Task Force 8: Student Support Services

Cover Sheet

Task 1: *Evaluate the breadth, quality and relevance of student support services currently available in the University, and advise as to the efficacy of these services in ensuring that no Manchester student is prevented from achieving her/his full academic potential by lack of effective advice and support in relation to non-academic problems.*

Task 2: *Evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities: recommend strategies for improving their efficacy, and advice as to the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond the University provided student accommodation.*

Task 3: *Recommend changes of priority and/or scope in the development, delivery and funding of residential accommodation and student support service that promise to improve the quality of the Manchester student experience.*

TF8 agreed to set up two sub-groups to deal separately with the first two tasks. The full reports of each sub-group, together with an Executive Summary of headline recommendations from each sub-group are attached. The third task assigned to TF8 has not yet been addressed.

It is evident that the UG Education Review could lead to radical changes in academic provision and expectations of students which would significantly influence the nature and shape of the non-academic support that should be provided. Thus, TF8 proposes that it will be necessary to revisit its conclusions, particularly with respect to student support services, once the final recommendations of the Review have been agreed.

14 December 2007

Task Force 8

Student Support Services

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The University of Manchester
Review of Undergraduate Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience
Task Force 8: Student Support Services

Sub-Group 1 Executive Summary

> **Task 1** *Evaluate the breadth, quality and relevance of student support services currently available in the University, and advise as to the efficacy of these services in ensuring that no Manchester student is prevented from achieving her/his full academic potential by lack of effective advice and support in relation to non-academic problems.*

The existing student support structures in the University are predicated on an assumption that the primary locus for student support is in academic Schools, with specialist support services being delivered centrally. The sub-group concluded that there should be a third element – namely a full range of 'enabling' strategies and activities which allow students to be actively engaged with, and feel part of, the University and wider community. The sub-group **recommends** that the framework of support for students should consist of three main elements:
  i.   Support in Schools;
  ii. Specialist support services;
  iii. Enabling strategies and activities.

i. *Support in Schools*

The Review of Personal Support for Students in Schools (2006) concluded "that, in many instances, the personal tutor system was no longer appropriate for the delivery of *non-academic* support". That Review recommended that key tasks for the support of students in Schools should be properly assigned, and that non-academic support should be provided by dedicated support staff who are properly trained and supported to carry out that role. These recommendations have been implemented in some Schools. The sub-group **recommends** that the recommendations of that earlier Review be adopted by all Schools across the University.

ii. *Specialist Support Services*

The sub-group is broadly of the view that the specialist support services and facilities offered by the University provide a range of services which is comparable to those offered by other universities in the UK and elsewhere and which are relevant to the types of problems commonly experienced by students. Nonetheless, some gaps have been identified. These include specifically:

- **Support for students experiencing mental health difficulties:** The employment of a suitably qualified Mental Health worker could bring significant benefits, both in terms of assessing students and also in supporting/educating staff about mental health issues.
- **Financial Advice**: The possibility of consolidating financial advice and support into one location should be explored. The sub-group **recommends** this as an area in which the University and the Students' Union could work together, possibly with the provision of a jointly-funded post based in the Students' Union.
- **Off-campus students:** Further work is needed to consider the support requirements of students who are not based on campus (eg students on placement, year abroad students, distance learners, and those commuting to the University from the local area).

In addition to these identified gaps, the sub-group noted some challenges which are impacting on provision:

- **Demand:** Very considerable increases in use of some services are causing significant pressures on staff. New and innovative ways of handing ever-increasing demand have been introduced where possible and this is an area where further work is being done.
- **Communication:** It is evident that some students are failing to access services because of lack of knowledge that they exist. The problem lies not in the amount of information available but in how we deliver that information to students. Student Portal provides a sound basis for further development and the implementation of Blackboard will facilitate the creative use of technology to provide an alternative means of communication and support for students, especially for those who are not located on campus. Lack of appropriate advice to students from staff who are unfamiliar

with the support services is perhaps a greater problem and points to the need for an information resource targeted at staff.

iii. *Enabling Strategies and Activities*
The third, and most innovative, element of student support relates to the development of strategies and activities that would enable students to recognise and take greater responsibility for solving their own problems, take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the University, and actively engage with, and feel part of, the University and wider community. The sub-group **recommends** actions in the following specific areas:

Normalising Problems and Personal Responsibility: There should be a change in approach to one whereby students understand it is normal to experience problems of one sort or another as part of life, and that the University is not here to provide the solution, but to provide the support and tools to enable them to take personal responsibility for dealing with the problem. One specific area where this is particularly relevant is the way 'extenuating' or mitigating circumstances which may have affected a student's performance are handled. At present, students are encouraged to inform their School of every small setback which they feel may have affected their performance, and they are given the expectation that this will be taken into account in the outcomes of assessment. Schools consequently devote an enormous amount of time to cataloguing mitigating circumstances and trying to determine whether or not it has affected performance and, if so, how this can be compensated for. [Note: in 2006-07, 25% (ie 410) of all students in the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures submitted evidence of mitigating circumstances in connection with assessments.] It is **recommended** that there should be a fundamental review of this activity with a view to focusing resources instead on those students who have significant barriers to overcome. Not only would this approach benefit those who genuinely need extra support but we would be helping students understand that problems are a normal part of life.

- **The importance of transition and the first year experience**: The University published a Framework for Induction and Transitional Support in September 2007 with an accompanying report which described why induction and transitional support was important. The sub-group **endorses** the findings of the Working Group on Induction and Transitional Support. Implementation is ongoing, and this will be strengthened by the appointment of a Student Retention Officer in the Student Experience Office who will be able to devote some attention to supporting Schools in developing induction and transitional support programmes.
- **Community:** There has been much discussion both within the University and externally about the power of belonging to a community. In an institution the size of this University, defining what is meant by community becomes problematic. In reality, students will belong to any number of communities within the University. In respect of the academic School, work is needed to establish the extent to which students feel that they know what that community is, how it is constructed and the extent to which they believe they are members of it. At the focus groups organised as part of the current review, it was clear that students' first line of identification with the University was normally with their programme of study rather than their School, many having no understanding of the terminology of 'School' and 'Faculty'. The sub-group **recommends** work be undertaken to facilitate student engagement and the development of student communities on campus.
  It is evident that, for a variety of reasons, there has been a decline in respect for undergraduates in the University. The sub-group **recommends** a cultural shift to adopting an attitude towards students which explicitly values their contribution and respects them as members of the University community.
- **Support of Peers:** The value of peer support and peer assisted learning is well recognised within the University and the sub-group **recommends** its extension into non-academic support activities.

The University of Manchester
Review of Undergraduate Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience
Task Force 8: Student Support Services
Report of Sub-Group 1

Introduction

1. Sub-group 1 addressed the following element of the task:

    "Evaluate the breadth, quality and relevance of student support services currently available in the University, and advise as to the efficacy of these services in ensuring that no Manchester student is prevented from achieving her/his full academic potential by lack of effective advice and support in relation to non-academic problems."

2. Early in its discussions, the sub-group came to the view that the wording of the task (specifically that 'no Manchester student is prevented from achieving her/his full academic potential by lack of effective advice and support') unintentionally lent a negative tone to the exercise in that it suggested an approach of providing safety nets for students with non-academic problems rather than the more positive approach of enabling students who might encounter such problems to succeed. The work of the sub-group has therefore focused on the aim of ensuring that all University of Manchester students have available to them a framework of non-academic support which gives them the opportunity and confidence to achieve their full academic potential.

3. In carrying out its task, the sub-group relied on the expertise and experience of its members (see Appendix 1), undertook internet research and conducted an internal information gathering exercise which focused on the nature of the problems experienced by students, the range and usage of existing student support services and the degree of satisfaction expressed by users of existing services and facilities. [Note: information collected by about the range of problems presented by students to Schools/Halls of Residence is presented as background information in Appendix 2.]

4. In addition, the sub-group noted, and gave particular attention to, the report of an in-depth review of the personal tutoring system in Schools that had been undertaken between December 2005 and April 2006. That review, which was supported by the Teaching and Learning Group, had been carried out by the Student Experience Office and overseen by a Steering Group chaired by Professor Kersti Börjars. The report, endorsed by the University's Senior Executive Team, was disseminated throughout the University and a substantial number of meetings with the implementation team took place early in 2006 at both Faculty and School level.

5. The Review of Support for Students in Schools resulted in a number of other in-depth reviews within the University and the sub-group gave particular attention to those reports also, namely: the Review of Support for International Students (2006) and the Report on Induction and Transitional Support for Students (2007).

6. The existing student support structures in the University are predicated on an assumption that the primary locus for student support is in the academic Schools, with specialist support services being delivered centrally. The sub-group quickly came to the conclusion that, whilst this provision of generalist and specialist support was entirely appropriate, it represented a somewhat reactive system which focussed on supporting students when things go wrong. If, however, student support was thought of in terms of enabling students to take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by The University of Manchester, then it became clear that consideration needed also to be given to putting in place a full range of 'enabling' strategies and activities which allowed students actively to engage with, and feel part of, the University and wider community. Thus, the sub-group focussed its attention on a framework of support for students which should consist of three main elements:

i.   Support in Schools;
ii.   Specialist support services;
iii.   Enabling strategies and activities.

7.   The sub-group was confident that this approach would complement the ideas that were emerging from the other Task Forces. However, it was evident that the UG Education Review could lead to radical changes in academic provision and expectations of students which would significantly influence the nature and shape of support that should be provided. Thus, the sub-group proposed that it would be necessary to revisit its conclusions once the final recommendations of the Review were agreed. The remainder of this report is structured around the three elements of student support listed above.

Support in Schools

8.   Historically, the first-line support for students, both academic and non-academic, has been delivered in Schools *via* the personal tutor system. The Review of Support for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Students in Schools (2006) (see report at http://tinyurl.com/2d6kry) was undertaken for two reasons: to identify how best to meet the non-academic needs of students and also to contribute to the agenda for ensuring that the best use is made of academic staff time. As part of that review, a survey was undertaken of the websites of the institutions included in the THES's top 25 (in 2004). Three main themes emerged from that survey:

    i.   The majority of academic and pastoral support was delivered *via* staffed offices rather than by individual members of academic staff. The latter were expected to be able to provide discipline specific help directly related to their teaching. There were also academic advisory services available at university level in many cases.

    ii.   There was a high level of commitment to student induction, with such programmes sustained throughout the first year.

    iii.   Study skills provision attracted a high level of resource, both at the university and the faculty levels. Many of the websites were explicit in extolling the brilliance of their students and their importance as members of the community whilst simultaneously recognising the need to support them during their transition year.

9.   In addition to this research into support arrangements in other universities both international and in the UK, the Review involved face-to-face interviews with colleagues involved in student support in every School in the University. It concluded that, in many instances, the personal tutor system was no longer appropriate for the delivery of *non-academic* student support. Its dependency on a significant number of individuals meant that it was impossible to ensure consistency and equality of treatment of students and it was extremely difficult (if not impossible) to ensure that personal tutors were kept informed and up-to-date. Some students had very good experiences whilst others had either indifferent or very poor experiences. Personal Tutors were unable to be accessible to students on a full-time basis, and the numbers of and diversity of students in 21st century higher education meant that it was an unreasonable imposition to expect academic staff to divert time from teaching and research to handling students' non-academic problems.

10.   The Review recognised that it was nonetheless important that students should have the opportunity to develop personal relationships with academic staff and concluded that the main basis for developing this relationship successfully lay in the academic structure of the student's programme of study, where the purpose of meetings between student and academic staff member was to discuss a student's progress in the academic context. The Review also concluded that it was correct that non-academic support for students should continue to be located in Schools, but that the delivery of this support should be professionalised and provided by Student Support Officers. The underlying philosophy espoused in the Review report was of a partnership between academic and administrative/support colleagues in which the bulk of personal support for students would be delivered by professional support staff unless there was a demonstrable value to be added by the

involvement of academic staff. To enable Schools to take these recommendations forward, the Review report identified tasks involved in support for students and discussed the best ways of delivering them and by whom.

11. The TF8 sub-group fully endorsed the conclusion of that earlier Review and noted that a number of Schools had responded positively to its recommendations by establishing posts whereby administrative staff provided dedicated non-academic support for students. Other Schools, while supporting the recommendations, had not had the opportunity or the resources to appoint student support officers. There was a requirement on Faculties to report in the OPRs on progress of Schools in considering and implementing the recommendations arising from that Review. The sub-group also noted that the Office of Student Support Services (OSSS) had developed a training programme for staff in Schools in student support roles, the first cohort having started the programme in September 2007.   The OSSS was also putting other arrangements in place to support the staff in Schools and to encourage consistency of approach across the University.

12. The sub-group hopes that this present Review of UG Education will lend further weight to the identification of student support officers in Schools and the work of the OSSS in supporting them and in facilitating consistency in this area of activity across the University.

    [Note: A sub-group of Task Force 5 is looking at the provision of academic support.]

Specialist Support Services

13. A variety of specialist student support services is currently provided as follows:

    - The Academic Advisory Service
    - The Accommodation Office
    - The Counselling Service
    - The Disability Support Office
    - English Language Programmes
    - Financial Advice (based in the Student Services Centre)
    - The International Advice Team (based in the Student Services Centre)
    - IT Support
    - MLP, Careers and Employability
    - Nurseries
    - Security/Police Liaison
    - Sport
    - Student Occupational Health
    - Students' Union Advice Centre

    In addition to the above, some student support is provided by external agencies closely linked to the University. These include in particular the Chaplaincies and the International Society.

    The work of these specialist services is summarised in Appendix 3.

14. The sub-group was broadly of the view that the specialist support services and facilities offered by the University of Manchester provide a range of services which is comparable to those offered by other universities in the UK and elsewhere and which are relevant to the types of problems commonly experienced by students. Nonetheless, some areas emerged in which it was felt there were opportunities to improve. These included specifically; support for students experiencing mental health difficulties, financial advice and support, and support for students not based on the University campus.

    Support for students experiencing mental health difficulties

    i.   Mental health is an area of increasing concern, particularly among staff who may be considered to be at the 'front line' of student support, in Schools and Halls of Residence. The Counselling

Service has only limited access to psychiatric assessment, via GP practices or Accident and Emergency, for students presenting with symptoms of mental illness and Student Occupational Health and the Disability Support Office are also under pressure in this area. Many universities have dedicated Mental Health workers, or sessional provision by a psychiatrist.

ii.   The employment of a suitably qualified mental health worker could bring significant benefits, both in terms of providing advice, liaison services and casework support in relation to students with serious mental health problems and also in supporting/educating staff about mental health issues. In 2004-05 a joint project was undertaken with a local PCT on student health. One of the key proposals from that group was for the establishment of a mental health worker to be funded jointly between the University and the PCT. Unfortunately, both the University and the PCT were unable to provide funds at that time to support the proposals and it may be timely to reinstigate the work of that project.

Financial Advice

i.   A post of Money Doctor was established in the Student Services Centre in January 2005 to provide a specialist money advice service for students. This service was well regarded within the University and had also been recognised for the work done with the Financial Services Authority in developing a toolkit as a resource for student money advisers. With the resignation of the member of staff concerned, the dedicated post of Money Doctor has been lost to savings. A financial advice service to students is currently being provided by the Student Funding and Financial Support Team in the Student Services Centre. Approximately 0.25fte is being devoted to providing this service and this reduction in resource means that it is not possible to continue the pro-active workshop and advice work that had been undertaken by the Money Doctor.

ii.   Financial advice is offered by the Students' Union Advice Centre which can also provide short-term loans to students. One in five student visits to the SU Advice Centre is about finance. Students sometimes shuttle between the SSC and the SU Advice Centre.

iii.   The Office of Student Support and Services recognises that financial advice and support being located in the same place as the collection of tuition fees is not necessarily ideal.

iv.   The sub-group agreed that the possibility of consolidating financial advice and support into one location should be explored. It regards this as an area in which the University and the Students' Union could work together, possibly with the provision of a jointly-funded post based in the Students' Union as is known to happen elsewhere.

