

## **OCSS Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

*This is compiled list of the most frequently asked questions from students regarding their off campus housing search. Of course, there are many more questions to ask, so please feel free to reach out to our office if you do not see an answer to your questions here!*

### **What kind of expenses are involved?**

- Be prepared to cover the first and last month's rent because most leases require them.
- Realtors charge a finder's fee which is typically equal to one month's rent. Sometimes the landlord or the owner of the apartment will cover all or part of the finder's fee. Be sure to ALWAYS ask if a realtor has any "FEE FREE" apartments!
- Most landlords or apartment owners will also charge a security deposit, which may or may not be returned once your lease is finished. The terms should be specified in your lease, and a security deposit cannot be more than one month's rent. This deposit will also sit in a bank account during your tenancy, and accrue interest, which you will collect upon moving out.

### **How much should I expect to spend on a monthly basis?**

- The pricing of rental units varies greatly in and around the city of Boston. You should expect to pay anywhere between \$600-\$1,700 a month for rent, utilities, transportation, and food. Most students will live with at least one other roommate to offset the high costs of off campus living.

### **How do I begin looking for an apartment?**

- Look at a map of Boston and the surrounding areas. Decide how far you are willing to commute, and take note of the location of subway and bus stops.
- Once you have decided on an area or two, it is a good idea to visit those neighborhoods during the day and at night to see if you feel safe and comfortable.
- Begin looking for potential roommates. It is a good idea to discuss price, individual preferences, and expectations before agreeing to live with someone and before beginning to look for apartments.
- Begin looking at apartments. There are many ways in which to look for apartments, whether using Emerson's [Housing Website](#), or contacting one of the many Emerson recommended Realtors.

## **How will I get to school from my apartment?**

- It is important to consider what form of transportation you will use to get not only to campus, but surrounding areas as well. Most students rely upon the MBTA subway and bus system to travel to and from school. Busses, biking, and walking are other means of transportation for our students.
- Make sure to walk to the MBTA “T” stop(s) closest to your apartment before making your decision. You want to make sure that you are comfortable with your walk to and from your apartment, and that you feel safe during the day and night time commute.
- Off Campus Student Services (OCSS) participates in the MBTA Semester T-Pass program. Through the program, students receive an 11% discount (subject to change) for the fall semester (Sept-Dec) and the spring semester (Feb-May). Passes must be purchased by the deadline set forth by the MBTA, and are made available for pick up through the OCSS Office.

## **Should I sign a lease?**

- Always sign a lease. Your lease is what states your right(s) as a tenant of the apartment you are renting. Without a lease, you have no rights, no guarantees, and no opportunity to take legal action, if needed.
- Make sure you read your entire lease. A lease is a binding, legal document, and you will be responsible for anything covered in it.
- Make sure to acquire a copy of your lease before moving into your apartment.
- If you have any questions about a lease, the OCSS will be more than happy to sit down with you to go over the contract page by page.

## **Will I need someone to co-sign my lease?**

- Landlords or apartment owners will typically require college students to have a co-signer on their lease. The co-signer is usually a parent, but may also be a relative or someone with a vested interest in supporting you.
- A credit check is usually run on the co-signers to ensure that they will be able to afford rental costs.

## **I looked at an apartment, and I really like it, but there are a few things I would like fixed, changed, or cleaned before I move in.**

- If there is anything about the apartment that you would like fixed, changed, or cleaned, discuss it with the landlord before signing the lease. Make sure the landlord agrees to make the changes and if possible, get the specific agreement in writing. Otherwise, there is no guarantee that the changes will be made.

### **What is included in my rent payment(s)?**

- Your rent payment may not cover all expenses within the apartment. Heat and hot water are sometimes included in the rent payment, but are not always. This is something that will be stated within your lease.
- Typically, electric, gas, cable, internet and any other expenses are not included in the rent payment.
- If heat, hot water, electric and/or gas are not included in the rent payment, it is always a good idea to ask the relator, landlord or service provider for typical bills paid during the past 6 months to a year.

### **What happens when I decide to take an apartment?**

- Be prepared to act quickly. Apartments are in high demand in the Boston area and do not remain available for long. If you are looking at apartments, it is a good idea to be prepared to fill out an application that same day.
- Once you decide to apply to rent an apartment, the realtor or landlord will typically have you fill out an application which will include financial information. After reviewing your ability to pay rent each month, the realtor or landlord will let you know whether you have been approved to rent the apartment.
- Then, you will be expected to pay whatever is required, usually including first and last month's rent, a security deposit and a finder's fee (fees required vary by lease).