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800 student landlords sign up to accreditation scheme

Since its launch one year ago, more than 800 student landlords have signed up to the AFS/Unipol Code, the first nationwide student landlord accreditation scheme, with figures predicted to rise to 2500 by the end of next year.

The Code, created by Accommodation for Students (AFS) (www.accommodationforstudents.com), the UK's No 1 student accommodation website, and Unipol, the charity working to improve training, standards and professionalism in student housing, is a voluntary scheme where landlords commit to maintaining professional standards when managing shared student properties. It sets out a number of specific standards which rented student properties and their management must adhere to, covering key areas such as comfort, facilities, safety, security and service.

As rents continue to rise in many university towns, students and parents are looking for reassurance that they are getting value for money. A survey conducted by AFS suggested that the introduction of the accreditation scheme has been well received throughout the industry with over 90 percent of students saying they would prefer to rent a property that has been physically inspected and accredited. Similarly, with growing competition in the student accommodation market, professional landlords are keen for their properties to stand out and are benefiting from quality tenants and quicker lettings.

Rob Hunter, founder of Place Group UK and The London Student Group (who are LLAS/ UKLAP Best Landlord Of The Year For Student Housing 2012 *), has worked with AFS for over 10 years and was one of the first landlords in London to sign up for the code.

Rob comments " Put simply, the code is definitely working for us. Based on the detailed independent inspections carried out as part of the accreditation process and the written reports we received, we now have a programme to ensure that our shared student houses are upgraded specifically by reference to the published requirements of the AFS/Unipol Code meaning they now meet the very highest safety standards which (in our case) in fact exceed those required by the local authority, therefore putting us ahead of the game in every respect".

Rob goes on to say "I can't speak highly enough of the accreditation, the outstanding quality of the assessors and the results we have seen. Compliance with a recognised published standard provides peace of mind to parents and students, and I am passionate about encouraging more landlords to get behind the scheme and help improve standards throughout the sector. I now know that not only

are we are supplying the very best product we can, but that we have independent acknowledgement of this to show to those considering renting from us and the universities we work with”.

Simon Thompson, co-founder and director of AFS, commented “Although it is still early days, with only pockets of accredited inventory in each city, we are very pleased with both the take up from landlords and reaction from students. I think its success can be attributed to the quality of the inspections taking place. Standards are physically checked during visits from professional verifiers who are extremely thorough in ensuring the properties are safe and suitable to let.”

Since the code is UK wide, it has to be suitable to cover a variety of different student properties. Simon comments “Ensuring the code works for all has been one of the greatest challenges and there have been some tweaks along the way to ensure it complies with new industry regulations. We are now confident that we have a succinct set of standards easily identifiable to students by our ‘thumbs up’ logo, which we hope in time will be recognised nationwide.”

With the busiest time of year fast approaching, when keen first year students start looking for their second year houses, AFS and Unipol are keen to encourage more and more landlords to become accredited and have launched a video to demonstrate how the process works. This can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjemwU6_3Dw&feature=youtu.be

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For further information, please contact:

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About Accommodation for Students

Accommodation for Students (www.accommodationforstudents.com) is the UKs number one No.1 student accommodation website, designed to provide students with one central comprehensive source of information on student accommodation.

Accommodation for Students was founded in 2000 by Simon Thompson and William Berry. It provides a powerful search engine accessing a nationwide database of student accommodation which enables students to find properties, private halls and housemates fast. Students can now also deposit their accommodation requirements using the sites Property Alerts service and get properties e-mailed to them on a daily basis that match their requirements. The landlord admin suite interface allows landlords to directly upload and edit their property details and pictures on to the site which allows for ease of communication with students.

Accommodation for Students was nominated for Best Use of Web in the 2005 and 2004 New Media Age Awards and was highly commended in the Best Industry Innovation category at the inaugural 2002 Property Business Awards. In June 2011 Simon Thompson was named one of the top 40 business people in Manchester, courtesy of the Crains Manchester Business Paper 40 under 40 awards. Co-founder William Berry also won the 2006 BT Essence of the Entrepreneur award for the site.

About Rob Hunter

Rob is a member of London Landlord Accreditation Scheme (LLAS) and his student housing business "The London Student Group" is LLAS/ UKLAP Best Landlord of the Year for Student Housing 2012.

Rob is a member of the National Landlords Association and registered as a private landlord with all the main London universities.

Rob is a Solicitor, a member of the Law Society, a member of the Chartered Institute of Housing, a member of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and member of the Institute of Financial Services.

Rob is the founder of "Place Group UK" which is registered with the OFT and is a corporate member of the Ombudsman Service (Property) [previously The Surveyors Ombudsman], the Housing Ombudsman, and subscribes to the Respect ASB Charter For Housing.