



# **Student Residential Accommodation in Global Cities: Improving Student Experience and Engagement**

**Research Report for Sodexo**  
October 2019

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## Acknowledgements

We wish to express our sincere thanks to many colleagues who made this research project possible, especially to the project sponsors, Sodexo Schools & Universities UK, for their sincere interest and support in this research. Thanks to our colleagues in UCL Accommodation who generously shared their ideas and facilitated access to several student residences.

Sincere thanks also to the teams from Student Living by Sodexo at Northumbria University Newcastle who guided our visits to several sites of student accommodation and spent time in discussion. To our colleagues at the University of Amsterdam and Vrije University we extend appreciation for graciously sharing their time, knowledge and facilities with us – even including bicycles to navigate the city. And to all of the staff and students who participated in our focus group sessions and interviews, thank you for sharing your thoughts, experiences and expertise.

We hope that this short project will lead to better understanding the importance of student residential accommodation, SRA, in global cities to benefit students, universities and the staff who contribute to forging positive student experience and engagement.

The research was conducted by UCL from late 2018 to May 2019 by Dr Zachery Spire and Professor Alexi Marmot, and officially launched at a joint UCL/Sodexo event in October 2019.

## List of Abbreviations

<b>FE</b> .....	Further Education – UK term generally refers to non-university tertiary education
<b>HE</b> .....	Higher Education – UK term generally refers to universities
<b>HEI</b> .....	Higher Education Institution
<b>KCL</b> .....	Kings College London
<b>PBSA</b> .....	Purpose-Built Student Accommodation
<b>SRA</b> .....	Student Residential Accommodation
<b>UCL</b> .....	University College London
<b>UvA</b> .....	Universiteit van Amsterdam
<b>VU</b> .....	Vrije Universiteit

# Executive Summary

**Student residential accommodation, SRA, continues to be a critical component of many students' engagement in higher education, HE. In this research, we focus particularly on student residential accommodation in global cities where housing pressures and costs are acute.**

The research aims to improve operational and theoretical understanding of the role of student residential accommodation as an element within the wider student experience. In addition to the literature review, the research is based primarily on visits, focus groups and interviews with a sample of staff and students in eight case study sites across four higher education institutions in two capital cities, Amsterdam (Netherlands), London (UK) and a regional city, Newcastle (UK).

The context to the research is that participation in HE continues to grow across the globe at a considerably faster rate than the supply of purpose-built student accommodation, PBSA. And there is a clear gap between supply of PBSA and supply, demand and distribution of non-PBSA housing available for domestic and international demand. Student numbers are rising particularly in large global cities. Data are increasingly available for prospective students on university rankings and urban rankings. City governments, universities and the real estate industry across the contexts we studied have responded by policy and planning, and, increasing the quantity and variety of privately funded student residential accommodation.

Staff responsible for student accommodation facilities raised a number of key issues and concerns, including: the limited availability of student residential accommodation compared to demand, high cost of student accommodation as part of a students' total cost of attendance. The importance of the location of student residential accommodation in relation to academic facilities and other urban attractors were noted. Operators of SRA commonly stressed the importance of the relationship of staff to students both in enhancing the student experience and in being alert to student concerns, queries and issues.

Key themes raised by students include the overall quality of communication, relationships, and service provided to students, and the quality and equity of amenities within the student residential accommodation.

In order to improve experience and engagement for students in SRA, the findings of this research indicate three key aspects. First, the need to focus on student needs at stages of the student 'journey': pre-arrival, arrival, during studies, during exam periods and departure. We found that students desire clarity on the room allocation process, specific details regarding their room and its facilities, and the other students with whom they will reside. They also want more information on their future housing options after leaving SRA or once their studies are complete.

Second, both staff and students are clear that technology is becoming a key element of the students' expectations and engagement with and in student residential accommodation. In particular, mobile apps and social media, are of growing importance and utility in linking people within SRA, and in helping deliver services. Third and most important, staff-student relations shine through as the key driver of positive student attitudes and perceptions of experience and engagement with and in student residential accommodation. Relationships affected staff and student experience and engagement with accommodation and by extension, students' wider experience of the city and their institutions. Specific examples of these three aspects are noted in the report.

Looking forward, we recommend continued support for SRA staff training and opportunities for the staff to provide feedback on opportunities for improvements in the design and operation of the facilities, and the staff-student interface. We also foresee evolution of technology for SRA communications and services as complementing rather than replacing staff-student engagement opportunities pre-arrival, on arrival, throughout studies and upon departure.

Finally, we recommend further in-depth research to explore the contribution of student residential accommodation to student engagement across a variety of student residential accommodation a variety of SRAs/cities/regional/national and international contexts as a way of understanding whether, and how, cities are responding to demand for HE/SRA in clear, constructive ways. Such research should be designed specifically to compare the benefits of varied types of accommodation, student demographics and staffing models (e.g. 'residence life') in creating a positive student experience.

**We propose sustained study of the realities with and in SRA/PBSA/HEIs from staff and students living, working and studying in these living-learning communities.**

# 1. Expansion of universities in global cities

## 1.1 Growth of HE worldwide

Global demand for tertiary education remains robust, however, the influence of student residential accommodation (SRA) on access and participation rates in tertiary education is opaque. While relative demand within populations and across nations is varied, absolute demand for tertiary education continues a steady rise. Data from the UNESCO Institute of Statistics demonstrates gross enrolment – the percentage of the typical age group in education – has risen from approximately 10% in the early 1970s to approximately 37% in 2015, with, 57 countries having a gross enrolment ratio of more than 50% while ratios for another 61 countries are 15-50%. (Marginson, S, 2018).

As tertiary education, particularly higher education in universities, grows, so too does the demand for student (and staff) residential accommodation. Traditionally early universities provided student and staff residences as an integral part of the estate. Later UK ‘redbrick’ universities attracted mainly local students living nearby, while providing small amounts of university accommodation for non-locals. More recently student residential accommodation has been structurally under-supplied, while universities prioritise investment to expand their teaching and research estates to meet growing enrolment of both national and international students. In recent years, purpose built student accommodation, PBSA, has primarily been provided by private sector developers in the UK and many other countries, and operated by specialist facility management companies, including Sodexo. Here, we focus on student residential accommodation provided by institutions and institutional partners across a small set of cities.

## 1.2 Growth of student numbers in selected global cities

Global cities have seen growth in demand for tertiary education (Sassen 1991; QS Rankings 2018). For this research we chose a convenience sample of two neighbouring global cities, London and Amsterdam, and a regional UK city, Newcastle to provide a contrasting urban context.

Both London and Amsterdam continue to experience growth in demand for tertiary education (QS Rankings 2018). Recent data collated by London Higher (2017) notes that, of the nearly 2.3 million students studying in the UK at 163 Higher Education providers, approximately 372,000 or 16% of the UK total were enrolled in 39 London institutions. Similarly, a recent report on international student demand for Higher Education in the Netherlands noted substantial overall growth in demand for university places at Netherlands universities. The report by Daan Huberts (2018) highlighted that during the academic year 2016-17 over 112,000 international students studied in Dutch higher education, “the highest number ever recorded in the Netherlands” (2). In 2015-2016, a record number of 258,054 students studied in various universities in the Netherlands, an increase of 1.8% compared to the prior year, of whom 36,711 students were from abroad, a growth from 8.1% in 2008-2009 to 14.2% (I Amsterdam 2017). London (top 5) and Amsterdam (top 50) have consistently been ranked highly in the QS Best Student Cities from 2015 to the most recent reports.

