UNION OF STUDENTS IN IRELAND (USI)

Student Housing Submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness
FOREWORD

There is no doubt that the accommodation issue has affected all areas of society. The lack of available accommodation has forced students, professionals and the unemployed to compete for the same space.

In some cases people have felt the pinch in the form of increased cost. Some however have lost their homes as a result of these price increases and others have been forced to leave college or study elsewhere.

This situation has forced our most vulnerable to live on the streets, our students out of their classrooms and those in work to lose most of their pay to rent increasingly poor quality accommodation.

As a society we can identify the reasons for such a situation. We must accept that if we do not act to mitigate those reasons we become a part of the problem ourselves. Any attempt to solve this problem will only be successful if we include all of those affected by it. It is also important for us to avoid the typical Irish practice of providing solutions that are really equate to pushing the problem down the line.

The recommendations in our submission keep the above in mind. The provision of innovative, cost effective and actionable solutions to the issue of student accommodation present real opportunities for all areas. Our proposals seek to provide alleviation in the short medium and long-term.

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) is committed to supporting the provision of quality, affordable and adequate housing for all and is willing to work with any and all groups to allow that.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Student purpose-built accommodation as a housing issue was predicted in 2007 by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI) which paved the way for a detailed report titled Students in the Private Rental Sector: What Are The Issues? Since this report was published in 2009, there have been no long-term solutions put in place to deter the current crisis, or prevent the crisis from worsening.

The Irish economy has shown signs of recovery with the rate of unemployment falling at its lowest level in over 5 years. Student housing (lack of purpose built on-campus accommodation and private sector rent price increase and lack of rental properties) continues to fuel a dropout culture in third level education yet education is widely recognised as a key factor in social and economic wellbeing in Ireland. The Higher Education Authority (HEA) predicts that there will be an increase from 167,991 students in Full Time Education (FTEs) in 2014 to 192,886 FTEs in 2024 indicating the strong demand for accommodation will be increasing within a decade. Students are sophisticated partners in higher education with high standards from their experience in Irish higher education including high-quality, affordable, sustainable and inclusive available housing – standards that mirror those set by Construction 2020.

By providing alternative housing to students, or purpose-built on-campus accommodation, we will relieve the rental market of the burden placed on it and prevent overcrowding and competition among those who are homelessness, seeking social housing or families.

The current number of bed spaces suitable for student accommodation is estimated to be 31,296. With the current situation problems are arising for students in the private rental sector such as: increasing rents, exit of low-income student tenants, overcrowding and homelessness, state exposure to rising private rents, taking leases beyond capacity, not receiving deposits, and affordable, long-term tenancy (Housing Agency, 2014). In the housing market, students are competing with those who can pay higher rents. This gives rise to homelessness, overcrowding and health and safety risks with a wider impact on labour mobility and having a negative consequence on the functioning of the economy and society where purpose built accommodation can free up more housing for others in society.

Case studies collected here from University College Cork, Trinity College Dublin and NUI Galway show that accommodation services are increasingly overwhelmed with issues from students seeking accommodation in relation to: rent increases, lack of available and affordable accommodation and tenants rights. See Appendix I for case studies of students from Dublin City University.

This submission discusses the work of the DUWO (a Dutch student-housing corporation set up after the Second World War to assist with a huge lack of student accommodation in the Netherlands) and the establishment of an Irish Student Housing Trust. This would act as a long-term comprehensive solution to the accommodation problem, which is adaptable, and student focused. It must be noted that this ambitious request will not occur overnight, but should be considered by the Government as an extensive long-term goal by 2027 but must begin immediately.

The recommendations can be found on the following pages and outline the key tasks to be undertaken to begin tackling the issue of student housing.

“I’m in receipt of Special Maintenance grant (€657/month) from SUSI and getting literally €0 from my parents - it is extremely difficult to find accommodation that I can actually afford. I live in Donegal so commuting is not an option. My family lives here, and I am staying here for the summer to avoid rent costs in Dublin

- G. Romhanyi (August, 2015) DCU (Dublin City University)"
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Minister for Housing with the Committee on Housing and Homelessness to create a Student Housing Strategy in consultation with the USI that sets out long-term solutions, goals and timelines. This should be similar to the Social Housing Strategy and Homeless Strategy.

