



STUDENTS IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR
What are the issues?

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Preface

Many students studying away from home rely on the private residential sector for accommodation. For some, this can be their first real experience of living independently. Good quality, affordable accommodation, convenient to college can be an important factor in a student's quality of life and their likelihood of completing their studies. It is also an important factor in attracting students from abroad to come to study here in Ireland. Students' experiences in the sector are therefore important to trace and understand.

It was with this in mind that the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Department of Education and Science, the Union of Students in Ireland and the Private Residential Tenancies Board came together and requested the Centre for Housing Research to undertake this piece of research of students' experiences of the private rented sector.

The results of the survey of over 1,300 students in five Dublin colleges show high levels of satisfaction – almost nine-out-of-ten students reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their accommodation and only one-in-twenty described their relationship with their landlord in negative terms. A shorter survey of students not living in the private rented sector, however, found that about half would prefer to do so and cost was the main reason given for not renting. A second feature of the study was a review of student accommodation in Europe. This section points out that students are increasingly being recognised as a distinct and growing sub-sector of the private rented market.

Going forward, students' experiences in the private rented sector are likely to remain positive – rent levels have become more affordable in recent months and the new Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations have increased the minimum standards required. Increased enforcement of standards by local authorities is a third positive development.

It is important nonetheless not to become complacent and new initiatives are required to ensure students and their landlords are aware of their respective rights and responsibilities when renting. The recently prepared PRTB leaflet on *How to be a Good Tenant / How to be a Good Landlord* is a timely source of information for students and landlords as preparations for a new academic year get underway.

The research committee would like to thank the researchers, Noelle Cotter of the Centre for Housing Research and Candy Murphy of Candy Murphy and Associates, for undertaking this work, the participating colleges for granting campus access to the fieldworkers and the many students who completed questionnaires.

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Students in the Private Rented Sector

Introduction and Overview

SECTION ONE

Introduction and Overview

Following a meeting between the Union of Students in Ireland and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in October 2007 it was agreed that the issue of student accommodation in Ireland merited further examination. The Minister for Education and Science and the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government agreed to support such a study. The Private Residential Tenancies Board (PRTB) which has a mandate for research on the private rental sector led the study, which was carried out on their behalf by the Centre for Housing Research.

RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

According to the student representative bodies, accessing accommodation is an ongoing concern for students attending third-level institutes, particularly in Dublin. It was decided therefore to concentrate the study on the greater Dublin area (GDA), while reviewing both the national and European context in which issues regarding student accommodation arise.

AIM OF THE STUDY

- To review issues affecting the supply and access to student accommodation in Ireland in a European context
- To explore through primary research the specific situation of students in the Greater Dublin area
- To make recommendations based on these findings.

OBJECTIVES

- To review trends in student numbers and student accommodation
- To review current policy and practice on student accommodation in Ireland
- To provide quantitative data on the accommodation requirements/choices of students and on the cost and quality of such accommodation in Dublin and to identify any particular areas of concern for students living in the private rented sector
- To review the provision of student accommodation across the European Union and to identify examples of good practice
- To identify any areas of concern in the short, medium and long term and to recommend any actions required to address them.

METHODOLOGY

- Overview of the student population and of their accommodation options
- Analysis of available secondary data on student accommodation issues
- Review of policy and practice in the area of student accommodation in Ireland
- Survey of a sample of 1,300 students in the GDA in five different third-level institutes
- Review of student accommodation in Europe and related initiatives
- Identification of key issues and recommendations on actions required to address them.



SECTION TWO

Review of Student Accommodation in Ireland

INTRODUCTION

This section of the study examines available data on the student population and reviews identified issues in the provision of student accommodation. It also reviews policy and practice in this area. Estimates of the current level of provision of college-based accommodation in Dublin are made and trends in the provision of the private rented accommodation sector are reviewed.

STUDENT PROFILE AND ACCOMMODATION SITUATION

The Higher Education Authority records that of the 84,263 full-time students attending universities in the Republic of Ireland¹ in the academic year 2006–2007, 68,039 of these were undergraduate, with the remaining being full-time postgraduate enrolments. As can be seen from Table 2.1, 13 per cent of these students were living in college accommodation (either on or off campus), and 27 per cent were living in rented accommodation. Although no students were living in lodgings or hostels, a not unsubstantial number of full-time university students classified their accommodation as ‘other’ or did not specify their accommodation type, and 44 per cent were living at home.

¹ These HEA figures relate to students attending UCD, UCC, NUIG, TCD, NUIM, DCU, UL, NCAD, RCSI, St Patrick’s Drumcondra, Mary Immaculate College Limerick and the Mater Dei Institute of Education.

Table 2.1 Number of students in various types of accommodation 2006–2007

	COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION	UNSPECIFIED	OTHER	OWN HOME	PARENTAL HOME	RENTED ACCOMMODATION	TOTAL
POPULATION	11,407	6,535	1,549	3,587	37,348	23,837	84,263
%	13	7	1	4	44	27	100

Source: HEA website

The Department of Education and Science² states that in this same academic year (2006–2007) there were 138,362 students in different forms of third-level education, and 53,358 of these were in Institutes of Technology or technical colleges. The Department of Education and Science estimates that the student population will reach 170,000 by 2013, an increase of 31,638 or 22 per cent over seven years.

Taking these figures into consideration, it can be seen that there is a substantial and growing body of students in Ireland. Added to this, Ireland and Irish colleges are increasingly encouraging international students to choose Ireland for their studies. International students bring important economic and other benefits. They are estimated to spend €154 million in direct fees, and €181 million off-campus (International Education Board, Ireland, 2006).

A Higher Education Authority report released in July 2008 (*National Plan for Equity of Access to Higher Education 2008–2013*, p.36) discusses changes in participation rates by children from different social groups between 1998 and 2004. It was observed that children from lower-middle-class families had not increased their representation in third-level institutions to the same extent as children from other social groups. The given reason for this is that these families were just above the income threshold for grants and yet did not have sufficient income to pay the associated costs. The report states that despite the abolition of fees, families must provide an average annual maintenance cost of €7,000 to put a student through third-level education. The expense of maintaining a student away from the parental/guardian's home contributes significantly to these costs.

Thus the demand for student accommodation is likely to increase – among both national and international students. This has implications both for campus accommodation and for the private rented sector, while the cost of providing such accommodation is likely to place significant burdens on many of the families concerned.

² Figures available on Department of Education and Science website: www.education.ie

ACCOMMODATION ISSUES FOR STUDENTS

In 2007 the Union of Students in Ireland identified obtaining accommodation as a core problem for students around the country and undertook to make student accommodation a key campaign focus. The most severe problem was recorded as occurring in Dublin (USI annual report, 2007–2008). A 2007 study by the Centre for Housing Research (Coates and Feely, 2007) involving interviews with local authority housing inspection staff discovered that there was a higher incidence of non-compliance in bedsits³ and older properties. These are the areas of the rental property market that students are likely to access.

The Eurostudent Survey II 2003–2004 (Darmody et al., 2005) documented students' experiences in terms of their accommodation situation, sources of income, expenditure levels and overall well-being in Ireland (N=3,900). This survey recorded that the highest proportion of full- and part-time students lived in rented accommodation (39 per cent), seven per cent lived in college residences and four per cent in lodgings/digs. Satisfaction with accommodation was lowest among those living in private rented accommodation; with the highest proportion of expenditure going on accommodation.

The survey found that 54 per cent of students received indirect support from their families, subsidising their accommodation or other expenses. The average family subsidy for students in rented accommodation was found to be €95.69, of a total average monthly accommodation cost of €388.63. For students in lodgings or digs, the average family subsidy was €108.02, of a total average monthly cost of €381.11. Students who lived in university-provided accommodation attained the highest family subsidies (average €200.54 per month), but were also paying on average more per month for this form of accommodation – €418.85. Students received money from employment and from student grants, as well as from their parents.

In the same survey, 24 per cent of full-time students described their financial situation as good; however, a further 19 per cent reported it as bad. The latter 19 per cent were also the students who worked longer hours. Employment outside of course commitments was more likely among students whose parents had lower levels of education.

This study allowed room for qualitative commentary, and accommodation was cited as a frequent complaint among student respondents. The availability and standard of accommodation was criticised, as was the cost of living in cities, particularly Dublin. One respondent said:

Accommodation is so expensive in Dublin that I have been forced to live at home. I therefore spend up to two hours travelling to college every morning and the same home (p.86).

Commuting was found to constitute a sizeable proportion of student outgoings in this survey – 32 per cent of (full- and part-time) students spent between €51 and €100 per month on travel and, overall, students spent on average 4.5 hours per week travelling to and from college. Students living with their parents spent the most on transport; students living in their own households spent marginally less, with the least amount spent by students living in institutionally-provided accommodation (e.g. student halls).

³ Bedsits will be phased out under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008. See page 17 for further details on these regulations.

This brief overview of the Irish student population shows that demand for student accommodation is likely to expand in the future, creating demand for reasonably priced accommodation within close proximity to institutional settings. This may put pressure on accommodation costs in these areas which may in turn create further difficulties for students struggling to manage their coursework and employment. Students who live further away from their place of study to keep costs down may face significant commuting costs. Furthermore, while students who were most satisfied with their accommodation were those who lived with their parents this may not be an option for the majority of students. Students who were least satisfied with their accommodation were those who lived in the private rented sector and available research indicates that standards of accommodation in this sector may be relatively poor.

POLICY INITIATIVES

The government has taken a number of initiatives to support the provision of student accommodation in Ireland.

The 1999 Finance Act introduced the Section 23 Relief Scheme for certain types of development in Ireland (relevant legislation contained in Chapter 11 of Part 10 of the Taxes Consolidation Act 1997). Among the forms of building works against which owners could seek relief was student accommodation. A full deduction of expenditure on construction, conversion or refurbishment could be offset against all Irish rental income. The scheme applied to capital expenditure incurred between 1 April 1999 and 31 July 2006, and was extended to 31 July 2008 under the Finance Act 2006 in accordance with certain conditions. However, there was a gradual reduction in the amount of expenditure qualifying for relief after 31 December 2006. Expenditure incurred in 2006 could qualify in full without restriction, but this was reduced to 75 per cent of expenditure incurred in 2007 and to 50 per cent of expenditure incurred between 1 January 2008 and 31 July 2008.

The same Finance Act also provided for Section 50 – a scheme of tax relief for rented residential accommodation for third-level students; this was very similar to the Section 23 relief. Section 50 allowed for the full deduction of the construction cost of the unit (less site cost) available against all Irish rental income. If rental income deduction was not fully utilised in year one, then the balance could be carried forward and offset against future Irish rental income.

Under Section 23, student accommodation eligible for relief had to comply with certain criteria. At a minimum 20 bed spaces had to be provided, and the development had to be certified by an educational institution and used as student accommodation for ten years from the date of first residence. The accommodation had to be either on campus or within an eight-kilometre radius in an area approved by the same educational institution.

Sections 23 and 50 also provided for a certain quality of accommodation. Study bedrooms were to be grouped into house units, with a minimum of three bed spaces per unit, and a maximum of eight bed spaces ranging from a minimum gross floor area space of 55 square metres to a maximum gross floor area of 160 square metres. It was detailed that study bedrooms should have common entrance halls and a shared living/kitchen area space of a reasonable size to accommodate appropriate furniture which should be detailed in the planning layout. Minimum sizes per number of bed spaces sharing kitchen areas, living spaces and bedrooms were provided for in this scheme and basic facilities were also outlined. Kitchen units including sinks, cookers and fridges were provided for and bedrooms had to include desk space and storage as well as internet services. Minimum sizes for bathrooms and in particular en-suites for students with disabilities were accounted for. One out of every 50 bedrooms or part thereof availing of this scheme were to be appropriate for students with a disability and buildings generally were to be compliant with Part M of the building regulations, as well as any other usual standards regarding buildings and associated works.

A 2006 report to the Department of Finance by Indecon which reviewed such tax incentives found that the number of bed spaces developed or under construction between 1999 and 2004 stood at 15,317. Indecon's research also showed that the proportion of students residing in student accommodation approved under the scheme rose by 16.6 per cent, with a fall of 20.1 per cent in students living in other accommodation provided by the market, between 2000 and 2005.

Indecon found that 44 per cent of third-level institutions that had availed of Section 23 believed that there was now an excess supply of accommodation available in the market. A further third believed there was an adequate supply and 22.2 per cent thought there was a shortage of supply. All of the institutions surveyed that did not avail of the Section 23 tax incentive thought there was an adequate supply of accommodation.

Indecon surmised that this had been a successful scheme, achieving its stated objective, however at a high cost to the Exchequer and at a time of significant increase in the wider private rented property market to which students would have access. Therefore, Indecon concluded that there was no economic or social justification for further supports in the student accommodation area, and recommended that there should not be an extension of the capital allowances for student accommodation for projects that had not lodged full planning applications by December 2004. However, Indecon did not comment on the stock distribution across the country.

ANALYSIS OF COLLEGE-PROVIDED ACCOMMODATION IN DUBLIN

An internet and telephone survey of all the colleges in Dublin was carried out in summer 2008 as part of the study. This revealed an uneven spread of college-provided accommodation across the county. A number of colleges were unable to provide comprehensive information and in some cases discrepancies were found between information on websites and that received directly from the staff in the colleges concerned. Information on Dublin area colleges provision of accommodation are outlined in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Information on Dublin area colleges and their provision of accommodation (2008)

ON-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION	OFF-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION	TOTAL UNITS	BED SPACES	AVERAGE RENT PER PERSON PER MONTH	NUMBER WITH PRIVATE BATHROOM	PRIORITY GIVEN TO...
2,384 units	180 units	2,564	2,577	€450	1,176	(1) Special needs students (2) International students (3) Irish students not from Dublin (4) First years
UCD						
None	700 units	700	700	Max. €600	700	
DIT						
980 units	None	980	980	€474.14	732	3% available for special needs students First years with 500+ points guaranteed accommodation
DCU						
230 units	None	230	230	€360	–	(1) Final year students (2) 2nd/3rd years Special needs students
ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE						
600 units	None	600	600	€512	300	Special needs students
GRIFFITH COLLEGE						
286 units	None	286	286	€289	286	
NCI						
90 units	none	90	90	–	90	
RCSI						
700 units	1,008 units	1,708				
TCD ⁴						

⁴ Trinity College Dublin's information was derived from its website where it states that accommodation is provided for both staff and students. The website states that TCD provides 1,733 bed spaces in college-owned accommodation for staff and students; of this, 735 are on campus and the remainder are in Dublin's suburbs, just outside the city centre. The TCD students' union gives a more detailed breakdown; there are 1,708 rooms for students provided by TCD. Of these 1708, 700 are on campus and the remainder are in Dарты. In the academic year 2008–2009 there are 50 rooms allocated to first years, 80 for postgraduates, 200 for TCD scholars, 85 are allocated under different schemes and 265 are for rising final year students. In the academic year 2008–2009 the 1,008 rooms in Dарты were allocated in the following way, with the largest allocation for first years (480 rooms); there were 160 rooms allocated for Sociates/international students, 40 for final year students, 62 rooms for postgraduates, 50 rooms for third year students, 16 rooms for TCD schemes, and 200 rooms for second years.

This table indicates that there are 5,463 bed spaces in Dublin colleges. However, at the moment student-specific college accommodation is provided for only nine per cent of the student population in Dublin, with the remainder of students living either with parents/guardians or in the private rented sector.

FUTURE PLANS FOR COLLEGE-BASED STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

University College Dublin plans to create 10,000 more units in its forthcoming campus redevelopment and Trinity College Dublin recently advertised that it is seeking 1,000 new student residential units by September 2010 (*Sunday Tribune*, 26 April 2009). Dublin Institute of Technology is also planning to create more units when it moves to its Grangegorman campus – but the number of units has not yet been decided. In light of DIT's proposed move, DIT carried out its own survey of students with regard to accommodation and associated preferences in early 2008⁵. Students were most influenced by the price and location of accommodation, with security also being a concern. Students were asked if they would consider living in block-booked off-campus accommodation, and 76 per cent stated they would.

There are plans underway for providing student-specific accommodation in central Dublin. The most advanced projects are in the planning permission process – two of which would be non-college specific, i.e. the students could be from any third-level institution – and the National College of Art and Design is planning to build accommodation for its own students.

There are other proposed projects, but the three that are the closest to coming on stream are as follows:

- The Digital Hub project is a multi-use development with three buildings for student accommodation providing a total of 650 bed spaces, with an estimated rental cost of €180–€200 per week. Students would each have their own single bedrooms. They would have communal living areas, but each student would have his/her own fridge and cooking facility. This development is speculative, i.e. there is no operator assigned for this project. Completion is intended for late 2009–early 2010.
- Ely Property Group is planning a phased development in Dublin's Cork Street which it would also operate. This development could eventually provide over 1,000 bed spaces and would include an aparthotel element. This aparthotel would be aimed at postgraduate students and rooms would effectively look like studio apartments with no shared facilities. When not being used by students, outside of term-time, the operator could provide these rooms for visitors to Dublin. There would be a facility for joining neighbouring rooms to accommodate families outside of term-time. It would take approximately two years for this development to be available to Dublin's students.

Neither of these developments would be gated communities and the intent would be to integrate them with the current surroundings and promote regeneration of the area.

⁵ O'Connor and Russell DIT Student Engagement and Satisfaction Survey 2007–2008 DIT internal document kindly made available by DIT. Sample size – 1,210 completed surveys and 780 partially completed surveys.

The National College of Art and Design on Dublin's Thomas Street surveyed its students and found that 800–1,000 students would be interested in living on campus. There are plans to provide 200–240 bed spaces, to be built on site by a private consortium that would lease the site, develop the property and manage the completed buildings for a specified time period.

There is another potential student accommodation development in the Newmarket area in Dublin 8 which could provide 2,000 units on a non-specific college basis, to be run by a private operator. This project is in the very early stages of planning.

This review of student accommodation indicates that only a small proportion of students in Dublin currently live in college-based accommodation. While there are a number of plans to increase provision of specialist student accommodation, led both by colleges and by private developers, the fact remains that most students in Dublin will continue to depend on the private rental sector for their accommodation unless they are living 'at home'.

TRENDS IN THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR IN DUBLIN

RENTAL LEVELS

The Daft Rental Report Quarter 2, 2008, with an introduction by the President of the USI, stated that the average rent in Dublin's city centre at that time was €1,300, despite rents falling 3.4 per cent around the city since the first quarter of 2008 (in this period the only rent increase was in North County Dublin where rents were up 1.6 per cent). The Daft Report Q3, 2008 stated that rents across the country were at their lowest since August 2006, and that since the summer of 2008 rents have dropped by three per cent across the country. South County and West County Dublin's rents fell by five per cent in the twelve months to November 2008 and they are expected to fall further. The Daft Rental Report Q1, 2009 reveals that rents have fallen again by more than five per cent. Daft's figures reflect the asking price for a property on its website and also do not necessarily represent all available rental properties in the country. The asking price may differ from the rent agreed between a landlord and tenant – the latter may be in a better position to renegotiate in light of the current market.