## 1.3 Influence of students in the cities

To understand the relationship between SRA, students and cities it is helpful to consider supply, demand and distribution of students and student residential accommodation using a multilevel, multidimensional and relational approach (Solomonides 2013). ‘Where’ do students live? ‘Why’ do they select into their residential accommodation? ‘What’ factors do they consider when selecting where to live? And ‘how’ does their accommodation influence their engagement and experiences with the city and with their university?



In the last decade, scholars (Blimling 2015; Sage, Smith & Hubbard 2012; Tight 2011) have debated the drivers (e.g. policy, practice, provision type, social attitudes) influencing HEI and private provision of SRA. In this context, we note city and local council policies may influence the supply, demand, and distribution of student residential accommodation. Students ‘need somewhere to live’, institutions may desire to provide students a type of residential life and education, while private investors and developers may view student residential accommodation as a profitable market asset to invest in for its potential yields and ROIs. We found the interests of stakeholders may come into tension on issues such as the design, form, costs, location, and amenities of SRA.

## 1.4 Responses from cities, universities, and the real estate sector

Reports by real estate companies (Cushman & Wakefield 2017, 2018; JLL 2016; Savills 2017, 2018) argue that the private provision of SRA emerged in response to a historical/structural under-supply of SRA. In the UK, student numbers/recruitment were originally tied to number of agreed places at an institutional level. As attitudes towards HE evolved, the aim of increasing recruitment and participation came into tension with SRA provision, retention and the relationships of SRA provision to students’ academic life. Instead, the ‘gold standard’ of Oxbridge came to be the exception and not a rule to aim for. These points will be further developed later in this paper. Various solutions have emerged including SRA, private rentals in co-living spaces, shared houses/flats/apartments, and commuter students travelling considerable distances between the university and their origin home and private residence. Shortage of supply has resulted in HEIs delimiting those students who are eligible to apply and participate in student residential accommodation. Frequently this results in SRA eligibility being restricted to first-year undergraduates, international and postgraduate students (Sage 2010).

Some cities have formulated policies for SRA within plans addressing the accessibility and affordability of housing more generally. For example, The Greater London Authority (GLA) has formulated a city-wide policy, H-17, on future development of student residential accommodation, that permits universities to own and/or lease both the land and student residential accommodation site. By contrast Amsterdam generally treats SRA as a form of social housing provision in which higher education institutions operate as ‘lease holders’, with attached social facilities such as shops and sports centres available for the use of all local residents, not restricted to students. The universities are not able to buy/sell/develop their main land holdings for student residential accommodation, only for more direct academic activities.

Similarly, the real estate sector has highlighted a drive towards increased investment in student residential accommodation in response to strong levels of demand. Savills (2018) noted that in 2016-2017, “Global investment into student residential accommodation exceeded \$16.4bn...a new annual record” (3). The authors noted global interest in SRA with ‘cross-border’ investment in over 37% of all student housing investment deals. In the UK, Cushman & Wakefield (2018) reported 31,348 new beds within a total of approximately 627,000 purpose-built bed spaces for 2018/19. They note that 32% of all new beds are studios, and that 95% of these are provided by the private sector. Both Savills (2018) and Cushman & Wakefield (2018) note that political uncertainty with regard to ‘Brexit’ and the current political climate of the United States may influence the attractiveness of the US & UK to investment in the short term. Institutional and sovereign fund investors continue to look towards European Union Markets (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Netherlands) as macro level political issues, growth in the number of courses taught in English in these countries and social attitudes towards ‘openness’ makes these markets attractive to prospective students, both domestic and international. In these dynamic environments, student residential accommodation is having a cascading influence on student engagement in and with higher education institutions and cities.

## 2. Student engagement

**Paralleling discussions of supply, demand and distribution of student residential accommodation is the influence of student residential accommodation on students' engagement and experience.**

### 2.1 Understanding student engagement

The concept of student engagement has its historical roots in the work of Alexander Astin (US) (1984). As Vicki Trowler (2010) noted, it was Astin's work on student 'involvement' that subsequently led to student experience as a conceptual lens for studies in higher education. While the literature and research on student experience in higher education has been ongoing since the mid-1980s in the US, the use of student experience as a conceptual lens for studies in higher education in the UK is more recent. Student experience came to prominence, as Little et al. (2009) noted, as massification and marketisation of the UK HE sector became entrenched concepts. A number of authors have cited changing attitudes post world war II (See Tight 2011), changes in student fee levels (Dunne and Owen 2013), a discursive move towards incorporating more student 'voice' (McGall 2010) and students as partners (Bryson 2016). Alongside these evolving conceptualisations of student experience, sharp changes in government policy aimed at massification and marketisation of higher education in the UK (Shattock 1994) and growth in international student numbers (Higher Education Statistics Agency 2017) were drivers underpinning a discursive shift from student participation and representation to student experience and engagement in higher education.

It is from some of the above existing literature and research that our student engagement lens emerged. We chose a student engagement lens as the breadth of the concept provides space to select and examine factors influencing students in higher education. As Little et al. (2009) note, for the UK, study of student engagement emerged from literature and research on student participation and representation. Similarly, Vicki Trowler (2010) completed a comprehensive literature review on student engagement defined as:

“...Concerned with the interaction between the time, effort and other relevant resources invested by both students and their institutions intended to optimise the student experience and enhance the learning outcomes and development of students and the performance, and reputation of the institution” (3).

### 2.2 The role of student residential accommodation

Student residential accommodation has long been considered a key component of the forms, functions and purpose of universities (Silver 2004). From halls of residence at Oxford, to en-suite style provision developed and operated by private providers in cities such as London and Newcastle, student residential accommodation continues to be a dynamic and evolving component of many university's provision and students' experience of a higher education in the UK. Alternatively, student residential accommodation can be viewed as a type of social housing whose operators remain regulated and shaped by governmental policy. Thus, the role and influence of student residential accommodation on student engagement in higher education remains diverse.



While a historically perpetuated part of many students educational experience in university, student residential accommodation continues to evolve across countries, higher education providers and urban contexts. The forms, functions and stated purpose of SRA continue to shift. Recent research in the UK (Spire, 2018) highlighted the interface of student engagement and student residential accommodation for undergraduate and postgraduate, domestic and international students . The study found students and staff across different sites perceived student residential accommodation as influencing students' engagement (e.g. social engagement, study habits, sense of security) in and with their accommodation and their higher education institution.