Off-campus students

i.   This includes students on placements, year abroad students, distance learners, students undertaking a period of study at another university and those commuting to the University from the local area. The sub-group identified this category of students as having specific support requirements which could be enhanced by use of technology. The Open University successfully supports distance learners and achieved 95% student satisfaction in the 2007 National Student Survey. An article in the Guardian newspaper on personal support for students on OU programmes emphasised the importance of one-to-one contact with academic staff (albeit over a message board/telephone rather than face-to-face) for creating community.[1]

ii   The need for additional support for this category of student was recognised by the working group on induction and transitional support which noted that: "Part-time and distance learning students and students who commute are not regularly on campus and, as a result, may not receive the same opportunities for induction/transitional support as full-time students. Even some full-time students do not need to be on campus very often and can also be affected by issues such as isolation. The elements of induction which contribute to integration and sense of

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[1] 'Open (almost) all hours', 30 October 2007

community are particularly important for these groups of students, and may require a more innovative approach. The Faculty of Life Science's Homestart programme for undergraduates who commute to University is an example of a direct attempt to intervene and create a network for such students. Other initiatives include using electronic media to provide opportunities for 'virtual' interactions, and there are a number of examples around the University and elsewhere."[2]

[Further work is needed to consider the support requirements of students who are not based on campus.]

15. In addition to these identified gaps in provision, the sub-group noted a number of challenges having to be faced by these specialist support services:

Demand

i.   For some services (specifically the Counselling Service and the Disability Support Office) there has been a year on year increase in demand over the last few years which is significantly over and above a simple increase in student numbers (see appendix 3).   New and innovative ways of handling this increased demand have been introduced where possible and this is an area where further work is being done. In some areas, such as the Counselling Service, it is recognised that a one-to-one approach is not always necessary, nor always desired, and innovative self-help resources which take full advantage of technology (e.g. an online diagnostic tool available to both staff and students) could provide additional support. The Counselling Service is in the process of developing some self-help tools but the lack of resource/expertise to implement them may limit progress.

Communication and Coordination **(add para about coord/joined up working)**

i.   Despite students receiving information about the whole range of support services and facilities provided by the University through a range of media, it is evident that some students are failing to access the services when in need because of lack of knowledge that they exist. The sub-group is of the view that there is sufficient information available about the support services, but that the problem lies in how we deliver that information to students. The development of the Student Portal as the electronic gateway to a whole range of information and resources provided by the University has been an important step forward in this matter and provides a sound basis for further development.

ii. However, there are some serious shortcomings in the provision of information in Studentnet (which is poorly organised) and contradictions between this and the information currently delivered on the externally-facing website.

iii. The implementation of Blackboard will facilitate the creative use of technology to provide alternative means of communication and support for students, especially for those who are not located on campus.

iv. The sub-group identified that lack of information about support services among staff is perhaps a greater problem, as it means that students approaching staff are less likely to receive the appropriate advice. This will be addressed in part by the improvements anticipated through the adoption of student support officers in Schools, and the development of the Student Advice and Information Hub (see Appendix 3, paragraph 1), but we should still be working to ensure that all staff have a basic understanding, or easy access to information about, the specialist support services, in order that they can easily refer students.

v.   The sub-group agreed that an information resource targeted at staff should be developed. This could take the form of a searchable, online 'staff handbook' (similar in range to the Crucial

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[2] Report of the working group on induction and transitional support, 2007

Guide). It is important that staff are not expected to rely on content which has been developed for a student audience.

Enabling Strategies and Activities

16. The third, and most innovative, element of student support relates to the development of strategies and activities that would enable students to recognise and take greater responsibility for solving their own problems, to take full advantage of the opportunities offered to them by the University, and to actively engage with, and feel part of, the University and wider community. This can be addressed under the following specific areas:

    - Normalising problems
    - The importance of transition and the first year experience
    - Belonging to a community
    - Support of Peers

Normalising problems

i. Clegg et al[3] conducted research into the paradox that, although Universities offer a multiplicity of support options, students appeared reluctant to take advantage of them. As part of an institutional review intended to understand how students achieve, they interviewed a number of students about their experiences[4]. From the interviews, two key issues were identified: 'the complexities of help-seeking and the extent to which students found it difficult to seek out help from the sources that were theoretically available to them (tutor support, student services and so on).' It was concluded that 'confronting personal and other difficulties is a normal part of undertaking any life project and not something that can be regarded as exceptional; rather we should value the resourcefulness of students in coping with the demands on them.'[5] They found through their interviews that students gained in confidence and self-esteem through taking control of their own problems whereas seeking help 'seemed particularly problematic because it diminished proper pride in their own coping skills and capacities.' The students interviewed in the study came from a range of backgrounds, study modes and ethnicities. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit from them what had enabled them to 'persist', what problems they encountered and how they resolved them.

ii. The key findings of that study were[6]:
    - ability to draw on the support of their peers;
    - family a major source of support;
    - an unwillingness to seek help from a tutor in case they thought the student a 'slacker';
    - a high degree of acceptance of life's difficulties and a reluctance to see their difficulties as something that should prompt them to seek extra help;
    - In particular the idea of being an adult, and being at university not school, involves notions of the capacity to cope with problems independently.

iii. These findings suggest that a positive step would be to approach student support from a perspective which says to students that they will experience problems of one sort or another, and that the University is here, not to provide the solution, but to provide the support and tools to enable them to resolve the problem. This would mirror their academic journey in developing an independent, confident individual who recognises that, when problems occur, there are a variety of ways to overcome them, and knows how to access the available resources. There should be no sense of failure in seeking to use these resources, but rather a sense of entitlement, of taking advantage of the expertise and experience of others and using that to come to one's own decision. We need to build these findings into the way we discuss and think

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[3] Clegg, Sue, Bradley, Sally and Smith, Karen, "I've had to swallow my pride': help seeking and self-esteem', *Higher Education Research & Development*, 2006, 25,101 - 113
[4] Clegg, p. 102
[5] Clegg, p. 102
[6] Clegg, pp 105 – 111

about student support, about how we can create an environment in which, through the provision of self-help advice and tools, students take control of their own problems but that, when necessary, asking for help is acceptable/normal, and not seen as something which diminishes them.

iv.   A fundamental point seems to be to recognise that, whilst there will be circumstances in which students approach their tutors or specialist support services for help, they will also be seeking help in other ways, or not at all. We should not necessarily seek to change this behaviour, but to develop strategies which build on it by placing information about support in their way.   A good deal of work goes on already in terms of identifying students with problems, and this needs to be built on so that Schools are pro-actively looking out for them. Large class size makes this very difficult but if we can develop ways in which students feel known in teaching groups, either by other students or by members of staff, then we are conversely also placing staff in a position where they are able to notice things about students. Actively monitoring work and attendance is one key to spotting problems.

v.   The sub-group noted that other universities place greater recognition on the variety of networks used by students to seek help by developing resources for students' friends and families. For example, UCL has developed a parental support scheme which provides information about the university thereby enabling the parents to better support their sons/daughters.   The Open University's Friends and Families Website is another useful example.[7]   While it is essential not to compromise the independence of the student or to make assumptions about students' family backgrounds, the development of a website with a specific section badged 'for family and friends' is worthy of consideration.

vi.   Another way of normalising student problems and giving self-help advice would be to create a website with examples of problems faced by students and how they have been overcome. The Open University Faculty of Arts publishes a set of 'stories' from students about their experiences of studying, and tips for others, which gives an example of the type of approach.[8] The Friends and Families website quoted above also includes examples and video clips.

vii.   One specific area where the University's current approach tends to counter an approach towards self-help, independence and personal responsibility is the way 'extenuating' or mitigating circumstances which may have affected a student's performance are handled. At present, students are encouraged to inform their School of every small setback which they feel may have affected their performance, and they are given to understand that the effect of this will somehow be taken into account when determining the outcomes of assessment. Schools consequently devote an enormous amount of time to cataloguing mitigating circumstances and trying to determine, for each case, whether or not it has affected performance and, if so, how this can be compensated for.   It is suggested that we should instead be focusing resources on those students who have significant barriers to overcome. Not only would this approach benefit those who genuinely needed extra support but we would be helping students understand that problems are a normal part of life. If we aim to enable these individuals to meet these challenges, we will be taking a step towards developing independent, effective, strong individuals.

viii.   One practical measure which could be taken to reinforce this approach would be to review our approach to mitigating circumstances, extensions, re-sits etc.   In 2006-7, 25% (410) of students in the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures submitted evidence for mitigation in connection with an assessment. What expectations do we raise among students when we allow them to submit evidence for mitigating circumstances? Can we really assess the impact of a cold on the quality of their work?   Might it not be clearer and fairer if we gave students the responsibility for declaring themselves fit to undertake any given assessment, on the assumption that if they were not fit there would be an opportunity to take the assessment next time it was presented?

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[7] http://www.open.ac.uk/family/personal-support.php
[8] http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/student-views/index.html

ix.   De Montfort University, for example, does not allow mitigation. Instead they allow 'deferral of assessment on grounds of extenuating circumstances'. Extenuating circumstances are defined as 'genuine circumstances beyond a student's control, or ability to foresee, and which seriously impair his or her assessed work'. The regulation includes examples of these (acute illness, bereavement of close family/friends, other serious matters) and examples of things which do not qualify. Students have to apply to a panel for permission to defer, and the only allowance the panel is able to make is to allow them to defer to the next assessment period.[9] In this way, students are given responsibility for determining whether the circumstance in question has really affected them.

The importance of transition and the first year experience

i.   The University published a Framework for Induction and Transitional Support in September 2007[10]. The accompanying report described why induction and transitional support was important:

"High quality induction and transitional support provides the foundation for a successful and satisfying experience at University.[11] Making the transition from secondary or further education to studying at University level is challenging for even the most able students, particularly when combined with new living environments and social networks. International students also face the demands of living and learning in a new country, using a different language and, in many cases, adjusting to a different culture of education.

Well planned induction processes establish a framework within which students are enabled to take advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by the University of Manchester, and foster an environment within which students are able to access support when they need it.

An understanding of induction as a process which continues throughout the student lifecycle enables the University to identify transition points when students may need particular support and intervention, and to provide this in a way which does not detract from their development as independent learners.

Successful induction and transitional support creates student satisfaction and contributes to student retention by creating an environment within which it is possible for students to raise concerns, and also raises awareness of times during the student lifecycle when individuals may be vulnerable and require additional support."[12]

ii.   The sub-group endorses the findings of the Working Group on Induction and Transitional Support. Implementation is ongoing, and will be strengthened by the appointment of a Student Retention Officer in the Student Experience Office who will be able to devote some attention to supporting Schools in developing induction and transitional support programmes.

iii.   A number of Universities, particularly in the United States, run successful 'First Year Seminar' schemes and/or 'Learning Communities'[13] which contribute to students' ability to successfully make the transition, as well as offering opportunities to develop higher level 'learning skills', engage students with discussion of topical themes broadly related to their programmes of study and increase students' interactions with academic staff (especially researchers, senior Professors etc). [See also the report of Task Force 5's sub-group on Academic Advising and Skills.]

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[9] See http://www.dmu.ac.uk/aboutdmu/services/registry/aro_deferrals.jsp for further information.
[10] See http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/policies/display/index.htm?id=124136&off=RegSec->AcaReg->SSS
[11] See the STAR programme for further information and resources: http://www.ulster.ac.uk/star/index.htm
[12] Full report is online at
http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/studentexperience/pdfs/Induction%20ReportvfinalSept2007.pdf
[13] See for example, http://www.lsa.umich.edu/mlc/ at the University of Michigan, or http://fss.berkeley.edu/ at the University of California, Berkeley.

Community

i.   There has been much discussion both within the University and externally (as just one example, The University of Sheffield has recently launched a project to 'evaluate the ways in which student communities develop on campus and how these enrich the student experience in its broadest sense'[14]) about the power of belonging to a community in terms of enriching the student experience, mitigating against isolation, feeling a sense of identity within an organisation and with it, being confident of entitlement and ability to access the benefits provided by that community, and it is generally agreed that 'developing community' is a 'good thing'.

ii. However, in an institution the size of the University of Manchester, defining what is meant by community becomes problematic. In reality, students will belong to any number of communities within the University.   They will belong to some of these for the full period of their programme of study (e.g. to their School, their programme) and to others for a shorter time. There are many optional communities students may belong to such as societies, clubs, faith groups etc. A high proportion (80%) of undergraduates will belong to a University Hall of Residence in their first year but there seems to be little desire from students to retain an association with this community once their period of residence is over. In the 2007 survey of hall residents, only 6% indicated any desire to maintain their association with the Hall after they had left. (This attitude is probably connected with the view that there is a progression in residential experience, from University Hall to the independence of private sector rented accommodation, with a possible sojourn in a private hall in between). There are of course all sorts of 'virtual' communities, offered by e.g. Facebook.

iii. In terms of the community of the academic School work is needed to establish the extent to which students feel that they know what that community is, how it is constructed and the extent to which they believe they are members of it. At the focus groups organised as part of the current review, it was clear that students' first line of identification with the University was normally with their programme of study rather than their School, many having no understanding of the terminology of 'School' and 'Faculty'.

iv. It became apparent during the research for the Review of Support for Students in Schools that students seem to have very little idea of what academic staff actually do. They see that academic staff deliver lectures and seminars – in terms of arts and humanities subjects this can, from the perspective of the student, amount to only a few hours a week – so what do they do the 'rest' of the time, and why are they not perpetually available to see students, respond to their emails etc? There are examples in the UK and many more in the United States of strategies to involve undergraduates in the research culture of the School which may be of benefit.   For example, the Reinvention Centre at the University of Warwick provides opportunities for undergraduate students to undertake research projects:

     http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/cetl/ugresearch/

v.   The new framework on induction and transitional support referred to above identifies the fostering of a sense of community as a critical element in successful transition and suggests that:

     "… emphasis should be placed on structured events which enable students to get to know one another and to develop contact with academic staff. Initiatives that bring students together across disciplines and which encourage interaction between different levels of study are also important. … Some programmes are able to provide field trips away from campus, which are effective in creating a sense of community and an ethos of peer support. Events and activities planned with these aims in mind need not be confined to the introductory weeks, nor to new students."

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[14] Andrew West, Director of Student Services, University of Sheffield, to the AMOSSHE mailing list, 25 October 2007

vi.   It appears to many that, for a variety of reasons, the University has allowed a decline in respect for undergraduates to occur. We would like to see a cultural shift in the University to a widespread attitude towards students which explicitly values their contribution and respects them as members of the University community.

Support of Peers

i.   The value of peer support and peer assisted learning is already well-recognised at the University of Manchester and this can only benefit from expansion. Some Universities (e.g. Berkeley) have enormous, centrally run peer support services, largely focused on study skills. Is there opportunity to develop an entirely distinctive scheme for peer support in terms of non-academic problems? Students are more likely to discuss problems with their peers than they are with those whom they perceive to be 'in authority', have 'power' over them, are responsible for making decisions about them etc.

ii.   The working party on induction and transitional support found that:

"Involving other students in induction and transitional support has been shown to be an effective way of delivering information and integrating new students into the community. The University's Peer Mentoring and Peer Assisted Learning programmes provide nationally recognised standards in this area, and many Schools draw on these schemes to provide a supplementary source of support for students."

iii.   One such specific example of this is in the School of Medicine and in other universities of buddying/mentor schemes whereby each new student is paired with an existing student *before they arrive* to provide information and answer queries and to meet and greet them when they arrive.   This contributes significantly to a sense of belonging and being a part of the community from the outset.

