

BEING A GOOD ROOMMATE



Introduction

Welcome to the Bader International Study Centre and to the Student Services department. We hope each of our residents finds this community welcoming and supportive. Support for academic as well as personal development is a primary focus for Student Services, and living with a new roommate, whether from the same or a different country can provide many opportunities for personal growth.

A good beginning is to become better acquainted with your roommate so that you can be open and honest with them. This does not mean sharing everything, but it does require that you feel comfortable enough with one another to be able to express yourself about your own needs, and to respect your roommate's needs. When you appreciate each other's backgrounds, attitudes, habits, and moods, you are ready to talk about your roommate expectations.

Being a Good Roommate

The following issues represent areas where conflict has been known to occur between roommates. Talk about what your needs are in this living situation. Do not take anything for granted. As you talk with each other develop a list of your mutual expectations. Fill out the information sheet in the middle of this booklet to help clarify things.

When you have completed the information sheet, pass it to your Student Life Coordinator.

Sharing things

- Is sharing clothes, shoes, boots allowed?
- Is sharing electronics (e.g., laptop, iPod) allowed?
- Is sharing toiletries (e.g., shampoo, cosmetics) allowed?
- Is sharing school supplies (e.g., pencils, pens) allowed?
- Is permission required before using all items or just certain items?

Cleanliness

- What are your standards of cleanliness?

Handling conflicts

- How do you want to be approached about a problem or difference of opinion?

Noise

All students must comply with the Quiet Hours policy, but what about habits and behaviours in the room?

- Do you like to study with music?
- How often does each roommate Skype with family etc?

Personal needs

- What is each person's schedule?
- Does either roommate prefer alone time?

Alcohol

All students must comply with the BISC Rules and Regulations regarding alcohol possession and consumption, but what about individual habits and behaviours in the room?

- How do you feel about drinking?
- What about visitors who drink?

Problem Solving

1. Sit down together – either in your room or a neutral space.
2. Each roommate should take a turn describing their perception of the situation – how they feel about it and what the problem is.
3. Avoid blaming each other. Use “I” statements.
4. Come to an agreement about what the problem is.
5. Talk about exactly what changes will be needed to bring about a solution.
6. Compromise to reach a solution.
7. Make a plan of action and set a time frame for trying out the plan.
8. Set a future date to evaluate the situation and talk about changes if needed.

These steps seem quite simple but to make them work you have to interact fairly. The key to a successful discussion of problems is communicating on an equal basis and avoiding behaviour which will break down communication.

What to do when things just won't work out

If you and your roommate have tried to work out your problems but nothing is working you can ask for help from:

- Your Student Life Coordinator
- One of the Assistant Managers
- The Student and Enrolment Services Manager

If you have not been through the roommate agreement and attempted developing your own solution to the problem before approaching your SLC then a likely first step will be for your SLC to ask you to work through the steps listed above.

“I” Statements

“I” statements contribute to effective communication and effective conflict resolution. When we state something as a fact that is really just our subjective viewpoint it can:

- alienate people from us because their experience may not be the same as ours.
- imply we are powerless to have any influence over our responses to the situation. This is a common way in which conflicts become entrenched and, seemingly to those involved, irresolvable. The situation reduces to a win/lose situation where if one person's fact is right then the other's must be wrong.

Using an I-statement acknowledges that the viewpoint is our own and not necessarily a fact about the situation. I am accepting ownership of my experience and acknowledging that it may not be one that is shared by others.

Roommate Contract

Each student living in Bader Hall has...