Falling rents in combination with an influx of new properties (the total stock of rental properties in Q2 of 2008 was twice the number at the same time the previous year) could result in students in 2008–2009 being in a more desirable position with regard to renting than in the recent past.

ACCOMMODATION STANDARDS

In addition to possible rent reductions, students may also benefit in the long term from the new Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008. These regulations are intended to ensure certain minimum standards and include guidelines on access to sanitary and laundry facilities, fixed heating appliances and cooking and food storage facilities. There are also updated standards in relation to ventilation, lighting, electricity and gas. Provision is made for new standards in relation to refuse facilities and fire safety.

The regulations will come into effect in their entirety for new lettings from the beginning of February 2009. Existing rental properties will be excused from three articles in these regulations until February 2013, to allow for improvements. These three articles relate to sanitary and laundry facilities, fixed heating appliances and cooking and food storage facilities.

The regulations effectively mean that bedsits – a form of accommodation frequently associated with student accommodation – will be phased out and that students are likely to have the opportunity to live in better quality accommodation in the future.

SUMMARY

This review of trends in student numbers indicates that student numbers in Ireland are growing and are likely to continue to grow in the future, fuelled by an increasing policy focus on attracting international students to Ireland. The demand for student accommodation is therefore likely to expand in the future, creating extra demand for reasonably priced accommodation within close proximity to institutional settings. This review has shown how these trends may put pressure on accommodation costs in these areas which may in turn create further difficulties for students struggling to manage their coursework and employment. Students who live further away from their place of study, in an effort to keep costs down, may face significant commuting costs. Furthermore, while students who were most satisfied with their accommodation were those who lived with their parents this may not be an option for the majority of students. Students who were least satisfied with their accommodation were those who lived in the private rented sector, and available research indicates that standards of accommodation in this sector may be relatively poor.

However, while student bodies have identified student accommodation as an on-going concern for students in terms of supply, cost and quality, available research also indicates that places for students in specialist accommodation have increased and are likely to continue to increase in certain key locations in the future, due in part to government incentives to encourage construction of student accommodation, and that supply problems have reduced in recent times. While Irish students will continue to depend largely on the private sector for accommodation, such accommodation may become less costly and is likely to be of a higher standard in the future.

In the next section of the report we present the results of surveys of students in Dublin colleges, undertaken to elicit their views on these issues.



SECTION THREE

Survey of Students in the Private Rented Sector

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this part of the research was on the Greater Dublin Area as this is the area with the largest student population and is considered to be the area with the most intense competition for private rented accommodation. However, students' unions all over Ireland were contacted and given the opportunity to make submissions regarding the private rented sector for students in their area. Five students' unions made contact, and all five were very positive about the private rented sector in their area, with Athlone IT students' union reporting that there was a surplus of private rented accommodation despite the absence of college-provided accommodation.

Threshold offices in Cork and Galway were contacted in April 2009 with regard to student accommodation problems they might have encountered. In both offices, student problems with private rented accommodation have become less prominent than in previous years in light of the availability of Section 50 properties and the general property downturn. The retention of deposits was the most common problem cited in both Threshold offices. In Cork, Threshold has become aware of the practice of landlords issuing licensing agreements rather than tenancy agreements to students. However, the extent of this practice could not be established. Also, Cork City Council will not issue parking permits to tenants where the tenancy is not registered with the PRTB – this would affect all tenants, not just students.

The survey of students in the Greater Dublin Area aimed to explore students' preferences, choices and accommodation situations. The research questions to be answered were:

- What type of accommodation do students in third-level education require and how does this compare with what they actually access?
- What is the current availability of accommodation both on- and off-campus for students in the Greater Dublin Area?
- What is the level of student satisfaction with their accommodation in the private rented sector?
- What is the general profile of this section of the private rented sector in terms of price, quality and accommodation type?

The results are presented below, following an outline of the methods used.

METHODS

Between 14 October 2008 and 21 November 2008, the Centre for Housing Research undertook on-campus surveys with students in regard to their current accommodation and their preferences. Seven fieldworkers familiar with survey design and administration were recruited to survey 1,000–1,500 third-level students in the Greater Dublin Area. Five sites were selected. These were:

- Institute of Technology Tallaght (ITT). ITT was established in 1993, and currently has 4,000 undergraduate and over 100 postgraduate students. ITT is located in the Dublin suburb of Tallaght in the south of the city.
- Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). Cathal Brugha Street, Kevin Street, Bolton Street, Aungier Street, Mountjoy Square. DIT was established as an autonomous institution in 1992, and currently has approximately 20,000 students. DIT does not have a central campus, but is based in various locations around Dublin's city centre. The institute is in the planning stages of centralising its campus in Grangegorman, also in Dublin's city centre.
- Dublin City University (DCU). DCU enrolled its first students in 1980, and currently has approximately 10,000 students (inclusive of 2,500 distance education students). DCU is located north of Dublin's city centre in the Santry area.
- University College Dublin (UCD). UCD was established in 1854 and currently has 20,573 students. The campus is based four kilometres from Dublin city centre in the suburbs of the south of the county. However, it has additional buildings in the city centre and close by the main campus in Blackrock.
- Trinity College Dublin (TCD). TCD was established in 1592 and had 15,492 registered students in the academic year 2006–2007 (10,689 undergraduates and 4,803 postgraduates). Eighty-four per cent of Trinity's students in the year 2006–2007 were Irish and the remainder were international admissions (10 per cent EU). The campus is based in Dublin city centre, with some additional buildings outside of the city centre.

These sites were selected to reflect a range of type of institution, geographical location and student number.

Two types of questionnaires were completed in face-to-face interviews on these five campuses. A longer survey was administered to students who were living in the private rented sector according to a given definition (see appendix 1) (n=1,383). A shorter questionnaire was administered to students who were not living in the private rented sector (n=740). The short survey took under a minute to complete; the longer survey took approximately ten minutes (copies of both questionnaires are provided in the appendices).

The fieldworkers received a 90-minute training and information session and a pilot took place in ITT, following which some minor alterations were made to the questionnaire.

At the pilot stage it became apparent that ITT differed from the other campuses as a large numbers of students were found to be living with their parents/guardians⁶. However, 85 questionnaires were completed in ITT. It should be noted that the suburban nature of the Tallaght area may not be fully reflected in the survey findings. DIT was over-sampled as it is a similar type of institution and has a very large student population offering a wide range of courses that might not be available in all ITs outside Dublin, thereby attracting a student population in need of accommodation.

Among the other colleges a good spread of students across years was achieved without specific targeting. Fieldworkers conducted the surveys in public areas in various parts of the campuses to ensure a good spread of student course-type.

RESULTS OF THE SHORT SURVEY

In total 740 students completed the short survey, which was administered to those who were not living in the private rented sector. Forty-one per cent of these students were in first year (n=308), 26 per cent in second year (n=199), 18 per cent were in third year (n=134), nine per cent in fourth year (n=67) and the remaining four per cent were postgraduates (n=30)⁷.

The breakdown of respondents by type of institution is shown in Table 3.1:

⁶ It is possible that an institution such as Tallaght tends to attract students from the local area and fewer students from outside Dublin necessitating accommodation in the private rented sector. Students from outside Dublin may choose to attend their local IT and live with their parents/guardians to save the expense of living in Dublin and away from the family home.

⁷ There were two cases where year of study was not recorded

Table 3.1 Institutional breakdown of students who completed the short survey

	FULL-TIME	PART-TIME	TOTAL
ITT	109	1	110 (15%)
DCU	151	1	152 (20.8%)
UCD	119	1	120 (16.4%)
TCD	146	–	146 (20%)
DIT	200	2	202 (27.7%)
TOTAL	725	5	730 (100%) ⁸

Table 3.2 shows the breakdown of courses undertaken by these students.

Table 3.2 Courses undertaken by short survey students (n=698)

	ARTS/HUMANITIES	BUSINESS	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	SCIENCE	VOCATIONAL
NUMBER	239	226	28	102	103
%	34	32	4	14	14

WHERE STUDENTS LIVED

The vast majority of students not living in the private rented sector were found to be living with their parents/guardian (n=609). Of the remainder, 80 were living in college-provided accommodation, 28 were renting from their families or a friend, 18 were owner-occupiers, three students were renting social housing and one student was living in army barracks.

When asked why they chose this form of accommodation, students generally responded that it was because it was convenient, practical and what they could afford.

There was an almost even divide among students in terms of whether they would prefer to be living in the private rented sector, with just over half (51 per cent) stating that they would prefer to be in the private rented sector and just under half (49 per cent) stating that they would not prefer this type of accommodation.

Respondents who stated they would rather be in the private rented sector were asked why they were not doing so. Affordability was the main reason given (n=260), referred to by over half of the respondents. Additionally, 164 students stated that they felt there was no point renting as their family/guardian home is close to college, 30 stated they could not find anywhere suitable to rent in terms of proximity to college and 24 students stated they could not find anywhere suitable to rent in terms of quality of accommodation. This information is summarised in Table 3.3⁹.

⁸ There were ten missing responses to this question. Throughout, missing data are excluded from figures and tables.

⁹ Students were allowed to select multiple categories, and 46 students stated both that they could not afford to rent and that there was no point as their family/guardian home is close to college.

Table 3.3 Short survey response to ‘Why are you not living in the private rented sector?’

I CANNOT AFFORD TO RENT	260
THERE IS NO POINT BECAUSE MY FAMILY/GUARDIAN HOME IS CLOSE TO COLLEGE	164
I CANNOT FIND ANYWHERE SUITABLE TO RENT IN TERMS OF PROXIMITY TO COLLEGE	30
I CANNOT FIND ANYWHERE SUITABLE TO RENT IN TERMS OF QUALITY OF ACCOMMODATION	24

SUMMARY

These findings indicate that half of students currently living at home would prefer to be renting their own accommodation and just half of these do not rent because the cost is prohibitive. A very small number refer to lack of suitable accommodation close to college or to problems relating to the quality of available accommodation.

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF STUDENTS LIVING IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR (‘LONG SURVEY’)

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONDENTS

The longer survey of students in the private rented sector involved 1,383 respondents – 721 male respondents (52.3 per cent) and 658 female respondents (47.7 per cent)¹⁰. The average age of respondents was 20.73 with the majority of respondents being between the ages of 18 and 23 (1,033, 75.6 per cent). Fifty-six respondents were age 30 or over.

Sixteen per cent of respondents were from outside Ireland. As Table 3.4 shows these students come from a very wide range of countries, including China, USA, African Continent and Russia.

Table 3.4 Respondents from outside the island of Ireland

UNITED KINGDOM	39	INDIA	12
GERMANY	35	RUSSIA	10
AFRICAN CONTINENT	31	POLAND	8
FRANCE	30	BELGIUM	7
CHINA	23	CANADA	6
USA	17	THE NETHERLANDS	5

Students originating in Ireland came from a wide variety of counties with only 15 per cent coming from Dublin. See Table 3.5.

¹⁰ In four cases, the respondent’s gender was not recorded

Table 3.5 Respondents with origins on island of Ireland

DUBLIN	163	KILKENNY	31
WEXFORD	78	MAYO	30
MEATH	72	WATERFORD	26
CORK	60	WESTMEATH	25
KILDARE	58	LONGFORD	23
CAVAN	44	ROSCOMMON	23
CARLOW	44	OFFALY	21
LOUTH	49	LAOIS	21
MONAGHAN	42	LIMERICK	20
NORTHERN IRELAND	41	SLIGO	19
DONEGAL	40	CLARE	19
WICKLOW	34	KERRY	16
GALWAY	33	LEITRIM	14
TIPPERARY	31	TOTAL	1,077

COLLEGE AND YEAR OF STUDY

Table 3.6 shows the breakdown of respondents by college (full-time or part-time) and year of study.

Table 3.6 Respondents' college, year and full/part-time status

	FIRST YEAR	SECOND YEAR	THIRD YEAR	FINAL YEAR	POSTGRADUATE	% TOTAL
ITT P/T	1	0	0	2	1	.3%
ITT F/T	15	24	29	12	1	5.9%
DCU P/T	0	1	1	1	1	.3%
DCU F/T	77	79	80	38	55	23.8%
UCD P/T	0	1	0	0	1	.1%
UCD F/T	51	78	78	20	28	18.5%
TCD P/T	0	0	1	0	2	.2%
TCD F/T	56	72	77	40	45	21%
DIT P/T	1	2	7	2	0	.9%
DIT F/T	71	93	114	67	56	29%
TOTAL (N=1,381)	272 (19.7%)	350 (25.3%)	387 (28%)	182 (13.2%)	190 (13.8%)	100%

This shows a reasonable spread across year of study, with 20 per cent in their first year, 14 per cent in their final year and 13 per cent being postgraduates.

The majority of respondents were arts/humanities students (n=493, 35.7%), a further 285 (13.8%) were students of business, 277 (20%) were pursuing vocational studies, 256 (18.5%) were science students and 70 (5.1%) were information technology students.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Three hundred and nineteen students were in receipt of a grant at the time of surveying. Seventy-five of these students (23 per cent) described finding accommodation difficult, as what was on offer was too expensive.

Almost 20 per cent (263 students) stated that they paid fees; (although it was specified that this should not refer to registration fees it is likely that some students did confuse their registration fees with college fees). The range of fees was €800–€20,339 with an average fee of €6,231. There were two students paying €20,000 and over and they were both from the USA. Forty-two per cent of students who were paying fees were postgraduates (n=113), and overall a majority of students (n=161) who were paying fees were over age 23.

EMPLOYMENT

Respondents were asked about their employment status – 646 students (46.8%) said they did not work at all, 592 (42.9%) did part-time work, 109 (7.9%) did occasional work and 33 (2.4%) were in full-time employment.

Student wages varied between a minimum of €50 per month and a maximum of €3,500 per month (mean €581.42). Male students' average earning per month after tax was reported to be €651.91 compared to €505.95 reported by female students.

There were very few part-time students in the sample (n=25) but they did not, as might be expected, work full-time and four part-time students did not work at all. Ten full-time DCU and ten full-time DIT students balanced their courses with working full time.

CURRENT ACCOMMODATION

Over half of the respondents (n=705, 51%) had begun renting their accommodation at the beginning of the current term, 227 respondents (16.4%) had moved into their accommodation during the summer, 168 (12.1%) had lived in their current accommodation during the preceding academic year and over the summer, while 143 respondents (10.3%) had begun renting their accommodation after the term had begun. Over 100 students (n=115, 8.3%) were long-term tenants, having lived in their current accommodation over the previous two or more academic years and a further 25 (1.8%) had lived in their current accommodation during the previous academic year and had sub-let the property during the summer months when not in residence. Table 3.7 summarises this information.

Table 3.7 Responses to question ‘How long have you been renting your current accommodation?’

I HAVE BEEN RENTING MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION SINCE THE START OF TERM	705 (51%)
I MOVED INTO MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION OVER THE SUMMER MONTHS	227 (16.4%)
I LIVED IN MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION DURING THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR AND OVER THE SUMMER	168 (12.1%)
I BEGAN RENTING MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION BETWEEN THE START OF TERM AND NOW	143 (10.3%)
I LIVED IN MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION DURING THE LAST 2 OR MORE ACADEMIC YEARS	115 (8.3%)
I LIVED IN MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION DURING THE LAST ACADEMIC YEAR AND SUB-LET IT OVER THE SUMMER	25 (1.8%)
TOTAL:	1,383 (100%)

Respondents were asked to select one response to best describe how they sourced their accommodation, and were provided with room to state an ‘other’ way. The two most common ways of sourcing this accommodation were found to be online (n=705, 51%) and through friends or word-of-mouth (n=460, 33.3%). A further 86 respondents (6.2%) found their accommodation via a newspaper advertisement, 58 (4.2%) found it through their college accommodation office, while 38 (2.8%) found their accommodation through the students’ union. The less common ways of finding accommodation were through an agency (n=24, 1.7%) and an advertisement on a university notice board (n=7, 0.5%). Students therefore were more likely to find accommodation using resources unconnected with their college.

When asked ‘How long did it take you to find your accommodation?’ 1–2 weeks (n=333, 24%) was the most frequent response, but a similar number said it took less than a week (n=315, 22.8%). A further 273 students (19.8%) took 3–4 weeks to find their accommodation, and 261 students (18.9%) stated that someone else found their accommodation on their behalf. A small number of students were waiting a longer time period before finding their current accommodation; 153 students (11.1%) reported that it took them 1–2 months to find their accommodation, and a further 46 (3.3%) reported that it took them more than 2 months.

The time it took to find accommodation does not appear to be influenced by where a student was from; in other words, students not from Dublin did not take any longer to find accommodation than students who were based in Dublin.

This question does not gauge the intensity with which accommodation was pursued so the follow-up subjective question was intended to explore the difficulty or ease with which the student experienced this property search. Six hundred and fifty-four respondents (47.3%) found their property search very easy or easy, 277 (20%) stated it was neither easy nor difficult, 356 (25.8%) stated it was difficult and 95 students (6.9%) stated they found this property search very difficult.

As would be expected, people who responded that they found their search easy or very easy tended to find that accommodation in a shorter timeframe; and students who responded that their search was difficult or very difficult tended to state that it took them a longer time to find their current accommodation. This is documented in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8 Perception of ease or difficulty in finding accommodation and the length of time it took to find this accommodation

	SOMEONE ELSE	< A WEEK	1-2 WEEKS	3-4 WEEKS	1-2 MONTHS	2+ MONTHS
EASY/ VERY EASY	218	237	154	33	11	0
DIFFICULT/ VERY DIFFICULT	20	26	84	154	124	42

Students were then asked why they described this property search as difficult; they could make multiple selections from a list and also provide their own independent reasons. These responses are recorded in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9 Reasons respondents thought their property search was difficult

THE ACCOMMODATION ON OFFER WAS VERY EXPENSIVE	331
THERE WERE A LOT OF PEOPLE COMPETING FOR SIMILAR ACCOMMODATION TYPES	268
IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND ACCOMMODATION IN THE AREAS I WOULD LIKE TO LIVE IN	254
IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND INFORMATION ON AVAILABLE ACCOMMODATION	82
A LOT OF PROPERTIES WERE NOT WILLING TO TAKE STUDENTS	24
I HAD TOO MUCH CHOICE AND COULD NOT MAKE UP MY MIND	10
FINDING ACCOMMODATION WHEN YOU ARE NOT LIVING IN DUBLIN IS DIFFICULT	6
IT WAS DIFFICULT TO FIND A PLACE FOR A GROUP	4
AVAILABLE ACCOMMODATION IS OF A VERY POOR QUALITY	4
I WANTED A SHORTER LEASE THAN PROPERTIES WERE WILLING TO GIVE	3

There were also a small number of single response reasons:

- Difficult to find accommodation when you are on rent allowance
- I did not want to share a room
- Room price went up for couples
- Problems with estate agents
- Language barrier a problem

- Difficulty in finding flatmates
- Did not want to live in digs
- References were required
- Pets not allowed
- Sexuality narrowed property choices

These findings reveal that a third of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to get accommodation. The main reasons given for this were cost, competition for available accommodation or lack of accommodation in the preferred area.