## 2.3 Surveys and ratings

Surveys and ratings underpin much of the discourse surrounding student engagement and student residential accommodation. In the UK, the National Student Survey (NSS) provides one of the most long-standing measurement of student feedback on qualities of institution, course of study and overall satisfaction with participation and includes several questions on students' housing conditions and their studies. Building on the NSS, the Higher Education Academy, HEA, has developed the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) (2014-2017) to study student engagement across participating institutions. More recently, a number of publications identify the 'best' student cities.. For example, QS Rankings began to publish 'best' student city rankings (2015-2018), while The Class of 2020 published its list of 'Best' Student Cities in 2018. These rankings define 'best' from a set of factors and dimensions they consider important to student experience and engagement. These dimensions are positioned as offering a 'holistic' and 'semi-objective' view of quality by the authors. While these ratings provide a set of possibilities to explore the characteristics of a quality institution and city for students, they reduce what they themselves frame as largely subjective attributes (perception/attitude towards quality and experience of a place and institution) in an attempt to rank universities and cities. These rankings tend to reify and ultimately replicate a set of cities and universities/institutions already well established in the 'top 10' and 'top 50' (e.g. QS World Rankings 2018, Times Higher and other surveys).

## 2.4 Building on existing approaches

Surveys including the UK National Student Survey, NSS, that is administered only to final year undergraduates, UKES (administered to first/second year undergraduates) and QS/The Class of 2020, offer a set of frameworks to explore and understand the student experience of higher education institutions and cities. However, in this research, we adopted a multi-perspective, multi-positional approach. To quote Simon Marginson, "We don't need more empty platitudes and hollow comparatives ...we need a view on the 'multi-positionality' (Marginson 2018). This multi-positional approach seeks feedback from various agents living in, or operating student residential accommodation for higher education institutions. In this case, we use several case studies to elicit staff and student perspectives within a set of institutions located in three cities in England and the Netherlands. Through interviews, focus groups, and site visits we explore how various stakeholders perceive student residential accommodation, student engagement and the inherent future risks a student, institution, provider and operator adopt. (Barnett 2011).

# 3. Evolution of student residential accommodation

## 3.1 Emergence and complexity of student residential accommodation

The emergence of student residential accommodation remains contested. Provision of student residential accommodation began during the early development of Oxford. Stone (1974) noted that Oxford did not originally provide student residential accommodation. Instead, the wider ‘township’ absorbed student demand for lodging. However, as tensions between ‘town’ and ‘gown’ grew, he noted that the town gave an ultimatum to the institution. He argued they proposed the institution gain ‘control’ over their students or risk being expelled from the township. This was a key moment in the evolution of the institution, and by extension, of university education in England. The institution determined to provide students with residential accommodation to extend its influence on student behaviour outside the formal academic environment. In addition to influencing the socialisation of students, student residential accommodation also became a revenue-generating resource for the institution.

### Oxford, Cambridge and the collegiate ideal

Student residential accommodation provision by Oxford began in what Stone (1974) called ‘primitive halls of residence’. Later, Oxford would develop halls of residence, that eventually (along with Cambridge) would become the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. The collegiate ideal would, through time and historical persistence, become engrained as the ‘gold standard’ of a university education in England (Shattock 1994). While student residential accommodation persisted throughout the development of UK higher education, its forms, functions and stated purpose would develop further complexity.

### University College London, King’s College London and the University of London

Fast forward several hundred years, and University College London (UCL) and King’s College London (KCL) would establish halls and houses in London. As Shattock (1994) noted, the conditions within which UCL and KCL were established in a dense, growing Victorian urban environment in central London differing considerably from rural and medieval Oxbridge. UCL took an alternative approach to Oxbridge colleges, naming its provision a ‘houses’ approach, while KCL, drawing on Oxford, aimed to provide students with a residential life aligned with ‘high table’ and resonating back to the relationship that the Church of England established within its own halls of residence (Brothers and Hatch 1971). Thus, both UCL and KCL replicated two key components of student residential accommodation in the UK. First, a set of buildings that were devoted to student residence. Second, the ‘idea’ that student residence is part of a UK university (and by extension higher education). These constituent components: physical provision of student residences and the ideal of residence-based higher education, formed the basis for the future evolution of student residential accommodation in the UK. Later, the federated University of London provided ‘distance’ education to students, mostly located in the North of England and farther afield. (Sanderson 1975, 1988). The University of London did not provide student residential accommodation until its incorporation with UCL and KCL.

## **Civic universities**

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Following the distance-based university education of the University of London, a number of 'civic' universities (e.g. Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Reading, Nottingham, Newcastle) were established during the late 19th and early 20th century in the 'industrial' regions of England. Government policy required these institutions to extend university education into regions of England lacking established universities. At the outset the civic universities did not provide student residences. However, with the establishment of block grants by the University Grants Committee (UGC) these institutions would later build residential accommodation, often of a grander scale and scope reflective of their larger student populations, compared to that of their predecessors at Oxbridge, UCL and KCL. The architectural conventions available to the civic universities at the time of their building student residential accommodation may have had a substantial influence on the type and quantity of the student residential accommodation they provided. The typology of student residential accommodation acted as a 'container', delimiting the type of student residential accommodation facility and expectations of their functions and stated purpose.

## **'New' Plateglass universities**

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The civic universities were followed in the 1960s with the 'plateglass' or 'new' universities. In 1962-63, The Robbins Committee issued its report on the state of higher education in England. In the report, the committee took a view that development of additional universities was needed, and, that a number of 'greenfield' sites were available and suited to establishing universities that could evolve in the future. The plateglass universities were established with student residential accommodation in mind, in towns/cities where the Robbins Committee felt that likely growth in demand for higher education could be absorbed (e.g. East Anglia, Essex, Kent, Lancaster, Sussex, Warwick, York). They were explicitly concerned with the influence of student residential accommodation on accessibility, participation rates and recruitment. Thus, student residential accommodation continued to be treated as a constituent component of university places in England.

## **A binary divide: Polytechnics and Colleges**

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Following the plateglass universities, a division between university (higher education) and non-university polytechnics and colleges (further education) was consolidated. Polytechnic, Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATS), Teachers Colleges and Regional Technical Colleges had been well established or were being established alongside continued growth in demand for tertiary education. In parallel, policy aimed at increasing access resulted in enlarged student numbers in English higher education. However, as the Robbins Committee (1963) noted, it remained unclear whether, and how, universities might absorb large increases in demand for university education and the consequences for university estates in the short-medium and longer term.

## Open University

Division between university and ‘non-university’ tertiary education was further disrupted when The Open University (OU) began to provide distance education using technology (i.e. television, radio, kits) for students across England. This model of university education did not rely upon students using a university estate. Rather, students were able to study ‘from home’. This ‘at home’ study model for higher education challenged preconceived notions of what constituted a university, and how university education might be delivered.

## Post-1992 Universities

Further challenging the residence-based higher education model was the 1992/93 Further and Higher Education Act of England. The act granted university status to polytechnics as a means of increasing the number of universities and university places. However, at the time of their move to university status, governmental grants for developing student residential accommodation had ceased. Rather, universities were considered a ‘sector’ in a higher education ‘market’. Thus, universities looking to establish their own student residential accommodation facilities would need to source their finances individually. It is unclear what influence this had on deciding whether or not to provide student residential accommodation. However, it is clear that the financial health of institutions that were established without requisite funds to build and develop student residential accommodation will be challenged on a number of fronts to build SRA, and, recruit and retain students.

While the concept and provision of student residential accommodation continues into the 21st century, it now houses a minority of students. It remains unclear if a ‘self-funding’ model of higher education SRA will survive.