The University of Manchester
Review of Undergraduate Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience
Task Force 8: Student Support Services
Appendices to the Report of Sub-Group 1

Appendix 1: Membership of Sub-Group 1, Student Support Services

Pat Sponder	Head of Student Support and Services
Catherine Croft	Taught Programmes Manager, School of Arts, Histories and Cultures
Jacquie Wilson	School of Materials/Warden, Hulme Hall
Yvonne McLean	Student Support Training Programme Developer
Jenny Wragge	Student Experience Officer
Liz Sheader	Teaching Fellow, FLS and Adviser, Academic Advisory Service
Bev Craig	Welfare Officer, UMSU
Rachel Brealey	Head of Faculty Administration, FLS
Tim David	Professor, School of Medicine (Faculty lead on Fitness to Practice)

Appendix 2: Types of Problems Presented by Students

1. In an attempt to evaluate the relevance of existing support services to our students, the sub-group investigated the types of problems experienced by students, and mapped these against the options for support available. The information set out below has been drawn from that provided by two of Schools (Art, Histories and Cultures and Materials) on mitigating circumstances presented by students in respect of examinations or other assessments, information from the Students' Union Advice Centre and information from Wardens on problems presented by students to the pastoral care teams.

Type of problem	Options for getting support, <u>in addition to</u> Personal Tutor/Student Support Officer in the School	Options for support external to the University
death in family	Counselling Service Chaplaincy Pastoral team (if living in Univ residence) SU Advice Centre	
death of friend	Ditto	
Illness/hospitalisation (self)	School/programme administration Student Occupational Health (fitness to study/return to study)	NHS
illness/hospitalisation (family/friend)	Counselling Service Chaplaincy Pastoral team (if living in Univ residence)	
general stress/anxiety	Counselling Service Disability Support Office Chaplaincy Pastoral team (if living in Univ residence)	
exam stress	Counselling Service Disability Support Office Academic Advisory Service	
depression/suicidal	Counselling Service Disability Support Office Chaplaincy Pastoral team (if living in Univ residence)	
victim of assault and other crimes (eg burglary, theft)	Police liaison officer Security SU Advice Centre	Police Victim Support
family problems	Counselling Service Chaplaincy	
eating disorder	Counselling Service	NHS
financial problems	SSC Fees Team SU Advice Centre	Citizens Advice Bureau Bank
personal relationship and other problems	Counselling Service Chaplaincy	
bullying and harassment	Counselling Service Equality and Diversity Office Office of Student Support and Services (procedures) School and Faculty offices SU Advice Centre	
problems in School/Faculty	Academic Advisory Service School (depending on nature of problem) SU Advice Centre	
problems with drugs	SU Advice Centre Counselling Service Student Occupational Health	NHS
problems with alcohol	SU Advice Centre Counselling Service Student Occupational Health	NHS

2. The categorisation of the grounds on which the 1099 requests for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account were submitted to the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures in the period November 2006 – September 2007 is as follows:

Medical	560	51%
Personal	304	28%
Medical & Personal	133	12%
Other	102	10%

3. The categorisation of problems presented to the Senior Tutor in the Medical School in 2006/7 is as follows:

Personal/Health Issues	101	31%
Attendance	69	21%
Academic failure	59	17%
Study Issue (exams/PBL/study skills)	44	14%
Intercalation	18	5%
Appeal/Progress	18	5%
Professional conduct	10	3%
Financial	7	2%
Other	7	2%

Note: Medicine (like Pharmacy, Dentistry and Nursing) has particularly stringent attendance requirements. Of the other issues presented, the School of Medicine itself was the appropriate 'specialist service' to handle the majority of these. Personal/health issues may have required referral to other parts of the University (principally Student Occupational Health or the Counselling Service) or externally. With regard to financial matters, the Medical Students Representative Council can provide advice and expertise, otherwise students would be referred either to the SU Advice Centre or to the Student Services Centre.

4. Students presented the following issues at the Students' Union Advice Centre

- Academic – 27% (primarily appeals, course problems)
- Student life – 20%
- Funding – 19%
- Housing – 11%
- Legal – 5%
- Employment – 3%
- Benefits (social services) – 2%
- Consumer rights – 2%
- Immigration – 1%
- Childcare – 1%

Appendix 3: The work of the specialist student support services and facilities

Usage and quality/efficiency of support services

Note: Student satisfaction data (where available from the internal Student Satisfaction Surveys) are offered as a proxy for the measurement of effectiveness of the individual services as the Counselling Service is the only service which has a formal mechanism (CORE) for evaluating this.

Service	Student Usage	Satisfaction 2007 % satisfied (level of satisfaction on scale of 1-5)
Academic Advisory Service	Around 4,500 problems handled between 1998 and 2006	66% (3.78)
Accommodation Office	All 1st year undergraduates and all international students are guaranteed places in University accommodation.	62% (3.66) (with their accommodation) 47% (3.24) (with the Accommodation Office)
Counselling Service	1515 new clients in 2005/6 and 1789 in 2006/7.	81% (4.17)
Disability Support Office	2989 students registered (2007) (30% increase on 2006.)	75% (4.10)
English Languages Programme	920 students' proficiency in English language tested, 730[1] students registered for in-sessional English and 101[2] students booked an academic writing tutorial (2005/6)	66% (3.72) of users (2006 satisfaction survey)
International Advice Team	1,100 case files opened 1 August – 23 Dec 2005 and 700 applications to extend permission to stay in UK sent to Home Office	74% (3.92)
IT Support	See report of Task Force 7	
MLP, Careers and Employability	8,262 appointments and 49,000 visits during 2006/7. 2000 students registered on credit-bearing Careers Management Skills modules and 332 undergraduates completed MLP.	68% (3.80) of undergraduates
Nurseries (Dryden Street and Echoes)	2006/7: 26 students on the waiting list at Dryden Street and 5 full-time UG parents. Echoes – 2 full-time UG parents.	n/a
Security/Police Liaison Officer		75% (4.01) feel safe on campus
Sport	On the residential campuses, Campus Sport provides recreational sporting activities for 2800 students and staff across a range of sports, both team and individual. (August 2006)	71% (3.82)
Student Occupational Health	664 students referred and 1078 self-referred in 2006/7. Emergency health advice given on 110 occasions.	n/a
Students' Union Advice Centre	3276 students visited the Advice Centre in 2006/7, some of which will be recurring visits. Figures exclude email enquiries and visits to executive officers.	n/a
Nightline		n/a

Note: In addition to those listed above, the Pastoral Support Teams in Halls of Residence are considered to be a key element in the support provision for students living in University accommodation. See Sub Group2 report for more information.

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[1] Not including Term 3
[2] Not including Term 3

Details of the Individual Support Services

Academic Advisory Service

1. The move of the Academic Advisory Service into University Place in March 2008 offers an opportunity to increase the profile of student support services among students and staff. The service will be renamed the 'Student Advice and Information Hub' and it will have a closer working relationship with the Student Experience Office. At present plans for development are at an early stage. The advisers from the AAS will continue to be available for student appointments, delivering the same type of advice as they do at the moment. The Hub will be co-located with the Accommodation Office, both of which are based off an atrium. This increases the potential for passing traffic to the service (there is currently almost zero potential for casual enquirers), which will help to raise awareness. The atrium will be utilised to provide a range of resources, including information about the whole range of support services. There will be computer terminals, which will offer an opportunity to deliver online information and interactive services. A key role for the Hub will also be as a focal point for staff seeking advice and support for students. The work of the Student Experience Office and the Student Support Training Programme and the facilities of the building and the Hub will be drawn on to provide a focus for 'supporting the supporters'. The very fact that these services will be based in a student-oriented building will offer us real opportunities to improve awareness and use of student support services.

Accommodation Office/Manchester Student Homes

2. The Accommodation Office handles accommodation enquiries and guarantees accommodation in University residences to all new undergraduates and all international students.

3. Manchester Student Homes coordinates the provision of private sector rented accommodation to students. It runs a landlord approval scheme, as well as a University leased accommodation service, placing the University as the landlord for substantial numbers of students. It supports students by checking tenancy agreements with them and advising them on handling problems with landlords. There were at least 10,000 absolutely unique visits to the MSH website during August 2007. Of respondents who had used MSH, 61% expressed themselves to be satisfied in the 2007 student satisfaction survey.

Counselling Service

Total Usage	2005-06		2006-07		% increase in numbers from 2005-06 to 2006-07
Staff	231	15.5%	317	17.8%	37%
Postgraduate	306	20.0%	305	17.2%	0%
Undergraduate	978	64.5%	1158	65%	18%
Total	1515		1780		17%

4. The Counselling Service is able to assess the effectiveness of its impact on clients by using the Clinical Outcome Routine Evaluation (CORE) tool. CORE identifies bands of severity (in terms of mental ill health presented) from Severe (score of 2.5 and above), Moderately Severe (2 – 2.5), Moderate (1.5 – 2), Mild (1 – 1.5) and two healthy bands (scores of under 1). Clients presenting at the University Counselling Service have average pre-thereapy scores of 1.83 (Moderate). Through the mediation of the Counselling Service, clients leave with an average post therapy score of 0.83 (healthy).

5. A study in the British Journal of Guidance and Counselling in February 2007 found that 'university counselling services deliver a service to people who closely resemble NHS primary care (mental health trust) clients in terms of severity and risk to self.'[3]

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[3] Connell, Janice, Barkham, Michael and Mellor-Clark, John, 'CORE-OM mental health norms of students attending university counselling services benchmarked against an age-matched primary care sample', *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 2007, 35, 41 – 57.

**Problems presented to Counselling between 1 August 2006 and 31 July 2007**
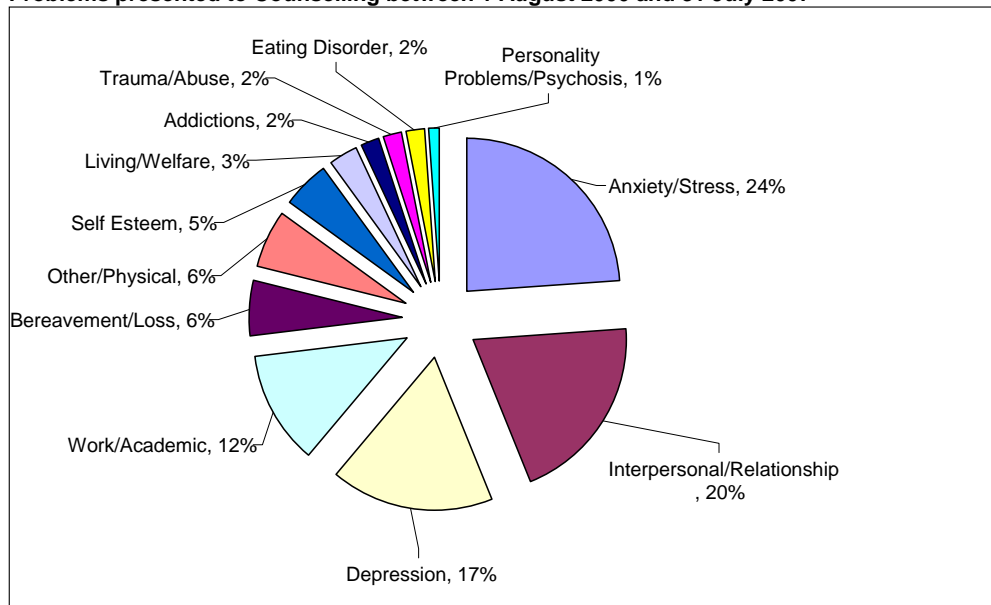
Disability Support Office

6.   The Disability Support Office has experienced another increase in demand, up 30% from 2006/07. Staffing levels are currently under review in order to ensure that the service is not compromised. The majority of students registered with the DSO have Specific Learning Difficulties (1517 in November 2007) and the office has developed links with external experts to provide support for students with aspergers syndrome, visually impaired students and deaf students to provide both a resource for staff and support for students.
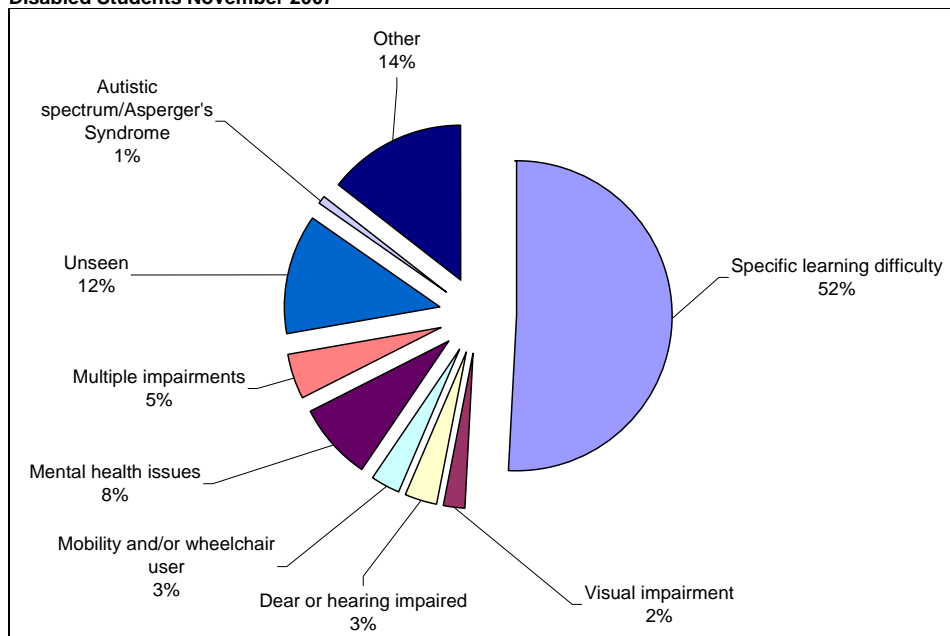
Number of students registered with the Disability Support Office June 2001 – December 2007
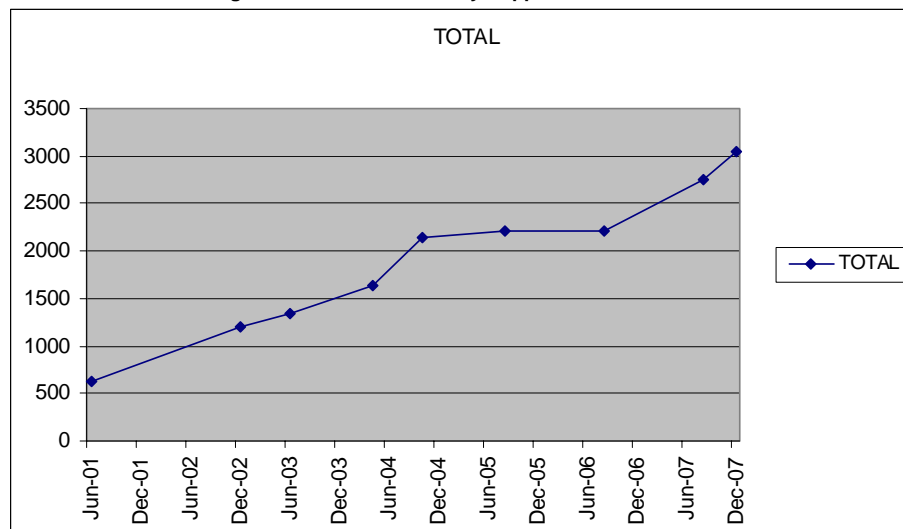
Disabled Students Jun 01 - Dec 07
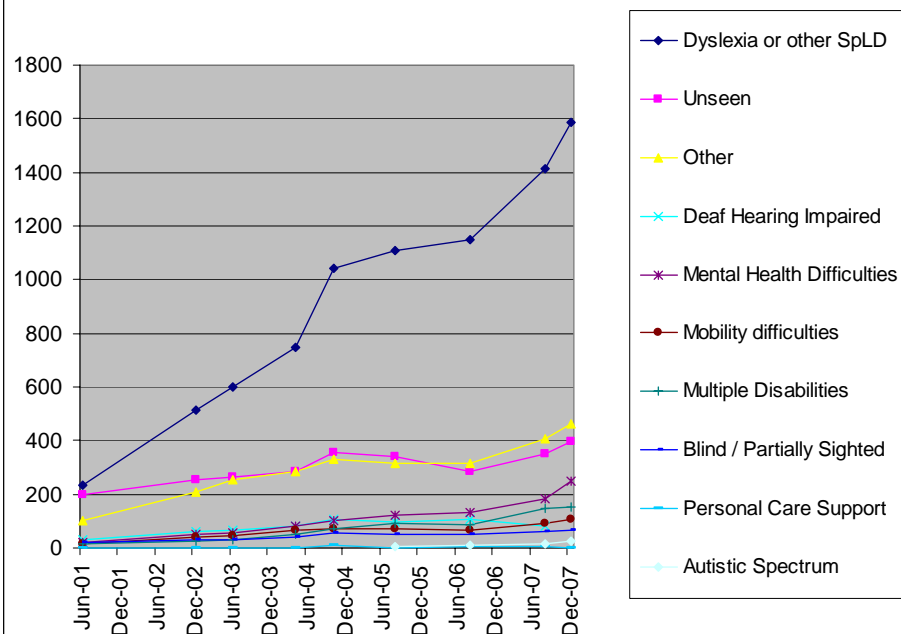
Disabled Students November 2007

English Languages Programme

7. The English Language Programme provides English language assessment and teaching for international students, together with study skills advice (e.g. writing and listening skills).