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION

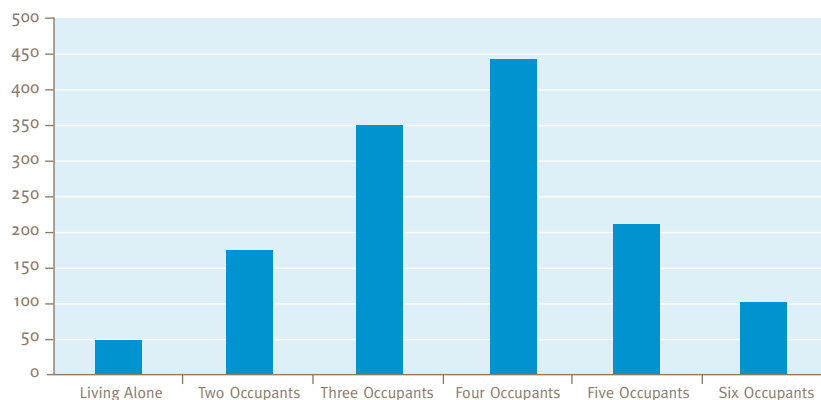
The majority of the students interviewed said they lived in house-share accommodation (n=665, 48.1%) or apartment blocks (n=535, 38.7%), 120 (8.7%) lived in accommodation that was part of a multi-unit house, 36 (2.6%) were in digs and 27 (2%) lived in bedsits.

The majority of students shared their accommodation with six or fewer people; however, this number did stretch to 24 in one case. Twenty-four students shared their accommodation with six other people (1.8%) and 12 students shared with seven other people (0.9%).

As figure 3.1 shows the most common response for number of accommodation unit occupants (including respondent) was four (n=439, 32.1%). There were 346 students (25.3%) in accommodation that had a total of three occupants, 211 students (15.4%) had a household size of five, 176 students (12.9%) shared with one other person, 102 respondents (7.5%) had a household size of six. Forty-six students (3.4%) lived alone or were in digs.

Students who were in digs were not asked about numbers in the property unit, as this would include the property-owner and, potentially, their extended family – these students were only asked about how many people they shared their bedroom with. Nineteen students in digs had their own room, 10 students shared with one other person, one student shared the bedroom with three people and three students shared their digs bedroom with four people.

Figure 3.1 Number of accommodation occupants (including respondent)



Of the 46 students who lived alone, as mentioned, 19 of these were in their own bedroom in digs, 15 were in bedsits, nine were in apartments, and two were living in accommodation in multi-unit houses – possibly similar to bedsits. One person reported living alone in a house-share form of accommodation. This is possibly an incorrect answer or the individual was waiting for new tenants.

Students were asked how many people shared each bedroom in the household up to a maximum of five bedrooms. It was uncommon to have more than two students sharing a bedroom. A single-occupancy bedroom was the most common response. The only outlier was one student who reported sharing a bedroom with seven other people.

These findings indicate as expected the tendency of students to live in house-sharing accommodation, with an average of four occupants in each accommodation.

SATISFACTION WITH ACCOMMODATION

Students were asked about how satisfied they were with their current accommodation and as Table 3.10 shows most (62 per cent) said they were generally happy with their accommodation. However, 242 students (17.8 per cent) did express a preference for better quality accommodation in the private rented sector.

Table 3.10 ‘Which of these statements is correct for you?’

I AM HAPPY WITH MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION	845 (62%)
I WOULD PREFER TO BE IN BETTER STANDARD PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION	242 (17.8%)
I WOULD PREFER TO LIVE IN COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION	229 (16.8%)
I WOULD PREFER TO LIVE WITH MY FAMILY/GUARDIAN BUT THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE	47 (3.4%)

These findings indicate that almost a third of respondents would prefer to be in alternative accommodation, with 16.8 per cent stating that they would prefer to live in college accommodation.

WHY ACCOMMODATION WAS CHOSEN

This section documents the factors that influenced respondents’ choice of accommodation. The information will be used to indicate how students’ preferences match with the reality of their current accommodation.

Respondents (n=1,378) were either very satisfied (n=328, 23.8%) or satisfied (n=894, 64.9%) with their current accommodation. Only a small number of students stated they were either not particularly satisfied (n=145, 10.5%) or dissatisfied (n=11, 0.8%).

When these satisfaction/dissatisfaction responses are considered against stated preferences (see Table 3.11) it can be seen that, as would be expected, students who were very satisfied or satisfied with their current accommodation also stated that they were happy with their current accommodation. However, a small number (n=20) of students who were not particularly satisfied with their current accommodation stated that they were happy with their current accommodation. Students across the satisfaction/dissatisfaction continuum, when they did not state that they were happy with their current accommodation, generally stated that they would prefer if their accommodation was of a better standard, or that they could live in college-provided accommodation.

These findings can be interpreted in the context of research carried out by Charbonneau et al. (2006) who in their research on student preferences noted that students, as with the larger population, may have a list of preferences with regard to their accommodation. These may include, for example, proximity to campus, occupancy numbers, style of housing, and facilities. However, when choosing accommodation students may make compromises to acquire more of one attribute at the expense of another. For example, students might choose accommodation that is a very short walking distance to campus although it is more expensive and of poorer quality than other available accommodation further away from campus. Similarly, it is likely that although students may have been happy with their current accommodation, they may not have been particularly satisfied and would have preferred if all their original criteria were fulfilled.

Table 3.11 Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction considered against stated preferences

	VERY SATISFIED	SATISFIED	NOT PARTICULARLY SATISFIED	DISSATISFIED	TOTAL
HAPPY WITH MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION	266 (19.6%)	558 (41.1%)	20 (1.5%)	0	844 (62.1%)
PREFER TO BE IN BETTER STANDARD PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION	4 (.3%)	147 (10.8%)	82 (6%)	8 (.6%)	241 (17.7%)
PREFER TO LIVE IN COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION	38 (2.8%)	154 (11.3%)	33 (2.4%)	2 (.1%)	227 (16.7%)
PREFER TO LIVE WITH FAMILY/GUARDIAN	10 (.7%)	28 (2.1%)	8 (.6%)	1 (.1%)	47 (3.5%)
TOTAL	318 (23.4%)	887 (65.3%)	143 (10.5%)	11 (.8%)	1359 (100%)

FACTORS AFFECTING CHOICE OF ACCOMMODATION

Students were asked to rate the importance of five factors in terms of influencing them when choosing accommodation. These were: cost, quality, size, proximity to college and personal safety. Students were also given the opportunity to mention any other factors that would influence their choice of accommodation.

Of these five factors, cost was considered the most important factor influencing choice of accommodation, with over 50 per cent of respondents stating that cost was very important. The quality of the accommodation and its proximity to college were also deemed important, rated as very important by 36 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. Personal safety and the size of the accommodation were considered less important factors. See Table 3.12 for respondents' rating of influential factors.

Table 3.12 Relative importance of five factors influencing choice of accommodation

	COST	QUALITY	SIZE	PROXIMITY TO COLLEGE	PERSONAL SAFETY
VERY IMPORTANT	762 (55.1%)	497 (36%)	169 (12.2%)	443 (32.1%)	400 (29%)
IMPORTANT	549 (39.7%)	762 (55.2%)	729 (52.7%)	717 (51.9%)	668 (48.4%)
NOT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT	67 (4.8%)	113 (8.2%)	466 (33.7%)	204 (14.8%)	261 (18.9%)
UNIMPORTANT	4 (.3%)	9 (.7%)	18 (1.3%)	18 (1.3%)	52 (3.8%)
TOTAL	1,382	1,381	1,382	1,382	1,381

Female respondents rated personal safety somewhat more highly than their male counterparts. Two hundred and forty-nine female respondents thought that personal safety was a very important influencing factor when choosing accommodation, while 149 male respondents similarly rated it. Equal numbers of females and males rated personal safety as an important factor when choosing accommodation, suggesting that the gender divide in prioritising personal safety may not be as defined as it seems at first glance. However, of those who rated personal safety as not particularly important or unimportant, males were three times more likely to do so than females.

A total of 285 students mentioned other factors influencing their choice of accommodation. The most common such factor cited was who they would be living with (n=84). Transport was also a concern; 29 respondents cited transport links as influential when selecting their accommodation, and 22 respondents stated that the availability of car parking would influence their choice. Local amenities (n=22) and the area (n=18) were factors for other students. Internet access was important for 12 students, and there were multiple other reasons cited on an individual basis.

RENTAL LEVELS

On average, students individually paid €108.23 per week in rent and the average weekly rent for the entire unit was €382.16. Students in digs were not asked this latter question, and 315 students did not know the total amount paid for their accommodation – this would suggest that students pay their landlords individually rather than as a household.

These average rents compare favourably with the price of college-provided accommodation. For students in UCD, average rent in the private rented sector is approximately €18.69 more per month than for on-campus accommodation. Over the year, students in TCD would pay on average €1,050.20 more than if they were living in college-provided accommodation; however, the caveat here is that the annual cost of €5,000 for TCD accommodation (figure provided by TCD students' union) would not include the summer holidays which the average annual cost in our survey would include. DCU's average rent in the private sector is €14.14 less than for on-campus accommodation per month and DIT's private rental sector average was considerably less than the maximum price of college-provided accommodation.

There were 548 students (39.9%) who paid their rent through their bank accounts. Of the remainder, 429 (31.3%) said they did not receive receipts from their landlord and did not have a rent book, while 395 students (28.8%) said either they had a rent book or they got receipts from their landlord.

It was uncommon for rent to include bills; only 262 students stated that their rent included bills. Students were not asked what bills were included. Twenty-five students stated that meals were included in their rental of digs.

Students were asked if their parents or a guardian helped to pay for their accommodation, and 883 students stated this was the case, representing two-thirds of total respondents.

Students were then asked how much their parents/guardians contributed per month to their living expenses (the broader term 'living expenses' was used, as parents/guardians might not strictly allocate money for rent). Where students stated that their parents/guardians paid for all of their living expenses, the per month figure for their rent was used. On average parents/guardians gave these students €476.17 for their living expenses. The average real total for parental contributions towards their children in college would be higher if students had been able to quantify the amount of 'all' their living expenses. In other words, the figure given here is more conservative as, when students stated their parents paid 'all' their living expenses, only the rent figure was entered into the dataset.

Overall, students felt that their accommodation either was good value for money (n=432, 31.2%) or the cost was about right for what they were getting in return (n=729, 52.7%). However, 222 students (16.1%) thought that their accommodation was poor value for money.

As would be expected when students' opinions on the cost of their accommodation is compared against their accommodation preference (see Table 3.13), those who thought that their accommodation was good value, or about right for what they were getting in return, were also principally the respondents who were happy with their current accommodation. Eighty-four students who thought that their accommodation was poor value were happy with where they were currently living; suggesting that either the quality of their accommodation was good but that the price was too high for them, or that their current accommodation fulfilled other criteria (e.g. proximity to college) but at a cost that students felt exceeded its worth.

Table 3.13 Opinion of cost of accommodation related to accommodation preferences

	GOOD VALUE	ABOUT RIGHT	POOR VALUE	TOTAL
PREFER COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION	66	133	30	229
PREFER TO LIVE WITH FAMILY	17	18	12	47
PREFER BETTER STANDARD RENTAL ACCOMMODATION	29	119	94	242
HAPPY WITH CURRENT ACCOMMODATION	310	451	84	845
TOTAL	422	721	220	1363

Of the 1,311 students who stated that cost was very important or important when selecting accommodation, 28.7% (n=397) thought that their accommodation was good value for money and a further 51% (n=705) felt that the cost was about right for what they were getting in return. The remaining 15.2% thought that their current accommodation was poor value for money.

There appeared to be an inverse relationship between the individual per week cost of accommodation and the perceived importance of cost. Students who stated that cost was very important in influencing their choice of accommodation paid an average of €105.39 per week in rent; students who stated that cost was important paid an average of €110.06 per week in rent; students who stated that cost was not particularly important paid €121.73 on average per week in rent. Students who regarded cost as unimportant in choosing their accommodation, of whom there were only four students, paid an average of €172.86 per week in rent.

Students who received a grant and perceived cost to be very important paid an average of €103.90 per week; those who thought cost was important paid €109.03 per week. Students who received a grant and thought rent was not particularly important paid an average of €91.82 per week in rent.

Overall students felt that quality was very important or important when choosing accommodation (n=1,259). These students were generally happy with the actual quality of their accommodation; 1,092 students (79.1%), who had stated that quality was either very important or important when choosing accommodation, also stated that their current accommodation was either very good or good quality. There were 159 students (11.5%) who rated quality as very important or important and who also stated that their accommodation was not in good condition. A further seven students (0.5%) stated that although they rated quality of accommodation as very important or important, they believed their current accommodation to be in bad condition. See Table 3.14 for details.

Table 3.14 Student consideration of accommodation quality when choosing where to live and the quality of their current accommodation

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
VERY GOOD QUALITY	133 (9.6%)	124 (9%)	19 (1.4%)	1 (.1%)	277 (20.1%)
GOOD QUALITY	306 (22.2%)	529 (38.3%)	65 (4.7%)	2 (.1%)	902 (65.4%)
NOT GOOD CONDITION	53 (3.8%)	106 (7.7%)	28 (2%)	4 (.3%)	191 (13.8%)
VERY BAD CONDITION	4 (.3%)	3 (.2%)	1 (.1%)	2 (.1%)	10 (.7%)
TOTAL	496 (35.9%)	762 (55.2%)	113 (8.2%)	9 (.7%)	1,380 (100%)

Students took personal safety into account when choosing accommodation – 1,068 students stated that it was either important or very important. Of these students who rated personal safety as influencing their choice of accommodation, 1,008 believed that their current accommodation was either very safe or somewhat safe. A further 76 and 8 students thought that their current accommodation was not particularly safe or totally unsafe respectively.

Table 3.15 Consideration of safety as an influence on accommodation selection and perceived safety of current accommodation

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
VERY SAFE	206 (14.9%)	245 (17.8%)	83 (6%)	19 (1.4%)	553 (40.1%)
SOMEWHAT SAFE	169 (12.2%)	388 (28.1%)	161 (11.7%)	25 (1.8%)	743 (53.8%)
NOT PARTICULARLY SAFE	20 (1.4%)	33 (2.4%)	17 (1.2%)	6 (.4%)	76 (5.5%)
TOTALLY UNSAFE	4 (.3%)	2 (.1%)	–	2 (.1%)	8 (.6%)
TOTAL	399 (28.9%)	668 (48.4%)	261 (18.9%)	52 (3.8%)	1,380 (100%)

There were 1,160 students who stated that proximity to college was either a very important or important factor in influencing their accommodation choice. Of these 1,160 students, 1,051 thought that their commuting time to college was either good or reasonable. Only 106 of the 1,160 students stated that their commuting time was either bad or terrible. See Table 3.16 for details.

Table 3.16 Influence of proximity to college when choosing accommodation and perception of commuting time

	VERY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	NOT PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
GOOD COMMUTING TIME	238 (17.3%)	317 (23%)	71 (5.1%)	9 (.7%)	635 (46%)
REASONABLE COMMUTING TIME	171 (12.4%)	325 (23.6%)	105 (7.6%)	5 (.4%)	606 (43.9%)
BAD COMMUTING TIME	27 (2%)	63 (4.6%)	22 (1.6%)	3 (.2%)	115 (8.3%)
TERRIBLE COMMUTING TIME	6 (.4%)	10 (.7%)	6 (.4%)	1 (.1%)	23 (1.7%)
TOTAL	442 (32.1%)	715 (51.8%)	204 (14.8%)	18 (1.3%)	1,379 (100%)

TIME TAKEN TO GET TO COLLEGE AND METHOD USED

The majority of the surveyed students (91.8%) got to college in less than 45 minutes; 580 students (41.9%) took 15–30 minutes to commute to college, 421 students (30.4%) commuted to college in under 15 minutes and it took 269 students (19.5%) 31–45 minutes to get to college. It took a further 78 students (5.6%) 46–60 minutes to get to college, and 35 students (2.5%) were commuting for over an hour.

The Dublin Transportation Office ‘Travel to Education Survey’ (September 2007) stated that 47 per cent of third-level students’ commute time to college was less than 30 minutes, with 23.8 per cent of students having a journey time of over one hour. It is likely that the difference between the DTO figures and figures from this sample occurs because students in this sample were in the private rented sector and are more likely to locate closer to their college, while the DTO survey would include students living in their parents/guardians’ homes, which could potentially be further away from the college.

Students were asked about the principal way they commuted to college – walk, bicycle, own motorised transport, or public transport. However, students may use a combination of these – for example, students could state that they principally cycle to college but on a rainy day or a day they are running late they might use public transport. Most students either principally walked to college (n=625, 45.2%) or used one form of public transport (n=467, 33.8%); 166 students (12%) cycled to college, 73 (5.3%) drove to college, 46 (3.3%) used more than one form of public transport (e.g. two buses, or a train and a bus). Six students (0.4%) got to college by moped or motorcycle.

As so many students walked or cycled they did not have monthly commuting costs (n=638). Of students who did have monthly commuting costs, the modal answer was that commuting costs were €61–80 per month (n=246).

The Dublin Transportation Office's 'Road User Monitoring Report' (2007) stated that 34.6 per cent of all Greater Dublin Area students travelled to school or college on foot, 3.4 per cent cycled, 21.3 per cent got the bus and 4.4 per cent got the train. These figures were significantly different¹¹ (excluding own motorised transport) from the survey sample, where, if the percentages had been comparable, more students in this study's sample would have been walking and using public transport, and there would have been fewer cyclists. As mentioned with the other DTO survey, a difference between these two surveys is that the survey under consideration in this document was based only among students in the private rented sector, and does not include students who may be living with their parents/guardians or in college-provided accommodation.

RELATIONSHIP WITH LANDLORD

Overall the majority of students recorded having a reasonable or indifferent relationship with their current landlord; 826 students (60.2%) stated that their relationship with their current landlord was excellent (n=227, 16.5%) or good (n=599, 43.7%) and a further 466 students (34%) stated that they had not had any real contact with their landlord to date. Sixty-three students (4.6%) described their relationship with their landlord as not good, and a further 17 students (1.2%) described this relationship as poor.

When students stated that this relationship was either not good or poor, they were asked why this was the case. Multiple reasons were cited by individuals, but the most common responses were because the landlord would not fix problems when requested (n=27), because the landlord was felt to be intrusive (n=19), or because of a personality clash between the student and the landlord (n=16).

Specific reasons cited are listed below, with the number of students citing this reason in brackets.

Why is the relationship between you and your current landlord not good?

- Personality clash (11)
- The landlord is intrusive (13)
- The landlord will not fix problems in the house and makes rent demands when it has already been paid (5)
- The landlord will not fix problems in the house (14)
- The landlord is non-responsive (7)
- The landlord gave away a promised bedroom to someone else (1)
- The inventory was not taken at the beginning of the lease (1)
- The landlord asks for the rent at different times of the month (1)
- The landlord threatens eviction if the tenants do not pay the increase in rent (1)

¹¹ [$\chi^2(2)=143.64, p<.001$]

- The landlord is a bully (1)
- The landlord comes into the house whenever he/she wants and does not fix any problems in the house (1)
- We had parties so the relationship is now not good (2)
- The landlord does not like us having our friends in the house (1)

Why is the relationship between you and your current landlord poor?

