

Request Reference: 3255

FOI Request dated 30/09/2024 -

1. Safety Policies in Student Accommodation

Please provide details of the policies your university has in place to prevent safety issues within student accommodation. Specifically, I am interested in policies addressing the following areas:

- a. Criminal attacks and property damage*
- b. Fire prevention and escape procedures*
- c. Maintenance work (e.g., fire doors and other important safety infrastructure)*

Where are these policies accessible to students? If they are not available, please explain why.

2. Policies for Resolving Safety Issues

Please provide details of the university's policies for responding to reported safety concerns in student accommodation, covering:

- a. Criminal attacks and property damage*
- b. Fire prevention and escape procedures*
- c. Maintenance issues (e.g., fire doors and safety infrastructure)*

Again, where are these policies available to students? If not available, please explain why.

3. Accommodation Complaints

How many complaints regarding university accommodation have been received since 1st September 2020? This should include, but is not limited to, complaints about maintenance, cleaning, and safety concerns.

4. Accommodation Complaints Process

What is the university's official process for addressing complaints related to accommodation building concerns? What steps have been taken to ensure this process is easily accessible to students?

5. Policy on Student Safety Concerns

Please detail the university's policy on addressing student safety concerns within accommodation buildings:

- a. When the university has actual knowledge of a safety concern*
- b. When the university has constructive knowledge of a safety concern (i.e., situations where the university ought to know about the concern with due diligence)*

6. Supporting Students Raising Safety Concerns

What steps does the university take to ensure the safety and support of students who raise concerns about their physical safety within accommodation?

Please provide specific examples or an excerpt from your policies detailing how this process is implemented. If no such policy exists, please explain why.

7. Repeated Safety Concerns

If a student raises repeated concerns about the same safety issue (i.e., the issue remains unresolved), how would your response differ from the general support provided in question 6? For clarity, I have included an example scenario below, which may help when formulating responses:

Example Scenario:

Accommodation Building A is broken into by a criminal. The criminal vandalises the property at 3:00 am and gains entry to a student flat, damaging the front door beyond repair. The door is later fixed but poorly. A week later, the handle falls off during normal use, trapping the students inside. Thankfully, no fire occurs.

Two weeks later, another act of criminal damage occurs, and two months later, the flat is vandalised again.

8. How would the university seek to prevent such attacks from occurring in the first place?

(This may align with your response to Question 1)

9. How would the university respond once notified of the situation?

(This may align with your response to Question 2)

10. How would the university support the physical and mental wellbeing of affected students?

(This may align with your response to Question 6)

11. How many student accommodation buildings do you own, and how many do you provide in partnership with another company?

12. In total, how many students reside in the accommodation buildings in question 11?

Response

Please note some policies in relation to this request can be found on our website. It has been determined that this information is exempt on the basis that s21 of the Act applies – Information Reasonably Accessible by Other Means. As this exemption is absolute there is no requirement for me to conduct a public interest test, however in order to provide assistance I provide the following link - [Accommodation | University of Hull](#).

1. The University provides access to relevant policies, procedures, rules, handbooks, terms and conditions and codes of conduct to students via the Student IT portal. Documents that particularly relate to your enquiry include; Student Living Handbook, Accommodation Misconduct Procedure, Accommodation Complaints (links to Student complaints web page), Accommodation Rules, Code of Student Conduct, Courtyard/Westfield/Taylor Court documents, and Licence to Occupy Terms and Conditions (all of which fall within Accommodation Services' remit). Please also see the above link.

2. The Accommodation Complaints link (links to Student complaints web page) is made available to students via the within the Student IT Portal. Please also see the above link.

Accommodation Services follows the University guidelines for complaints. UPP has its own complaints procedure, however where UPP related complaints are received by Accommodation Services, university complaint procedures are adhered to.

3.	
AY 20/21	23 complaints
AY21/22	24 complaints*
AY22/23	28 complaints
AY23/24	23 complaints
AY24/25	7 complaints (as at 071024)

Note: the above includes informal and formal complaints that have required some level of investigation by Accommodation Services. Day to day student feedback, concerning maintenance, cleaning, H&S and / or any other accommodation matters, is not recorded. Any student feedback managed directly by the operational teams at the residences is not recorded by Accommodation Services.

*During AY21/22 there was a high level of student feedback concerning heating failures at Westfield Court which was dealt with as one complaint (which is included in the AY21/22 complaints number above).

4. The Accommodation Complaints link (links to Student complaints web page) is made available to students via the within the Student IT Portal.

Where students contact Accommodation Services; Accommodation Services will liaise with the operational teams at the residences (along with other university colleagues, such as Estates, as appropriate) to reach an acceptable resolution for all parties involved.

Both the Courtyard and Westfield Court (which includes Taylor Court) operate 24-hour x 7 days week reception desks for giving students the opportunity to report and discuss their concerns directly with the operational team responsible.

UPP provide access to their 'home at halls' which is another facility for WC & TC students to raise accommodation building concerns.

5. The Wellbeing & Inclusion section of the Student IT Portal includes multiple support resources that students can access should they have concerns for the safety of themselves and others. These resources also include a 'Report a Concern' facility that is made available to students via the Student IT Portal too.