8. In 2005/6 920 candidates' proficiency in English language was tested by English Langauge Programmes, 730 students (excluding term 3) registered for in-sessional English language courses and 101 students (excluding term 3) booked an academic writing tutorial. Overall satisfaction with the service among undergraduate users was 66% (3.72) in the 2006 student satisfaction survey.

[Note: A sub-group of Task Force 5 is addressing the question of support for skills/learning development.]

International Advice Team

9. The categorisation of issues handled in 2006 is as follows: Immigration (80% of which 40% were complex, i.e. Level 2 casework according to the Office of Immigration Services Commissioner), Finance, Employment during and after study (work permits, income tax, National Insurance, part-time work), personal and family issues, accommodation, other (HOST, council tax, driving in UK).

IT support services

10. Task Force 7 Library and IT Services has reported on this area.

MLP, Careers and Employability

11. MLP provides the opportunity for students to become involved in their local community and to develop leadership skills and self-awareness. The Careers Service provides a range of advice and support in relation to career choice, job hunting, part-time work and further study.

12. The Careers service provides a huge range of facilities for students to support them in developing their skills and finding employment or suitable further study opportunities. It is consistently voted the best University careers service by employers. 68% of undergraduate users of the Careers service were satisfied with their experience according to the 2007 student satisfaction survey. During 2006/7 there were 8,262 appointments made at the Careers Service, and 49,000 visits (around 4,000 per month on average). In addition, 2000 students were registered on credit-bearing Career Management Skills modules and 332 undergraduates completed the Manchester Leadership Programme.

13. The division would like to expand its services in a number of areas:
    • mentoring for undergraduates, which seems to have a huge impact on aspirations and ability to get graduate jobs;
    • increased specialist support to International students
    • more online interactive services
    • utilisation of support of alumni
    • more Career Management Skills courses.

    It would also like to conduct more detailed research into the aspirations of Manchester students. At present it is evident that many students graduating from Manchester choose to remain in the area and take up low paid employment for the first 6-12 months after graduation, often following this with a period of travel.

Nurseries

14. The University provides places for students' children in two day-nurseries; Dryden Street and Echoes. The majority of these places are taken by the children of postgraduate students. In October 2007, 5 full-time undergraduate parents had children placed at Dryden Street Nursery. At Echoes there were 2 full-time undergraduate parents with children in the nursery. In September 2006 the University offered students the opportunity, as part of the registration process, to indicate their responsibility for dependents. 375 took up the opportunity, of whom 49 had children aged between 0 and 12 months, 184 had children aged between 13 months and 5 years, 133 had children between 6 and 10 years and 114 had children between 11 and 18 years. Other respondents had

responsibility for the elderly, the ill and the disabled. Taken together, these figures suggest that childcare needs affect only a small number of undergraduate students. Currently, although it has no formal policy, the University expects Schools to take a flexible approach towards students who have responsibility for childcare. There is also government funding, *via* the Childcare Grant and Parents Learning Allowance available (depending on status) for student parents to cover their childcare costs.

Security/Police Liaison Officer

15. The University's Security service is on-call to all students and staff and patrols campus and residences. In partnership with Greater Manchester Police, there is a Police Liaison Officer based on campus, who is supported by a Community liaison officer.

16. In the 2006/7 student satisfaction surveys, 75% of respondents agreed that they felt safe on campus.

Sport

17. SPORT facilitates student participation in sport at all levels, with recognised benefits to health and well-being as well as encouraging skills such as leadership, team working, and strengthening participants' identification with the HEI. In addition to facilities at the Armitage and Sugden centres, a significant part of SPORT's provision lies in the encouragement and facilitation of sport on the residential campuses, where there are opportunities to take part in both team sports and individual health and fitness classes at all levels. There is a dedicated Campus Sport Development officer who works with Hall JCRs and RAs to expand opportunities and participation. In August 2006, Campus Sport provided recreational sporting activities for over 2800 students and staff. The Campus Sport ideology is one of 'participation for enjoyment and fitness reasons, rather than being performance-focused'.[4]

18. In the 2006/7 satisfaction surveys, 71% of those who used the University sports facilities were satisfied.

Student Occupational Health

19. In terms of student support, Student Occupational Health assesses students for their fitness to study (either through self-referral or referral by Schools/Faculties) and offers emergency health advice to students. It also provides services such as pre-acceptance assessment, fitness to travel assessment, advice to leaders of field trips, vaccinations, screenings and so on.

20. In 2006/7, Student Occupational Health saw 664 students referred by Schools for an assessment of their fitness to study, take exams, return to study etc. 1078 students referred themselves for similar assessments, and emergency health advice was given on 110 occasions.

23. Student Occupational Health would be able to improve its services if it had access to specialists and specialist services, especially pscyhiatrists and psychologists.

Students' Union Advice Centre

24. The Students' Union Advice Centre complements the specialist support services provided by the University. In addition to signposting students to University services, it provides advice to students on a wide range of topics, from sexual health and alcohol awareness to problems with landlords and legal advice. It is also an advocacy service for students who wish to challenge the University's decisions in terms of academic appeals, or who have found themselves subject to University disciplinary procedures, or who seek support in making a complaint to the University.

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[4] Report on the provision of sport facilities in the three residential campuses of The University of Manchester, August 2006.

25. There may be opportunities for joint working with the SU Advice Centre, for example in the provision of financial advice, which would improve the support services available to students.

Study Abroad Unit

26. The Study Abroad Unit provides support to Manchester students going abroad, and also for Exchange students visiting Manchester.

Chaplaincies

27. Faith support is provided by a range of faith organisations around Manchester, including the Chaplaincy to Higher Education in Manchester, based at St. Peter's House (Oxford Road). The University is represented on the management board of St. Peter's House.

International Society

28. 'The International Society is an independent Educational Charity and has broad objectives relating to the advancement of the education of students in Manchester, and "particularly in international matters". They particularly focus on the social welfare of international students and their families. Over recent years, the Society has provided significant support to the University's Orientation and Welcome Scheme and runs an excellent programme of trips for students. The Charity was established in 1966 with the support of VUM.

29. Today the Society is funded jointly by The University of Manchester, Salford University and MMU. In 2004/05 The International Society had a turnover of c£317k, of which The University of Manchester provided c£180k (through a variety of sources, but predominantly through the International Development Division (IDD) budget). In 2004/05 the other two universities in Manchester provided c£27k of funding (c£17k from MMU and c£10k from Salford). So far in 2005/06, IDD has provided the Society with c£186k.

30. The International Society is a unique organisation that adds significant value to The University of Manchester's strategic objectives in relation to international student recruitment. The Director of International Development is a member of the International Society Council and works with its management team to ensure that their activities add value to the experience of international students studying at The University of Manchester.'[5]

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[5] Review of Support for International Students, 2006

The University of Manchester
Review of Undergraduate Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience
Task Force 8: Student Support Services

Sub-Group 2 Executive Summary

> **Task 2:** *Evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities: recommend strategies for improving their efficacy, and advice as to the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond the University provided student accommodation.*

Sub-Group 2 addressed each of the three aspects of this task in turn.

Question 1: *Evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities*
In order to answer this question the sub-group had first to establish what effective learning communities were within halls of residence and what key characteristics they should exhibit. The group decided on the following two definitions:
- a community of academic staff and students whose personal development was supported by their residential experience;
- a community of students whose academic learning experience was supported by their residential experience.

These two definitions of what an ideal hall learning community should be, can be further refined by understanding the following definition of what a University experience can be, as described by Anthony Smith and Frank Webster in their essay on 'Changing Ideas of the University' featured within 'Universities in the future'.
'The University has become a crucial rite of passage in the development of citizens. It provides a transformative experience in people's lives when identities may be decisively shaped and lasting friendships and associations contracted (Pascarella and Terensini 1991). This is apparent to those who have the good fortune to pass through Universities. Moreover that University experience provides a basis for the cultivation of independence of thought which underpins healthy democracy'.

It would seem a logical supposition that the validity of the provision of a residential experience is dependent upon it being supportive of such a 'transformative experience'.
Our research suggests that at their best University residences enable the development of learning communities by:
- creating a supportive and managed space for students' personal development within a likeminded community;
- helping to reduce barriers to academic success such as financial cost and personal anxiety;
- the provision of IT, social and learning space and opportunities for student community development. What must also be made clear however is that not all residences provide a similar level of support to the learning environment and that not all students appreciate the support they provide. Using the data gathered by the sub group it would be fair to state that:
- The provision of accommodation by the recruiting University is an accepted and expected minimum standard for first year Undergraduate students in both the UK and the world's best quality institutions. We must provide an accommodation guarantee to achieve our recruitment targets
- International undergraduates (over 90% of each year's entry are resident with us) value the supportive nature of University halls more highly than home undergraduates (80% of each year's entry are resident with us);
- The strongest communities are those which exist in traditional, often catered halls. These are often the least popular amongst potential undergraduates during the application stage, if not once they have arrived;
- Building design is at least as important as the pastoral care arrangements/management of residences in the development of learning communities, with social, sporting and learning/library space in combination with IT being characteristics of success;

- The real benefits of a University residential experience are part of the personal development of a student and as such are really only limited to the first year of study;
- The residential experience is a key part of the University 'transformative experience';
- 92% of respondents to our survey of current residents (2300 students) confirmed that the residential halls provided a helpful transition from home to fully independent living.
- 89% of students thought their University residence supported their academic learning experience;
- The University should not be in the 'residences business' for its own sake, but it must be in the student recruitment and educational development business, of which owning and operating residences plays a small but important part.

Question 2: *Recommend strategies for improving their efficacy:*
The following statements of principle and recommendations for improvement are derived from an analysis of the research completed on what is working at Manchester, within the Russell group and amongst the top universities across the world.

Building recommendations
1. Halls of residence need to have identified study areas, be they computer clusters, libraries or study rooms.
2. The development of teaching space in and around halls is to be encouraged.
3. Where possible rooms should be organised on the corridor system with large communal areas to encourage social interaction.
4. All rooms should have high speed broadband internet connections.
5. Study bedrooms should be as large as possible with enhanced sound proofing.
6. Accommodation should be as easily accessible to the academic campus as possible.
7. Sports facilities should be developed in conjunction with halls of residence.
8. Social space should be provided with appropriate catering facilities at the heart of each residence.
9. Residential campus should be investigated for the development of academic buildings.

Community recommendations
1. Pastoral care to be managed professionally as part of the STARS management structure with established minimum operating standards developed through effective staff development. Recognition of the value of their role by their departments would also be helpful.
2. Pastoral structures to involve a maximum of 500 students to enhance the sense of community within those halls and to be further supported by an increase in the number of resident tutors.
3. RAs (Residents' Associations) to be developed through the use of officer training and standardization of constitutions and terms of reference, to include a responsibility for the enhancement of the learning experience. An enhancement of the role through formal University recognition of the value of the student RA chair role would be helpful.
4. Non resident first year undergraduate students to be offered the chance to be part of hall RAs.
5. All students to be offered membership of RAs for the full duration of study and to be encouraged to be involved with key hall events during the year.

Operational recommendations
1. The provision of accommodation as cheaply as possible to be a key strategic aim of the residences, alongside the maintenance of choice of accommodation and styles of living. The residences must provide excellent value for money.
2. Security provision to be regularly reviewed within the residences and details of SLA (Service Level Agreement) provided to all residents.
3. A senior pastoral team member to be part of STARS senior management team and to seek to influence departmental priorities.
4. Priority on allocation to be given to international undergraduates for the duration of their study and also first year home undergraduates but no places retained for home undergraduates within their second and third years unless members of RA committees. The move into the private sector for second years should be regarded as being part of the learning process.
5. Areas suitable for use as teaching space are to be identified within the halls, and open lectures to be invited into the halls during term time.
6. Hall IT provision to be constantly monitored and enhanced and engaged with teaching strategy through use of Hornet and IPTV.

7. Library, theatre, museum and gallery management should be invited to review the residential estate for potential areas of cooperation.

Question 3: *What is the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond the University provided student accommodation?*
This question has already been answered to a degree by the successful use of private sector providers over the past ten years to meet some of the University's accommodation requirements. The operation and building style of private halls is not as conducive to the kinds of experience suggested by our research as being best practice for University halls for first year undergraduates, unless the University has significant control over the experience, and even then the use of small flat style blocks with no ancillary facilities or common or study areas impact negatively upon the first year undergraduate experience.

Recommendations on the encouragement of best practice amongst private providers through direct contractual relationships
1. Relationships need to be long term (3-5 years), ideally using leases to obtain cost benefits, to create the ability to build effective communities and to ensure decent levels of customer service from the private halls operation.
2. The presence of an established and effective pastoral team is key to the successful operation of these private halls.
3. A University presence in the housing market helps keep prices down. The truth of the matter is that if private providers obtain a monopoly then costs will rise and standards will fall, which could adversely impact on student recruitment and the student experience.
4. The true cost of using private providers can be met through the operation of the University owned department but this would be a significant draw on University resources without this cross subsidy. A quarter of our provision is provided through partnerships with the private sector already and any increases to this will need to be carefully costed as part of the departments financial planning. This is not a reason to not progress in this way, but the full costs to the University do need to be understood.
5. The University needs to maintain regular dialogue with the private sector to influence location and design of any new halls.

Approval and Marketing relationships
The University has been using the power of its recommendation to improve the standards found in the accommodation market since 1997. In recognition of the fact that it could not afford to build accommodation to house second and third years, the University in association with MMU set up Manchester Student Homes (MSH), which is a bureau designed to advertise the availability of suitable student housing in the city.
Recommendations to improve the impact of approval and marketing relationships upon best practice
1. The MSH code is currently voluntary and only 10% of properties are inspected. To enhance the power of this code to improve standards further it would be best to ensure that most if not all properties are inspected for adherence to the code
2. 'Hornet light' (University residence IT connections) should be rolled out to all landlords and those who provide it should be supported.
3. The awareness of MSH amongst the student body and the city should be encouraged through a more impactful office location.
4. More work should be done on the feasibility of providing pastoral support to students within private dwellings.