- The landlord does not respond to our calls and requests (7)
- The landlord is wanted by the police and they keep calling to the door (3)
- The landlord is intrusive (6)
- Personality clash (5)
- The landlord always complains about the house being untidy (1)
- The landlord would not provide a copy of the lease (1)
- There was hassle over the previous tenants' bills (1)

AWARENESS OF THE PRTB REGISTRATION SYSTEM

There was a low awareness of the PRTB registration system among respondents. Sixty per cent (815 students) did not know if their tenancy was registered, 421 students (30.8%) reported that their tenancy was registered, and 131 students (9.6%) stated that their tenancy was not registered.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

A historical element was included in the survey to assess change in students' experience of the private rental sector. There were 773 students (56.5%) in the private rented sector for the previous academic year, and under three-quarters of these (n=478, 62%) were in a different property to their current accommodation. Two hundred and ninety-three students (38%) were in the same property as they had been in the previous academic year.

Three hundred and thirty-three students (43.7%) stated that their rent was the same in this academic year as in the previous academic year, 267 students (35%) reported that their rent had gone up since the previous academic year, and the remainder (n=162, 21.3%) stated that their rent had gone down. The principal reason given for the rent both going up and going down was related to living in a different property. However, very few students could explain the changes in rent. On average, students' rent had gone up by €78.62 and had been reduced by €66.37.

Students were asked about their relationship with their former landlord. Of the respondents who answered this question, 175 students (24.5%) had the same landlord as during the previous academic year. For the remaining students, 63 stated that their relationship with their former landlord was excellent (11.5%), with a further 252 (45.9%) stating that their relationship was good. A further 156 students (28.4%) said they had not had any real contact with their former landlord.

Forty-seven students (8.6%) stated that their relationship with their former landlord was not good, and a further 31 (5.6%) described the relationship as poor. Similar to students' responses to the question about their current landlord, students recorded that the reason the former relationship was 'not good' or 'poor' was because the landlord was unresponsive. Other reasons were also stated, such as having trouble getting deposits returned, and getting into trouble for having parties. Reasons for a 'not good' or 'poor' relationship with the landlord of the previous academic year are listed below, with the number of students citing this reason in brackets.

Why was the relationship between you and your former landlord not good/poor?

- We had parties (15)
- Personality clash (12)
- I was overcharged for rent (1)
- The landlord was unconcerned that the accommodation was in very bad condition (1)
- The landlord was intrusive and came in without asking (2)

CROSS-COLLEGE COMPARISON

A cross-college comparison was considered an important element of this survey. As can be seen from the descriptive statistics outlined below (see Tables 3.19 and 3.20), no major differences were found between colleges. As can be seen from Table 3.19, there was no one college where students found it more difficult or easier to find accommodation and the duration of time finding accommodation in the private rented sector did not differ considerably across the colleges.

Of the students who found it difficult to find their accommodation, there was also a similar breakdown across the colleges in reasons for this difficulty. For example, students who were based in the city centre did not state in considerably greater numbers that there was too much competition for similar accommodation types, than their counterparts outside of the city centre. The types of accommodation students inhabit, and the number of occupants, were also very similar across the different colleges. When asked about their preferences, across the colleges, students stated in their greatest numbers that they were happy with their current accommodation (see Table 3.19). Additionally, in terms of influential factors for selecting accommodation, students did not differ across colleges; for example, DCU students were not more inclined to prioritise the size of their accommodation than DIT students.

Table 3.17 ‘How would you describe finding your current accommodation?’
– by college

	ITT	DCU	UCD	TCD	DIT	TOTAL
VERY EASY	20 23.5%	87 26.1%	37 14.4%	48 16.4%	100 24.2%	292 21.2%
EASY	26 30.6%	79 23.7%	67 26.1%	74 25.3%	114 27.6%	360 26.1%
NEITHER EASY NOR DIFFICULT	18 21.2%	64 19.2%	57 22.2%	60 20.5%	78 18.9%	277 20%
DIFFICULT	18 21.2%	79 23.7%	76 29.6%	88 30.1%	95 23%	356 25.8%
VERY DIFFICULT	3 3.5%	24 7.2%	20 7.8%	22 7.5%	26 6.3%	95 6.9%
TOTAL	85 100%	333 100%	257 100%	292 100%	413 100%	1,380 100%

Table 3.18 ‘Which of these statements is correct for you?’ – by college

	ITT	DCU	UCD	TCD	DIT	TOTAL
I WOULD PREFER TO LIVE IN COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION	21 (25.3%)	56 (17.1%)	56 (21.8%)	53 (18.4%)	43 (10.6%)	229 (16.8%)
I WOULD PREFER TO LIVE WITH MY FAMILY/GUARDIAN BUT THIS IS NOT FEASIBLE	1 (1.2%)	16 (4.9%)	6 (2.3%)	8 (2.8%)	15 (3.7%)	46 (3.4%)
I AM HAPPY WITH MY CURRENT ACCOMMODATION	44 (53%)	195 (59.6%)	146 (56.8%)	187 (64.9%)	273 (67.2%)	845 (62%)
I WOULD PREFER TO BE IN BETTER STANDARD PRIVATE RENTED ACCOMMODATION	17 (20.5%)	60 (18.3%)	49 (19.1%)	40 (13.9%)	75 (18.5%)	241 (17.8%)
TOTAL	83 (100%)	327 (100%)	257 (100%)	288 (100%)	408 (100%)	1,361 (100%)

The one aspect where a small difference was found between colleges was in average weekly cost of accommodation to the individual. TCD student rent was the highest at €116.35, UCD student rent was averaged at €108.16, DCU rent was €106.34, ITT was €105.19 and DIT had the lowest average weekly rent at €104.71. However, a difference of €11.64 per week between the lowest and highest rents could not be considered a large discrepancy¹².

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SITUATION OUTSIDE DUBLIN

Students' unions all over Ireland were contacted and given the opportunity to make submissions about the private rented sector for students in their area. Five students' unions made contact, and all five were very positive about the private rented sector in their area, with Athlone IT students' union reporting that there was a surplus of private rented accommodation despite the absence of college-provided accommodation. Threshold in Cork and Galway also reported fewer problems for student clients than in previous years. The principal problem encountered was deposit retention.

SURVEYS OF STUDENTS IN DUBLIN

Surveys of students in Dublin third-level institutions found the following:

Students not in Private Rented Accommodation

Half of students currently living at home would prefer to be renting their own accommodation and just half of those were prevented from doing so by affordability. A very small number referred to lack of suitable accommodation close to college or to problems relating to the quality of available accommodation.

Students in Private Rented Accommodation

Almost a quarter were in receipt of a grant at the time of surveying. Seventy-five of these students – 23 per cent – described finding accommodation difficult, as what was on offer was too expensive.

Over half of the respondents had begun renting their accommodation at the beginning of the current term.

The two most common ways of sourcing this accommodation were found to be online (51 per cent) and through friends or word-of-mouth (33.3 per cent). Students therefore were more likely to find accommodation using resources unconnected with their college.

¹² By excluding ITT due to small sample size, significant relationships were found [$F(3,1285)=7.632, p<.001$]. A post-hoc comparison indicated that the significant difference was between TCD and all the other colleges (except ITT due to its exclusion). However, this should be cautiously interpreted, as the difference between the highest and lowest rent is a small sum.

The majority of surveyed students found their private rented accommodation in less than a month, with a small number (11.1 per cent) stating that it took them 1–2 months to find their accommodation, and a further 46 (3.3 per cent) reporting that it took them more than 2 months.

While almost half of respondents described finding their accommodation as easy or very easy, a third of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to find accommodation. The main reasons given for this were cost, competition for available accommodation or lack of accommodation in the preferred area.

The majority of the students interviewed said they lived either in house-share accommodation (48.1 per cent) or apartment blocks (38.7 per cent), while 8.7 per cent lived in accommodation that was part of a multi-unit house, 2.6 per cent were in digs and two per cent lived in bedsits. The most common number of accommodation unit occupants was found to be four. A single-occupancy bedroom was the most common situation for the surveyed students.

A third said they were generally happy with their accommodation. However, 17.8 per cent did express a preference for better quality accommodation in the private rented sector.

Up to a third of respondents would prefer to be in alternative accommodation, with 17 per cent stating that they would prefer to live in college accommodation.

Respondents were either very satisfied (n=328, 23.8%) or satisfied (n=894, 64.9%) with their current accommodation. Only a small number of students stated they were either not particularly satisfied (n=145, 10.5%) or dissatisfied (n=11, 0.8%).

Cost was considered the most important factor influencing choice of accommodation, with over 50 per cent of respondents stating that cost was very important. The quality of the accommodation and its proximity to college were also deemed important, rated as very important by 36 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. Personal safety and the size of the accommodation were considered less important factors.

On average, students paid €108.23 per week in rent and the average weekly rent for the entire unit was €382.16. These average rents compare favourably with the price of college-provided accommodation.

Forty per cent paid their rent through their bank accounts. Of the remainder, 429 (31.3%) said they did not receive receipts from their landlord and did not have a rent book, while 395 students (28.8%) said either they had a rent book or they got receipts from their landlord. There was low awareness of the PRTB registration system, with 60 per cent of respondents not knowing if their tenancy was registered, and a further 9.6 per cent stating that their tenancy was not registered. The remaining 30.8 per cent of surveyed students reported that their tenancy was registered.

Two-thirds of total respondents stated that their parents or a guardian helped to pay for their accommodation.

Overall, students felt that their accommodation either was good value for money (31.2 per cent) or the cost was about right for what they were getting in return (52.7 per cent). However, 222 students (16.1 per cent) thought that their accommodation was poor value for money.

There appeared to be an inverse relationship between the individual per week cost of accommodation and the perceived importance of cost.

Of the students who rated personal safety as influencing their choice of accommodation, almost three-quarters believed their current accommodation was either very safe or somewhat safe.

Over 80 per cent of students stated that proximity to college was either a very important or important factor in influencing their accommodation choice. The majority of the surveyed students (91.8 per cent) got to college in less than 45 minutes. Most students principally either walked to college (45.2 per cent) or used one form of public transport (33.8 per cent); 166 students (12%) cycled to college, and 73 (5.3%) drove to college. Of students who did have commuting costs, the average for such costs was €61–80 per month (n=246).

Overall, the majority of students recorded having a reasonable or indifferent relationship with their current landlord. Sixty-three students (4.6 per cent) described their relationship with their landlord as not good, and a further 17 students (1.2 per cent) described this relationship as poor.

The most common explanations for poor relationships with landlords were because the landlord would not fix problems when requested (n=27), because the landlord was felt to be intrusive (n=19), or because of a personality clash between the student and the landlord (n=16).

Thirty-eight per cent were in the same property as they had been in the previous academic year. Forty-four per cent of these students stated that their rent was the same in the current academic year as in the previous, 267 students (35%) reported that their rent had gone up since the previous academic year, and the remainder (n=162, 21.3%) stated that their rent had gone down.

The principal reason given for the rent both going up and going down was related to living in a different property. However, very few students could explain the changes in rent. On average, students' rent had gone up by €78.62 and had been reduced by €66.37.

A quarter of students had the same landlord as during the previous academic year. For the remaining students, 11.5 per cent stated their relationship with their former landlord was excellent, with another 45.9 per cent stating that their relationship was good. A further 28.4 per cent said they had not had any real contact with their former landlord.

No significant differences were found between colleges in these findings. However, a small difference was found between colleges in average weekly cost to the individual for accommodation. TCD students' private rented sector rent was the highest at €116.35, UCD student rent was averaged at €108.16, DCU rent was €106.34, ITT was €105.19 and DIT had the lowest average weekly rent at €104.71 – a difference of €11.64 per week between the lowest and highest rents.



SECTION FOUR

Review of Student Accommodation in Europe

INTRODUCTION

Students are increasingly being recognised as a distinct and growing sub-sector of the private rented housing market. The private market for student housing is most developed in the UK where it is currently worth £6.6bn and is forecast to grow to over £20bn in the next 6 years (Savills Research, 2007). However, education policy aimed at increasing student numbers does not seem to have been accompanied by detailed action to address consequent housing outcomes. It is assumed that the private rental market will expand accordingly, and indeed in many countries large-scale corporate student landlordism emerged in the early 1990s and has been developing rapidly in response to this.

This section will examine international trends in student numbers, their housing needs and the different types of support that students receive for accommodation in different countries. This section will also consider the role of the private sector in meeting these needs. This is followed by a short discussion on the role of universities and students in the development of 'knowledge cities' and finally by a review of some specific initiatives to support student accommodation in Europe.

TRENDS IN STUDENT NUMBERS AND ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

There were in excess of 18 million students in Europe in 2004 (Eurydice, 2007, latest figures). The student population in tertiary education is continuing to rise, having grown by over 10 per cent between 2001 and 2004. The number of students in Greece, Romania, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden, Iceland and the newer member states was found by Eurydice to be growing at a rate above the EU average. The increase exceeded 50 per cent in Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland and Romania. In the other countries in this group with rates above the EU average, the growth in student numbers averaged over 20 per cent, while the increase was slower in Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Finland, the United Kingdom and Norway. In France and Italy, student enrolment levels stayed largely unchanged over this period (Eurydice, 2005). Interestingly Austria recorded a decrease in its student population between 1998 and 2002, the result of a sudden fall in student numbers in 2002 following the introduction of tuition fees in tertiary education in 2001–2002. This sudden drop was preceded by several years of steadily increasing student numbers from 1998 to 2001 (Eurydice, 2005).

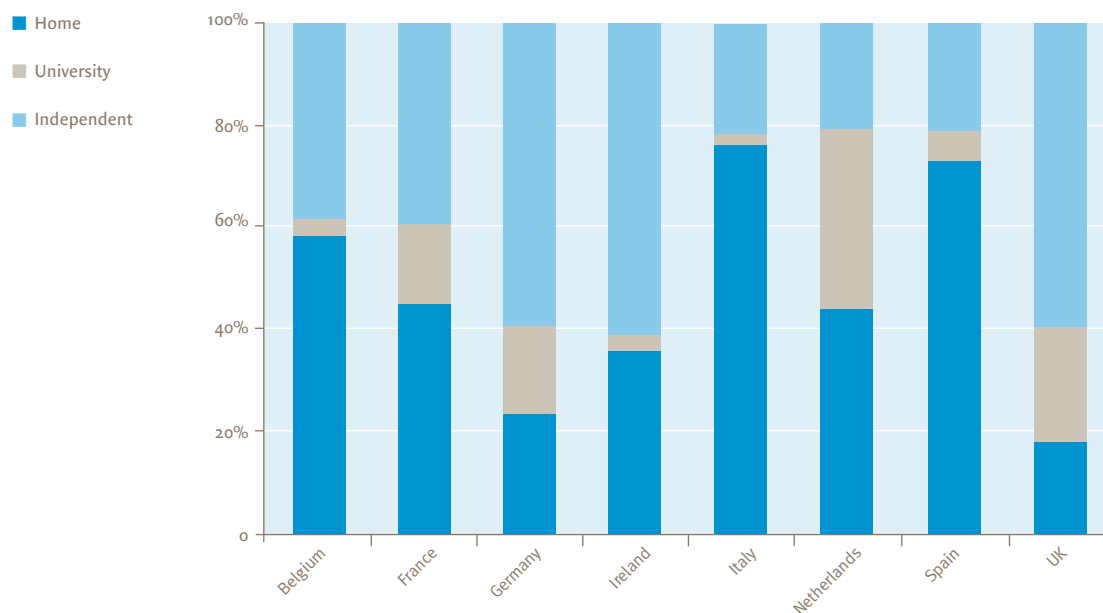
However, overall student numbers are forecast to continue to grow in the foreseeable future (Savills Research, 2007). European economies are working to develop knowledge-based economies which rely on high and growing levels of educational qualifications. Current policy throughout Europe is therefore to increase the number of the workforce with third- and fourth-level qualifications (OECD, 2005). Additionally, the number of overseas students studying in Europe is expanding rapidly. These overseas students are increasingly seen as a source of revenue and as a method of helping third-level establishments to meet rising running costs (CIHE, 2006).

Despite this, lower birth-rates are likely to put pressure on third-level institutions. Mizikaci and Baumgartl (2007) report:

Populations in the EU-27 countries failed to reproduce themselves over a prolonged period, with a lower than 1.5 birth rate. European universities, which traditionally educate students aged 18-to-25 years, will obviously be affected from the reduced numbers of their traditional target group in the long term. It is projected that some higher education systems in Europe are under the highest risk of closure or setback while others are under medium risk due to the population decline.

Students live either in the family/guardian home, in independent, private accommodation or on campus. The graph below shows the proportion of students living in different forms of accommodation in a number of European countries. This shows that large numbers reside in the family home but that this varies significantly by country.

Figure 4.1 Percentage of students in different forms of accommodation in a number of European countries (2007)



Source: Eurostudent/King Sturge Research 2007

As can be seen, a relatively high proportion of Irish students live in independently-supplied (private) accommodation. Far smaller percentages of Irish students occupy university-supplied accommodation compared with, for example the Netherlands or the UK. As outlined in Section One, universities provide accommodation to less than five per cent of students in Ireland. As is shown by Figure 4.1, the percentage of students living in the family home is significantly higher in western continental Europe than it is in the UK. Italy is the highest, with over 75 per cent staying in the family home. Looking specifically to the UK, a recent major review of the private rental sector concluded that students now represent one of the largest demand groups for private rented accommodation, 'clearly comprising a key dimension of the PRS (Private Rental Sector)' (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008).