## 3.2 SRA designs and shared areas

Student residential accommodation in higher education in England, as elsewhere, has evolved in the design and provision of shared spaces to keep pace with social, political and economic drivers that shape the form, functions and purpose of SRA for students, staff, institutions and the wider public, as well as changing student expectations.

Historically the collegiate Oxbridge model accommodates a small academic community in ‘colleges’ containing clusters of student bedrooms, shared bathrooms and occasional catering points; residential accommodation and tutorial offices for academic staff; a master’s lodge; and significant central places typically including a chapel, library, refectory, bar, games or social area, sports facilities, landscaped courtyards and grounds. In civic universities, this model is simplified to provide mainly the student bedrooms with shared bathrooms and catering points, and sometimes a dining hall and a modest range of social and sports facilities. A variety of expectations about social amongst students, and between students and staff, are suggested by different spatial provision (Brothers and Hatch 1971, Muthesius, 2000). Academic staff and tutors rarely live in the SRA though older students may act as resident mentors or guardians.

Contemporary SRA developments tend to provide private self-contained bedrooms, single or shared, with en-suite shower and WC, group kitchens and laundries, and communal social spaces for studying and recreational events. At the luxurious end, the study bedroom has grown into a self-contained studio room or flat with an en-suite bathroom and also a small cooking area. In some instances the individual private domain is the dominant concept. In others the private bedroom domain is balanced by generous communal facilities including social study spaces, common study rooms, common multi-purpose rooms, catering and coffee area, cinema, music room and gym. The boundaries between private and public areas are sometimes blurred (Spire 2018).

### 3.3 Diverse provision and providers

Like changes in the design and typology of student residential accommodation, student residential accommodation provision and providers have also diversified. Historically, the educational institutions – primarily universities and colleges, have directly provided student residential accommodation (Silver 2004). However, sharp changes in the funding and policy regimes have periodically altered both the amount and type of government funding for higher education institutions and associated student residential accommodation. Institutions have adapted through cost sharing, build-to-let schemes involving property developers or funders and private outsourced operators. The changing financial landscape for institutions has moved SRA provision from a public, institutional activity to a largely public-private partnership model in which institutions and third-party developers/operators share provision plus some direct private provision of independent student residential accommodation. Companies including Unite, Liberty, UrbanNest and UPP have collaborated to build numerous blocks of student residential accommodations, often within ‘super prime’ and ‘prime’ locations. Currently one of the largest UK hall of residence is a Unite purpose-built student accommodation block adjacent to Leeds University, with over 1,000 bed spaces.

Providing students with an en-suite study bedroom is no longer sufficient to ensure take-up of rooms. Comfortable, generous social amenities are considered to be of increased value in attracting Generation Z students and therefore influence the investment decisions of SRA providers.

# 4. Methodology: Literature review and case studies in three cities

## 4.1 Literature review

We completed a literature search in September 2018 using the key terms: global city, student residential accommodation and student engagement. Our search was limited to publications between 1 January 2008 and 1 January 2018 and returned over 16,000 distinct items. The items were reviewed for themes and issues under consideration, conceptual approach, methodology and relevance to the present study. Our definitions, case study approach and qualitative methods for data generation emerged from our review of this existing literature and research on student residential accommodation, global cities, and student residential accommodation in global cities.

## 4.2 Definition of student residential accommodation and global city

Definitions of student residential accommodation and global cities were highly contested. For this research, our key terms student residential accommodation was defined as: a type of residential accommodation provided by an institution and/or private provider for the exclusive use by students during term-time. A global city was defined as: a city of significant social, political and cultural influence at multiple levels of analyses, including: city, regional, national, international and 'global'.

## 4.3 Selection of cases and methods

To explore the impact of student residential accommodation in global cities, a convenience sample of three cities was selected: London, Amsterdam and Newcastle. The first two are internationally renowned capital cities, 'global cities'. Newcastle as a smaller city provided a different context allowing some comparison between the more global and the more national urban scene. Contacts of the project advisory group and of the researchers were essential in gaining access to case studies within the three cities. In all we examined student residential provision in three cities, four universities and eight student residential accommodation sites. It should be noted that most of the field research was conducted in winter 2018, during the early months of the academic year. Thus some of the information may be less applicable to other periods and seasons.

In London, our own university, UCL, provided background to SRA provision and opened the door to two different sites of student accommodation. In Newcastle, Sodexo's Student Living team provided access to several sites they operated for students attending Newcastle University and Northumbria University. In Amsterdam, professionals from the Estates Department at the University of Amsterdam and Vrije University of Amsterdam gave us a briefing and introduced us to their student housing operating partners.

In parallel, we developed a mixed methods study approach using interviews, focus groups, site visits and questionnaires to generate data from staff and students. During the short research period we were able to complete several interviews and focus group sessions with Estates staff who oversee and set the policies for allocation of student residential accommodation, as well as with staff running SRA on the ground, and with student ambassadors and groups of student residents on some of the sites. We developed an online questionnaire for students to understand their views on different aspects of their accommodation, however the time allotted to complete the research was too short to receive approval for and execute the questionnaire. Nonetheless, till, we were able to generate a number of interesting insights from staff and students across the case study sites we were able to visit.



## 4.4 The Cities

In her work, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* Saskia Sassen (1991)[2002] builds on the existing notion of ‘world’ city, coined by Patrick Geddes (1915) [2002]. She focuses on the influence of globalisation and the concentration of financial, technological and human ‘capitals’ in particular cities (i.e. New York, London, Tokyo). However, she frames a global city as multidimensional, to their financial and technological infrastructure underpinned by their broader social and cultural influences that sustain them and their position within global economic systems. We referred to the ‘ranking’ system for global cities devised by the Globalisation and World Cities Network (2018). Key characteristics of the three case study cities are described below using the most recent data available at the time of writing.

### London

The latest official estimate of the population of London is 8,825,001 (Office for National Statistics 2018). According to the Higher Education Statistics Agency, HESA, there were in excess of 2.2 million undergraduate and postgraduate students with 1.1 million full-time equivalent and sandwich students enrolled in UK higher education during the 2015/2016 academic year, of whom about 372,000 or 16% of the UK student total were studying at 39 HE providers in London, and forming 0.4% of the total urban population. The Greater London Authority’s Draft London Plan has explicit policy related to the location and development of student residential accommodation. The policy suggests protocols for local housing authorities and councils to deliberate on the site, development and operation of student residential accommodation within London councils, requiring that new PBSA should: contribute to a mixed and inclusive neighbourhood; be allocated to students attending specific institutions; include 35% ‘affordable’ accommodation defined as rent including all services and utilities costing no more than 55% of the government student maintenance loan; provide adequate functional living space and layout; be located in areas close to local services reached by walking, cycling and public transport, but away from central London regeneration and redevelopment schemes. Additional requirements for 3,500 new PBSA bed-spaces annually are noted. Temporary use of student accommodation during vacation periods is encouraged to help delivery of affordable units (GLA 2017).