The University of Manchester
Review of Undergraduate Teaching, Learning and the Student Experience
Task Force 8: Student Support Services
Report of Sub-Group 2

"Evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities: recommend strategies for improving their efficacy, and advise as to the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond the University provided student accommodation."

Introduction

1. The remit for the residences strategy task force is to provide answers to three distinct but interrelated questions:

    i.   evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities;
    ii. recommend strategies for improving their efficacy;
    iii. advise as to the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond University provided student accommodation?

2. This report will detail the research undertaken in order to answer these questions and will provide recommendations for the future to be debated as part of the wider review of teaching and learning.

3. The provision of residential accommodation with its focus on enabling the recruitment and teaching of undergraduate students is at the heart of the debate over what the University's core mission is, subject as it is to the constantly shifting balance of institutional focus between teaching and learning and the research agenda. This balance is at the heart of this strategic review.

4. The following pieces of research were conducted in support of this report:

    i.   An online survey of all students in University residence was conducted over a three week period to the 27th of November. 9500 students were contacted and 2300 replied, a response rate of 25% (Appendix 1 Summary Report);

    ii. An online survey of 140 halls pastoral staff was completed during November. 13 responded (Appendix 2 Summary report);

    iii. An analysis of applications, demand, transfers requests and leavers was completed for the University residences, using data from the previous three years (Appendix 3);

    iv. Members of staff from International Student Recruitment and students resident within private halls were interviewed and the review was discussed at three campus student forums (Appendix 4);

    v.   A review of the performance of Manchester Student Homes was completed (Appendix 5);

    vi. A survey of accommodation provision within the Russell group and the Shanghai top twenty five Universities was completed during November (Appendix 6);

    vii. A desk top review of current models of accommodation financing was completed supported by Quayle Munro, financial advisors and using the Savills housing report and the Unite student demand report.

Question 1
Evaluate the efficacy of the University's residential halls and campuses in building effective learning communities.

5. In order to answer this question the sub-group had first to establish what effective learning communities were within halls of residence and what key characteristics they should exhibit. The group decided on the following two definitions:

   • a community of academic staff and students whose personal development was supported by their residential experience;

   • a community of students whose academic learning experience was supported by their residential experience.

6. These two definitions of what an ideal hall learning community can be, can further be refined by understanding the following definition of what a University experience should be, as described by Anthony Smith and Frank Webster in their essay on 'Changing Ideas of the University' featured within 'Universities in the future':

   'The University has become a crucial rite of passage in the development of citizens. It provides a transformative experience in people's lives when identities may be decisively shaped and lasting friendships and associations contracted (Pascarella and Terensini 1991). This is apparent to those who have the good fortune to pass through Universities. Moreover that University experience provides a basis for the cultivation of independence of thought which underpins healthy democracy'.

7. It would seem a logical supposition that the validity of the provision of a residential experience is dependent upon it being supportive of such a 'transformative experience'.

A residential learning community as an opportunity for personal development

8. The development of a community of students who are mutually supportive and who enable each other's growth and development is the goal of the University's halls of residence and especially their pastoral teams. They are supported in this by the over arching sense of collegiality generated by the commonality of purpose of all residents being undergraduates from the same University, who are experiencing things for the first time together. The sub-group identified a list of life skills which were perceived to be desirable outcomes from living within a hall learning community and these were tested through an online survey of all current residents:

   • Tolerance for others and the ability to live in a community guided by 'University' principles.
   • The development of varied friendship groups equipping students to progress from halls into the wider world.
   • Responsibility for themselves and others through membership of residence associations, clubs and societies.
   • Becoming 'streetwise' through the development of an awareness of security, accommodation law, sources of University support and the experience of being away from home, but in a supportive environment created by the pastoral team.
   • Sporting activity and the ability to play competitive and non-competitive sport reduces stress and builds on many life skills including team work and perseverance.

9. The questionnaire had replies from 2300 students and the results seemed to suggest that broadly speaking the hall experience does help with the personal development of its residents:

   • 92% of respondents confirmed that the halls provided a helpful transition from home to fully independent living.
   • 93% suggested that the experience was supportive of students becoming more tolerant of others.
   • 86% believed that halls are vital in the development of friendship groups.

2

- 94% believe that common areas within halls are important to allow students to socialise.

- 70% believe that membership of Residence Associations and Junior Common Rooms encourage the development of leadership skills and teamwork.

- 57% think that welfare support (e.g. a Pastoral Care Team) should be provided within halls (although 30% didn't know what 'welfare' was).

10. The personal development provided by University accommodation is also identified by pastoral staff as enhancing 'lifestyle learning' which includes areas such as social skills, citizenship, awareness of multi culturalism and improved self awareness.

11. These results suggest that students appreciate the provision of accommodation and that their experiences within the first year support and enable their personal development.

A residential experience which supports the academic learning experience

12. The University provides 'study' bedrooms rather than disco or party bedrooms and the part played by University accommodation in supporting students' academic learning experience has always been assumed to be significant. The sub-group identified the following areas where it was felt that residences played a significant part:

- Student Support: the Pastoral care network provides a first level of support to new students in halls and also offers a signposting service to other areas of University support. This aids retention by reducing the number of students leaving the University due to non academic problems and also reduces the burden on central services by dealing with all but the serious issues facing the student residents. The use of University discipline improves standards of behaviour and difficult students can be prevented from impacting on their colleagues' experiences far more quickly than through the use of accommodation law;

- IT provision: all University bedrooms are equipped with a direct high speed broadband link into the University computer service; the student can therefore study as effectively in their room as they can anywhere else on campus, reducing the reliance on library and computer facilities. Wifi for common areas would also help this;

- Computer clusters: form a vital element of support for student study (Owens Park computer cluster had 40,000 logins during October 2007, of which 40% were non resident);

- Study groups: there are subject associations within halls and students' associations and the fact that halls include students on a full range of courses encourages discussion and debate of a cross disciplinary nature;

- Libraries: there is a budget allocation for more traditional halls to spend on books;

- JCR/RA: organise some activities which support learning and cultural appreciation;

- Social space such as kitchens and common rooms: these areas encourage discussion, meetings and student organisation. Bars and television lounges aid relaxation and debate;

- Examination support: revision space is provided in most halls and is supported by the Pastoral team;

- Catering: allows more free time for students to study rather than cook and clean;

- Security: the freedom from worry aids concentration on study;

- Cost: the better value the accommodation the less likely students will need to work long hours in paid work.

13. The results of the student questionnaire seem to confirm the majority of theories about the support that accommodation provides to the undergraduate academic mission:

- 89% of students thought their residence supported their academic learning experience;

- 22% of students have had to make use of support provided by the hall tutors and wardens;

- 97% of students described the provision of IT within their bedroom as being very important to their academic progress;

- 88% agreed with the statement that halls provide a secure environment in which to live.

14. When asked to rate the things that would make the residential experience more supportive of their academic studies the following priorities emerged:

- 42% of respondents identified cheaper accommodation as being very important;

- 28% of respondents identified a halls library/study space as being very important;

- 25% of respondents identified having larger bedrooms as being very important;

- 21% of respondents identified having more social space and quieter rooms as being very important.

15. These findings were also supported by the survey of pastoral care staff that identified library space, IT services, quality social space, joined-up and effective management and a choice of style of accommodation to be key to the hall being supportive.

16. In conclusion the student view is that University halls support the academic experience but that this experience could be improved through a variety of measures.

Sector comparisons and other benchmarks

17. In assessing the performance of the University's accommodation through the use of this year's online survey we are of course limiting ourselves to the opinions of this year's students, who for the most part are only aware of the student experience in Manchester. In an effort to establish a set of broader benchmarks against which to judge University accommodation's support for personal and academic development the sub-group undertook further research.

Comparison with the Top 25 Universities in the world and the Russell group

i. The accommodation office undertook a web site review of the accommodation provision within the Shanghai top 25 .The majority of these institutions are in the USA with a smaller number in Asia and Canada and also London.

ii. The comparisons between Manchester and the other institutions are difficult to make due to the variety of size of institution and latent cultural differences. However most of the top institutions, outside of Asia provide accommodation which is normally:

- organised along a collegiate style, normally into communities of only 300 or so students;

- catered;

- guaranteed accommodation for the first year and often longer;

- provides a connection between student and hall for the duration of the student's presence;

- Is frequently basic, with shared facilities and rooms as a common feature.

iii. The Asian institutions are similar to those in central Europe with very little accommodation being provided by the University and the majority of students studying at their local University and living at home.

iv. The Russell group survey of accommodation reveals a picture broadly similar to our own with most Universities owning and controlling the majority of their accommodation but using the private sector to meet additional demand. Nottingham has the smallest University owned estate with deals in place

with Opal and Unite and Sheffield also have a majority of stock owned but not operated by the private sector.

Accommodation guarantee

i. The provision of accommodation is guaranteed for all Russell group first year undergraduates apart from Kings College London and some Oxford colleges. The reality for most institutions is that they cannot recruit enough students of the requisite quality from their local areas and rely on students travelling from around the country to their campus.

ii. The enablement of this relocation is one of the reasons for the accommodation guarantee due to the short time scale between A level results and terms starting at University.

iii. The University of Manchester provides the accommodation guarantee to all new undergraduates although it also extends this for the full three years for international undergraduate students. This is regarded as 'an essential part of the marketing strategy of the international office' and is replicated only by Cambridge.

iv. Our survey of undergraduates found that only 21% of students did not consider the accommodation guarantee to be important, with 94% of students being aware of it.

Accommodation provision and its impact on retention

i. This is a very difficult subject to analyse due to the variety of conflicting influences upon students who choose to leave their University place. The assumption is that the provision of a supportive residential experience helps retention rates amongst undergraduates especially during the first few months, however hard data is difficult to come by as students will rarely admit the real reason that they are leaving. The University of Manchester is well above the average retention rate across the sector and performs to a similar level to the majority of the Russell group.

ii. Those Universities without their own accommodation provision do tend to fare far worse at retention, however they also tend to be Universities from the less successful end of the spectrum and so frequently have higher drop out rates due to academic reasons.

Accommodation applications and demand for places in University accommodation

i. The demand for University accommodation has remained steady since Unity and saw a significant increase during the last intake with a 10% increase in applications from first year undergraduates to 9315 applications against a total of 8466 actual eventual University entrants. Of these applications 6820 first year students accepted University accommodation or just over 80% of intake. These figures reflect research completed by the Unite group who found that on average 20% of students would prefer/would have to study from home rather than move into private or University accommodation.

ii. The perceived growth in the numbers of students who are studying from home has been more than offset by the growth in international students, returning students and postgraduates. The University of Manchester accommodation is more popular than ever.

Changes in popularity of different accommodation styles

i. The historic change in style of University accommodation provision across the sector has been driven by the commercial risks of operating an accommodation portfolio.

ii. The requirement for University accommodation to be self funding has meant that its key strategic drivers have been to:

- meet market demands to reduce the risk of operating residences;

- minimise costs by building residences requiring minimal staff support either through the provision of catering or cleaning.

iii. It is fair to say that by following these commercially focused drivers the 'point' of providing student accommodation for much of the sector has been lost and indeed if the only driver for providing accommodation is to do so as competitively as possible and to make a profit, then it could be argued that Universities should allow the private sector to fulfil this need as their fixed costs tend to be lower than that faced by the sector.

iv. It is interesting to note therefore that the 2006/7 NUS survey of accommodation costs found that on average private halls were 18% more expensive than institutional halls as a result of longer let lengths and additional costs for fuel and internet access.

v. What this means for the University sector is that they can provide accommodation more cheaply than the private sector and that they can be self funding. However truly to justify their existence they must juggle these strategic imperatives with the requirement to fulfil student demands and expectations and also support the University's academic mission.

The University should not be in the residences business but it should be in the student recruitment and educational development business, of which owning and operating residences play a small but important part.

vi. The variety of drivers for student residential consumers is clearly seen in our own application statistics which show a strong and growing demand for en suite self catered accommodation but also strong demand for accommodation which is:

- close to campus;
- self catered;
- traditional.

vii. In other words, the fact that it is University accommodation, with all that that implies, is enough to over ride the importance of en suite modern accommodation to many potential residents.

viii. The style of accommodation which, despite the University factor, struggles to generate applications is:

- catered non traditional;
- all male traditional;
- far from campus;
- non refurbished (10 years or more);

ix. Using the levels of past demand to predicate a strategy decision would suggest therefore that our best option would be to work to our strengths to ensure our competitiveness and to ensure the **broadest** offering can be maintained. The sale of Hardy farm has removed the last distant residence which means that the chief challenge is to reduce the amount of non refurbished stock available and if possible to remove some catered accommodation.

x. It seems therefore illogical to suggest we try to compete with the private sector to deliver brand new en suite accommodation which does not support the development of learning communities, when we can fill the accommodation that we have. With student numbers growing and with demand from home first year undergraduates remaining firm, and with almost all international undergraduates wanting University accommodation, we should be quite happy for students who are able to organize their own accommodation and want brand new buildings to do so, whilst being supported by us though organizations such as Manchester student homes.

xi. It is important to recognize that the student's choice of University is not down to the perceived quality of accommodation and for those for whom the age of accommodation is vital, the market will provide.

xii. In summary therefore the three key strategic drivers for the development of student accommodation should be that:

- it meets demand and is self funding;
- it provides a choice of accommodation style which should include cheap standard, catered and en suite;
- It supports the development of learning communities through design and associated services.

The quality and impact of pastoral care

i. The pastoral care team has a significant part to play in the development of learning communities within halls and is present in some form or another in almost all accommodation associated with Universities.

ii. There is very little comparative data for the performance and delivery of pastoral care across the sector but what is clear is that, in halls with pro-active wardens and strong and experienced teams of tutors, student discipline and behaviour is better, which helps the development of individuals and also enables study. A further characteristic of these halls is that hall life is fuller and more rewarding intellectually with activities and opportunities focussed upon the residents' association (RA).

iii. We can quite clearly see from applications from returning students, the reports from RAs at campus forums and within the satisfaction statistics from these halls, that halls with a sense of community arising from a strong pastoral presence are more successful in all aspects of creating a learning community.

iv. It seems therefore logical that raising the status of the provision of pastoral care and an enhancement of its influence over the operation of the residences will improve the student experience. This will be further supported by more recognition of the role of the RAs and their activities from the broader University, and a closer involvement of Student Services.

v. The most successful communities are those which are no more than 500 strong, further subdivided into smaller units of around one hundred and which consist of a partnership between students, pastoral teams and the halls operational teams. They are characterised by having social, learning and sporting space in which the community can grow together.

Conclusions

18. In answer to the question posed as to the efficacy of the University residences' ability to build learning communities it is clear that, at their best, University residences enable the development of learning communities by:

- creating a supportive and managed space for students' personal development within a like minded community;
- helping to reduce barriers to academic success such as financial cost and personal anxiety;
- the provision of IT, social and learning space and opportunities for student community development.

19. What must also be made clear however is that not all residences provide a similar level of support to the learning environment and that not all students appreciate the support they provide. Using the data gathered it would be fair to state that:

- The provision of accommodation by the recruiting University is an accepted and expected minimum standard for first year Undergraduate students in both the UK and the World's best quality institutions;
- International undergraduates (over 90% of each year's entry) value the supportive nature of University halls more highly than home undergraduates (80% of each year's entry);

- The strongest communities are those which exist in traditional, often catered, halls, which are often the least popular amongst potential undergraduates during the application stage, if not once they have arrived;

- Building design is at least as important as the pastoral care arrangements/management of residences in the development of learning communities with social, sporting and learning/library space in combination with IT being characteristics of success;

- The real benefits of a University residential experience are part of the personal development of a student and as such are really only limited to the first year of study;

- The residential experience is a key part of the University 'transformative experience';

- If a hall is old, tired and in need of refurbishment then no amount of pastoral care or social space will improve the morale and motivation of the student residents.