Where students contact Accommodation Services; students are signposted to appropriate Student Support colleagues. If the concerns relate to a 'dispute amongst flat mates', Accommodation Services will assist as far as possible, signposting students to online tools etc to assist the student(s) in resolving the matter amongst themselves, signposting to Student Services as necessary.

6. The Student Complaints section of the Student IT Portal includes details of the steps that the university take to ensure the safety and support of students who raise concerns about their physical safety within accommodation. Staff can raise a Cause for Concern', with or without the student(s) consent, should they believe that the student(s) physical wellbeing is at risk.

7. The Student Complaints section of the Student IT Portal includes details of the steps that a student can take to escalate a concern that they feel has not been addressed effectively. Concerns are dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

8. Exempt s.31(1)(a): Prejudice to prevention or detection of crime please see below*.

9. Exempt s.31(1)(a): Prejudice to prevention or detection of crime please see below*.

10. The Wellbeing & Inclusion section of the Student IT Portal includes multiple support resources that students can access should they have concerns for the safety of themselves and others. These resources also include a 'Report a Concern' facility that is made available to students via the Student IT Portal too.

These resources are inclusive of a 24/7 Helpline/Webchat for Wellbeing support. The opportunity to access 6 sessions of counselling (per student per problem) which can be self-directed or through a University Adviser and a 'Report a Concern' facility. The university wellbeing and site teams work closely together to understand matters arising and concerns to ensure a proactive approach is taken to offer students affected by an incident.

Staff and the public may raise a concern regarding a student in order to contact our team. They may find this form via the university website. Students may also raise a concern for themselves, however we encourage students to complete a "pathway to support form" which is on Hubble/the portal. In the form they may highlight any physical or mental health concerns they have. We aim to respond to their form within 3 days to either book an appointment for further exploration of their needs or send supporting information to answer their query. There are multiple outcomes in terms of support for physical and mental health issues, hence they are offered on a needs led basis. Students may also complete a student support questionnaire in which they are informing the university of a disability and requesting reasonable adjustments for their studies. This is in line with the Equality act. A member of the student wellbeing attends the weekly campus community meetings in which any campus related issues are discussed; to contribute or offer advice. The conduct and complaints team are also invited to our weekly student at risk meeting. All students have access to the student assistance programme which is a 24 hour helpline with trained counsellors.

11. There are a total of 30 student accommodation buildings, of which 21 are operated in partnership with another company.

There are

University owned (562 rooms)

- 9 residential buildings, plus reception area, at the Courtyard;
- for AY24/25; 3-buildings are closed for student use.

Partnered (1750 rooms)

- 12 residential buildings at Taylor Court
- 9 residential buildings at Westfield Court (one of which is sub-divided into 4 'blocks')

12. It is not possible to provide the requested data as the number of students who reside within the accommodation buildings varies on a very regular basis. The occupancy levels of the buildings are driven by customer requirements throughout the year.

There are 2312 rooms on campus of which 2095 are available for student lets (as at 071024)

As at 071014 there are 1753 students in residence

- 325 Courtyard
- 224 Taylor Court
- 1204 Westfield Court

*** Reasons for Exemptions - 31(1)(a) of the FOIA. Law Enforcement:**

Section 1 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) places two duties on public authorities. Unless exemptions apply, the first duty at Section 1(1)(a) is to confirm or deny whether the information specified in a request is held. The second duty at Section 1(1)(b) is to disclose information that has been confirmed as being held. Where exemptions are relied upon Section 17 of FOIA requires that we provide the applicant with a notice which: a) states that fact b) specifies the exemption(s) in question and c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies.

It is our opinion that release of some of the information requested relating to the University's methods of 'preventing attack' and related 'response actions' would put the University at significant and real risk of crime. Therefore, applying Section 31(1)(a) of the FOIA to this part of your request.

The requested information relating to the University's attack prevention and emergency responses would be likely, in combination with other information released pursuant to this request, to prejudice the prevention or detection of a crime. Release of any information under the Act represents a disclosure to the world at large; therefore, we must consider the likely impact of information about the University being made publicly available.

As with other higher education institutions, the security of living individuals who use our premises; our buildings and assets; research, information, equipment and intellectual property is important to the University. Maintaining the security of our premises and its contents is a significant challenge, and ensuring the appropriate level of security is in place is a major factor contributing towards overall security.

If we were to disclose the requested information, a motivated individual or group could use this information to target any potential vulnerabilities, exposing the University's premises and its contents to various types of unlawful criminal activity such as, including but not limited to: trespassing, espionage, burglary, kidnap, robbery, theft, fraud, sabotage, arson and consequently prejudicing the prevention of criminal activity.

Having determined that disclosure of this information would expose the University to a real and significant risk of crime, application of the s.31(1) exemption also requires us to consider the public interest in withholding or disclosing this information.

The factors in favour of disclosure would include:

- Increasing public understanding of the types of security measures in place at the University.

Factors in favour of withholding the information are largely laid out in the explanation for the use of the exemption above but would include:

- Protecting the ability of public authorities to protect valuable public assets acquired with public funds.

- There is a substantial public interest in protecting society from the impact of crime and not facilitating any steps which are likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of a crime.
- There is substantial public interest in not jeopardising the University's security of the premises or living individuals.

After consideration of the above we believe that the public interest lies in maintaining the exemption and therefore not releasing those referenced as exempt.