- The right to sleep during the night undisturbed.
- The right to study in one's room free of noise and distractions during quiet hours.
- The right of access to one's room and facilities at all times.
- The right to feel secure against physical or emotional harm.
- The right to a clean room.
- The right to have one's belongings respected.
- The right to have guests in the room when they will not disturb one's roommates' right to sleep or study.
- The right to privacy.
- The right to redress grievances.
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We agree

1. To follow the rules and conditions set out in the BISC Rules and Regulations, the BISC Residence Agreement, and abide by the laws of the United Kingdom.
2. To the following conditions and living standards for our room.
 - a. Food _____
 - b. Cleanliness _____
 - c. Sharing of Personal Items _____

d. Smoking, Drinking_____

e. Overnight Guests & Visitors_____

*Please refer to the Guest Policy in the BISC Rules and Regulations.

f. Privacy_____

g. Noise/Study Times_____

h. Security_____

i. Messages_____

j. Handling Conflict_____

k. Communication Style_____

l. m. Additional Remarks_____

Roommate #1: _____

Date: _____

Roommate #2. _____

Date: _____

Student Services Member: _____

Date: _____

Loud/Noisy Neighbours

If you are being disturbed by a neighbour, your first effort should be to speak with them constructively about your concern.

- 1. Attempt early intervention.** Speak with your neighbour(s) the first time you are woken up or as soon as you suspect a pattern is developing. Do not spend an entire semester tolerating the same disturbance and then reach your limit during exam time. It will be easier for all parties to resolve it if you are not angry and their behaviour is not yet a routine.
- 2. Talk directly.** Plan to speak face-to-face. Direct conversation is much more effective than writing a letter or banging on the wall. More importantly, do not create retaliatory noise – this does nothing but weaken your case for complaining.
- 3. Plan ahead.** Think about the best way in which to say what you want to say. Be prepared to describe how and when the disturbance is affecting you.
- 4. Be willing to listen.** Once you have stated the problem, really listen to their response. There are always at least two sides to every situation.
- 5. If they are gracious** with their response be sure to thank them for their consideration.
- 6. If they are unwilling** to answer their door or talk with you, contact your Student Life Coordinator (SLC) to discuss the problem. The SLC will do their best to mediate the conflict as a neutral party.

Living and Learning in a Diverse Community

Developing a constructive relationship with a person can be educational and fun. You can learn how another person perceives the world while fostering attitudes and traits that are increasingly valuable in the modern world.

Roommates from either another country or the same country will find that cultures and customs vary widely. Developing constructive relationships with people requires an open mind, respect for the other person, the ability to listen without judging the other person, flexibility, and good humour.

Recently Arrived Roommates

Some students may have arrived in the UK early, but the majority will have arrived on the official arrivals day, and will have been on long flights from Canada, the USA, Japan, China, etc.

Recently arrived roommates need special consideration. It's also worth noting that you may observe some of these behaviours in yourself if you have not lived in the UK before:

- They are likely to be **quite tired**, not just because of the long trip and jet lag, but because they will likely have been engaged in lengthy and complex preparations for their stay at the BISC.
- They may be **lonely** because they have left their family and friends behind and do not know anyone in the new place.
- They may be **quite anxious** as a result of so many common things being unfamiliar to them such as the value of coins, the location of buildings, the food, etc.
- They may **have problems with the local English**, even if they know English grammar and vocabulary well.
- They may go through some phases in adjusting to the new environment. Their initial excitement and openness may be replaced by a period of withdrawal or depression. If you become concerned, talk with your Student Life Coordinator (SLC) about it. They can make someone checks in.

Language Barriers

1. **Enjoy your roommate's accent.** Often you can understand, if only you make a little extra effort to listen. One excellent tool for gaining insight is to paraphrase what you think they said.
2. **Limited English proficiency** does not imply limited intelligence.
3. **Slow down.** Anyone learning or using a foreign language has trouble keeping up with a native speaker. If your roommate says you talk too fast, try to slow down and speak more clearly, not more loudly.
4. **Avoid slang.** Slang expressions are confusing to most people learning or using a foreign language. You may be asked to explain the meaning of some slang phrases.
5. **Ask for verification.** After you have spoken, ask your roommate to restate what you have said. Don't ask "Do you understand?" as most people will say "Yes" to the question whether they understand it or not.
6. **Be alert for different meanings** being assigned to certain words, phrases, or actions. Sometimes you think you are understanding your roommate, and suddenly you realize you do not. When this happens, stop your conversation and discuss the apparent point of misunderstanding.
7. **Take time to learn some words** in your roommate's language – what a great opportunity!
8. **Most of all – be patient!**