2. To provide funding €90,000 to hire a Student Housing Officer that will work with the USI and liaise with relevant stakeholders to fulfil certain tasks such as:
   a. Help students find full-term accommodation;
   b. Operate a search for property database;
   c. Conduct research on student housing across Ireland;
   d. Investigate alternatives for student housing;
   e. Operate an online find a tenant service through homes.usi.ie;
   f. Operate a student focussed find a roommate database through homes.usi.ie;
   g. Operate an online digs database through homes.usi.ie;
   h. Improve and operate dispute resolution procedures for students;
   i. Liaise with authorised housing authorities;
   j. Advise on the Student Housing Strategy;
   k. Begin developing and planning of an Irish Student Housing Trust.

3. Minister for Housing with the Committee on Housing and Homelessness to create a Student Housing Strategy in consultation with the USI to facilitate and support the creation of an Irish Student Union Housing Trust that will act as a corporation set up by the USI to tackle the student accommodation crisis in order to alleviate the pressure from the private rental market.

4. Investigate the feasibility and provide for the creation of a capital grant specifically for HEI’s planning, development and construction of on-campus student accommodation.

5. To ensure that NAMA recognises the student housing issue as a social issue and to be recognised as a social housing issue to assist with development and planning to meet demand.

6. Consideration to be given to tax measures to develop on-campus accommodation for HEIs.

7. Engage in meaningful consultation with NAMA regarding the availability of suitable properties and land that could be used for student accommodation by HEIs or HEIs working on joint projects.

8. Encourage and facilitate the construction of multi-purpose buildings on campus. i.e. Academic, commercial and residential existing in the same building.

9. Future developments should adhere to the recommendations for enabled access for students with disabilities.

10. That all actions coming out of the Committee for Housing and Homelessness focus on the provision of quality, affordable accommodation in a timely manner and to avoid prioritising one at the expense of the others.

11. To develop a coherent programme of conditional supply-side supports to increase availability of affordable rental housing.

12. Introduce a system of rent regulation to provide greater certainty for student tenants and landlords through a mechanism for disciplined market-sensitive rent adjustment.
13. Amend part 3 of the Residential Tenancies Act 2004 to include a provision that allows for students’ unions or other representative bodies to have legal standing to challenge on behalf of their membership the introduction of new rents in purpose built student accommodation centres, where those rents are raised outside of term time.

14. Amend the equal status act to include discrimination relating to students in the provision of accommodation as one of the grounds.
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE USI (USI) AND INVOLVEMENT IN STUDENT HOUSING AND HOUSING CRISIS

Student purpose-built accommodation as a housing issue was predicted in 2007 by the USI which paved the way for a detailed report titled Students in the Private Rental Sector: What Are The Issues? Since this report was published in 2009, there have been no long-term solutions put in place to deter the current crisis, or prevent the crisis from worsening.

The crux of the issue is the lack of purpose-built accommodation where students are forced to commute or seek poor quality accommodation. To add, rising rent prices in Ireland’s cities (Dublin, Galway, Cork, Waterford and Limerick) as well as commuter belt towns such as Kildare have pushed students out of higher-level education.

The USI is the national representative body for third-level students’ unions in Ireland. USI is the sole national representative body for students in Ireland. Founded in 1959, USI now represents more than 354,000 students in over forty colleges across the island of Ireland. The goal of the USI is to work for the rights of students and a fair and equal third level education system in Ireland. USI has campaigned on the issue of student accommodation since the 1970s and works with the PRTB, Threshold and other organisations on the issue. In August 2014, the USI launched homes.usi.ie as an online service that hosts accommodation advertising ‘digs’ to students all over Ireland as a short-term immediate proactive solution to the student accommodation crisis. In August 2015, there were 400 homes live on homes.usi.ie at any given time. From this, USI began collecting case studies to highlight the issue [see Appendix I].