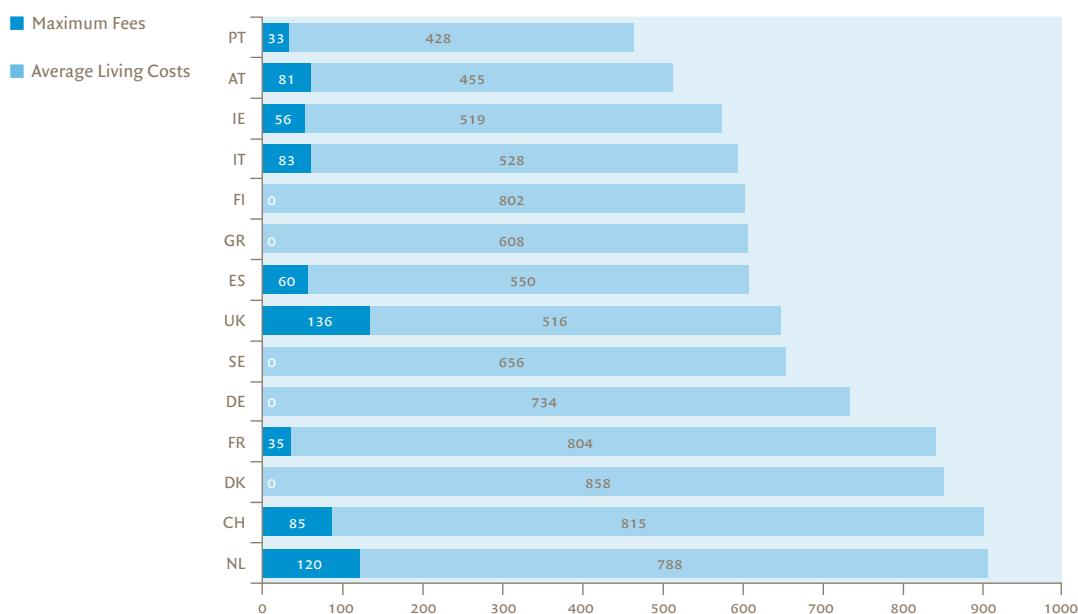
In relation to where students live, Rugg and Rhodes state:

Many students, also usually leaving home for the first time, spend a year in halls of residence and then further years renting privately. According to the 2001 Census, full-time students comprised 16 per cent of all people in households in the PRS (Rhodes, 2006b). More recent exact figures are not available on student numbers and their accommodation. Estimates (for England and Wales) indicate that despite an increase in the proportion of students studying from home, 1.6m students had a residential demand and, roughly, between 45 and 50 per cent of students were living in the PRS (Blakey, 2008). (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

STATE SUPPORTS FOR STUDENTS IN EUROPE

Schwarz and Rehburg (2004) found that supports for students tend to focus primarily on the cost of fees. By contrast, accommodation and living costs are often much less well supported by these systems. However, as Schwarz and Rehburg indicate, in every European country the amounts that have to be spent on course fees are quite small in comparison to the students' cost of living. Cost of living encompasses accommodation, food, travel, clothing, and entertainment (see Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 Maximum or fixed student fees and average living costs in European countries (per student and month)



Data are not available for Belgium and Norway

Source: Schwarz and Rehburg (2004)

Figure 4.2 shows that students' living costs (in euro) are highest in the Netherlands, with Ireland in the middle range. The table also shows that many countries have no fees and that in those cases where fees are paid these represent only a small proportion of total costs. Schwarz and Rehburg maintain:

Students' living costs vary considerably. The average is around 400 to 600 Euros per month — and can herewith be regarded as low or moderate — in the Northwest of Europe (Ireland, UK) and in Southern Europe (Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece). In contrast, the cost of living for students in the North and Middle European countries is much higher: in France, Switzerland, and Denmark, for example, they add up to over 800 Euros per student and month. (Schwarz and Rehburg, 2004)

Schwarz and Rehburg identify four different models of support for students in Europe:

In the first model, students are regarded as **responsible citizens**. The State provides extensive financial support for the time of study. Most students live on their own. They are considered to be mature people who go their own way, with financial assistance from the public. Nearly all students receive financial support; there are no student fees. This model is mainly applied in the Nordic countries: Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland. Students are also regarded as self-responsible investors. Therefore, it is not customary to allow financial relief, like tax allowances or children's allowances, for the students' parents.

Students are regarded as **young learners** in the second model. Public student support is only available in case of financial need. Public welfare is provided according to a subsidiary concept: the parents are responsible for the education of their children and the State will only intervene if parents are not or not sufficiently able to pay. This model can be found in Western and middle European countries, such as Ireland, France, Belgium, Germany, and Austria. Usually, but not always students in these countries have to pay fees. Those who receive public student support, however, are exempted.

In the third model, students are considered to be **children** sheltered by their families. This model can be observed in Southern European countries, like Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. The majority of students live with their parents during their studies and the core family must ensure the children's education on its own. Financial help by the State is offered only in case of urgent need. As a rule, higher education institutions in these countries charge student fees (except for Greece).

The fourth type of student role model is the **investor** model which is represented by the UK and the Netherlands. In these two countries, students are regarded as investors in their future career. In contrast to the first model, students must substantially contribute to their education. Hence, student fees are high compared to other European countries. At the same time, many students receive public student support. The money the State provides for higher education is transferred directly to the students who are responsible for making proper use of it. (Schwarz and Rehburg, 2004)

For Schwarz and Rehburg, these models affect the way that student support is provided and the extent to which accommodation is seen as being the responsibility of the State, either by direct or indirect funding, or the responsibility of the students and/or their families. However, despite the existence of these different models, the researchers believe that the investor model, currently most prevalent in the UK and the Netherlands, will become more prevalent in other European countries in the future (Schwarz and Rehburg, 2004).

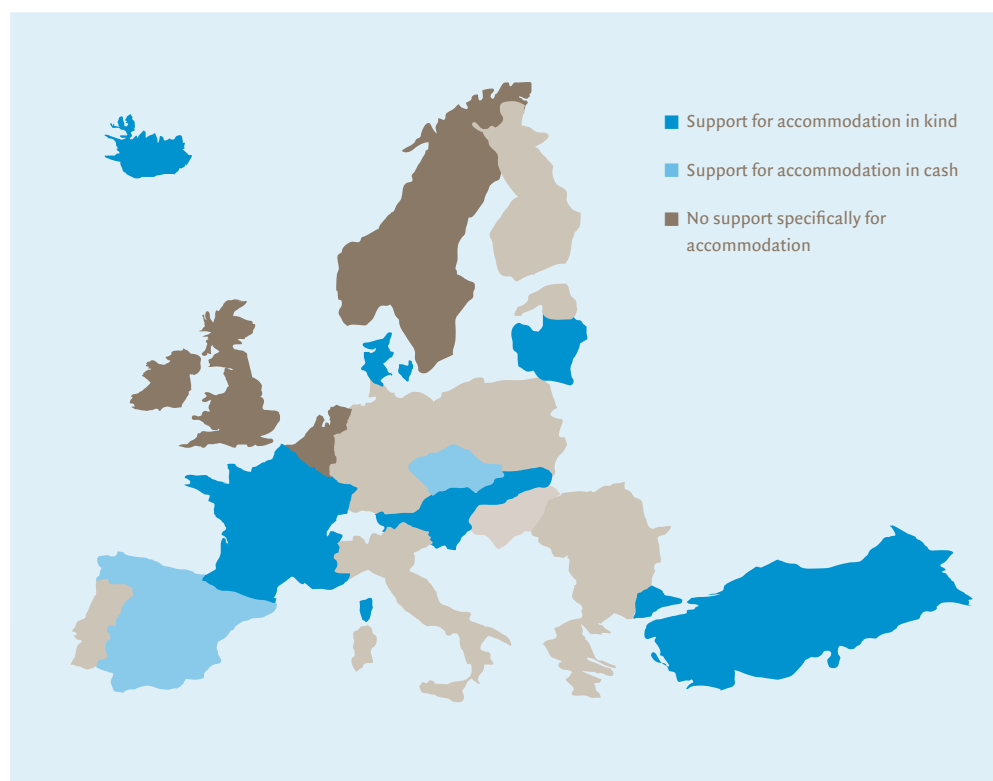
Where the State supports the costs of student accommodation this support is in cash, through the award of a grant, and/or in kind, i.e. accommodation is made available for students, for example in halls of residence. Figure 4.3 shows the type of support provided in each European country (Eurydice, 2007). This indicates that many European countries provide accommodation at reduced rent for students. However, the scale of this accommodation as a proportion of total student numbers is quite low. Overall Eurydice concluded:

Among the 21 countries with accommodation at reduced rent for students, only eight have set a maximum rent (of between PPS €61 and PPS €338 depending on the country concerned). The number of places is often very limited, with no more than 15 per cent of students provided for, except in Bulgaria (24 per cent) and Hungary (22 per cent). (Eurydice, 2007)

In ten of these countries accommodation may be combined with support in cash. In the case of the UK, Ireland, Luxembourg, Austria, Norway and Belgium support for accommodation in cash cannot be separated from support to cover the cost of living. However, Eurydice goes on to say:

Furthermore, the provision of student accommodation may also occur in cases in which there are no subsidies or central regulation (as in the French and Flemish Communities of Belgium, Sweden, the United Kingdom and Norway). (Eurydice, 2007)

Figure 4.3 Types of support for accommodation awarded to students enrolled for a first qualification (ISCED 5) in a public or government-dependent private institution, 2005



Note: Support for accommodation is said to be *in kind* when public services contribute to the purchase and/or daily management of accommodation for students. Support *in cash* corresponds to cash payments for student rent. Support for accommodation is reported here when it is regarded as entirely distinct from other types of support. The dark grey colour indicates support that is both in kind and in cash.

Source: Eurydice (2007)

AVAILABILITY OF PUBLIC STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

Figure 4.5 shows the number of European countries providing public service accommodation for students. This indicates that sixteen countries provide such accommodation.

Figure 4.5 Number of places in public service accommodation for students (ISCED 5) enrolled for a first qualification and rent levels (PPS €), public or government-dependent private sectors, 2005–2006

	BE FR	BE DE	BE NL	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
NO. OF PLACES (%)	–	–	–	24	(21)	:	10	:	–	:	–	7	2	1	:	11	:
MINIMUM RENT	–	–	–	18	●	●	48	●	–	●	–	140	●	115	●	0	:
MAXIMUM RENT	–	–	–	76	95	●	338	●	–	●	–	234	●	153	●	105	:
	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/ WLS/NIR	UK- SCT	IS	LI	NO	TR
NO. OF PLACES (%)	22	–	–	13	7	4	16	14	30	22	–	–	–	:	–	–	10
MINIMUM RENT	33	–	–	●	●	69	39	●	●	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	61
MAXIMUM RENT	●	–	–	●	●	●	110	●	●	●	–	–	–	●	–	–	61

● Amount freely determined at local level

– No student accommodation provided by the public authorities

Explanatory note: The number of places in student accommodation is expressed as a percentage of students enrolled in ISCED 5 programmes (2004 data, Eurostat). The rents shown are monthly amounts. Amounts are converted by means of 'purchasing power parities' (PPP) and aligned with the euro. This means that national currency is converted into an artificial but common currency, the purchasing power standard (PPS). (Eurydice, 2007)

This figure shows that the number of student accommodation places or halls of residence available to students varies considerably across Europe. It ranges from five per cent (as in Italy, Cyprus and Portugal) to over 20 per cent in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Finland. Furthermore, in three countries (Bulgaria, Hungary and Finland), the two types of support (in cash and in kind) may be combined. In some countries, e.g. Denmark and Latvia, numbers of places are not known as they are set locally.

Figure 4.6 shows the annual amounts of cash support provided specifically for student accommodation in a number of European countries.

Figure 4.6 Annual amounts of cash support (PPS €) awarded specifically for accommodation to students enrolled for a first qualification (ISCED 5) in a public or government-dependent institution, 2005–2006

	BE FR	BE DE	BE NL	BG	CZ	DK	DE	EE	IE	EL	ES	FR	IT	CY	LV	LT	LU
INVARIABLE AMOUNT	–	–	–	403	●	–	–	439	–	1177	–	–	●	–	–	–	–
MINIMUM AMOUNT	–	–	–	–	●	–	–	–	–	–	2652	–	●	–	–	–	–
MAXIMUM AMOUNT	–	–	–	–	●	–	2231	–	–	–	5139	–	●	–	–	–	–
	HU	MT	NL	AT	PL	PT	RO	SI	SK	FI	SE	UK-ENG/ WLS/NIR	UK- SCT	IS	LI	NO	TR
INVARIABLE AMOUNT	396	–	–	–	–	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
MINIMUM AMOUNT	–	–	–	–	1438	–	189	–	–	215	–	–	–	–	0	–	–
MAXIMUM AMOUNT	–	–	–	–	2589	–	333	–	–	1608	–	–	–	–	3422	–	–

● Amount freely determined at local level

– No support in cash specifically for accommodation

This figure shows that a majority of countries do not provide support in cash specifically for accommodation. It also shows that for the two countries that offer the highest amounts of cash support (Spain and Liechtenstein, with a maximum of over PPS €5,000 a year in Spain), neither offers any support in kind. In all the other countries in which data on cash support for accommodation are available, the public authorities also subsidise the building and/or maintenance of lower rent accommodation.

PRIVATE SECTOR INVOLVEMENT IN THE EUROPEAN STUDENT HOUSING MARKET

According to King Sturge (2008) the student accommodation sub-sector is forecast to experience considerable growth in the medium to long term with an increasing number of commercial developers and housing associations operating in the market. Many developers, contractors and investors are seeing a clear opportunity to enter this market which may be relatively more resistant to the global downturn than other sub-sectors. (King Sturge, 2008; AMA Research, 2006).

However, there is also evidence that in countries where fees have been reintroduced or topped up the number of students living with their parents has increased. Also, as widening participation in third level occurs this is likely to increase the proportion of students studying and living in their own catchment area (Savills Research, 2007). Despite these trends, the private market for student accommodation is forecast to increase further in the future as the rise in student numbers has not been matched by an increase in the number of student beds provided on campus by universities and colleges and as numbers of postgraduates and overseas students increase significantly over the next decade (Savills Research, 2007).

Rugg and Rhodes' (2008) review of the private residential market in the UK concluded that one of the key reasons why the student sub-market has grown is that it is a market where a high density build is appropriate and one where institutional investments are bringing new bed spaces through the building of large private sector halls of residence. This is supported by the growth of accreditation in the private rental market in the UK which is particularly attractive in the student rental sub-market.

In the UK the top ten providers of commercial halls of residence now account for over 100,000 beds places. Not all these units have been new build. In some instances, the landlords have acquired and redeveloped existing halls of residence in agreement with the relevant Higher Educational Authority (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008). According to Savills Research (2007) the age and quality of existing university stock will be the main driver of growth in the UK student housing market in the future, with universities seeking to transfer the liability of ageing housing stock to the private sector. Nevertheless, King Sturge (2008) notes the accelerating trend of developer-operators that concentrate on the purchase and developments of new sites and often offer strongly branded premium accommodation.

Savills Research (2007) highlighted how these trends are being mitigated by a reduction in the number of bed spaces managed by universities:

Over the same period, the proportion of bed spaces provided or managed by universities has fallen from 33 per cent to 25 per cent of all bed spaces for full-time students, which is a reflection of greater acceptance of private sector involvement. The increase in private sector provision is a direct response to increased demand from overseas and domestic students for better quality accommodation. In addition, universities have realised that to attract overseas students they need good quality accommodation but they do not have sufficient levels of funding to invest in non-core areas of their educational business. The increased costs of higher education for domestic students have also resulted in more students demanding better quality, modern accommodation.
(Savills Research, 2007)

A 2006 UK Review of the Accommodation Sector in Higher Education stated:

Current estimates across the sector show that a considerable maintenance and infrastructure backlog exists. Around £8 billion will be needed over the next few years to repair, replace and modernise the buildings and services in many post-war buildings used throughout the UK's universities, which are now reaching the end of their design life. (AMA Research, 2006)

Savills Research (2007) highlights how areas where demand for purpose-built accommodation from overseas and first-time students outstrips supply will be the most lucrative areas for private investment. The researchers point to the extent of consolidation that is occurring among private sector providers of student accommodation and note that the university sector continues to seek private investment as well as partnerships with private providers (Savills Research, 2007).

Rugg and Rhodes (2008) refer to how these developments have impacted both on rent levels and the quality of accommodation available to students in the UK where these developments are most advanced.

The stereotype of student rental housing has been shared houses, not always in the best condition, or institutional halls of residence. The commercial sector has largely transformed the student housing experience, offering 'luxury' blocks with en suite facilities, broadband internet connections and gym facilities. This improvement has come at a cost. The 2006–7 Unipol/NUS research indicated that average corporate private provider rents were 18 per cent more expensive than the rents charged by institutional providers (Unipol/NUS, 2007). Although it could be argued that a great deal of private provision is deliberately 'up market' and cheaper options are available, many higher education institutions meet their implied duty to house first-year and overseas students through nomination agreements with private halls. These student groups are, by definition, inexperienced consumers and perhaps lack the knowledge to choose cheaper accommodation. (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

They conclude that, in the UK at least:

It is clear that the student rental market is shifting, that a new student housing 'product' has been developed, and a new kind of student landlord has emerged. Student housing is becoming very big business, but it remains to be seen how far this development serves the interests of students seeking to minimise their accommodation costs and so reduce the level of indebtedness on graduation. (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

This in turn may be influenced by another finding of Rugg and Rhodes:

Anecdotal evidence indicates that, in some locations such as Birmingham, traditional student landlords are looking to alternative tenant groups to fill properties previously let to students who were now living in private sector halls of residence (Groves, et al., 1999). (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

Rugg and Rhodes go on to talk about the policy concern that arises in relation to the growth of a student sub-market in the private rental sector:

The concentration of student rentals in the vicinity of higher education institutions has attracted a great deal of policy attention. It is argued that student renting 'destabilises' communities, 'prices out' owner occupiers and first-time buyers in particular, and subjects longer-term residents to noise and rubbish nuisance. However, census data demonstrate that intensive student habitation is not common: there are more than 8,000 wards in England, and of these just 59 had student densities where a student household reference person comprised 10 per cent or more of all household reference persons in the ward. (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

They say there is a need for a 'common sense' approach to the issue of student accommodation:

... an acknowledgement that demand for property from students and higher education staff will be a consequence of the presence of a higher education institution in a particular locality. If student demand was not spatially concentrated in houses in multiple occupation, then demand for property would be even more intensive, and students – unable to live within walking distance of their place of study – would seek alternative transport provision. It is perhaps also worth remembering that higher education institutions are deemed to be so beneficial to the local economy that the government is seeking to establish twenty new higher education centres as a means of effecting area regeneration and job creation. (Rugg and Rhodes, 2008)

Looking more generally at the European market for student accommodation, King Sturge concluded:

Most Western European universities do not have sufficient accommodation to house students, with very few accommodating more than 10 per cent. The sheer number of students versus the low provision of University and private sector halls demonstrates potential demand, which is a similar position held in the UK a few years ago. (King Sturge, 2008)

They estimate that the number of students studying away from their home countries will reach 3 million in 2008. They go on to refer to research by Eurostudent which concluded that many foreign students are discouraged from studying abroad due to a lack of suitable accommodation (King Sturge, 2008).

King Sturge commented on the fact that these students are often seeking accommodation in cities that already have a significant shortage of housing stock, such as Florence, Paris and Amsterdam. Rents across Western Europe average at around €350 per month for private student accommodation, although there are some significant regional variations. Notable exceptions are Paris and London, where land values and housing shortages have pushed up rents. Added to this, some students are willing to pay a premium for good, specialised accommodation located close to their place of study.

