.7.2 A portion of the financial aid provided by NSFAS may also be applied towards the accommodation cost of students who live in UFS-accredited off-campus accommodation, subject to the student qualifying for a private accommodation allowance from NSFAS.</p>
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	<p>6.7.3 The private accommodation allowances of NSFAS will either be received and managed by the UFS simultaneously with the students' tuition fees and accordingly paid directly to the off-campus accommodation provider, as contemplated in paragraph 6.7.4 below, or NSFAS will pay the private accommodation allowance directly to the students to effect payment to the off-campus accommodation provider, as contemplated in paragraph 6.7.5 below.</p> <p>6.7.4 NSFAS Private Accommodation Allowance Managed by the UFS</p> <p>a) The Finance Department of the UFS will allocate a designated amount of the NSFAS funds towards the payment of rental for off-campus private accommodation.</p> <p>b) The maximum amount allocated towards rent for off-campus private accommodation will be determined by the UFS, NSFAS and the Department of Higher Education and Training from time to time.</p> <p>c) The Finance Department of the UFS will effect payment to the off-campus accommodation provider upon receipt of a valid written invoice from the respective off-campus accommodation provider.</p> <p>d) Kindly note that the provisions of this paragraph 6.7.4 may be subject to change and the procedure relating to the management of NSFAS private accommodation allowances will be determined by the UFS, NSFAS and the Department of Higher Education and Training in respect of each new academic year.</p> <p>6.7.5 NSFAS Private Accommodation Allowance Paid Directly to Students</p> <p>a) In the event that the NSFAS private accommodation allowance is paid out directly to students, the students shall be responsible for effecting rental payments to the off-campus accommodation provider.</p> <p>b) It shall be the sole responsibility of the off-campus accommodation provider to secure the rental payments from the students, and the UFS shall not in any manner whatsoever be held liable in the event that students default in respect of payment of any rental amounts due in terms of this paragraph 6.7.5.</p> <p>6.7.6 The provisions of paragraph 6.7.5 shall apply in respect of all bursaries and/or student funding allocated towards the payment of off-campus accommodation.</p> <p>6.8 Construction, Repairs and Maintenance of the Off-Campus Accommodation</p> <p>6.8.1 Any and all construction, repairs and maintenance of the property must comply with all relevant legislation and be carried out by appropriately qualified staff or contractors.</p>
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	<p>6.8.2 Reasonable procedures and response times for emergency, urgent and routine repairs should be established and implemented by the off-campus accommodation provider after consultation with all stakeholders, including the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.</p> <p>6.8.3 Any construction, maintenance or repairs must be carried out with minimum disruption to the academic programme and requirements of students, and with due regard for their safety and security.</p> <p>6.8.4 In the event that repairs are of such a nature that relocation of the students is required, the UFS will make alternative accommodation available to the students until such time as the off-campus accommodation is reasonably inhabitable.</p> <p>6.9 Student Well-being and Support</p> <p>6.9.1 The off-campus accommodation providers shall endeavour to make adequate provision for the medical and psychological well-being of students by referring such students to the relevant UFS platforms, such as Kovsie Health or Kovsie Counselling, upon becoming reasonably aware that students may be in need of such services.</p> <p>6.9.2 The minimum standards of student housing on higher education institutions should be adhered to.</p> <p>6.10 Student Discipline</p> <p>6.10.1 Students living in accredited off-campus accommodation are expected to live in accordance with the values of the UFS. The UFS policies, regulations and procedures (copies of which are available on the UFS website) shall also apply to students who live in accredited off-campus accommodation.</p> <p>6.10.2 All students who transgress these policies, regulations and procedures will be subject to disciplinary action as prescribed by the official UFS Rules on Student Discipline, which are stipulated in Annexure B of the (2022 General Academic Rules and Regulations).</p>
7. Responsibility	<p>7.1 Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs</p> <p>7.2 Assistant Director: Accommodation Administration</p> <p>7.3 Officer: Off-Campus Accommodation</p>
8. Accountability and Authority	
8.1 Implementation	<p>8.1.1 Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs</p> <p>8.1.2 Assistant Director: Accommodation Administration</p> <p>8.1.3 Officer: Off-Campus Accommodation</p>
8.2 Compliance	8.2.1 Executive Director: Student Affairs
8.3 Monitoring and Evaluation	8.3.1 Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs
8.4 Development/Review	8.4.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 (three) years in accordance with the relevant UFS policies, procedures, guidelines and regulations, in consultation with the following stakeholders of the UFS:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the Housing and Residence Affairs Department (“HRA”); b) the Student Representative Council as representative of the Student Affairs Department; c) the Finance Department; d) UFS Protection Services; and e) the Occupational Health and Safety Department. <p>8.4.2 This policy must be read in consideration of and in conjunction with the Protection of Personal Information Act, 4 of 2013, as well as all applicable student accommodation policies and by-laws of the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality and other local municipalities within which the UFS is operating, the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 (as amended), the Housing Act, 107 of 1997 (as amended), the Consumer Protection Act, 68 of 2008 (as amended) and the Rental Housing Act, 50 of 1999 (as amended).</p>
8.5 Approval Authority	<p>8.5.1 Rectorate;</p> <p>8.5.2 UMC;</p> <p>8.5.3 Student Support Services Committee of Council; and</p> <p>8.5.4 Council.</p>
8.6 Interpretation and Advice	8.6.1 Senior Director: Housing and Residence Affairs
9. Who should know this policy?	
<p>9.1 Registered UFS students</p> <p>9.2 Housing and Residence Affairs</p> <p>9.3 Student Affairs</p> <p>9.4 Finance</p> <p>9.5 Health and Wellness Centre</p> <p>9.6 Occupational Health and Safety</p> <p>9.7 Off-Campus Accommodation Providers</p>	
10. Policy / Procedure Implementation Plan	10.1 Please see the full document referring to the Implementation Plan.
11. Resources Required	<p>11.1 Sufficient staff capacity, specifically in the Off-Campus Accommodation office (OCA), including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Officer responsible for the OCA office; b) Administrator; c) Inspection Officer; d) Intern; and e) Two Student Assistants. <p>11.2 Additionally, the crucial relationship with two key stakeholders:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Protection Services – staff and vehicle transport; and b) Department of Finance – both Financial Aid and Accounts Payable.
12. Answers to FAQs	Please see the full list of FAQs as an additional.
EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLICY	
Performance Indicator(s):	To be completed on review by the person responsible for implementation, monitoring and evaluation.