"It has been hard to find accommodation near my college. Another problem is that is it so expensive to find anything reasonable. I found one house but by the time I got back to the landlord the room was taken"

- D. Bridges (August, 2015)
DCU (Dublin City University)

2. OVERVIEW

2.1 The Irish Context: Economy, Homelessness and Higher Education

The Irish economy has shown signs of recovery with the rate of unemployment falling at its lowest level in over 5 years, GDP grew by almost 5% in 2014 and was expected to grow by 4% in 2015. However, economic competitiveness will be undermined by shortage of accommodation and housing for students with students preferring to emigrate or drop-out (Housing Agency, 2015).

There are 5,811 homeless people as of February 2016 with 3,930 of those being adults (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2016). To add, there were 5,241 people in emergency accommodation in December 2015 – 3,915 in Dublin, and 1,326 throughout the rest of the country. Information from the Peter McVerry Trust finds that there are over 600 young people (aged 18-24) in homelessness nationally today. Peter McVerry Trust provides accommodation primarily to young people under the age of 35, many of whom will be in further education or third level. The issue of homelessness is also a student issue, and should be acknowledged as such. Focus Ireland found that a large volume of young people who become homeless indicated that contact with services did not occur until long after they had left home for the first time (Mayock, Parker, & Murphy, 2014) similar to many students when leaving home and entering third-level education.

Student housing (lack of purpose built on-campus accommodation and private sector rent price increase and lack of rental properties) continues to fuel a dropout culture in third level education. Education is widely recognised as a key factor in social and economic wellbeing in Ireland. Higher education funding per student fell 27% between 2006 and 2013 seeing less supports for students, a decrease in retention rates, and students finding it difficult to attend higher-level education due to the increase in rent, and shortage of accommodation (Goldrick-Kelly, 2015). During the Celtic Tiger, the cost of living increased rapidly with inflation being fuelled by the boom. The knock-on effects...
of this have been felt by students today as accommodation has become more expensive and more difficult to obtain (Harmon & Foubert, 2009) [see Section 4 for Case Study research from University College Cork].

2.2 Student Population Nationally and Globally

The population of the Irish State is at almost 4.6 million (which is the highest in 150 years). To date, the population has increased by 30% in the last 20 years and is predicted to continue to grow to 5.2 million by 2031 (Housing Agency, 2015). The Higher Education Authority (HEA) predicts that there will be an increase from 167,991 students in Full Time Education (FTEs) in 2014 to 192,886 FTEs in 2024.

There is now a strong demand due to an active rise in student numbers in Ireland and internationally. This is a result of student mobility increasing as global tertiary enrolments rose from 98 million to around 165 million in 2011 and are expected to reach over 263 million by 2025 globally (Jones Lang LaSalle, 2012). With the population rising and the student population rising with it, there is no plan or strategy in place to deal with students as a demographic. This lack of availability of housing stems from a lack of construction activity while Ireland’s population has been increasing (Daft.ie, 2015).

2.3 Construction 2020 and Social Housing Strategy

The Government’s Construction 2020 Strategy provides the foundation for rebuilding a sustainable construction sector in Ireland. It cannot be denied that this strategy will make a worthwhile contribution to the economic recovery by increasing housing output by 2020 and provide an estimate of 60,000 jobs. From this strategy, the goals of housing policy are:

- Affordability
- Sustainability
- Inclusion

To add, the Social Housing Strategy aims to provide 35,000 social housing units at the estimated cost of €3.8 billion creating a total of 29,000 jobs. However detailed these strategies are, with clear, achievable goals and timelines, the issue of student accommodation is not addressed. Construction 2020 recognises ‘a range of accommodation types are required to meet market demands, and there are economic opportunities, for example, for the supply and provision of purpose-built student accommodation and accommodation suitable for older people’ (p 14). Student housing is not recognised as a social housing or city planning issue in the Social Housing Strategy, which impedes any construction of housing that would be student specific.

It cannot be denied that the issue of student housing is a complex one with facets of varying obstacles in the way but the USI believe that a Student Housing Strategy should be considered for any real changes to occur.

