

ACoP – THE UNIVERSITIES UK AND GUILDHE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

AUE TECHNICAL BRIEFING 2026 *V1 25/08/2026*

PRIMARY AUDIENCE	Heads of Engineering or equivalent in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (where the University is a registered member of the UUK/GuildHE Code of Practice).
SECONDARY AUDIENCE	Senior Engineers or equivalent
KEY MESSAGE	ACoP's purpose is to support its members in the delivery of safe, efficient and sustainable student accommodation and provide a practical and relevant alternative to licensing under the Housing Act 2004. It achieves this by setting rigorous standards, assuring compliance and sharing best practice. The Code, administered by ACoP, provides a visible kite mark for accommodation, which is useful in promoting it to students and their parents. For the avoidance of any doubt, compliance with The Code is a statutory requirement and replaces the need for Local Authority licensing. The Code establishes a comprehensive framework that extends well beyond the baseline standards typically associated with licensing regimes. Notwithstanding this broader scope, compliance with all applicable Local Authority statutory requirements, including minimum amenity standards, remains a fundamental expectation under The Code. This approach was a central principle underpinning the development of the 2025 Code and was determined by members and stakeholders throughout the review process. There was a shared recognition that, whilst the physical fabric of a building provides an important foundation, the student living experience is shaped by a much wider range of factors. The enhanced scope of The Code was therefore

	intentionally designed to reflect the full breadth of university life and accommodation provision, ensuring that standards extend beyond the minimum regulatory requirements to encompass the quality, wellbeing, support, engagement, and overall experience of students living within accommodation.
KEY ACTION	Ensure accommodation teams and internal auditors can access your institution's student accommodation compliance data in respect of engineering services. Under the current Code, institutions must complete detailed triennial audits, supported in the intervening years by mandatory self-assessment audits. You can check when your institution is next due an audit by emailing info@acop.ac.uk.
PENALTIES FOR NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE	ACoP aims to promote continuous improvement, so its standards should be treated as a baseline to exceed rather than a target to meet. ACoP recognises that compliance is demanding, and this is intentional. The Code is founded upon a clear and uncompromising commitment to student safety, wellbeing, and the quality of the student living experience. Its requirements are designed to ensure that students benefit from accommodation that not only meets statutory obligations but also delivers a safe, supportive, and professionally managed environment. At the same time, membership of ACoP provides substantial value to accommodation providers. By replacing the need for Local Authority licensing, ACoP membership can deliver significant financial savings across the sector, reducing administrative burdens and licensing costs while maintaining robust independent oversight and assurance. This reflects a fundamental principle of The Code: that high standards, strong consumer protection, and student safety should be achieved through a sector-led framework that is both rigorous and efficient. The demanding nature of compliance is therefore a deliberate feature of the scheme, ensuring that members can demonstrate excellence, secure tangible operational benefits, and provide students, parents, universities, and stakeholders with confidence that accommodation is being managed to the highest standards. ACoP exists to help members maintain compliance and continually improve standards, while fulfilling its responsibility to identify, challenge, and address instances of non-compliance. Examples of non-compliance include:

	• Failure to meet ACoP's administrative requirements, such as poor communication, late submission of documents or non-payment of relevant fees. • Audit findings, or inadequate responses to them, that indicate persistent management failure. • Complaints from students or their representatives that are not properly addressed and indicate serious or persistent management failure. • Member compliance status will be reported on member and student-facing websites, including where a member is under review because of late submissions or failure to address non-compliant elements of The Code. Institutions remain non-compliant until all requirements have been met or there is an agreed plan to meet them. Exclusion of an institution from ACoP will mean that they cease to be a 'specified' educational establishment and some or all their accommodation may become subject to mandatory HMO licensing, additional HMO licensing or selective licensing as a result. Both Government and the Member's Local Authority are required to be notified by ACoP once the member is excluded.
BACKGROUND TO THE CODE	The Code originated from the Housing Act 2004, which introduced licensing for houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and other measures. The Act exempted accommodation managed or controlled by further or higher education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, provided the FE and HE sector established a Government-approved code of practice. The Government authorised UUK and GuildHE to create The code. They appointed the Association of Directors of Estates (AUDE) to lead the work, including consultation with other sector bodies.
GOVERNANCE OF THE CODE	ACoP is administered as a Special Interest Organisation (SIO) within Professional Higher Education Services Ltd (PHES), on behalf of UUK and GuildHE. Two standing committees support its effective operation: the Compliance Assurance and Scrutiny Board (CASB) and the Governance Board (GB). CASB oversees ACoP's operational management by receiving members' audit reports and, through its scrutiny panel, reviewing audit submissions. It reports its findings to the GB and may make recommendations about individual members, wider policy, or

	updates to The Code. The GB oversees the strategic development and operation of The Code and publishes an annual review of ACoP's performance, drawing on members' experiences, audit findings, complaints, compliance issues, and reports from other bodies.
IMPORTANT LINKS	The following web links will give you access to further information: • The ACoP website • Note: Login access is required for some areas, this is free of charge and open to all employees within the member organisation • The ACoP website for students • Annual Reports – summary of audit findings and trends • Code Knowledge Hub
FURTHER INFORMATION	You can contact the ACoP National Code Advisors by emailing info@ACoP.ac.uk