### Amsterdam

The population of Amsterdam for 2016 was reported as 813,562 in the city limits, with the urban area estimated to have a population of approximately, 1.1 million and the greater metropolitan area having a population close to 1.6 million (World Population 2018). As data for total number of students studying in Amsterdam, is sparse, the student numbers for the two institutions (UvA and VU) are noted later in this report. Real estate trends in Amsterdam reveal accelerating housing demand that exceeds supply. Student residential accommodation, like the broader housing market of the city, is under pressure. As universities do not directly provide and operate student residential accommodation, the form, functions and stated purpose of student residential accommodation for students, institutions and the wider community are contested.

### Newcastle

The population of Newcastle was 316,028 based on 2011 census data (Rowe and Taylor 2013). At that time, the younger to middling age range was projected to contract as the older population increased. As a considerably smaller city than London and Amsterdam, with an illustrious past. Today, it is significant within its local region but has a modest global impact. Thus Newcastle provides an interesting and complementary case study city within which to explore the responses to student residential accommodation.

## 4.5 The Universities

Having selected London, Amsterdam and Newcastle we identified universities in those cities largely drawing on existing relationships with colleagues. In London we selected University College London (UCL) established in 1826, our own university where we enjoy positive relations with members of the Estates and Facilities Department and its Student Accommodation team. UCL characterises itself as “London’s Global University”. Based in the heart of the Bloomsbury area of the city, the university has over 13,000 staff and 38,000 students from 150 countries. It provides student residential accommodation to approximately 6,000 students in 26 halls of residence. “Our halls vary in size, facilities and history” (UCL 2019). The university also partners with a number of private providers through nominations agreements and is developing a second large location in East London in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park that will include student residential accommodation.

In Amsterdam, the University of Amsterdam, UvA and Vrije University, VU agreed to arrange access for us to their partner student residential accommodation providers. The University of Amsterdam, UvA, is a public institution, established in 1632, with 34,183 students in 2018/19 (University of Amsterdam 2018). UvA has approximately 6,000 employees and approximately 3,000 PhD researchers working in the institution (ibid.). VU was established more recently in 1880, operating as a private, but publicly funded institution with a Christian affiliation. In 2017 VU had 22,867 enrolled students (13,280 undergraduates, 9,583 postgraduates) including 4,113 international students, 18% of the student body. Both UvA and VU noted that they signpost their prospective and returning students to one of their nominated student residential accommodations, operated by DeKey or DuWo, student housing foundations. Both institutions are characterised as ‘urban’ with some sites and buildings dispersed within the metropolitan area of Amsterdam. The two universities are not direct providers of student residential accommodation, rather, they arrange accommodation for a few select students and provide information for all other students allowing them to seek accommodation for themselves.

In the case of Northumbria University, according to the university history, the institution began in 1880 as a College of Technology. Subsequently, the College of Technology was incorporated into a polytechnic in 1969 and later, in 1992-1993, Newcastle Polytechnic was granted university status at the same time as many other UK polytechnics changed their status. Northumbria University notes that for 2018/19 it has over 35,000 students, representing over 125 nationalities (About us, 2018/19). That publication goes on to note that Northumbria University was voted best city for students by the MSN Travel Survey in 2009, 2010, 2011 and received the What Uni Choice Awards 2014. The site notes the city centre location, multi-cultural city and £200 million in investments as leading its initiatives, including to ‘Top 50’ for research ‘power’ in the UK. In the 2014 National Student Housing Survey (2014), Northumbria University was ranked 2nd in the UK for student accommodation. The institution highlights that its facilities were ranked 7th in the UK for student satisfaction and living standards (Lloyd’s Bank Quality of Life Survey, 2014).

From the sample of universities in London, Amsterdam and Newcastle we selected a set of student residential accommodation sites where their students resided. An overview of each student residential accommodation site that we visited as part of this research appears in Appendix A.

# 5. Key Findings

## 5.1 Student views of their experience and engagement

In this section we present a number of key themes and issues raised by students and staff during our visits across the three institutions. The key issues raised by students during our visits and focus groups include: availability of accommodation, cost of accommodation and the location in relation to their academic facilities. The key issues raised by staff are their relationships with students, local level management policy, practice and procedures, amenities, and value for money. We also note the university position on student residential accommodation as a 'service', that is essential for recruitment as well as revenue generation was frequently raised in both published text and focus group conversations.

### Availability of accommodation

A key issue for students is the availability of accommodation and assistance in finding it as a critical component of their decision to study at their respective institution. One student in Newcastle noted:

"I wanted to take a law course that allowed me to take a year abroad. None of the courses in Ireland near me had that option. So I chose this course because it allowed me to study abroad during my third year. I wouldn't have chosen it if I hadn't had accommodation sorted out by the university"

**(Female, Undergraduate, 18 years old, from Dublin, Ireland)**

Two international students on a 'study abroad' term from the United States noted:

"CalTech has an agreement for housing with UCL. We were able to request the same residence hall at the time of our application"

**(Male 19, Female, 19, Undergraduates, from California, US)**

A key factor in the decision to attend the institutions was students' ability to obtain guaranteed housing through the university and/or private providers. It is a crucial element for international students, and important for more local students. Students in London and Newcastle, appreciated that their university engaged in the provision of their student residential accommodation. However, students in the Netherlands noted that they had 'heard' of difficulties finding accommodation in Amsterdam.

### Cost of accommodation

The cost of the accommodation is also an important factor in the decision to accept an accommodation offer. Respondents in focus groups raised time and again the cost of accommodation, that weighed heavily on their attitude to university. For some, the total cost of attendance was a concern for their future debt. Students' awareness of their debt and the influence of debt on life choices after graduation, have been explored in recent literature (Callender 2018).

Students at UCL and Northumbria University noted that their application allowed them to rank order their accommodation preferences. For UCL, this meant ranking the features of the accommodation by its importance for them. Similarly, students at Northumbria University could select the specific accommodation block, flat and room through an online accommodation portal. They expressed concerns about the

cost of their accommodation, choosing the most 'private' or 'less expensive' option that was available at the time of their booking after comparing the cost of accommodation across accommodation types on offer. Other respondents proposed that they were focused on 'value for money', noting they were content to rank their accommodation preferences on cost, proximity to their regular academic facilities and the university more generally. Being close to the institution is a strong preference mentioned on another of occasions.

Cost was a key factor in both English institutions studied, and was also important for students in Amsterdam. In the facilities we visited used by the University of Amsterdam, students noted that scarcity of accommodation in the city, and, the high cost of private rentals obtained through private letting agencies, were concerns that were considerably eased by dealing with the institution. For residents in DeKey's University of Amsterdam residences, accessibility and affordability went hand in hand. In contrast to the private and institutional providers in England, the social provision of student housing in Amsterdam made the price of student accommodation more economical. Average rents for student accommodation provision by DeKey were substantially below market rates when compared to local private accommodation provision in the city. Students commented that the rental price was 'reasonable', especially given the location and quality of the accommodation, including recently renovated units.

## Location of accommodation

As Joana Sage (2010) noted in her thesis on 'studentification', the location of accommodation was raised as a primary issue by students. When asked, students in this study noted that the proximity of accommodation to academic and non-academic facilities, and to the university more generally, were strong concerns when considering the various accommodation options available through the university.