Question 2
Recommend strategies for improving their efficacy

20. The following statements of principle and recommendations for improvement are derived from an analysis of the research completed on what is working at Manchester, within the Russell group and amongst the top Universities across the world;

21. The recommendations are divided into three categories of buildings, communities and operational recommendations.

Building recommendations

i. Hall of residence need to have identified study areas be they computer clusters, libraries or study rooms.

ii. The development of teaching space in and around halls is to be encouraged.

iii. Where possible rooms should be organised on the corridor system with large communal areas to encourage social interaction.

iv. All rooms should have high speed broadband internet connections

v. Study bedrooms should be as large as possible with enhanced sound proofing.

vi. Accommodation should be as easily accessible to the academic campus as possible.

vii. Sports facilities should be developed in conjunction with halls of residence.

viii. Social space should be provided with appropriate catering facilities at the heart of each residence.

ix. Residential campus should be investigated for the development of academic buildings.

Community recommendations

i. Pastoral care to be managed professionally as part of the STARS management structure with established minimum operating standards developed through effective staff development. A recognition of the value of their role by their departments would also be helpful.

ii. Pastoral structures to involve a maximum of 500 students to enhance the sense of community within those halls and to be further supported by an increase in the number of resident tutors.

iii. RAs to be developed through the use of officer training and standardisation of constitutions and terms of reference, to include a responsibility for the enhancement of the learning experience. An enhancement of the role through formal University recognition of the value of the student RA chair role would be helpful.

iv. Non resident first year undergraduate students to be offered the chance to be part of hall RAs.

v. All students to be offered membership of Residents' Associations for the full duration of study and to be encouraged to be involved with key hall events during the year.

Operational recommendations

i. The provision of accommodation as cheaply as possible to be a key strategic aim of the residences alongside the maintenance of choice of accommodation and styles of living. The residences must provide excellent value for money.

ii. Security provision to be regularly reviewed within the residences and details of Service Level Agreement (SLA) provided to all residents.

iii. A senior pastoral team to be part of STARS senior management team and to seek to influence departmental priorities.

iv. Priority on allocation to be given to international undergraduates for the duration of their study and also first year home undergraduates but no places retained for home undergraduates within their second and third years unless members of RA committees. The move into the private sector for second years should be regarded as being part of the learning process.

v. Areas suitable for use as teaching space are to be identified within the halls and open lectures to be invited into the halls during term time.

vi. Hall IT provision to be constantly monitored and enhanced and engaged with teaching strategy through use of Hornet and IPTV.

vii. Library, theatre, museum and gallery management should be invited to review the residential estate for potential areas of cooperation.

Question 3

What is the practicality of working with private providers to extend best practice into student accommodation beyond the University provided student accommodation?

22. This question has already been answered to a degree by the successful use of private sector providers for the past ten years to meet some of the University's accommodation requirements. It would be useful however to describe the benefits and pitfalls of this cooperation and to make recommendations as to the shape of future relationships. The University works with the private sector in two distinct ways; through *direct contractual relationships* and through an *approval and marketing relationship*.

Direct contractual relationships

i. The University has been in business with private student accommodation providers for many years, most significantly Opal Estates and to a lesser extent Victoria Hall. In our recent survey just under half of students suggested that as long as the services available were the same they would not mind if a hall was owned by the private sector.

ii. It is true that very few undergraduates choose the private sector in the first year over University accommodation, but for some people this is a far more attractive option due to the lack of institutional feel and perceptions about complete freedom.

iii. The country has seen significant growth in this sector for the past five years with around 130,000 rooms being provided in 'private halls' in the last ten years.

iv. The majority of these providers have traditionally targeted returning undergraduates for their schemes, normally at the expense of the traditional student shared house. The reasons for this targeting are that:

- Returners are normally happier with a longer rental terms than first years due to work and study commitments;

- Returners are normally more streetwise and self reliant and do not require welfare support;

- Fewer returners drop out of University than first years, reducing the risk of empty rooms;

- Returners frequently have already made friendship groups and will often take whole flats as a group reducing friction and dispute.

v.   In addition to these factors customer services and facilities are normally very minimal and private halls are organised into separate flats of between four and eight people who have full responsibility for cleanliness and behaviour within their flats, but who also rarely mix with other flats in the development.

The operation and building style of private halls is not conducive to the kinds of experience suggested as best practice for University halls for first year undergraduates, unless the University has significant control over the experience.

vi. The negative impact of private hall life on the student experience has been highlighted by our recent survey which has four of our private hall suppliers listed in the bottom six for student satisfaction.

vii. The reasons for this low satisfaction are: price and contractual relationships, lack of facilities, lack of pastoral care provision, hall community and IT provision, and it would seem to make sense to explore these barriers to the use of private halls and to try to identify some potential solutions to these problems.

Price and contractual relationship

i.   Private halls are more expensive than University halls due the requirement of their owners to make a profit, but also due to the less competitive borrowing rates these developments can achieve in comparison to Universities.

ii. In cities without a strong University accommodation provision prices have surged over the past few years.

iii. A tendering exercise for a thousand rooms undertaken during November 2007, which was open to all of the private sector, resulted in prices being quoted to us which were between 10% and 20% higher than in our own comparable stock. The private sector is moving to a minimum of a 43 week rental term, which is three weeks longer than our own, and continues to charge for utilities and internet access.

iv. The Manchester market is still undersupplied by private sector student accommodation and there is no need for private halls to reduce prices as they will fill without a direct connection with the University.

v.   This sellers' market has also led to private providers being unwilling to accept unguaranteed nominations or simple referral schemes. This means that, to secure rooms to fill their accommodation promise, institutions must guarantee occupancy through leases or underwritten nomination agreements.

vi. In order to prevent price becoming a disincentive to students coming to the University and to prevent it impacting negatively upon the student experience, the University has to take on room leases as the basis of its short to medium term accommodation requirements.

vii. The ability to secure medium term arrangements also enables the achievement of a discount on the rental level achieved, which can then be used to fund students leaving the University's residence fees (which all Universities cover and which private landlords do not) and also the pastoral team costs. The income from these kinds of deals does not cover the cost of administering the residences but this is cross subsidised by the operation of the rest of the University department.

viii. By leasing the rooms it is also possible for the University to contract with the student, meaning they will be covered by University codes of conduct which helps with behaviour and hall management.

ix. It is also fair to say that the ability of the University to provoke competition amongst different providers encourages best practice and lower prices.

Lack of facilities and IT provision

i. Property development is a tough business and one in which every square foot has to pay back the cost of its construction.

ii. Most private hall developments do not include social space or ancillary facilities such as common rooms, bars and catering facilities within their halls due to the costs of managing and maintaining these spaces.

iii. All private halls will also use the flat rather than the corridor system which will also inhibit the development of a community.

iv. There is very little the University can do about a lack of facilities apart from focusing upon this provision during any tender exercise and in some cases linking up a private hall with an existing University one to encourage sharing of facilities.

v. A longer term relationship with a private provider also allows us to supply University IT connections to each room.

Pastoral care provision

i. On average we provide a resident tutor for every sixty students although this number can be higher according to location. The cost of providing a team of tutors and wardens is in the region of £1 million for the current estate or around £100 per student place.

ii. The recruitment and creation of a pastoral team does take time and in most cases it is not possible to do this in the time duration between the A level results day and the start of term, meaning that commitment to a hall needs to be long term and planned.

iii. To illustrate this in a hall such as Opal Gardens, which has been leased for several years the pastoral team has created an effective community which probably does more than any other in the department. This compares to Manchester student village which was taken on at the last moment and where it was impossible to recruit a pastoral team, leading to an overall student satisfaction figure of only 49%.

Recommendations on the encouragement of best practice amongst private providers through direct contractual relationships

23. Relationships need to be long term (3-5 years) to obtain cost benefits, to create the ability to build effective communities and to ensure decent levels of customer service from the private halls operation.

24. The presence of an established and effective pastoral team is key to the successful operation of these private halls.

25. A University presence in the housing market helps keep prices down. The truth of the matter is that if private providers obtain a monopoly then costs will rise and standards will fall, which could adversely impact on student recruitment and the student experience.

26. The true cost of using private providers can be met through the operation of the University owned department but this would be a significant draw on University resources without this cross subsidy. A quarter of our provision is provided through partnerships with the private sector already and any increases to this will need to be carefully costed as part of the departments financial planning. This

is not a reason not to progress in this way, but the full costs to the University do need to be understood.

27. The University needs to maintain regular dialogue with the private sector to influence location and design of any new halls.

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i. The University has been using the power of its recommendation to improve the standards found in the accommodation market since 1997.

ii. In recognition of the fact that it could not afford to build accommodation to house second and third years, the University in association with MMU set up Manchester Student Homes (MSH), which is a bureau designed to advertise the availability of suitable student housing in the city.

iii. MSH drives standards through its voluntary code of conduct which Landlords must sign up to before being advertised to our students. The code of conduct is a powerful lever to raise standards of maintenance and operation and students may complain using the code in the event of problems which can lead to landlords being removed from the scheme.

iv. MSH also provides guidance to landlords on effective management and will support students with security advice and also provide a tenants' charter which can help in clashes with local residents.

v. MSH also encourages competition which keeps prices down as students are able to search their website for the most competitive deals.

vi. MSH in association with STARS IT have also developed a new 'Hornet light' broadband service which code approved landlords can now sign up to, meaning second and third years can have the same level of IT access as they did from University halls.

Recommendations to improve the impact of approval and marketing relationships upon best practice

28. The MSH code is currently voluntary and only 10% of properties are inspected. To enhance the power of this code to improve standards further it would be best to ensure that most if not all properties are inspected for adherence to the code

29. 'Hornet light' should be rolled out to all landlords and those who provide it should be supported.

30. The awareness of MSH amongst the student body and the city should be encouraged through a more impactful office location.

31. More work should be done on the feasibility of providing pastoral support to students within private dwellings.

Task Force 8 Sub-Group

Question
How well do the current residents feel that they are supported in their academic mission by their accommodation?

The methodology/process of investigation
- On-line Residences Student Satisfaction Survey developed to include specific questions on the learning experience provided in residences.
- Review of top 25 Universities accommodation websites to compare accommodation provision.
- Telephone discussion with Louise Wringe from i-graduate.

The outcomes of the research

Residential Satisfaction Survey

The online residences satisfaction survey received 2300 responses (representing 24% of the residential community). Within this overall figure were 1644 UG students (representing 21% of the residential community).

The purpose of the questionnaire was to assess the effectiveness of procedures, services and facilities and to seek improvements where possible. Questions were designed to evaluate services in key operational areas including application procedures, facilities and services and quality of life in halls. A section was also included to explore student perceptions on life style and learning, the results of which were designed to be included for consideration by the Task Force Sub-group.

Results to key questions:
94% of residents were aware of the accommodation guarantee. 53% of residents confirmed that this guarantee was very important/important to them, 26% fairly and 21% not very or at all.

44% of residents were unconcerned that the accommodation provided was in recommended accommodation rather than that owned/managed by the University. However when questioned about overall satisfaction levels the halls which scored significantly lower than the mean average (88%) were generally the leased halls with scores of:
Student Village: 69%
Wilmslow Park: 65%
Victoria UBS: 49%

Issues in leased halls with low satisfaction levels included; the lack of RA/JCR activities, ability to make friends and the support provided generally, together with issues around value for money and IT services. In leased accommodation, where the accommodation was managed jointly between the University and the provider, scores were similar to other University owned halls.

The key consideration when applying for accommodation was the ability to study in the bedroom, followed by the availability of good social spaces, having self catered accommodation and being located with other students of the University.

17% of students were not very or not at all satisfied with the accommodation allocation process and 50% of the complaints were regarding not being offered accommodation that matched one of their application preferences.

35% of residents didn't know whether welfare support should be provided in halls as they didn't know what this was, although 89% believed that the support provided in residences helped enable their academic learning experience.

93% of residents confirmed that halls of residence provide a useful stepping stone from home to full independence.

The top three requests associated with providing an improved residential experience were cheaper accommodation, additional social space and the provision of a hall library.

The importance of social spaces featured heavily and when questioned 94% of residents agreed that having a range of good social spaces was important in encouraging students to meet informally building on collegiality.

Top 25 Universities

Common aspects of accommodation services within the top 25 International University Residences:
-   For the majority of Universities catering is seen as an integral part of the student experience.
-   There is a propensity for smaller college communities or houses. In a number of Universities the colleges are themed into special interests or offer residential education programmes
-   The provision of IT is available within all accommodation with a small number offering wireless options.
-   Cable TV including University owned channels appears to be a common provision certainly within American Institutions.
-   Social spaces and common areas were provided within residences by all halls.
-   Pastoral support is provided by residential staff who are tasked with providing welfare support in halls.

Comments from i-graduate on initiatives that could be considered to build upon the learning environment in halls:

Universities have yet to invest in interpreting/anticipating student expectations by looking at the needs of certain groupings either at the application/allocation stage or following arrival. Suggested groupings included:
-   Life Experience - Life much more important than work.
-   Job Seekers – study to get a good job.
-   City Slickers - Want to make a lot of money and job security.
-   Greenpeacers - High-life on the work-life balance. Want to change the world.
-   Workaholics/Grabbers – The group that wants it all and wants it now.

Universities should also consider how they could embrace/harness the social network frequently sites used by students as a method of communication and peer support.

The conclusions of the research and any recommendations

-   Investigate the introduction of themed learning activities into residence building on activities. These could be designed to appeal to particular interest groups with the aim of providing activities to enhance personal learning and development.
-   Consider the terminology used to describe the support services within residences to ensure an understanding of what this is and how this is provided by the University.
-   Seek to improve/maximise the social spaces currently available in residences and examine how existing facilities could be shared between halls.
-   Look at introducing a residences networking web forum where residents could link up with residents from other halls. This could encourage residents in larger hall environments to develop their own communities/friendship groups who share similar interests. This network could also develop the customer relationship between residents and the halls management teams.
-   Any additional accommodation should ideally provide self-catered en suite bedrooms. If this is to be leased from the private sector the University should ensure that the accommodation is for students of the University of Manchester only and offers good social spaces as well as bedroom/communal facilities with inclusive internet provision.
-   Continue to develop free-wire services to add additional value to the residential experience.

Learning Communities survey – summary

The following is a summary of views from the 13 respondents to the recent learning communities survey.

1. **How would you define a Learning community?**
   A learning community was defined many ways and may be summed up as a group of people who learn a variety of skills from each other in many different ways. There was recognition that the type of learning was diverse and that such learning should be actively encouraged.

2. **Do you consider learning to take place in halls? If yes, what type of learning, If no, why not?**
   Every respondent, without exception, said yes to the first part. The types of learning included learning how to live with and respect others, academic and life-learning, life skills, a holistic approach to learning, learning to look after themselves and others, developing and enhancing skills for a multi-cultural world, social skills, practical skills related to the management and development of organisations and sports, and academic learning through study and interactions with others in same discipline.

3. **Do you consider it important that halls should be learning communities? If yes, why? If no, why?**
   Everyone responded yes. Why varied from a desire to get value for the additional tuition fees being paid to a comment that student-teacher contact was minimal during the day and that halls were where people genuinely cared about you. It was felt halls should actively support learning and foster cultures of learning. Halls were felt to be a fundamental part of the student experience and for alumni it was where and who they lived with that marked their experience as being good or bad.

4. **What do halls require to be effective learning communities?**
   Suitable building layouts – corridors were favoured with small comfortable spaces for study, libraries/quiet areas and computer clusters that are not dependent on tutors to open/close, and music practice space; community spirit; active management and pastoral teams that support the concept of halls being learning communities and for whom the welfare of students is their main concern; support and engagement from the University so that halls are not seen as being separate from academic life; support from academics.