According to King Sturge:

The scale of the opportunity for investors and developers in European student housing is enormous. The need is palpable, the market large and the solutions diverse. If the UK experience were applied directly to the European countries featured in this report, the potential value for purpose-built private accommodation alone could be over €30 billion. In some countries this is a very new market. In Germany restrictions regarding ownership of public housing have meant that private investors and developers have found it difficult to penetrate the market. However, with recent liberalization allowing direct ownership, and the domestic market currently in no state to fill the void, this represents a real opportunity for overseas investors. (King Sturge, 2008)

VIEWS OF STUDENT ORGANISATIONS ACROSS EUROPE ON STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Many student organisations across Europe have expressed concerns about the availability of student accommodation. A recent paper included comments from students across Europe (ESU, 2008). Christine Skoghen Nyhagen writes of the Norwegian experience:

Norway does not have enough student housing, and in the last few years, the rental prices have increased more than the financial support that students receive. Many students have to rent on the private market, and pay more. If you do not speak Norwegian, then finding somewhere to live is even more difficult.
(ESU, 2008)

In 2004 Claire Guichet, who was responsible for student housing in the French student organisation Fage, said that the goal was for 10 per cent of students in France to have the possibility of getting into public student accommodation by 2014. Today just six per cent on a national basis have been given housing and in Paris the share is under one per cent (ESU, 2008).

Matthew Agius, Secretary General at Kunsill Ta' L-Istudenti Universitajji in Malta, says that Malta has difficulties offering enough housing for international students:

Malta is a small country with a high population density. Finding room for enough student housing is a big challenge for us. (ESU, 2008)

In Finland, shortage of accommodation is seen to be a problem. The Helsinki Students Union Housing Service states:

The biggest reason for a student housing problem in the metropolitan area is the lack of appropriate land required for building student housing. This leads to lack of student apartments, because housing cannot be built as fast as the number of students grows. At the moment there is student housing for about a third of students. Apartments are queued for a long time and the situation is most difficult for the new students moving into the metropolitan area every autumn. The biggest provider of metropolitan area student housing, Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region (HOAS) has 8,000 apartments. There are 31,000 students in the University of Helsinki alone.
(<http://www.hyy.helsinki.fi>)

Although there are various forms of financial support available to meet living costs and even different types of support for accommodation, only one national union of students (Cyprus) confirms that the grants for students are adequate to cover their living costs and only 15 per cent (Cyprus, Malta, Denmark, Norway, Slovenia, Slovakia, Portugal) confirmed that there is a sufficient loans system to cover living costs and tuition fees (ESU, 2008).

One initiative undertaken by student groups was to research the scale and depth of the problem surrounding student accommodation. In 2007 the National Union of Students (NUS) in Scotland launched a 'Brick by Brick' campaign, focusing on the problems with student housing in Scotland and offering recommendations. Problems identified included rent levels, the practice of withholding deposits and the ending of a lease, as well as health and safety concerns. Amongst their recommendations was that the Scottish Government should ensure that it includes students as a main stakeholder in its review of the private rented sector (NUS, 2007). Their study revealed that 24 per cent of all students interviewed believed their accommodation was of an unacceptable standard, with 45 per cent of students in the South of Scotland saying their accommodation was in a poor level of repair:

In total, 61 per cent of respondents were living in a property requiring an HMO license (i.e. a rented property with three or more unrelated tenants). Within this 61 per cent, it appears that areas of high pressure within the property market have a relation to the density in which students rent. (NUS, 2007)

Scotland Shelter found that most students opt for university accommodation during their first year and then rent privately from landlords or letting agencies in subsequent years (www.Scotland.Shelter.org.uk).

Access to accommodation is seen to be a particular problem for foreign students:

Access to reasonable accommodation during the period of studies in the host country from the home country is usually quite difficult as often times the housing situation in cities with one or several Higher Education Institutions is quite tense and cheap and appropriate housing is hard to find, especially for foreign students. Issues such as deposits, proof of regular income, duration of the housing contract and also racial discrimination from landlords/landladies are also problematic issues. (ESU, undated)

Nor is accommodation in service-provided accommodation seen to be without its problems. Student housing provided by social services agencies was also found to be problematic in cases where foreign students are specifically placed in certain dormitories leading to separation and isolation from local students (ESU, undated).

Such dissatisfaction can sometimes turn to protest:

The independent organisation «Jeudi Noir», which means «Black Thursday», often goes to the media and protests about the housing situation for students in France. Last autumn some students also took action against poor living conditions during the widespread blockades on French universities. (ESU, 2008)

KNOWLEDGE CITIES

Knowledge cities are increasingly recognised as having a role to play in the creation of knowledge economies. Such cities have:

... a significant university presence with a strong research focus; businesses in innovative, creative areas like digital media, art and architecture, life sciences and information and communication technologies; and ideally, a vibrant student population and an existing or developing multicultural, international mix of residents. (David Campbell, Office of Knowledge Capital for Melbourne in Australia quoted in The Irish Times Friday, 20 March, 2009)

Van den Berg and Russo in a publication on ‘The Student City’ (2004) highlight the role of students as ‘citizens and the high-skilled working class of tomorrow’:

Students keep cities lively and diverse. They are the main consumers of cultural and recreational facilities. They have a distinct expenditure pattern that in some cases is crucial to support the economy of whole cities or specific neighbourhoods. Increased international students' mobility is a major vector of socio-economic integration between regions of Europe. However, the conditions for a full integration of student communities in local communities are not always met. Students are still an ‘invisible population’, with little space in local policy, no decision power, and an ambiguous role in social development. (Van den Berg and Russo, 2004)

The authors go on to outline a framework for a comprehensive strategy aimed at integrating student communities into urban development and building the ‘student-friendly’ city. This strategy includes working to create diverse, versatile student communities involving appropriate planning of student accommodation within such cities, including campus planning. They identify Helsinki and Utrecht as ‘student cities’ where higher education institutions are strong and are beneficial to stakeholders in the local economy, and as cities that are very attractive to students. Building on their analysis of a number of European cities they identify best practice in relation to addressing housing and related issues for students and thus helping to integrate them into local economies. Two such cities are Helsinki and Munich. In Helsinki for example:

The student union is an example of how empowered and ‘rooted’ student organisations may facilitate the integration of student communities providing services and supports of all kinds. (Van den Berg and Russo, 2004)

Referring to Munich they state:

Studentwerk Munich is to the fore in solving the problem of housing shortages for students in the city thanks to an active acquisition policy and their capacity to negotiate the best solution with the city and the HEIs as well as with private sector partners. The effectiveness of this organisation is in its good capacity to connect with students and involve them in creative solutions. (Van den Berg and Russo, 2004)

In advising on policy they emphasise that what is needed is an explicit strategy targeting the student community as key players in the well-being and competitiveness of the city.

Addressing potential problems in relation to student accommodation Van den Berg and Russo recommend that local governments:

- Monitor the housing market
- Proactively stimulate housing developments for students through the involvement of private parties
- Organise solutions for short stayers
- Inform incoming students about housing through well-designed and attractive multilingual web pages and well distributed brochures.

Below we examine how a number of European cities are responding to these needs.

EXAMPLES OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPEAN CITIES

As referred to above, a number of different models of student support can be found throughout Europe. The above analysis has also shown how a student presence in the private rented sector is a notable feature of many university towns as is the presence of specialist accommodation for students, provided either by universities themselves or by private providers. In this section we look at a number of examples of different approaches to supporting the provision of student accommodation in four such cities: Helsinki, Amsterdam, Munich and London.

HELSINKI

Overview

Finland's population is 5.3 million, the population density being 15.5 inhabitants per km². The population of the capital, Helsinki, is about 560,000 (Eurydice, 2007) with a student population of over 50,000 at nine universities (www.BSKR.org).

Costs for students

Approximately one-third of all Finnish students live in student apartments. Housing costs are relatively low, and applying for an apartment is through student housing foundations and companies. These are not-for-profit associations governed by student unions and/or the municipality (www.study-in-europe.org). Average monthly living costs for students are estimated to be about €600. The costs of living include accommodation, food, public transport, study materials, clothing, and leisure activities (University of Helsinki, http://www.helsinki.fi/studying/fees_and_costs.shtml. Site accessed January 2009).

Supports for students

The majority of Finnish students are financially supported by the Finnish state. International students are entitled to financial aid for students under certain conditions (University of Applied Sciences). Funding for student grants, including accommodation, comes through Kela, the social insurance institute of Finland. The amount of aid depends on the type of school, age and marital status of the student, and the mode of accommodation. The student's overall financial situation is also taken into account (Kela, 2009). A housing supplement can be paid to students living in rented, right-of-tenancy or right-of-purchase accommodation. No age limits apply to the housing supplement (Kela, 2009). Study grants are also available through Kela, ranging from €21.86 to €259.01.

Housing grants cover 80 per cent of the rent. It is not available if the rent is less than €33.63 per month, and is not granted for the part of the rent that exceeds €252.00. The maximum amount of the housing supplement is €201.60 per month (Kela 2009). Students who live in accommodation owned or rented from their parents are granted a maximum supplement of €58.87 per month (Kela, 2009). Students without children living in rented, right-of-tenancy or right-of-purchase accommodation may apply for housing supplement as a part of their student financial aid.

Providers

The Finnish state does not invest directly in housing construction or in the purchase of buildings for student housing. However, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland (ARA) supports the building and restoration of student housing through an ARA loan system. The cost-recovery rent principle is applied to all rental housing financed by ARA. Investment grants for special groups are also available for construction, repair and acquisition of rental dwellings for special groups such as the elderly, the homeless, students and refugees. A student housing construction project can thus be granted a direct subsidy of up to 10 per cent of the total financing costs if the project is financed by an interest subsidy loan approved by ARA. Such student housing functions on a non-profit basis (Sofia Lindqvist, Secretary for Social Affairs, Students Union of the University of Helsinki, 2009).

Not-for-profit foundations operate such housing and the biggest provider of metropolitan area student housing is the Foundation for Student Housing (HOAS). HOAS was established in 1969 to help relieve the shortage of student housing within the Helsinki metropolitan area and currently has 8,000 Helsinki apartments. HOAS student accommodation can be applied for by anyone undertaking full-time studies in a secondary level educational institution or university. HOAS works in co-operation with the student unions of the University of Helsinki, Helsinki University of Technology and Helsinki School of Economics and Business Administration, as well as 13 other local student unions. Part of HOAS's accommodation is reserved for international exchange students and researchers. At summertime HOAS also rents rooms and apartments for non-students. For postgraduate students HOAS is able to offer accommodation only rarely.

In the Helsinki region, HOAS student housing can accommodate only a minority of the students (among the students of the University of Helsinki, for example, about one out of three lives in a student apartment). This means that a majority has to compete on the open market with a very high rental level (Sofia Lindqvist, Secretary for Social Affairs, Students Union of the University of Helsinki, 2009). The Student Unions' Housing Service provides a private market housing service for students who have paid their student union's membership fee and are studying in one of these universities: University of Helsinki, Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics, Sibelius Academy, University of Art and Design, and Academy of Fine Arts. Students from other institutions are entitled to apply for temporary housing for the summer (1 May to 31 August). The service is free of charge for both the applicants and the landlords (University of Helsinki, undated).

The Student Union of the University of Helsinki also organises temporary housing in dormitory conditions when required for a small fee (Sofia Lindqvist, Secretary for Social Affairs, Students Union of the University of Helsinki, 2009). So called 'Nations' or faculty organisations own a number of such dormitories. The student must be a member of such an organisation or a student of the faculty to be considered. (<http://www.helsinki.fi/studying/Housing.shtml>)

AMSTERDAM

Overview

The Netherlands has a population of over 16.5 million people (www.cia.gov, 2008) and Amsterdam has approximately 751,000 inhabitants (www.amsterdam.info). The second half of the twentieth century saw a massive growth in university education in the Netherlands. The expansion of the student finance system helped to make a university education attainable for a much larger group of students. Since 1993, university education has been governed by the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW) (Burydice, 2007).

Student costs

Living costs for students are approximately €400 per month for accommodation and a further €370 for other expenses (www.otago.ac). There is no campus 'living area' in Amsterdam and student housing is scattered throughout the city (www.otago.ac). In the Netherlands all students are required to pay tuition fees. Since 1991, the amounts charged are identical for both university students and students at HBO-institutions (universities of professional education). In principle, the amounts charged by the individual institutions are centrally determined by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and are regulated by law.

Student support

Student support is mainly provided in the form of direct support through grants, loans and a public transport pass. Some indirect support through tax facilities is available for parents of students who fall outside the regular student support system.

Providers

As stated above, the campus system does not exist in the Netherlands. Three forms of student housing have been identified:

- Student housing – mostly double rooms with shared facilities
- Students houses – where each student has their own room and share the bathroom and kitchen
- Landlords – Students rent one room and share the kitchen/bathroom with the owner of the house (Hogeschool Voor de Koonsten Utrecht website, undated).

Various agencies rent out rooms at student buildings. De Key is a big student housing foundation company, with student houses all over the city. Its subsidiary, SSF, works together with several educational institutes, among which are the UvA, the VU and the HvA. SSF rents out rooms to students and staff members who have been put forward by the educational institutes (www.dekey.nl). The waiting list is usually short although it can sometimes take 6–12 months to get a place. This company is also used by many of the universities to accommodate their students.

Uilenstede (owned by an organisation called Intermezzo) is a big student housing complex at Amstelveen, a southern suburb of Amsterdam. There is a registration fee and a waiting period up to 1.5 years (www.amsterdam.info).

Casa Academica is a summer hotel near Amstel Station (southern part of the city) that rents out its rooms for students from October to June. There is a registration fee and a waiting list for up to ten months (www.Amsterdam.info).

MUNICH

Munich hosts Germany's largest student population at about 100,000 students. As referred to above, the Studentenwerk (Student Union) plays an important role in supporting students to find accommodation in Munich. Such student unions are found throughout Germany. The Munich website¹³ describes their role as follows:

Studentenwerke (Student Unions) are not university institutions. They first came into being after World War I as a self-help and advocacy group by students for students. So, unlike universities, they are only marginally funded by (or dependent on) the government.

A total of 58 Studentenwerke (Student Unions), organized in the Dachverband Deutsches Studentenwerk (DSW) (Umbrella Organisation of German Student Unions), are responsible for the social and economic well-being of the students in Germany. Their job is defined by the "Hochschulgesetze der Länder" (State legislation for higher education). For instance, the Bayerisches Hochschulgesetz (Bavarian legislation act for higher education) describes the main duty of the Studentenwerk (Student Union) as "the overall economic support of all students of the Staatlichen Hochschulen (State universities)" (BayHSchG Art. 99,1). Less abstractly this means:

¹³ http://www.wegweiser-muenchen.de/english/student_union/o

- The construction and operation of student dormitories
- The operation of catering institutions, as Mensen [dining halls] and cafeterias
- The supply of child-care-facilities for students with children
- The support of students in all cultural and social areas
- The promotion of international relations.

LONDON

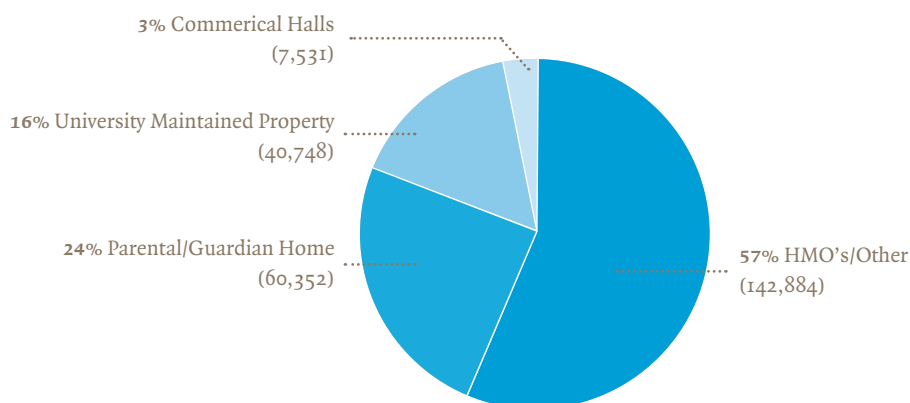
Overview

The resident population of the UK was almost 61 million in 2007 (www.statistics.gov.uk) with over 8 million living in the wider London area. There are over 400,000 higher education students in London, of whom two-thirds are full-time. More than 50,000 come from overseas (Mayor of London, 2002). London has one of the largest concentrations of universities in the world with 40 higher education institutions, not including foreign universities with London branches.

Student accommodation

The majority of students in London live in HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) (King Sturge, 2008). However, almost a quarter live at home, with 16 per cent in university-maintained property and three per cent in commercial halls.

Figure 4.7 Accommodation provision in London (September 2007)



Source: HESA/King Sturge Research 2007

There has been a growing tendency for students in London to remain living with their parents. This is particularly pronounced amongst those from low-income backgrounds and Asian students. Such a trend is unsurprising given the high cost of accommodation in London. Those students who do not live with their parents face private sector rents that are on average 44 per cent higher than elsewhere in the country (Mayor of London, 2002).

The most common category of accommodation within the private rented sector is the shared house. This usually involves a group of friends who decide to rent a property together and to share the costs between them (www.nus.org.uk). Another category of private sector accommodation is 'lodgings', which entails sharing the whole or part of a house with a resident landlord and (possibly) the landlord's family. There has been a shortage of affordable accommodation in the private sector, especially in London and the southeast (www.nus.org.uk). London has the most expensive rents at over £100 per week.

Student costs

A survey¹⁴ of students found that the total cost-of-living for a student in the UK ranged from £6,000 to £12,000. Accommodation ranged from £2,500 to £5,000. The cost of accommodation is a major source of financial concern to students in London. Fewer London students are able to gain a place in university-provided accommodation (18 per cent compared with 24 per cent elsewhere) and institutional rents are 41 per cent higher in London than in the rest of the UK. The propensity for London students to defray housing costs by living with their parents accounts for the lower average levels of debt amongst London students (Mayor of London, 2002).

The Higher Education Act 2004 allowed institutions in England to set variable tuition fees for new students of up to £3,000 per year from 2006–2007, with any increases linked to the level of inflation. The maximum tuition fee for 2007–2008 is £3,070. In practice almost all institutions charge the maximum (Eurydice, 2007–2008).

Providers

As referred to above, a number of private organisations are now specialising in providing specialist student accommodation. Providers of such accommodation in London include Liberty Living, Moorfield Group (Domain) and Opal (AMA Research, 2006).

King Sturge (2008) spell out how the student accommodation market in the UK is being increasingly dominated by private developer-operators. This, the authors say, has been evident in the large number of transactions during that period, with over £700 million worth of properties being traded. They also found that the top three players in the market remain the same but that all have increased their portfolios. They indicated that when they last reported in 2005, the top 20 operators had a total of 91,154 operational beds (123,536 in 2007) and a combined development pipeline of 25,660 beds (38,611 for 2007) – an increase of 36 per cent and 50 per cent respectively. They found that half of the top 20 players were developer/operator/investors with five specialist investment funds and five housing associations. Figure 4.8 shows these developers by beds available and in the pipeline.