UCL students expressed a strong appreciation of the location of their hall within the 'campus'. A female student explained:

**"It feels safe. I feel like there is good security. I don't have to worry about walking back home at night"** (Female, Undergraduate, 18, International student)

Location was more than ease of access to 'campus' and academic facilities. Students also noted that they appreciated a sense of 'proximity' and closeness to the institution. One group of students in Northumbria-Newcastle pointed out:

**"My accommodation is far from the city centre and campus. I have to get on a metro coming in from the outside of the city. It takes 20 minutes to get into campus. And I don't like going into the city at night and coming back. I stay over at my friend's hall near campus sometimes (so as not to have to come back late at night)"** (Female, Undergraduate, 18, from Dublin Ireland)

Location was perceived by students as largely about access to academic facilities, non-academic facilities and ease of movement through their preferred areas of the cities within which they were studying.

## Staff-Student relationship

For a number of students in our focus groups at UCL and Northumbria University, their relationship with reception staff, hall managers, administrators, hall wardens/vice-wardens and security staff were key to their engagement with and in their accommodation. When asked about the 'thing' they most appreciated in their current student residential accommodation, many students cited 'the staff' as being critical to their experiences.

UCL students explained that their relationship with front-desk staff was a key component of their experience, particularly the staff's personable, warm and welcoming responses to student queries. Moreover, the general demeanour of staff was cited as something students would not change. Likewise, Northumbria University students noted that the front-desk staff, hall manager and security all had an influence on their engagement and experience within the hall. Students mentioned that they felt a genuine concern by hall staff for their overall well-being that went beyond that of a 'provider', 'service' and 'customer' relationship.

By contrast, students at DeKey residences in Amsterdam were aware of the live-in staff working in their halls of residence, however, none indicated that they had any interactions with live-in student resident advisers. Administrators noted to students that indeed there was 'on-site' staff who could help and provide counselling on an 'as needed' basis.

## 5.2 SRA Staff views

To complement student feedback, we were fortunately able to arrange several group meetings with staff across the cases we studied. Staff raised a number of themes: quality of service provision, amenities, technology, value for money, staff-student relations and management.

### Quality of service provision

Staff in student accommodation of UCL, Northumbria University, UvA and VU students emphasised the importance of 'service' and 'quality' in their approach to student residential accommodation provision. In particular, staff noted the importance of the 'quality' of provision, as applied to a diverse range of accommodation offerings and types. They noted their focus on delivering a quality 'service' to students. For reception staff, this meant a number of things including responding to students' maintenance requests, organising mail and deliveries, signposting students to campus resources, being concerned with students' mental health and well-being, checking in with and building rapport with students (and colleagues).

### Amenities

Across a number of sites we visited, staff were very focused on the amenities within their student residential accommodation. At UCL, the recently renovated multi-purpose room, student study bedrooms and washroom facilities and their special features were mentioned. At Northumbria University, staff were proud of the recently introduced new amenities and attractive, colourful interior design in the social spaces to refresh formerly underused spaces. For example, the amenities in Trinity Square include a gym, library, cinema screening room equipped with a high-quality widescreen projector, and new soft seating, booths and group zones designed for students to work together or socialize. The new music room in Glenamara House was noted as a success created by gathering musical instruments from the city and providing them for student residents to use. Moreover it was excellent 'value for money' as an underused space had been transformed into a music room, without much cost to the operator, the university or the city.

### Technology

Staff mentioned that many amenities were now 'smart', for example smart laundrettes, 'smart' televisions to connect students' individual devices, provision of an operator 'app' for students to report maintenance problems, give feedback on 'service' experiences, and engage with provider/operator on a mobile platform. Technology and 'future proofing' student residential accommodation for the connected student was a focus for providers in the UK.



Providers in the Netherlands mentioned the recent introduction of ‘smart’ locking systems, allowing students to enter their rooms by an app on their phone, backed up by a trusted person. Not only was this extremely convenient for the student but it also saved the cost of locksmiths when keys were lost or needed to be changed, and avoided the need to always have a trusted staff member on site with duplicate keys. ‘Smart’ launderettes had also been introduced, notifying students when their laundry load had finished. While technology and the integration of provision via smart devices and locks was important for providers and operators, they were keen that those technological improvements complemented a wider set of caring practices by staff for students.

## **Staff and Student relations**

Staff across the sites we visited were clear that an important aim was to ensure their role was not simply ‘transactional’. Instead, they spoke of the importance of finding opportunities to show they cared. Far from a standard relationship between ‘provider’ versus ‘consumer’ or ‘customer’ relationship, staff members appeared genuinely concerned for the quality of students’ residential life and experiences. In parallel to their ‘service’ responsibilities to students, staff in different teams - domestic services, reception, maintenance, operations - noted that this was not an overly complex ‘issue’. Rather, staff who were personable, aware, warm and empathetic towards students were often in a good position to detect emerging problems that student might experience such as such as mental health, financial, or struggling with their course content. SRA staff felt that cultivating positive relations with students had a beneficial cascading influence on staff-student interactions throughout the year.

## **5.3 University views**

Student and staff views on the forms, functions and purpose of student residential accommodation largely rest on the overall approach to student residential accommodation held by institutions and providers.

### **SRA as a service**

Across London, Amsterdam and Newcastle, student residential accommodation was framed by participating institutions as something the university provided as a service to students. Similar to the ideas noted in *Student Learning in College Residence Halls: What Works, What Doesn’t, and Why* by Gregory Blimling (2015), the universities in this study view student residential accommodation as an essential student service that is critical for the overall experience and engagement of students in higher education. Student residential accommodation was conceived as a service they ‘provided’ to complement the formal academic life of students by serving students as much as being a service to them.

### **SRA and recruitment**

The university administrators with whom we spoke were very clear that student residential accommodation was a serious consideration for recruitment. UCL noted that it was heavily oversubscribed and had partnered with the SRA developer/provider Unite to provide additional rooms for its students. Northumbria, University explicitly states that “where you live is a big aspect of your student life...When applying for accommodation, [students] can select the exact building, flat and room based on real online availability” (Northumbria University, 2018). Giving students a high degree of influence over the precise location of their student residential accommodation site and room has proved to be a mixed experience for staff and students since the supply of desired accommodation at an affordable cost has proved elusive. The high cost of accommodation weighs heavily on university feedback.



# 6. Improving student experience and engagement

**Based on the literature and findings from our case studies, the notes below suggest ways of improving the student experience and engagement, at different stages of student life, building on the work of David Clapham (2005) on youth housing pathways.**

## 6.1 Pre-arrival

Prior to arrival, clear information from the institutions, providers and operators about the 'move in' day process and the room attributes is valuable. A number of students mentioned issues such as pressure on parking, limited time to transfer personal belongings to rooms, the lack of sufficient lift facilities or lifts not reaching every floor. They also mention not having brought appropriate items such as desk lamps or correctly sized bedsheets since they had insufficient information about detailed provision of furniture, amenities and equipment in their room.

In those instances where students had been given clear directions on transport,, collecting keys and locating their rooms, students suggested that they would have appreciated prior guidance on the surrounding neighbourhood and way-finding in the city. While mobile apps such as maps may have created a sense that students no longer need people to provide local guides or local knowledge, it may still be appreciated.