5. **What prevents halls from being effective learning communities?**
   A variety of responses here from university cutbacks to noise. A strong feeling came through that pastoral teams were becoming overwhelmed in places with the need to deal with practical issues such

as fuses. Flats were not felt to be conducive to creating community. There was a feeling that there was a lack of connection to the university. Poor or slow maintenance, poor cleaning or no cleaning, inadequate long term maintenance, poorly trained staff, staff who are unhelpful or rude were all cited as preventing learning communities to thrive as were anti social behaviour and drinking. Lack of appropriate social spaces and lack of social activities which get people together positively were also cited.

6. **How well do you feel that our existing accommodation supports the development of learning communities?**
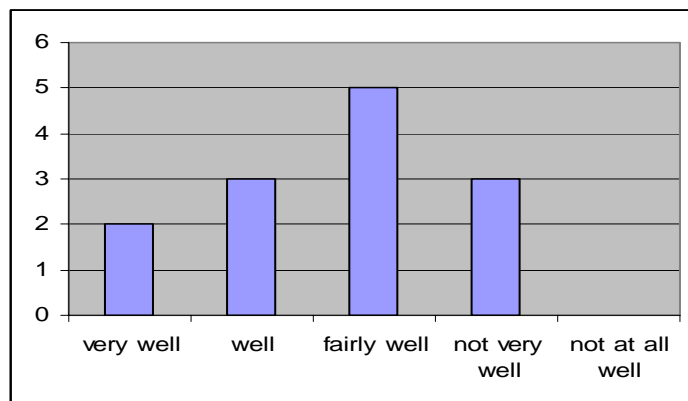
Very well 15%
Well 23%
Fairly well 38%
Very well 23%
Not very well - none

7. **What would you wish to see in an ideal hall of residence?**
Library with wi-fi access; computer clusters with printing facilities; affordable coffee machines; more facilities that were properly maintained and cleaned; a variety of social spaces (some with sofas), class rooms, music practice rooms, bar, gym and other sport facilities; tutors who know the names of their residents; high standards of physical security; friendly, cheerful and approachable, well-trained admin and pastoral staff; an active JCR whose members are willing to make a difference to improve residents' experience in hall; time-tabled and properly financed long-term maintenance; well kept grounds; more informal relaxed meetings between JCRs, pastoral staff and hall management.

Jacquie Wilson
3/12/2007

Task Force 8 Sub-Group

<u>Question</u>
Demand/leaver analysis – what do students want, is it changing and does it differ by type of undergraduate

<u>The methodology/process of investigation</u>
Statistical analysis of accommodation applications received from new students for the years 2000-07 including:
Type of accommodation: catered, self-catered and self-catered en suite
Self-catered en-suite accommodation by hall
Self-catered standard accommodation by hall
Catered accommodation by hall
2007-8 Applications by campus by EU, UK and Non-EU
2007-8 Catered accommodation by hall by EU, UK and Non-EU
2007-8 Self-catered standard accommodation by hall by EU, UK and Non-EU
2007-8 Self-catered en suite accommodation by hall by EU, UK and Non-EU
2004- 7Returning Student Applications by type of accommodation
2004-7 Returning Student Applications by hall
Leaver Analysis 2005-2007

<u>The outcomes of the research</u>

<u>Applications received from new undergraduate students</u>

Application trends demonstrate a significant increase over that last 8 years in the demand for self-catered en suite accommodation against a gradual decline in applications for self catered standard and catered accommodation. The increase is however associated with accommodation provided by the larger en suite residences with applications for the smaller en suite residences attached to catered halls remaining fairly static.

The City campus location attracts the largest percentage of Non-EU students for both standard and en suite accommodation.

Mixed sex catered residence receive just under 1 application per available place, but applications for single sex accommodation are significantly lower and which suggests that the majority of residents are placed in these halls without having selected these within one of their three accommodation application preferences.

<u>Applications received from returning students</u>

The statistics indicate fairly consistent application numbers for catered accommodation and this could be linked to the desire to retain an association with the hall community rather than just the provision of accommodation.

However the highest number of applications received is for accommodation offering self-catered facilities located on the City Campus, where demand exceeds supply.

The statistics demonstrate a decline in applications for en suite accommodation and which is very different to applications trends for 1st year students. This could be attributed to returning students being either less concerned about the absolute necessity for private facilities, preferring lower rents, or that the competition from new private builds offering a higher standard of accommodation has greater appeal.

<u>Early Leaver Analysis</u>

The analysis provided a summary by hall of the number of students who left their accommodation and withdrew from the University. It was difficult to draw any firm conclusions year on year as each year does differ significantly.

However the data does tend to suggest a higher number of early leavers in en suite accommodation provided in flat rather than corridor arrangement. This supports the anecdotal evidence provided by Wardens who cite small flat communities as being more introverted and prone to a greater number of clashes amongst residents, unlike corridors style accommodation where friendship groups tend to be larger and more gregarious.

Residences with shared bathroom facilities do also seem record fewer numbers of leavers and again, anecdotally, this accommodation is seen to promote greater opportunities to socialise and build friendship groups which could in turn assist retention.

The conclusions of the research and any recommendations

- Evaluate the split of accommodation made available for new/returning students to maximise the variance in preferences between student type and standard/en suite self catered accommodation.

- Maximise the number of available bedrooms for 1st year students, whilst meeting the international student guarantee.

- Consideration should be given to increasing the overall number of en suite bedrooms available for UG residents as part of any new accommodation strategy. However this should be in appropriately sized communities.

- Maximise the catered experience by offering all catered halls as mixed sex and thereby increase applications / increase popularity.

Task Force 8 Sub-Group

Question: What is the student experience in Private Halls with University of Manchester Pastoral care like, and does it match the experience in University owned Halls

The methodology/process of investigation
1. Meeting with Staff at Manchester Student Village which led to an indication of willingness to participate in best practise procedures with UoM
2. Email to a random selection of residents in MSV and Wilmslow Park which resulted in only one reply
3. Review of Student Survey responses from UoM students in Private Sector Accommodation results detailed below

The outcomes of the research

<u>Welfare Support</u>
The satisfaction levels for the overall Welfare service are highest where welfare staff live in the in the residence with a link through to a University of Manchester Warden:

-Manchester Student Village - Welfare service 90% satisfaction – two tutors in residence and linked to Grosvenor Place group of Halls Warden……Grosvenor Place Halls has an 83% satisfaction level

-Victoria Hall (HCS) 86% satisfaction - two tutors in residence and linked to Grosvenor Place Warden – 83% satisfaction as above

-Wilmslow Park – Welfare Service 34% satisfaction – no link to a UoM Pastoral Team, no tutors in residence

There is also evidence that a private sector hall which has a link with a UoM Hall where the Pastoral teams are not as pro-active may show the same lower satisfaction levels:

-Victoria Hall (UBS) 25% satisfaction – link to Whitworth Park Warden – satisfaction level 49%

<u>Welfare Support for hall activities</u>
Satisfaction levels for Welfare team supported hall activities show a similar pattern to that given above, in that the level of satisfaction is generally higher where there is a link with a UoM Welfare team, although the contributing factor of RAs and JCR associations also have to be taken into account in the UoM Hall satisfaction figure:

-Manchester Student village – 65% satisfaction, Grosvenor Place Halls – 91%

-Victoria Hall (HCS) 67% - Grosvenor Place Halls – 91%

-Victoria Hall (UBS) – 31% - Whitworth Park 75%

-Wilmslow Park 30% - no link to a UoM Hall

<u>Overall Satisfaction levels:</u>
Resident's overall satisfaction levels decrease in the Private sector – the lowest levels of satisfaction revealed by the Survey is shown in the 3 of the 4 private sector halls we have agreements with:

-Manchester Student village – 66%
-
Wilmslow Park – 61%

-Victoria Hall (Upper Brook St) 30%

With one exception - Victoria Hall (Higher Cambridge Street) - 84%, which is the only private sector hall showing a higher level of satisfaction than the lowest scoring UoM Hall
-    Allen Hall: 80%.

The conclusions of the research and any recommendations

Where we have an implanted University of Manchester Pastoral Care Team satisfaction levels are higher. Private halls need to be twinned with University halls and campus. The disparity of experience between students in University and unsupported private halls is unacceptable and damaging and needs to be avoided through better planning of student recruitment numbers.

Russell Group - Accommodation Guarantee

Guaranteed Accommodation?	International		Home	
	UG	PG	UG	PG
Cardiff University	All years	All years	1st yr	No
The University of Leeds	All years	All years	1st yr	No
The University of Southampton	All years	All years	1st yr	1st yr
The University of Nottingham	All years	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr
University College London	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	No
The University of Liverpool	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	No
The University of Bristol	1st yr	1st yr*	1st year	No
The University of Birmingham	1st yr	1st yr	1st year	No
The University of Warwick	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	No
The University of Glasgow	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr
The University of Sheffield	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	No***
The University of Edinburgh	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr****	No
The Queen's University of Belfast	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr
The University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr	1st yr
King's College London	1st yr	No	No**	No
Imperial College of Science, Technology & Medicine	1st yr	No	1st yr	No
London School of Economics and Political Science	1st yr	No	1st yr	No
The University of Cambridge	3 yrs	No	3 yrs	No
The University of Oxford	No	No	No	No

* Bristol's int Office site says all international students are guaranteed acommodation
but their accommodation office says overseas PG students MAY be guaranteed accommodation
** Kings College Students are guaranteed one year, not necessarily the first
*** Sheffield's O/S PG guarantee includes any students who are resident outside the UK
**** Gurantee excludes those from City of Edinburgh

Task Force 8 Sub-Group

Question
What support is available in finding accommodation for second and third years and how does the support differ from that needed for first years?

The methodology/process of investigation
A report from the Manager of Manchester Student Homes detailing the background and purpose of Manchester Student Homes (MSH).
Property Stats 2007
Web statistics 2007

The outcomes of the research

Founded in 1997 by the then three Universities of Manchester, MSH was set up out of the recognition that over 60% of students are housed in the private accommodation sector and that the Universities were key stakeholders in the provision of care for students within the private sector. In addition there was an understanding of the need to raise standards in the private sector and protect vulnerable students as well as create a market force.

The project is managed by a Policy Committee which is responsible for the overall direction of MSH. The Policy Committee is composed of representatives of each of the Universities and nominated representatives of the Student Unions of each of the parties.

MSH administers a property accreditation scheme or the "MSH Code of Standards" based on housing legislation detailing requirements for the physicality of property and landlords' management standards. Landlords register and voluntarily declare themselves "Code" or "Code Plus" and property details are displayed in a user friendly format to students. Additionally MSH works with regulatory agencies to ensure that legislation is achieved, leading on complementary initiatives offering a full and comprehensive guidance / advice package to registered landlords as well as the opportunity for landlords to actively participate in the development of MSH services.

Both Universities' Student Unions are fully supportive of the role that MSH plays in terms of student welfare and actively contribute to both Policy Committee and participatory campaigns to raise profile and awareness of the services offered.

Importantly all services are free of charge to students and include; access to the web-based accommodation database, contract checking, mediation, a code complaint system, general housing guidance and advice.

Students who choose an MSH registered landlord have recourse of action via the MSH office and can lodge code complaints against a landlord that will be investigated by the MSH Housing Officer. This action often resolves issues expediently to the satisfaction of both parties and acts as an additional level of after care for students and parents of the University.

The pastoral support MSH provide helps students to make the step from living at home or in a University Hall of Residence towards full independence. The ultimate aim is for students to fit into the local community and fully integrate as opposed to being seen as "other" or indeed becoming increasingly isolated from community and therefore becoming more vulnerable in the process.

The conclusions of the research and any recommendations

Despite limited funding MSH currently operates from a relatively strong market position in terms of reputation amongst the student and landlord communities. However, the current office location, although under review currently, does not provide a high profile or ground level visibility. This is detrimental to MSH in that not as many students are aware of MSH services despite sustained marketing campaigns. Students are often lost to private property

management agents who grow their business by enforcing administration fees onto students and have little to no interest in the welfare or pastoral support of their tenants.

A criticism of MSH's service is that they are unable to pre-inspect all properties prior to their registration. Whilst the bureau aims to inspect up to 10% of registered properties either proactively or reactively, they are not resourced to have a thorough pre inspection system and carry a risk of some unscrupulous landlords voluntarily declaring code status and operating their property at a sub-standard level.

Additional funding would go a long way towards securing excellent, high profile office premises encouraging more students to source their private sector accommodation via our scheme and with the added benefit of persuading more landlords to join our code therefore fulfilling our remit to continue to raise standards in the private sector.

Resource issues could also be addressed and the possibility of an additional housing professional in the team would enable a more robust inspection programme and reduce the risk of issues arising from the lack of pre-inspection.

Top 25 University Analysis

Questions		Harvard
Accommodation guarantee - how expansive, which groups of students are included		With minor exceptions, all students spend all four years on Campus. Freshmen are housed in three Freshman Halls.
The number and type of halls provided eg self catered/catered/ensuite/shared		Catered. Students housed in 'Dorms' which are split in to suites of 3 - 4 bedrooms with common room, bathrooms are usually shared between suites although there are some in-suite (sic).
The allocation of students into accommodation; any specific groupings to take into account course, school, lifestyle ethics		First years allocated by Dean of Freshmens Office. Second year by lottery.
The availability of residential welfare support staff, accommodation buddies, learning groups (tribes!), residential associations		There are three Resident Deans (one for each Hall) with responsibility for the academic progress and welfare of Freshmen, supported by 2 senior proctors and several assistant proctors. Monitored and supported by DoFM's Office.
The availability and scope of IT provision and any other technological initiatives		All Dorms have hi-speed access to Harvard network and Internet. Houses have computer labs.
The availability and range of social spaces		The Dorm suites have common rooms, and all the Halls have a mixture of Common Rooms and Study areas with TVs/DVDs, Games areas, etc.
The typical price of accommodation		Rent, Student Services and Board = $12,737
Any partnerships with private sector		With very few exceptions, Students live on campus for all 4 years.
		Stanford
Guarantee		Most students live on campus, 80 residences are available for 10,000 students. Family accommodation available in designated 'village' area which is mostly PG but some UG.
Number and Type		Dorms' with (usually) 2 students to a room. Halls are co-ed although women only floors available.
Catering		The 'Stanford Dining Experience' is considered to be an integral part of the whole university experience. Various meals plans are available to allow some flexibility. All cost $4945.00. There is also a whole range of other catering facilities, including 'sick trays', 'late plates', meals to suit religious requirements and a 'Peanut Sensitive Dining Hall'. You name it, they'll provide it!
Allocation		Freshmen sent preference forms for Halls (NOT specific Dorms) but rooms are assigned by the university, with the aim getting a good balance of interests, subject areas, backgrounds etc. Not allowed to choose roommates or meet beforehand. In subsequent years, allocation made by very complicated draw system which you can enter as pairs or groups. There are 4 cross cultural theme houses which are open to all students and "provide additional educational and social acitivities that explore history and culture of the ethnic goup that is focus of the house" (ie Zapata House: Chicano/Mexican America).
Welfare Support		Overall Dean of Students Office which oversees student welfare and overall quality of life for students at Stanford. Formally recognizes, and consults with, over 600 student organisations. Houses have Deans, and Residential Tutors . Each Hall has a 'Residential Education Programmme" which covers a whole range of activities. The residential experience is as important as the academic experience.
IT		All rooms have phones and IT connection. Other facilities such as Cable TV are available. 'Cardinal Mall, is an on-line shop run by the Residential and Dining services and provides a range of services.
Social Spaces		All houses are within 10 minutes of the main campus facilities. They all have dining halls and communal areas.
Costs		Rents range from $5863 a year to $7124 a year + House dues which range from $50 - $100, plus the meal plan fees which are $4945.00 a year