With the appointment of a Minister for Housing, a Committee on Housing and Homelessness and an interdepartmental working group set-up to address the issue a formal governmental strategy must be put in place with long-term and short-term goals with assigned responsibilities for action.

2.4 Need for Student Accommodation

With a real crisis ensuing the immense demand for student accommodation has a real impact on the private rental market. The HEA’s recent Report on Student Accommodation: Demand & Supply (2015) has indicated that the ‘increased provision of designated student accommodation, both on and off campus, has the potential, in the medium to long term, to ease on-going demand pressures in the private rented accommodation sector’ (p 1).

Student housing has been noted as an emerging mainstream investment category attracting significant interest from investors, developers and private operators with the rise in supply not being fast enough to accommodate the mounting demand, resulting in an unbalanced housing market.

The key appealing attributes of this sector include: stable income and solid rental growth above inflation, resilient
performance in downturns due to less cyclical nature of higher education, and high occupancy rates, recession hedge characteristics (Jones Lang LaSalle, 2012).

Reputational universities that have an influence on demand for higher education located in main cities (Cork, Dublin, Galway, Limerick) deliver a varied economic base. Powerful urban economics have a concentration capital, talented and skilled labour, knowledge and innovation and national economic activity where cities drive global economy accounting for over 50% of economic output and employment for many countries. Dublin ranks 9th as the best student city in the world in 2012 (Jones Lang LaSalle, 2012) which places the Capitol in a situation where it can thrive and benefit from a rich student population contributing to the economy and society.

Students are sophisticated partners in higher education who expect high standards from their experience in Irish higher education including high-quality, affordable, sustainable and inclusive available housing – standards that mirror those set by Construction 2020. Students are decoupled from macroeconomic factors that typically affect the housing market. Student enrolments have risen, and are projected to continue to rise, as a result of the tough economic environment where individuals return to college to up-skill to remain competitive in the labour market seeing a constant and increasing demand for student housing. By providing alternative housing to students, or purpose-built on-campus accommodation, we will relieve the rental market of the burden placed on it and prevent overcrowding and competition among those who are homelessness, seeking social housing or families.

3. PURPOSE BUILT ON-CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION

Evidence indicates that students living in on-campus accommodation are more likely to complete their education than students who commute (HEA, 2015). With first year students indicating preference for this accommodation, the stress and pressure of seeking off campus accommodation in favour of more expensive and lower quality accommodation puts a strain on students.

The current number of bed spaces suitable for student accommodation is estimated to be 31,296. Below in Table 1 are the figures populated by the HEA. The projected bed space development would result in total available beds of 39,696 in 2019 and 43,496 in 2024.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dublin</td>
<td>6,501</td>
<td>3,786</td>
<td>10,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cork</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>2,875</td>
<td>3,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galway</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>2,466</td>
<td>3,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limerick</td>
<td>2,590</td>
<td>4,226</td>
<td>6,816</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterford</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>1,919</td>
<td>2,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other locations</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4,810</td>
<td>4,810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Total</td>
<td>11,114</td>
<td>20,182</td>
<td>31,296</td>
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Table 1: Existing Student Accommodation Beds from HEA

The HEA indicate that the current demand for student bed spaces (both private and in the HEI) is just over 57,000 (public and private). To add, HEIs were asked to provide information on the level of demand for on campus bed spaces in their institution. This equated to 37,698 out of the total demand in 2014 of 57,104. Out of that 57,104 just 34% or 19,406 are private bed spaces. Notably, the average household size will have decreased from an average of 3.04 persons in 2002 to 2.67 in 2018. (Housing Agency, 2015). From the HEA (2015, p6):

‘having extrapolated anticipated student bed demand, including international students from the projected (median) increase in DES student numbers of 24,895 from 2014 to 2024, as outlined in figure1, the resulting increase would result in projected bed space demand of 62,855 in 2019 and 68,678 in 2024.’ Below in Figure 1 are the projected bed spaces set out by the HEA.
Universities in the UK guarantee accommodation to first year students but have been unable to meet growing demand for tertiary education in more recent years. During the period 2005 - 2010 there were on average 130,000 students who did not receive an offer due to the inability of UK institutions to accommodate eligible students during that period. In London (with a student base of around 298,000 full-time students) universities can only accommodate 15.5% of all full-time students (Jones Lang LaSalle, 2012).