## 6.2 On arrival

After 'moving in' students proposed that information to assist with 'settling in' would have been most helpful. UCL students appreciated the Guide to Life in Halls, a short publication (also available online) delivered at the time of their arrival, containing policies and practices within the hall, maps and tips on settling in.

A Welcome Party and Welcome Week events are key social events at the start of the year creating an opportunity to meet other residents and learn about all the spaces and facilities and events in the SRA, across the university and city.

## 6.3 During studies

Once students have 'settled in' and acclimatised to their residence and their course of study, the reception staff – if there are any - can become important anchor points, providing a sense of 'home away from home'. The staff responsible for on site services such as reception, cleaning and maintenance can act in an empathic style allowing them to 'get to know' their student residents, and potentially to be the first to detect student problems.

## 6.4 During exams/testing periods

At particular times during the academic year students may express higher levels of anxiety and stress such as before and during exams and deadlines for submission of work. An ethos of care and concern by operational and maintenance staff as well as wardens again may prove beneficial, as well as a student buddy system. The growing use of technology to substitute for personal conversations, for example in reporting faults, reduces immediate contact and engagement. Other means to encourage communication at exam time may be desirable.

## 6.5 Departure and post-departure

This is an important time for celebration, and for gathering data on student satisfaction, their ideas for improvements, and student destinations after exiting their student residential accommodation. It is also the time for recruiting past residents to act as ambassadors, mentors or wardens, for the next round of students.

# 7. Future issues for student residential accommodation

**In this section we raise some issues requiring further understanding for the effective development, operation and provision of future student residential accommodation.**

## 7.1 Importance of staff and their training

Throughout our case studies, the importance of staff was clearly revealed, yet there is little on this aspect in published research. Further study is needed on whether, and how, institutions and private providers conceive and deliver staff training to address the issues students face whilst living and studying in student residential accommodation. Achieving the right balance of professionalism, care and empathy within a living-learning community rests between operations and the concept of residential life.

## 7.2 Digital tools

Digital tools feature strongly in student and staff feedback. Pre-arrival, students search institution, provider and operator websites to select and apply to their preferred accommodation. They also use social media to discover information they cannot find on official provider and operator websites, and they join and/or create Facebook groups for peer feedback and what to 'expect' in their future student residential accommodation. When in residence, staff increasingly use proprietary applications to drive student-residential staff engagement (e.g. Sodexo mobile app). Such apps allow students to log requests, check if post or deliveries have arrived, review their contract and payments, and log maintenance issues. The development of further digital tools for SRA staff to allow efficient and students is certain to increase.

## 7.3 Connecting students

Digital tools and connections will complement rather than replace peer-to-peer and student-staff relations and relationship development. The 'smart' block of student residential accommodation will increasingly deploy technology to drive efficiencies and effectiveness in facility management and operations. In parallel more energy will be needed to create social events and programmes that complement students' use of social media platforms and apps. Connecting students will be both 'online' and in 'real time' through curated facilities and events. Providing opportunities for students to engage and interact at a social level, if they so desire, may also be useful to generate a sense of community in and with a students' residential accommodation.

## 7.4 Curating the facilities

In future student residential accommodation, curation will develop, to operate and oversee the interface of personal, social and physical qualities. We imagine future student residential accommodation facilities will respond to innovations in architecture and design, utilisation of data now being generated through apps and incorporating knowledge of student satisfaction. We envision student residential accommodation will deploy a set of principles and values about 'what' and 'how' to deliver, organise and oversee the ecosystem of physical, social and personal 'placemaking' in student residential accommodation (Temple 2009).

## 7.5 Future-proofing student residential accommodation: blended living?

In a recent publication, Glide (2018) proposed Smart Block 2020- student accommodation of the future, outlining six key factors and features for a successful 'smart' block: smart fibre infrastructure, sub-metering, managed thermostat heating, water escape management and environment monitoring. The authors believe that technology will drive future operational efficiencies within student residential accommodation facilities making them more efficient and less costly to operate and thus providing cost savings for residents.

## 7.6 Need for solid data

A key element to inform and influence the future of student residential accommodation rests with further study and solid data. The questionnaire developed as part of this research could be refined and applied widely to gain insights on what works. As student residential accommodation continues to evolve in relation to technology and changing social attitudes towards higher education and housing, solid data are essential helping to understand existing and prospective formulations of student residential accommodation and the ways they are perceived by students, providers, operators and institutions. Insights from this research we hope will be continued into the future, providing the opportunity to develop further data on the design, investment, development, provision and operation of student residential accommodation and its relationship to student experience and engagement.

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**World Population Statistics** (2018) Source: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/amsterdam-population/>.

# Appendix A: Case study sites

## University College London

Image Credit: [www.ucl.ac.uk/accommodation/ucl-halls/self-catered-accommodation/john-adams-hall](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/accommodation/ucl-halls/self-catered-accommodation/john-adams-hall)

### Site 1: John Adams Hall of Residence

John Adams Hall at the time of our study was an undergraduate hall of residence, with 100 single bedrooms utilising shared wash and kitchen facilities. Additionally, there are 49 en-suite rooms utilising shared facilities. A common multi-purpose room at basement level is complemented by first-floor study rooms. According to staff and student residents, this year has also seen the conversion of two old study and meeting rooms into classroom facilities, utilised throughout the week.

The website for UCL Accommodation notes that John Adams Hall & Endsleigh Gardens maintain a number of room types, including: single room (not en-suite) 9m<sup>2</sup> to 11.9m<sup>2</sup>, en-suite single studio, large en-suite single studio, 1 bedroom flat, large single room (not en-suite) 12m<sup>2</sup> and above, twin room (not en-suite and small single rooms (not en-suite and under 9m<sup>2</sup>).



# Northumbria University, Newcastle

Image Credit: [www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/accommodation/](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/study-at-northumbria/accommodation/)



## Site 2: New Bridge Street

New Bridge Street was a purpose built student accommodation, ‘split’ between two blocks and separated by a narrow access road with parking adjacent to both sides of the facility. When asked, hall staff noted the social spaces and reception had been renovated recently as part of Student Living by Sodexo developing the site ‘social’ spaces. New Bridge Street provides en-suite study bedrooms with double beds and shared ‘open plan’ kitchens. The institution websites outlines a 43 week contract length at a cost of £129.85 per week. Each flat contains 4-7 individual study bedrooms.



## Site 3: Glenamara House

Glenamara house was described as a recently refurbished hall, with a single bed (£98pw and £105pw 3/4 bed option), 2 minutes walk from campus. While the website indicates a lack of social space and gym, we found a renovated multipurpose facility and music room offered new and interesting opportunities for students studying and socialising.





## Site 4: Claude Gibb Hall

Claude Gibb Hall, a catered hall of residence is described as close to the campus. While study bedrooms were spacious, they were dated in terms of their fixtures and amenities. Contracts for Claude Gibb run for 39 weeks at £74.90pw (non-catered) and £116.90pw (catered). While there is a large social common room there is no onsite gym. Shared corridors include 10-12 single study bedroom. Showers and toilets can be accessed through shared corridors, along with the shared kitchenette equipped with a fridge, kettle, toaster and a microwave.