Private Sector		They currently have an agreement to provide subsidised off-campus acommodation for PGs. However, this is being wound down as a) off-campus accommodation is generally becoming cheaper and b) they are opening a big new PG Hall.
General		They have a 112 room guest building which is available for anyone visiting the campus.
		Berkeley
Guarantee		Approx 6186 beds + family accommodation. All 1st years who apply by 1st May are guaranteed 2 years accommodation. Students transfering the Autumn are also guaranteed accommodation if they apply by June 1st. No specific guarantees for other groups of students.
Number and type		Accommodation consists of single, double and triple rooms in co-ed or single gender environments. All Halls have Dining rooms serving breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner. All rooms are carpeted, furnished with extra long twin beds, dressers, desks, chairs, bookshelves, general lighting, closets, mirrors, and curtains. . Every hall has a recreation area, laundry facilities, vending/ice machines and . All University buildings are designated smoke-free.
Welfare		Each Hall has live-in health workers and live-in hall staff. For example: Foothill accommodates 776 students and 21 staff. There are six themed Halls, (as at Stanford, + Gender Studies, WiSE and Environmental Interests). One substance-free hall (no alcohol, cigarettes or drugs). All provide academic programs, services, and centres. Family accommodation available.
IT		Ethernet network connections in every room allowing access to the internet and campus resources. Residential computing staff will assist with hookup, support, and training. Free basic Cable TV. In-room telephone lines. Residential Telephone Services will set up name for long distance billing, students provide own telephone. Residential Living website.
Social Space		All halls have communal areas.
Price		Range from $10,485 to $15,75 rent and board.
Private sector		Students who choose to live of campus can get help and advice from Cal Rentals, but the University does not own or operate any off-campus accommodation, and does not recommend or endorse any off-campus options.
		Cambridge
Guarantee		Students live in college for the full three years. Most Colleges having Dining Halls but some offer limited self catering. Most Colleges mixed apart from 3 Wowmen only.
Number and Type		29 Colleges, most accommodation is in single study bedrooms. Accommodation ranges from Medieval buildings to modern build.
Welfare		All students have academic supervisors and all Colleges have a variety of welfare support systems. In addition there is a central University Counselling Service.
IT		All colleges have their own web sites and provide computer labs etc. Difficult to gauge what the provision to rooms is. One college mentions computer sockets in every room, but no mention of any HORNET type internet systems.
Social Spaces		The Colleges operate as mini Universities and they all have computer labs, libraries, bars, JCR's/SCR's, student socieities and sports teams etc. Many of the Colleges are set in their grounds, some are on the river, with boathouses.
Costs		Costs vary depending on type of accommodation or College, but the general figures given are as follows: Romm without en-suite £65 - £80 per week for 30 weeks. En-suite between £80 - £100. Kitchenfacility charges £10 - £16 and individual meals £2- £3. Most of the Colleges are in the town centre so little or no transport costs.

Private Sector		All UG and most graduate students are housed by their College, some PGs and students with families may need to find private accommodation and the University Accommodation Office has a website and database to assist them find suitable accommodation.
		MIT
Guarantee		All MIT students are eligible for University accommodation for eight terms. All freshmen are required to live in Halls or with parent/guardian.
Number /types of Halls		Range of Halls, UG can apply for double/triple/quad rooms. Single rooms available for somophores. Some halls all self catering, some have a Dining Room as well.. All Halls have basic facilities such as: Housekeeping in public areas, mail service, local phone service, repairs and maintenance, Desk Service, Laundery facilities, vending machines, TV Lounge, Weight Room, Games Room, Music Room, Computing quick station, Computer connection in every room.
Allocation		Can apply for Halls of their choice and there is a transfer request system for students not happy with their allocation. 11 UG Halls available on Campus. In subsequent years there is a choice of: dormitory, fraternity (29), sorority (6), independent living group (5, 1 female only), or appartment. The latter three types of accommodation are run independently by students and room allocations are made by them.
Welfare		All the Halls have two resident Housemasters (equivalent of our Wardens), usually a married couple, with a team of assistant housemasters. They are some small 'specialist houses' based in the Halls: French, German, Spanish, Russian, Slugfest and Stickmen + the Sorority and fraternity house.
IT		All rooms have wired connection and wireless access.
Social Space		All Halls have a range of social spaces (see above)
Costs		Difficult to generalise, East House has singles for $2766, doubles $2444, House tax $65 per semester, no dining. Simmons House: singles $3319, double $2933, House tax $75 per semester and $325 for dining plan.
Private Sector		Some students live off-campus and the University has a web-site to help them find accommodation. The University has some family accommodation off-campus.
General		Most halls allow fish as pets and quite a few allow cats! Some Halls have smoking rooms. Some Halls are all carpetted and some have nbo carpets on health and safety grounds. MIT has recently opened a Retirement home for MIT staff, close to the campus.
		CalTech
		All undergraduates and 1st year PGs who apply by deadlines. The University also has extensive provision for staff members and their families
		Whole range of accommodation available. Halls of residence, houses (accommodating 65 - 100 students) and apartments, some on-campus and some off. Ugs seem to be able to apply for any type. One Hall and all on-campus houses include full board. Other Hall and off-campus housing have optional board.
		First year room assignment is by 'Rotation'. All freshmen are able to visit the different Houses and then apply with three preferences. Most will get their first or second. The mahority of students will stay in the same same house for 4 years.
		All houses are a mix of 1st to 4th years, and each has a resident advisor. There is a Master of Students Houses who overseees the welfare and running of the student accommodation. Faculty are encouraged to be involved.
		All rooms on-campus have internet access and this is included in the rent for undergraduates.
		All Halls and houses have ccommunal areas and dining areas. All run their own societies and event and activities.

		Board Fees are $1,389.00 per term and are payable by Avery House and on-campus residents. Room Rental on campus ranges from $1,790.00 for a a room in a house or a double or triple room in Avery House, to $2,145.00 for a single suite in Avery House. Off-campus houses are $2,277.00 - Board optional and Marks/Braun Houses are $2,025.00 - Board optional.
		No
		Fish and other tank living creatures are allowed, a proposal to allow small animals in cages (ie Hamsters) is under discussion. Cats aren't allowed.
		Columbia University
		All students are guaranteed accommodation for up to 4 years. 1st years must live on-campus and are accommodated in 5 Halls in one area of the campus. Over 4,000 students live in Campus residence.
		Accommodation is single or double rooms and all floors co-ed with the exception of three single sex floors in one Hall. One Hall is all first years, others are mixed. Students who will be sharing are allowed to contact their roomies beforehand. Rooms are assigned by Accommodation Office and students can apply to transfer after they have moved in. 1st year student must take out a dining plan which costs $2,064.00 per term and consists of a mixture of set meals and points that can be used to buy meals. Other students can choose a dining plan if they want to but it's not compulsory costs range from $402 - $1,643.00 per term.
		Students apply with their preferences and rooms are assigned by Accommodation office. Transfer option available.
		Halls have Dean in Residence and Faculty in Residence. There is an Office of Resident's Programmes to oversee Hall Life. There is an on-line Guide to living which aims to answer any queries, plus there is a 24/7 Hospitality Desk located one of the centrally located Halls. Option of applying for Living Learning Center, two Halls with residents from years who work together in mentoring groups.
		All students have Ethernet jack and hi-speed internet connection, Residential Computing Consultants are available to help. Cable TV is available in most Common areas, Columbia has it's own cable channel. Plus they have the brilliant Laundry View: " **LaundryView** is an Internet application that allows you to monitor the status of washers and dryers in connected laundry rooms through a Web browser. LaundryView was developed in response to requests for greater control over laundry activities. Since many people tend to do their laundry during similar time periods, it results in busy laundry rooms. LaundryView's mission is to help you save time by providing information about the current state of laundry room equipment wherever you have access to a browser or e-mail messages"
		In the Halls of Residence there are communal lounges on all floors, plus additional lounges, tv rooms, music rooms etc,
		First year Students pay $5,801.00 per year + Dining Plan fees @ $2,064 per term. Seniors pay between $6,462.-- and $7,184.00.
		Princeton
		Accommodation guaranteed for all 4 years in six residential colleges.
		Each college is made up of a cluster of dormitories and social areas and is catered. Choice of A Graduate College and unfurnished appartments are available for graduates.
		Students apply for their College of choice.
		Each College has a Faculty Master, Dean, Director of Studies, Director of Student Life, Resident College Advisors, Resident Graduate Students and Dormitory Assistants.
		All students have internet access, cable, and phones. Some Colleges have wireless connections. Each College has a Residential Computing Consultant to help with any problems.

	Each College has a range of facilities, including dining halls, common rooms, academic spaces and arts and entertainment resources.
	Room prices: $5,980.00 + College Fee $595.00. Choice of meal plans: $4,600.00/$4,800.00/$5,000.00
	Web site to help students looking for off-campus accommodation.
	Chicago
Accommodation	10 Buildings split into 38 Houses of between 40 - 100 students.
Type	Catered.
Range	Each building is different, offering a range of accommodation
Admission	Students apply for Halls.
Welfare	Every Hall has a Resident Head (or couple) plus Assistant Resident Head. Most Halls are mixed freshers/seniors.
IT	All halls have Computing Labs, and all students have hi-speed ethernet connection and phones. CHOPIN is the online infrastructure for the Residences and can be used log computing or building concerns, update personal info, etc.
Social Space	Wide range of buildings, some off campus, including a former luxury hotel complete with pool and ballroom.
Costs	Room rates: First years: $6,273.00, others: $5712.00 - $7,617.00. Dining Plans: $2,289.00/$3,297.00/$4.866.00
	Oxford
	39 independent Colleges + 7 Private Halls, Students remain with one hall for the whole of their time at University.
	Catered
	Colleges are run and mini Universities with pastoral staff available in the Colleges
	All Colleges have good IT facilities
	Colleges provide libraries, bars, sports and social facilities
	Costs at Brasenose College (about average): Accommodation £3,00 for 27 weeks, meals £1,300
	Yale University
Guarantee	All Students full accommodation
	12 Residental Colleges, catered
	Allocation of rooms is by University with the aim of reflecting the wider university mix within the Colleges
	Dean and Master live in each Collge and oversee academic and wellbeing. Tutoring programmes and counselling available
	All students have internet connection.
	Each College has a Courtyard used for outdoor games, barbecues, etc, Gyms, Libraries, 24 hr Computer clusters. Also Colleges have one distinctive feature such as Pottery Studio or Printworks.
	Meal Plans are $2,380. Couldn't find Hall costs.
	No
	Cornell University

		All freshmen, somophores abd transfer students guaranteed accomodation + around 20% graduates
		Students buy meal plans to use at campus catering outlets
		Halls are assigned by the University. There are three themed Halls which students can apply for. Rooms are singles, doubles or triples.
		All students have internet access, Cornell also have Laundry View.
		All Halls have communal areas.
		UG pay $7,560.00, singel/ $6,680.00 double/ $6140.00 triple. PG costs vary depending on the type of accommodation
		Database for students looking for off-campus accommodation (mostly the graduates).
		California LA
		3 years guaranteed if application deadlines met.
		Six Colleges, each with their own identity.
		When applying, the students list the six colleges in order of preference.
		Usual IT provision, plus a interactiive web site for parents so they can keep in touch.
		Each college has a Provost, Academic Dean, Dean of Students Affairs, Dean of Residential Life.
		Each College has it's own communal rooms.
		Costs: $9,656,00 single/$8,865.00 double/$8,106.00. triples
		Pennsylvania
		Eleven UG residences, with distinct identities
		Catered, usual range of rooms
		Each Hall has it's own themed programme, some Halls require students to submit an essay wioth their application.
		Good IT provision. Have a facilitiy to allow prospective students to email exisiting students, plus page for parents,
		Each College has it's own team of Deans etc.
		Couldn't find fees
		Website for off-campus rentals.
		Wisconsin
		All students
		Residence Halls divided into Houses, plus appartment complex for graduates, staff and families. 6 special interest houses.
		Students list all the Halls in order of preference. Can ask to share with a friend.
		Room costs range from $4,871.00 to $6,253.00 depending on the room. Students can take out a Housing Food Account to pay for their meals. They can put in as much as they want.
		Usual IT facilities
		California SF

		All students eligible for up to 5 years accommodation
		Three housing complexes offering 1 - 3 bed apartments. Can ask for specific roommate. Students may live off-campus.
		Students apply giving they proposed move-in date, the university then let them know what will be available.
		Most rooms have hi-speed internet connections some don't.
		Prices start at $406.00 per month for shared double room - up to $2,679.00 for a 3 bed appartment. Student can lease an appartment.
		Website available for off-campus housing.
		John Hopkins
		All students
		7 Catered Halls of residence, + apartment complex with 1/2/3 & 4 bed appartments for students in Art and Design or Engineering.
		Students apply for their Hall of choice.
		All Halls have usual IT provision
		Halls have their own Games rooms, exercise rooms, computer clusters and Dining Halls.
		The Halls run special interest extra-curricular prgrammes.
		Cheapest Hall rooms are $5,142,00 (triple room) , most expensive $8,152.00 (single). Appartments start at $7,892.00. Meal Plans start at $1,320.00 up to $4,526.oo
		Tokyo
		Based on information for International students
		They have 4 halls which take international students. Two of them offer accommodation for the full 4 years, the other 2 for just 2 years. One is male only. 4,200 yen - 5,900 yen single occupancy. They seem to have very little accommodation for students, suggested options are Public Housing, Private rentals, or Company Housing (Companies own housing for staff and will sometimes rent to oversaeas students.)
		Michigan Ann Arbour
		All students who meet application deadlines. Not required to live on campus but most do.
		15 Halls of Residence with 9,618 places available for UG and PG students. 10 dining halls, Students take out meal plans
		Students list Halls in order of preference. There are several special interest Halls.
		Usual IT provision
		All Halls have welfare staff
		Communal spaces available
		Wide range of prices depending on room. Cheapest is a Qud room @ $6,750.00 (Fall/Winter term) to $10,110,00 for a deluxe single (Fall/Winter term).
		Kyoto
		Information for International Students

		University accommmodation for very limited. There are three international houses which are open to new students and available for one year only. Students then usually move into public or private accommodation.
		Imperial College, London
		All first year students who adhere to application deadlines and haven't been a UG student elsewhere in UK
		Halls of residence with single study rooms (some double and a few triple), shared bathrooms. All London accommodation is self catered. Students can also apply for the Intercollegiate Halls of the University of London.
		Students list preferences
		Most rooms have internet access and telephones
		Halls of residence with single study rooms, shared bathrooms. All London accommodation is self catered.
		All Halls have a team of wardens, assistant wardens and sub wardens.
		Wide range of Halls with differing facilities
		Cheapest is £4,455.36 for a shared room. Most expensive £6,086.79
		Ducane Housing Association provide housing for PGs.
		Toronto
		All 1st year students who adhere to admission deadlines
		Halls of residence spread over three campuses. Catered and self-catered available. Privately owned Halls also available off-campus,
		Students list prefences
		Usual IT provision
		Halls have team of Advisors, who live in.
		Costs (in Euros) self-catered 2,605 - 4,340m catered 5,262 - 8,240
		Seems to be more like the British style than American.
		University College London
		First year, full time students who apply within deadlines.
		Halls of residence or students houses are available. Students may also apply for the Intercollegiate Halls of Residence of the University of London. The Halls are catered.
		Students list preferences
		Rooms have computer data point.
		Halls have music rooms, computer clusters, laundry facilities, libraries and TV rooms. Rooms on Houses have computer data point and shared lounges with TVs,
		Costs: Weekly rates for Halls are from £97.79 to £139.37, Houses: £65.94 - £166.32.