Alcohol and Other Drugs	Alcohol and Drug Policy Review
<p>We know that individual choices around alcohol and drug use sometimes cause roommate conflicts. Sometimes these conflicts arise over storing or using alcohol and/or other drugs in the room and sometimes these conflicts are due to inconsiderate behaviour when students return to the room under the influence. Keeping in mind the BISC Rules and Regulations and UK law, we encourage you to have an honest conversation with your roommate about your expectations for behaviour in your shared space related to these matters. Being under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs is no excuse for disrespectful behaviour towards your roommate or for creating an unsafe situation in your room. Please know that BISC staff will document all alcohol and/or other drug violations which we observe and that both room owners can be held accountable for policy violations in the shared room.</p>	<p>Alcohol is allowed in student rooms, with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glass beer bottles are not allowed. • Open alcohol is only allowed in student rooms or C1 Common Room, the Headless Drummer, or at sanctioned events. • Students under the age of 18 may not possess or consume alcohol in or around the BISC estate. • It is prohibited to advertise, announce, organize, run, and/or host a gathering involving the consumption of alcohol, narcotics, or controlled substances. A gathering constitutes more than 6 students in a room or space. • Individual students are not allowed to possess large quantities of alcohol exceeding the volume of 24 beer cans, or 12 tall cans, or 26 ounces/75cl of liquor, or 1 litre of wine, or of any containers of alcohol exceeding one litre (e.g., kegs or mini-kegs). • Students may not participate in drinking games or any activities that promote excessive or rapid consumption of alcohol. This includes playing drinking games with any substance. • Students may not display items or displays that are perceived to promote unsafe alcohol consumption (e.g. funnels, trophy walls, drinking game tables, wizard staffs, etc.). • Marijuana and other illegal drugs are not permitted in Bader Hall or on the BISC estate.
Guest Policy	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All guests are requested to leave the Castle grounds by 1:00am if they do not wish to stay overnight. • Any guest staying later than this time must be officially registered as an overnight stay and will be charged the full room rate. Guests stay in the designated area of Bader Hall. • Any student who has booked, and paid, for a single room at Bader Hall has the privilege of having a maximum of 2 overnight guests stay for a maximum of 3 nights free of charge per term in their room. Guests are still responsible for paying for meals taken. They can purchase meal tickets at Castle Reception. A student who has the same privilege but will not be using the free nights may allocate these nights to another student with a single room. However no student may have more than 6 free nights in any one term. Guests staying in student single rooms must be booked in advance at Bader Reception. • Any student who has a single room by default (i.e. not paid to have a single room but has one anyway) may not have overnight guests stay with them. Guests must book and pay to stay in the A Wing of Bader Hall. • Students are limited to a maximum of ten guest overnights each term in the Fall and Winter terms and six guest overnights in the Summer terms. Exceptions to this must be requested in writing, in advance, to the Operations Manager and Student and Enrolment Services Manager. • While in residence buildings, guests must be escorted by their host at all times. • Residents are responsible for their guest's behaviour during their visit and any Rules and Regulations violations that they commit, regardless of whether or not the resident is present at the time of the incident. • Residents are responsible for informing their guests of Residence Rules and Regulations. Any fines, damages, etc., incurred by guests will be the responsibility of the host. Guests who are behaving inappropriately will be asked to leave. • Guests are expected to cooperate with requests by all BISC staff. • It is at the discretion of the BISC Management to restrict access to the whole or parts of Bader Hall and/or the campus at large by guests and others throughout the academic year. 	

With thanks to

- Apartment Life, Colorado State University
- <http://www.communicationandconflict.com/>