¹⁴ www.ukstudentlife.com

Figure 4.8 Rank top 20 commercial operator/investors ‘completed beds’ in Sept 2007 and in pipeline ‘Total beds’

RANK	TOP 20 COMMERCIAL OPERATOR/ INVESTORS	COMPLETED BEDS SEPT 2007	IN PIPELINE	TOTAL BEDS
1	Unite Group Plc	34,930	11,204	46,134
2	UPP	15,682	3,554	19,236
3	Opal Property Group	13,157	5,740	18,897
4	Liberty Living	9,805	697	10,502
5	Sanctuary Housing Association	8,255	0	8,255
6	Victoria Hall	5,007	2,585	7,592
7	Bovis Lend Lease	2,325	1,866	4,191
8	Cordea Savills LLP	2,778	1,364	4,142
9	Cosmopolitan Housing Association	3,531	600	4,131
10	Swanbourne Development Services Ltd	3,026	984	4,010
11	Gwalia Housing Group	2,381	1,567	3,948
12	Consensus Capital	3,770	0	3,770
13	Servite Housing Association	3,102	40	3,142
14	MCR Group	2,447	600	3,047
15	Teesland IOG	1,655	831	2,486
16	Beach Student Accommodation Fund	1,714	669	2,383
17	Nido	1,045	1,188	2,233
18	iQ	1507	314	1,821
19	Signpost Homes Ltd	514	956	1,470
20	Downing Developments	0	1,428	1,428
	OTHERS	6,905	2,474	9,379
	TOTAL	123,536	38,661	162,197

This data excludes private landlords operating shared houses. Pipeline properties are those of existing operators for schemes with planning consent as at September 2007.

Source: King Sturge (2008)

Looking specifically at London, King Sturge (2008) show the shortfall between student numbers and available beds in halls of residence. Of the 251,515 students attending the London universities full time, only 40,748 beds are available within university-owned halls of residence. There are some exceptions. The University of London, for example, has above-average provision of accommodation at 26 per cent (the national average being 22 per cent). Since 2005, the provision of commercially-operated beds has grown from less than one per cent to three per cent, which represents an extra 5,885 beds (with an overall value of around £725 million). The proportion of students living in houses in multiple occupation has remained relatively stable, whilst the number of students living with parents has increased from 21 per cent to 24 per cent.

Figure 4.9 Provision of beds by twenty one major institutions in London

INSTITUTION/COLLEGE	TOTAL FULL TIME STUDENTS	UNIVERSITY OWNED ACCOMMODATION	UNIVERSITY OCCUPIED ACCOMMODATION	PROVISION BEDS %
Brunel University	11,170	3,234	0	29%
Royal College of Music	620	170	0	27%
University of London (All Colleges Combined)	89,070	21,482	1,913	26%
Trinity College of Music	725	0	163	23%
Roehampton University	6,805	1,444	0	21%
St. Mary's College	3,145	637	0	20%
University of Greenwich	14,320	1,919	350	16%
Kingston University	16,900	2,437	0	14%
University of the Arts	12,345	1,750	615	14%
South Bank University	11,075	1,398	0	13%
University of East London	10,785	1,180	0	11%
Middlesex University	17,965	1,916	0	11%
City University	10,985	978	157	10%
University of Westminster	14,530	1,443	0	10%
Thames Valley University	9,315	72	839	10%
Ravensbourn College of Design and Communication	1,110	100	0	9%
London Metropolitan University	17,560	588	429	6%
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama	1,080	0	0	0%
Royal College of Art	810	0	0	0%
Wimbledon School of Art	610	0	0	0%
Rose Bruford College	590	0	0	0%
TOTAL	251,515	40,748	4,466	18%

Source: HESA/King Sturge Research 2007

According to King Sturge most private sector developers in London are concentrating on an increasingly premium product, moving student accommodation into the realm of serviced accommodation. The natural evolution of this will be the participation in graduate housing developments, such as Unite's new Livocity development.

Savills Research has developed a student demand model based on the significant drivers of demand and supply for student accommodation across all local authorities in the UK. The model gives a comprehensive insight into the best areas in the UK to invest, taking into account a range of factors such as:

- current and future supply of bed spaces in purpose-built halls
- rents and rental growth rates
- student growth rates.

While accommodation is a key part of universities' marketing strategies to attract new students, only around 21 per cent of student accommodation needs are currently catered for, whilst 47 per cent are thought to be in the private rented sector (AMA Research, 2006). There appears to be a paucity of Government initiatives to support the greater provision of student accommodation throughout Europe, with Finland identified as a noticeable exception. Interest in the student accommodation sector tends to be increasingly from private investors, particularly in the UK, but this trend is expected to spread throughout Europe. It is too early to analyse how the current serious economic downturn in Europe will affect these trends. However, according to AMA:

On a more positive note, rising student numbers and the necessity of institutions to attract students through the provision of modern and convenient accommodation is providing long-term work for contractors through both university-owned and leased accommodation projects. Universities will continue to consider a number of options for upgrading and managing existing accommodation, with the number choosing to outsource to the private sector forecast to grow. (AMA Research, 2006)

INNOVATIONS

INNOVATIONS IN BUILDING TECHNIQUES

A number of innovations in the building of student accommodation have been found in Europe, some of which are outlined below.

Tai Cartefi-Eco Innovations

Tai Cartefi is the development arm of GHG, a Group of five general needs and specialised housing associations based in Swansea, Wales and is responsible for the design and construction of new homes and rehabilitation projects for the Group (as well as student accommodation). Tai Cartefi is committed to continuing research to innovate and develop environmentally sound design and construction (Carbery Housing Association, 2003).

‘Student Savers Project’

In Hillingdon, in the UK, a ‘Student Savers Project’ was instituted to set up hire-purchase agreements with landlords of student accommodation. Its stated aim was that the Borough Council would pay for energy-efficiency measures while landlords would make repayments over a three-year period. Five pilot homes were chosen to assess the potential for savings. NHER surveys carried out at these properties identified a range of energy-saving measures including loft insulation, cavity wall insulation, low-energy light bulbs, and hot-water tank and pipe insulation. Advice and information was provided at those properties where insulation measures were not possible (Energy Saving Trust, 2004).

MODULAR CONSTRUCTION METHODS

Modular construction methods are also being used to build student housing. King Sturge reports:

US property companies were intrigued by the modular construction initiative of, amongst others, Bristol-based Unite – a UK leader in providing student housing. This concept, of factory-building accommodation units, is already common in the USA for motels: but there are few examples of it being used for student accommodation in the ‘States’. (King Sturge, 2008)

Innovative construction methods include turning shipping containers into student housing units. Keetwonen¹⁵, a student housing project in Amsterdam, has developed units which include a rooftop to accommodate efficient rainwater drainage while providing heat dispersal and insulation for the containers beneath (Inhabitat, 2007).

INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

Sheffield City Council runs a Student Accreditation Scheme in partnership with the two universities in the city. Its aim is to promote and recognise higher standards for shared student houses and flats. It is aimed primarily at typical Sheffield terraced houses shared by up to six students. The scheme is voluntary and there is no fee to join (Sheffield City Council).

Accreditation Network UK has a Code of Practice in place. Agreement to adhere to this Code of Practice (which has been approved by the Government by way of secondary legislation – SI 646/2006 Housing Act 2004) can result in a discount for such companies from the cost of mandatory licensing of houses in multiple occupation. The Housing Act 2004 introduced Mandatory Licensing of larger Houses in Multiple Occupation which applies to properties of three or more storeys, housing five or more people forming two or more separate households. This will make it more attractive for commercial providers to provide purpose-built student accommodation, as agreement to adhere to a Code of Practice will make such companies appealing to students and their parents.

¹⁵ <http://www.tempohousing.com/projects/keetwonen.html> (accessed 19 February, 2009)

SUMMARY

This review of student accommodation in Europe has illustrated the significant growth that has occurred in the number of third-level students throughout Europe in recent years. It has also indicated the likelihood that this trend will continue at least in the medium term as European economies respond to growing international competition by increasing the proportion of knowledge-based jobs in their economies, which in turn requires an increase in the numbers of the labour force with third- and fourth-level qualifications.

The review has highlighted the significant increases that can be expected in the number of overseas students in Europe. It has shown the diversity of arrangements in place throughout Europe in the way that student housing is provided and supported, with most governments providing support in cash and/or in kind towards student accommodation costs. However, it reveals that, while many countries do provide subsidised accommodation on site, such provision only covers a small and declining proportion of the total numbers of the overall student population throughout Europe.

This situation can be contrasted with a consistent overall trend towards the provision of specialist student accommodation throughout Europe by specialist private investors, most advanced at present in the UK. This has been described by Schwarz and Rehburg as the ‘investor model’ of student support which the authors believe will become more prominent throughout Europe in the future. Using London as an example, we have shown how such private investors are increasingly operating in the student housing market.

This review has also shown that there is a growing recognition of the important role that ‘student cities’ can play in the development of the knowledge economy. In this context it has illustrated how a number of cities are actively working to ensure that student accommodation is provided in a way that makes such cities attractive to students and supports their positive integration into the economic and social life of such cities.

We have illustrated in the case of the Netherlands, Finland and Germany the type of responses that cities in these countries have developed over many years to assist students to mediate the tight private residential rental market in Amsterdam, Helsinki and Munich.

We have shown how in Finland investment grants and loans are available for the construction, repair and acquisition of rental dwellings for special groups including students. Not-for-profit foundations operate such housing which can be applied for by anyone undertaking full-time studies in a secondary level educational institution or university.

Some innovations were also found in relation to improving the environmental condition and living standards of student housing and in the provision of innovative and cost-effective modularised student housing.

However, it has proved difficult to identify many specific recent innovations in the provision of student accommodation in European cities and this is an area that should be monitored to ensure that Irish cities are attractive ‘student cities’ and can thus play their role in the development of the knowledge economy in Ireland.

Finally the danger of transferring models across countries has been highlighted by Schwartz and Rehburg:

For now, one should be careful with statements about common trends and common policies in Europe. Moreover, the transfer of a particular national model to other national higher education systems is not a simple process. This is partly due to numbers: in Denmark and Norway, for example, less than 150,000 students are enrolled in higher education institutions, whereas in comparatively large countries such as France, the UK, and Germany, there are about 2 million enrolled students. Therefore, a European country cannot simply legitimate the decision about the future of its student financing with reference to some interesting models in the neighbourhood. There is still a need to develop individual solutions. Yet, examining the situation in other countries and gathering information about different financing systems can be very stimulating for future strategies. (Schwarz and Rehburg, 2004)



SECTION FIVE

Key Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

KEY FINDINGS

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION ISSUES IN IRELAND

There were 138,362 students in total in all forms of third-level education in the academic year 2006–2007¹⁶. Almost 85,000 of those students attended universities; 68,039 were undergraduates and the remainder were full-time postgraduates¹⁷. Thirteen per cent of these university students were estimated to be living in college accommodation. The Department of Education and Science estimates that the student population will reach 170,000 by 2013, an increase of 31,638 or 22 per cent over 7 years.

Ireland and Irish colleges are increasingly encouraging international students to choose Ireland for their studies. Such international students bring important economic and other benefits. They are estimated to spend €154 million in direct fees, and €181 million off-campus¹⁸.

¹⁶ Source: Department of Education and Science website

¹⁷ Source: HEA website

¹⁸ International Students in Higher Education, 2006

A Higher Education Authority report (2008) states that children from lower-middle-class families have not increased their representation in third-level institutions to the same extent as children from other social groups. The given reason for this is that these families are just above the income threshold for grants and yet do not have sufficient income to pay the associated costs. The report states that despite the abolition of fees, families must provide an average annual maintenance cost of €7,000 to put a student through third-level education. The costs of maintaining a student away from the parental/guardian's home contributes significantly to these costs.

The Union of Students in Ireland identified obtaining accommodation as a core problem for students around the country and undertook to make student accommodation a key campaign focus in 2007. The most severe problem was recorded as occurring in Dublin (USI annual report, 2007–2008). A recent study by the Centre for Housing Research (Coates and Feely, 2007) involving interviews with local authority housing inspection staff discovered that there was a higher incidence of non-compliance in bedsits¹⁹ and older properties – the forms of accommodation traditionally associated with students.

The Eurostudent Survey II 2003–2004 (Darmody et al., 2005) found that the highest proportion of full- and part-time Irish students lived in rented accommodation (39 per cent), seven per cent lived in college residences and four per cent in lodgings/digs. Satisfaction with accommodation was lowest among those living in private rented accommodation; with the highest proportion of expenditure going on accommodation.

The survey found that 54 per cent of students received indirect support from their families, subsidising their accommodation or other expenses. The average family subsidy for students in rented accommodation was found to be €95.69, of a total average monthly accommodation cost of €388.63. For students in lodgings or digs, the average family subsidy was €108.02, of a total average monthly cost of €381.11. Students who lived in university-provided accommodation attained the highest family subsidies (average €200.54 per month), and were paying on average more per month for this form of accommodation – €418.85. Students also obtained funds from employment and from student grants, as well as from their parents.

Commuting was found to constitute a significant proportion of student outgoings in the Eurostudent survey – 32 per cent of (full- and part-time) students spent between €51 and €100 per month on travel, and overall students spent on average 4.5 hours per week travelling to and from college. Students living with their parents spent the most on transport; students living in their own households spent marginally less, with the least amount spent by students living in institutionally-provided accommodation (e.g. student halls).

An internet and telephone survey of colleges in Dublin revealed an uneven spread of college-provided accommodation across the county. Currently, student-specific college accommodation is provided for only nine per cent of the student population in Dublin, while the remainder of students who are not living with parents/guardians live in the private rented sector.

¹⁹ Bedsits will be phased out under the Housing (Standards for Rented Houses) Regulations 2008. See page 17 for further details on these regulations.

The Daft Rental Report (Q2, 2008) stated that the average rent in Dublin's city centre at that time was €1,300, despite rents falling 3.4 per cent around the city since the first quarter of 2008 (in this period the only rent increase was in North County Dublin where rents went up 1.6 per cent). The Daft report (November 2008) stated that rents across the country were at their lowest since August 2006, and since the summer of 2008 rents dropped by three per cent across the country. The Daft Rental Report Q1, 2009 reveals that rents have fallen again by more than five per cent.

SURVEY OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

SITUATION OUTSIDE DUBLIN

Students' unions all over Ireland were contacted and given the opportunity to make submissions about the private rented sector for students in their area. Five students' unions made contact, and all five were very positive about the private rented sector in their area, with Athlone IT students' union reporting that there was a surplus of private rented accommodation despite the absence of college-provided accommodation. Threshold also reported fewer problems for students in Cork and Galway, compared to previous years.

SURVEYS OF STUDENTS IN DUBLIN

The focus of this part of the research was on the Greater Dublin Area, as this is the area with the largest student population and was considered to be the area with the most intense competition for private rented accommodation.

Surveys of students were carried out in Dublin third-level institutions (ITT, DCU, UCD, TCD, DIT). The key findings were as follows:

Students Not in Private Rented Accommodation

Half of students currently living at home would prefer to be renting their own accommodation and just half of these were prevented from doing so by affordability. A very small number referred to lack of suitable accommodation close to college or to problems relating to the quality of available accommodation.

Students in Private Rented Accommodation

Almost a quarter were in receipt of a grant at the time of surveying. Seventy-five of these students – 23 per cent – described finding accommodation difficult, as what was on offer was too expensive.

Over half of the respondents had begun renting their accommodation at the beginning of the current term.

The two most common ways of sourcing this accommodation were found to be online (51 per cent) and through friends or word-of-mouth (33.3 per cent). Students therefore were more likely to find accommodation using resources unconnected with their college.

The majority of surveyed students found their private rented accommodation in less than a month, with a small number (11.1 per cent) stating that it took them 1–2 months to find their accommodation, and a further 46 (3.3 per cent) reporting that it took them more than 2 months.

While almost half of respondents described finding their accommodation as easy or very easy, a third of respondents found it difficult or very difficult to get accommodation. The main reasons given for this were cost, competition for available accommodation or lack of accommodation in the preferred area.

The majority of the students interviewed said they lived either in house-share accommodation (48.1 per cent) or apartment blocks (38.7 per cent), while 8.7 per cent lived in accommodation that was part of a multi-unit house, 2.6 per cent were in digs and two per cent lived in bedsits. The most common number of accommodation unit occupants was found to be four, and bedrooms tended to be single-occupancy.

A third said they were generally happy with their accommodation. However, 17.8 per cent did express a preference for better quality accommodation in the private rented sector.

Up to a third of respondents would prefer to be in alternative accommodation, with 17 per cent stating that they would prefer to live in college accommodation.

Respondents were either very satisfied (n=328, 23.8%) or satisfied (n=894, 64.9%) with their current accommodation. Only a small number of students stated they were either not particularly satisfied (n=145, 10.5%) or dissatisfied (n=11, 0.8%).

Cost was considered the most important factor influencing choice of accommodation, with over 50 per cent of respondents stating that cost was very important. The quality of the accommodation and its proximity to college were also deemed important, rated as very important by 36 per cent and 32 per cent respectively. Personal safety and the size of the accommodation were considered less important factors.

On average, students paid €108.23 per week in rent and the average weekly rent for the entire unit was €382.16. These average rents compare favourably with the price of college-provided accommodation.

Forty per cent paid their rent through their bank accounts. Of the remainder, 429 (31.3%) said they did not receive receipts from their landlord and did not have a rent book, while 395 students (28.8%) said either they had a rent book or they got receipts from their landlord.

Two-thirds of total respondents stated that their parents or a guardian helped to pay for their accommodation.

Overall, students felt that their accommodation either was good value for money (31.2 per cent) or the cost was about right for what they were getting in return (52.7 per cent). However, 222 students (16.1%) thought that their accommodation was poor value for money.

There appeared to be an inverse relationship between the individual per week cost of accommodation and the perceived importance of cost.

Of the students who rated personal safety as influencing their choice of accommodation, three-quarters of them believed that their current accommodation was either very safe or somewhat safe.

Over 80 per cent of students stated that proximity to college was either a very important or important factor in influencing their accommodation choice.

The majority of the surveyed students (91.8 per cent) reached college in less than 45 minutes.

Most students either walk to college (45.2 per cent) or use one form of public transport (33.8 per cent); 166 students (12 per cent) cycle to college, and 73 (5.3 per cent) drive to college.

Of students who do have commuting costs, the average for such costs was €61–80 per month (n=246).

Overall, the majority of students recorded having a reasonable or indifferent relationship with their current landlord. Sixty-three students (4.6 per cent) described their relationship with their landlord as not good, and a further 17 students (1.2 per cent) described this relationship as poor.

The most common responses for poor relationships with landlords were because the landlord would not fix problems when requested (n=27), because the landlord was felt to be intrusive (n=19), or because of a personality clash between the student and the landlord (n=16).

Sixty per cent did not know if their tenancy was registered with the PRTB, 31 per cent reported that their tenancy was registered, and 10 per cent stated that their tenancy was not registered.

Thirty-eight per cent were in the same property as they had been in the previous academic year. Forty-four per cent of these students stated that their rent was the same in the current academic year as in the previous, 267 students (35 per cent) reported that their rent had gone up since the previous academic year, and the remainder (n=162, 21.3%) stated that their rent had gone down.

The principal reasons given for the rent both going up and going down were related to living in a different property. However, very few students could explain the changes in rent. On average, students' rent had gone up by €78.62 and had been reduced by €66.37.