## Site 5: Trinity Square

Trinity Square is based above a retail trading space and leisure centre. The accommodation is divided into 5 blocks which together house almost 1,000 students. The rooms range from standard single en-suite rooms in a shared flat to groups of two to five students in self-contained en-suite studio apartments. Each flat has its own washer/dryer and dishwasher. Contracts operate on 43 week periods from £119.70pw. The distance to campus run approximately 20-30 minutes and there is social space, gym, movie screening room and library in the core of Building 1. Each flat has 3-5 rooms, equipped with double beds in this self-catered facility.

# Vrije University



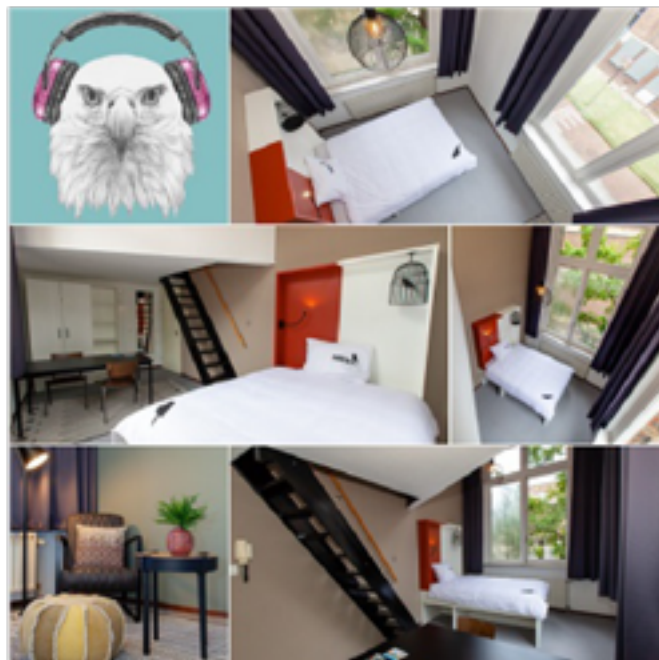
## Site 6: DuWo Student Village

For Vrije University, we visited the DuWo student village located in Amstelveen in the southern section of the city. At the DuWo student village, we met with the Head of Communications and the Head of Maintenance. The team gave us a tour of the facilities, including a review of two blocks of student accommodation and a sports centre. Additionally, we were accompanied by a student services officer from Vrije University who explained how the university refers prospective and enrolling students to DuWo.

The DuWo facilities provide shared and en-suite type study bedrooms. In facility one of our visit, we reviewed a flat with shared washroom, laundry and kitchen facilities. The rooms were single occupancy. Second, we reviewed a newer building with studio style rooms, including a number of rooms with courtyard facing balconies.



# University of Amsterdam



## Site 7/8: DeKey Halls of Residence

For the University of Amsterdam, we visited two separate halls of residence provided by DeKey in central Amsterdam. The halls were located in between the East (Oost) and De Plantage districts of Amsterdam. In this neighbourhood we reviewed the Bijltespad/Kattenburg flats, reserved by the university to rent to international students, approximately 5-10 minutes from the city centre by bicycle. Nearer the De Plantage and Roeterseilandcampus, we met with students living in mixed flats, with shared kitchens, shared washroom and laundry facilities.



# Appendix B: Sample comments by students

“The reception staff create a friendly atmosphere. [Reception Staff] are always positive”

“My room is small on my corridor, the location of the sockets are weird”

“Laundry is on the bottom of the building, I live on the top floor. I have to go up and down to the laundry”

“When I was moving in, the lift only goes to the second floor. My friend had a knee sprain and lived on the 3rd floor. They had to go up with all of their luggage when they moved in”

“We have four student resident assistants...We can contact them anytime, especially for things like lockouts or maintenance requests”

“My friends are all in my kitchen”

“I like the friendly atmosphere of the hall and the managers are awesome”

“I don't like the noise that always comes from this room, the common room. The noise travels to my room which is right above this room and you can hear people late at night pre-drinking or after they come back from their nights out”

“I applied and ranked my preferences on: costs, en-suite room and proximity to [my university]...”

“People who live in the basement are unlucky. There's issues with mice and rats, smell of cooking spreads throughout the floor”

“It's nice we are so close to Euston and King's Cross Station, it makes it easy to go home”

“I spend about half my time studying in my room and the other half studying in the library”

“I spend about 25% of my time studying in [my hall]...and 75% studying in the library”

“Front desk staff are always smiling and saying hello. Staff who clean our kitchen are nice”

“Sometimes people pre-drink in the common room to 3 or 6 AM. Sometimes people come down to play the piano at 2 AM. They don’t realise the noise is coming into my room. I’ve asked them to stop but they don’t so I have to call the duty RA”

“They started to have classes in one of the old study rooms that faces my room. When I wake up I have to keep my blinds closed because my sink directly faces the windows in that room. I can’t change with my blinds up because I did that once and people saw me”

“Money is a constant thought. It’s constantly going on in the background. If my accommodation wasn’t so expensive I wouldn’t have to work so much. It definitely affects my studies. This is university, it should be subsidised”

“There’s nothing to do in the city. University takes up so much time. I don’t think I have time to go out. I don’t think about going out...”

“I really like the facilities. I would just say that, regarding maintenance, I think the response time could be better. I have had a couple problems in my flat and room and it takes them ages to respond and fix it”

“There are social events in here but I don’t participate. I am too old. I study in my room”

“I know someone who stayed home. He’s not integrated well socially”

# Appendix C: Sample comments by staff

“Students are less respectful than in years past”

“Students drop out more from university. Before, this was from health and family issues. Now it seems more about money”

“Many more mental issues with students. Maybe people are more aware of it, but more students with medical issues. We need to do more risk assessments with students”

“Senior management has a morale problem. If you don’t like it, you can leave, but no one leaves. We have mortgages, bills to pay, families. We don’t belong to the organisation, we don’t come for money”

“We need to belong. Belonging affects the way we work and working with or against the organisation. If I’m not happy, how am I going to make other people happy?”

“It’s good to have more student residential accommodation, frees up housing for locals”

“We have more facilities and they are a lot better”

“We provide a great service, very positive. We want being here to be a ‘home away from home’. We want to be there for them”

“Our job changes from day to day...”

“You can see them grow. You can see them become independent adults. For them, everything is brand new”

“After Fall/Winter, they need support. They get their heels down, you can feel the anxiety and worries”

“We can’t force students to be social. We tried to put on a Welcome party but only 20 students came”

“They [Students] are looking for a ‘type’ of community. They are using Facebook Community and WhatsApp before arriving”

“We are now teaching more classes in English. This has increased international demand”

“We are piloting ‘smart’ locks on our doors. This will decrease the number of keys, hours spent to distribute and collect keys, and, allow students to use their phones to get into their rooms”

“It’s good to have more student residential accommodation, frees up housing for locals”

“We have more facilities and they are a lot better”

“We provide a great service, very positive. We want being here to be a ‘home away from home’. We want to be there for them”

“Our job changes from day to day...”

“You can see them grow. You can see them become independent adults. For them, everything is brand new”

“After Fall/Winter, they need support. They get their heels down, you can feel the anxiety and worries”

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