A quarter of students had the same landlord as during the previous academic year. For the remaining students, 11.5 per cent stated that their relationship with their former landlord was excellent with a further 45.9 per cent (252 respondents) stating that their relationship was good. A further 28.4 per cent said they had not had any real contact with their former landlord.

No significant differences were found between colleges in these findings. However, small differences were found between colleges in average weekly cost to the individual of accommodation. TCD student rent was the highest at €116.35, UCD student rent was averaged at €108.16, DCU rent was €106.34, ITT was €105.19 and DIT had the lowest average weekly rent at €104.71 – a difference of €11.64 per week between the lowest and highest rents.

REVIEW OF STUDENT ACCOMMODATION IN EUROPE

There were in excess of 18 million students in Europe in 2004 (Eurydice, 2007, latest figures). The student population in tertiary education is continuing to rise, having grown by over 10 per cent between 2001 and 2004. Overall student numbers are forecast to continue to grow in the foreseeable future (Savills, 2007). Added to this, the number of overseas students studying in Europe is expanding rapidly. These overseas students are increasingly seen as a source of revenue and as a method of helping third-level establishments meet rising running costs (CIHE, 2006).

International comparisons show that far smaller percentages of Irish students occupy university-supplied accommodation compared with, for example, the Netherlands or the UK. The percentage of students living in the family home is significantly higher in western continental Europe than it is in the UK. Italy is the highest with over 75 per cent staying in the family home.

Students are increasingly being recognised as a distinct and growing sub-sector of the private rented housing market. The private market for student housing is most developed in the UK where it is currently worth £6.6bn and is forecast to grow to over £20bn in the next 6 years (Savills Research, 2007). Looking specifically to the UK a recent major review of the private rental sector concluded that students now represent one of the largest demand groups for private rented accommodation, 'clearly comprising a key dimension of the PRS' (Private Rental Sector) (Rugg and Rhodes, 2004).

International comparisons of state supports for students found that they tend to focus primarily on the cost of fees. By contrast, accommodation and living costs are often much less well supported by these systems (Schwarz and Rehburg, 2004), with only a minority of countries providing support in cash specifically for accommodation. However, sixteen European countries do provide some accommodation at reduced rent for students but the scale of this accommodation as a proportion of total student numbers is quite low. It ranges from five per cent (as in Italy, Cyprus and Portugal) to over 20 per cent in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Finland.

The student accommodation sub-sector is forecast to experience considerable growth throughout Europe in the medium to long term, with an increasing number of commercial developers and housing associations operating in the market. Many developers, contractors and investors are seeing a clear opportunity to enter this market which may be relatively more resistant to the global downturn than other sub-sectors (King Sturge, 2008; AMA Research, 2006).

France, Germany and the UK remain the most important destinations for overseas students, each educating in excess of 225,000 students. The number of students studying away from their home countries is forecast to reach 3 million in 2008 and there is some evidence that foreign students are discouraged from studying abroad due to a lack of suitable accommodation (King Sturge, 2008).

Many student organisations across Europe continue to express concerns about the availability of student accommodation and few innovations to support the development of this market were found. However, a growing interest in the development of ‘student cities’ indicates that some cities are actively working to ensure that student accommodation is provided in a way that makes such cities attractive to students and supports their positive integration into the economic and social life of such cities.

This was illustrated in the case of the Netherlands, Finland and Germany where students are assisted to mediate the tight private residential rental market in Amsterdam, Helsinki and Munich.

In contrast, the role that private developers are playing in the development of the student rental accommodation sector is illustrated by reviewing developments in London.

CONCLUSIONS

Student numbers in Ireland are growing and are likely to continue to grow in the future, fuelled by an increasing policy focus on attracting international students to Ireland. The demand for student accommodation is therefore likely to expand in the future, creating extra demand for reasonably priced accommodation especially within close proximity to institutional settings.

Student bodies have identified student accommodation as an on-going concern for students in terms of supply, cost and quality. However, available research indicates that places for students in specialist accommodation have increased and are likely to continue to increase in certain key locations in the future, due in part to government incentives to encourage construction of student accommodation. Despite such growth in college-based and other specialist accommodation Irish students will continue to depend largely on the private sector. Available research indicates that standards of accommodation in this sector may be relatively poor but that such accommodation may become less costly and is likely to be of a higher standard in the future.

The survey of student accommodation carried out for this study indicates a reasonably high level of satisfaction within Dublin and potentially around the country. The five students’ unions involved in the study from outside Dublin were very positive about the private rented sector in their area while the survey of students in Dublin found that a majority of students were satisfied with their current accommodation and that responses across the Dublin colleges were very similar.

However, a minority do have problems with accommodation. A third found it difficult or very difficult to find their accommodation and a third would prefer to be in alternative accommodation, with 17 per cent saying they would prefer to be in college-provided accommodation. Sixteen per cent thought their accommodation was poor value for money. A third reported that their rent had gone up in the current year.

Relationships with landlords were generally positive with only one per cent describing this relationship as poor.

The review of student accommodation in Europe has illustrated that significant growth has occurred in the number of third-level students throughout Europe in recent years. The likelihood is that this trend will continue at least in the medium term as European economies respond to growing international competition by increasing the proportion of knowledge-based jobs in their economies, which in turn requires an increase in the numbers of the labour force with third- and fourth-level qualifications. The review also highlighted the significant increases that can be expected in the number of overseas students in Europe.

The diversity of arrangements in place throughout Europe in the way that student housing is provided and supported was highlighted, with most governments providing support in cash and/or in kind towards student accommodation costs. However, while many countries were found to provide subsidised accommodation on site, such provision only covers a small and declining proportion of the total numbers of the overall student population throughout Europe.

Increasingly student accommodation throughout Europe is being provided by specialist private investors, most advanced at present in the UK. This has been described by Schwarz and Rehburg (2004) as the ‘investor model’ of student support which they believe will become more prominent throughout Europe in the future. Using London as an example, this study shows how such private investors are increasingly in operation in the student housing market.

The review highlights the important role that ‘student cities’ can play in the development of the knowledge economy. In this context a number of cities are actively working to ensure that student accommodation is provided in a way that makes such cities attractive to students and supports their positive integration into the economic and social life of such cities.

This was illustrated in the case of the Netherlands, Finland and Germany where students are assisted to mediate the tight private residential rental market in Amsterdam, Helsinki and Munich.

However, it proved difficult to identify many specific recent innovations in the provision of student accommodation in European cities and this is an area that should be monitored to ensure that Irish cities are attractive ‘student cities’ and can thus play their role in the development of the knowledge economy in Ireland.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Overall the study reveals a number of both opportunities and challenges facing student accommodation in Ireland:

- Ensure that the supply, cost and quality of student accommodation is adequate to support the expansion of student numbers in Irish cities, including a growing number of international students, and to assist such cities to become centres of the knowledge economy
- Harness the potential of the student accommodation sector as a specialist and growing segment of the housing market

- Ensure that such accommodation is appropriately located to support the positive development of these cities and the integration of their student population
- Ensure that there is adequate information and advice to assist students to access appropriate accommodation, with a particular focus on ensuring that students on low income are accommodated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WIDER CONTEXT

- Under the policy intent of generating a knowledge economy it is essential that students have access to accommodation, and this includes attracting international students by demonstrating not only our high-calibre educational facilities, but also the quality of life for students in Ireland. The role that Irish cities could play in developing ‘student cities’ for the promotion of the knowledge economy should be considered.
- The fact that student communities are a strategic resource for urban development should be recognised. Purpose-built and properly managed student housing can be a significant regeneration engine that could be of great benefit to certain areas of, in particular, Dublin. The planning process in this is essential – ad-hoc student communities may not be as beneficial to an area as a properly planned and managed strategy (Van den Berg and Russo, 2004).
- Under the current economic downturn, the private sector may be increasingly encouraged to enter the student niche market until other uses become more profitable. This climate could prove to be an opportunity in this sector.

SPECIFIC SITUATION

- The surveys for this research were undertaken while the property market was experiencing a downturn, which may have influenced the generally positive picture of student accommodation in the Greater Dublin Area. The USI had been campaigning on this issue during the property boom. Therefore, the situation for students could alter again in the event of an upturn in the market. These trends and the effects that these may have on the student housing market should be monitored.
- In monitoring these trends, account should also be taken of the provision of campus-based and other specialist student accommodation coming onto the market.
- Where specialist private sector providers enter the market, it should be ensured that these providers can be regulated through any forthcoming legislation with regard to management companies, and if these fall under the jurisdiction of the PRTB, this should be clearly defined and made known to occupants.

- As can be seen from the student survey, there is low awareness of the registration of their tenancies, students may be unaware of their rights in this area and students' unions and the PRTB should support awareness campaigns in this regard. The PRTB 'Being a good landlord/tenant' information booklets should help to better inform students.
- In this vein, the adequacy of available sources of information and support for students, particularly first year, international and disadvantaged students wishing to access accommodation, should be regularly reviewed.
- Without jeopardising colleges' incentives or independence, colleges should be encouraged to review their allocations policies. Should some accommodation be allocated on the basis of second-level performance or within-college performance if this is at the expense of students who are not from the local area or students who have trouble accessing accommodation due to affordability or availability?
- The PRTB, in association with the Property Owners Association and in consultation with the Union of Students in Ireland, could assist landlords by drafting a lease specifically for students. For example, this could include an academic year duration; if it is agreed at the outset that the property would be rented for only nine months of the year, landlords could prepare in advance for early advertising rather than being left with a vacant property over the summer months. These leases could also be accompanied by, or incorporate, guidelines for students who may be away from their family home for the first time.
- In light of the economic downturn, landlords should be made aware of the potential of the student market and the free advertising that is potentially available through students' unions and college accommodation offices. These facilities may be under-utilised – considering how few students found their accommodation through these fora. In-house publicity campaigns for these services provided within the college could boost the numbers of students availing of this useful service.

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Appendix One

Are you a student of this campus, and are you in the private rented sector? [see box below, exclude if not]. This survey is being carried out by the Centre for Housing Research on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Education and Science. It will take 10-15 minutes and all responses are confidential.

Within definition for survey:

- renting through a commercial agency
- renting from a private landlord who you do not previously know
- renting a room from an owner-occupier previously unknown to student
- Students living in digs/rent a room

Outside definition for survey:

- college accommodation (e.g. on campus)
- purpose built student accommodation
- renting from a family member/friend
- social housing (local authority/voluntary & cooperative sector)
- living with their parents/guardians
- living in a hostel

1 How long have you been renting your current accommodation?

- I moved in over the summer months
- Since the start of this term
- I began renting it between the start of term and now
- I lived there during the last academic year and over the summer
- I lived there during the last academic year and sub-let it over the summer
- I lived there during the last two or more academic years
- Other _____

2 How did you source your accommodation?

- Through friends/word-of-mouth
- In a newspaper
- On-line
- Through the students union
- Through the university accommodation office
- Through an agency
- Other _____

3 How long did it take you to find your accommodation?

- Someone else found it for me
- Under a week
- 1 - 2 weeks
- 3 - 4 weeks
- 1 - 2 months
- More than 2 months

4 How would you describe finding this accommodation?

- It was very easy (go to question 6)
- It was easy (go to question 6)
- It was neither easy nor difficult
- It was difficult
- It was very difficult

5 Why would you describe it as being difficult? (more than one box can be ticked)

- (A) The accommodation on offer was very expensive
- (B) It was difficult to find information on available accommodation
- (C) It was difficult to find accommodation in the areas I would like to live in
- (D) There were a lot of people competing for similar accommodation types
- (E) I had too much choice and couldn't make up my mind
- (F) Other _____

6 How would you describe your accommodation?

- (A) Apartment in a block
- (B) Part of a multi-unit house
- (C) House-share
- (D) Bedsit
- (E) Digs

How many people do you share your bedroom with (including self) _____

7 How many people live in your accommodation? (including self)

- (A) Apartment in a block _____
(if sharing accommodation go to Q8)
[if living alone go to Q9]

8 For each bedroom, please state how many people are in each (including self)

- (A) Bedroom 1: _____
- (B) Bedroom 2: _____
- (C) Bedroom 3: _____
- (D) Bedroom 4: _____
- (E) Bedroom 5: _____

9 Which of these statements is correct for you:

- I would prefer to live in college accommodation
- I would prefer to live with my family/guardian but this is not feasible
- I am happy with my current accommodation
- I would prefer to be in better standard private rented accommodation

10 How important are each of the following factors when choosing accommodation: (please circle)

- (A) **Cost**
- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Very important | Important |
| Not particularly important | Unimportant |
- (B) **Quality of Accommodation**
- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Very important | Important |
| Not particularly important | Unimportant |
- (C) **Size of accommodation**
- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Very important | Important |
| Not particularly important | Unimportant |
- (D) **Proximity to College**
- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|
| Very important | Important |
| Not particularly important | Unimportant |

(E) **Personal safety**

Very important Important
Not particularly important Unimportant

(F) Are there any other factors important in influencing your choice of accommodation?

11 How satisfied are you with your current accommodation (please circle)

Very Satisfied Satisfied
Not particularly satisfied Dissatisfied

12 Do you think the cost of your accommodation is

Good value for money
About right for what I am getting in return
Poor value for money

13 How would you describe the quality of your accommodation?

Very good quality
Good quality
It is not in good condition
It is in very bad condition

14 In terms of personal safety, do you think your accommodation is...

Very safe
Somewhat safe
Not particularly safe
Totally unsafe

15 How long does it take you to travel to College?

Under 15 minutes
15 – 30 minutes
31 – 45 minutes
46 minutes to one hour
Over an hour

16 Do you think this is...

A good commuting time
A reasonable commuting time
A bad commuting time
A terrible commuting time

17 What is the principal way you get to College?

I walk
By bicycle
By moped/motorcycle
By car
By one form of public transport – bus/train/tram
I must use a combination of these public transport options – bus/train/tram – or get two forms – e.g. two buses, two trains, two trams
Taxi

18 What are your costs for commuting to and from college per month?

Nothing €61 – €80
Under €20 €81 – €100
€20 – €40 €101 – €120
€41 – €60 Over €120

19 What year are you in (please circle)

1st 2nd 3rd 4th Postgraduate

20 What course are you studyingArts/Humanities Business IT Science Vocational course (e.g. law, medicine,
nursing, dentistry, engineering) Other _____ **21 How much rent do you as an individual pay**

Per week? (as an individual) € _____

or Per month? (as an individual) € _____

(21A) Does this include any bills?

Yes No (21B) If in digs, does this rent
include meals?Yes No **22 If living with other people, what is the total
rent due on your accommodation for the
entire household?**

Per week € _____ or per month? € _____

Not applicable Don't know

(22A) Does this include any bills?

Yes No **23 Do your parents or a guardian help pay
for your accommodation?**Yes How much do they contribute per
month to your living expenses? € _____No **24 Do you receive a grant from the State?**Yes

How much per academic year? € _____

No **25 How would you rate your relationship with
your current landlord/their agent?**Excellent Good We have not had any real contact Not good

Why? _____

Poor

Why? _____

**26 Is your tenancy registered with the Private
Residential Tenancies Board?**Yes No Don't know Not applicable (would not be applicable if they live with
an owner-occupier or in digs)

27 Do you have a rent book/get rent receipts from your landlord?

- Yes
- No
- No because the rent is paid by direct debit

Poor

Why? _____

I have the same landlord/agent as during the last academic year

28 Were you in the private rented sector in the last academic year?

- Yes (go to question 29)
- No (go to question 30)

32 What age are you?

_____ / I am over 30

29 Are you currently in a different property to the one you were in during the last academic year?

- Yes, I'm in a new property
- No, I'm in the same property

33 Where are you originally from?

(state the county/country) _____

34 Are you paying college fees? (not registration fees)

- No
- Yes
- how much per year? € _____

30 Has your rent changed since the last academic year?

- Yes, it has gone up
- By how much? € _____ per month Why? _____
- Yes, it has gone down
- By how much? € _____ per month Why? _____
- No change in rent

35 Which college are you attending? And are you part or full time?

Institute of Technology Tallaght
part-time full-time

Dublin City University
part-time full-time

University College Dublin
part-time full-time

Trinity College Dublin
part-time full-time

Dublin Institute of Technology
part-time full-time

31 How would you rate your relationship with your last landlord/their agent?

- Excellent
- Good
- We have not had any real contact
- Not good
- Why? _____

36 Are you in employment?

- Yes full-time
- Yes part-time
- I do occasional work
- No (Go to question 39)

37 Which of the following statements best applies to you:

- I work to fund my accommodation costs
- I work because my general expenses aside from accommodation require me to work
- I work for a bit of extra spending money
- I work to get some work experience
- I work because I want to work

38 Approximately, how much do you earn per month from employment after any tax is deducted?

€ _____

39 Have you any other comments to make with regard to your satisfaction/dissatisfaction with your accommodation?

40 Respondents' Gender:

Male

Female

Appendix Two

This survey is being carried out by the Centre for Housing Research on behalf of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government and the Department of Education and Science. It will take 10-15 minutes and all responses are confidential. We are hoping to survey students of this campus – are you a student here? *(If yes, continue to Question 1, if not, thanks but outside target today)*

1 Do you live in private rented accommodation?

Within definition for survey:

- renting through a commercial agency
- renting from a private landlord who you do not previously know
- renting a room from an owner-occupier previously unknown to student
- Students living in digs/rent a room

Yes (Go to full questionnaire)

Outside definition for survey:

- college accommodation (e.g. on campus)
- purpose built student accommodation
- renting from a family member/friend
- social housing (local authority/voluntary & cooperative sector)
- living with their parents/guardians
- living in a hostel

No (Go to Question 2)

2 Do you live in:

- College-provided accommodation
- With your parents/a parent/guardian
- I rent from a family member/friend
- Your own home [i.e. owner-occupier]
- Social Housing
- Other (please specify) _____

3 Why have you chosen this option?

- Convenience and practicality
- This is what I can afford
- This would be my preferred accommodation
- Other _____

4 Would you prefer to be in private rented accommodation?

- Yes (Go to Question 5 below)
- No (Go to Question 6)

5 Why are you not living in private rented accommodation? (More than one box can be ticked)

- (A) There is no point because my family/guardian home is close to college
- (B) I cannot find anywhere suitable to rent in terms of quality of accommodation
- (C) I cannot find anywhere suitable to rent in terms of proximity to college
- (D) I cannot afford to rent
- (E) Other _____

6 What year are you in? (circle answer)
 1st 2nd 3rd 4th Postgraduate

7 What course are you studying:

Arts/Humanities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business	<input type="checkbox"/>
IT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Science	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vocational course (e.g. law, medicine, nursing, dentistry, engineering)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other _____	

8 Which college?

Which college are you attending?
 And are you part or full time?

Institute of Technology Tallaght	part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	full-time <input type="checkbox"/>
Dublin City University	part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	full-time <input type="checkbox"/>
University College Dublin	part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	full-time <input type="checkbox"/>
Trinity College Dublin	part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	full-time <input type="checkbox"/>
Dublin Institute of Technology	part-time <input type="checkbox"/>	full-time <input type="checkbox"/>