This is due to:

- Mix of high development costs;
- Funding constraints;
- Planning restrictions;
- Difficulty in securing well-located sites;
- Competition within rental sector;
- Focus on core business (teaching).

These barriers are similar here in Ireland, and with no strategy or long-term plan in place to begin overcoming these issues that are purposefully fuelling a student-housing crisis.

An estimation of €85,000 per bed space has been proposed by the HEA (2015). Capital investment in student accommodation is projected to increase by €700 million from 2014 to 2024 with a total gross investment planned will be a sum of €1 billion over the period to 2024. Funding will be drawn of a reinvestment of surpluses and new borrowings. While no borrowing framework exists for Institutes of Technology (IoTs) financing student accommodation would prove difficult, but not impossible.

With most student accommodation in public ownership from seven universities, the level of income that can be generated by the university sector from student accommodation will increase from €51 million in 2014 to €120 million in 2024. Notably, the surplus of income generated from on-campus accommodation during the academic year would be sufficient for maintenance, refurbishment and future investments for more student beds. Evidence from the US and UK has shown that the rise in demand has facilitated student housing to become one of the best-performing asset class changing investors perception of the sector (Jones Lang LaSalle, 2012).

The Minister for Housing with the Committee on Housing and Homelessness should consider working with the USI and the HEA to plan and prepare for the projected increase of students by sourcing and allocating funding, seeking development and land management by drawing a clear, and realistic, timeline in the form of a Student Housing Strategy.

"I had a deposit put down on a place for myself and my friend about 3 weeks ago (so well before CAO results came out), it was pulled with out any real reason. I’ve been working 9am - 5pm all summer saving up for a place and now can’t get anywhere. The market is just horrendous. I was in Dublin from the minute I finished work to 10 O’clock last night at viewings, one of which was a basement with a tiny window for €620 a month"

- M. Farrelly (September, 2015)
DCU (Dublin City University)
4. THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR AND TRENDS

With the current housing situation, problems are arising for students in the private rental sector which include: increasing rents, exit of low-income student tenants, overcrowding and homelessness, state exposure to rising private rents, taking leases beyond capacity, not receiving deposits, and affordable, long-term tenancy (Housing Agency, 2014). In the housing market, students are competing with those who can pay higher rents. This gives rise to homelessness, overcrowding and health and safety risks with a wider impact on labour mobility and having a negative consequence on the functioning of the economy and society where purpose built accommodation can free up more housing for others in society.

4.1 Lack of Accommodation

With the lack of purpose built student accommodation and a competition for housing in the rental sector, the student timeline puts students at a disadvantage. This competition is a reflection of the direct result of 40% less accommodation available than in 2014 which sees the months of March, May, August, and September spiking in students seeking accommodation across the country (see Case Studies).

In 2011, there were almost 60,000 rental properties listed over the course of the year – a little over half of all rental properties in the capita according to Daft.ie. Now, in the past 12 months there have just been 35,000 houses listed (Daft.ie, 2015). In Dublin between 2008 and 2012, there were an average of 5,200 properties available to rent. As of February 1st 2016, there were fewer than 1,400 properties available to rent reaching the lowest since 2006 (Daft.ie, 2015) with 771 homes available to rent in Munster. Rental properties across Cork, Galway, Limerick and Waterford have fallen from an average of 2,000 properties to 300 with areas outside of cities falling from 16,000 to 1,900. Currently, beds needed to satisfy supply and demand of 25,000 bed space.

4.2 Cost of Accommodation

Rents stabilised during 2010 but began to increase during 2013 (Housing Agency, 2015) and are now being reported above €1,000 in Ireland – far beyond students’ capacity where the DIT Cost of Living (2015) states that €1,222 is needed a month for students living away from home in 2015-2016. With this shortage rent prices have increased, and a shortage of housing has occurred. Rents in Dublin are up 43% since their lowest point in 2010, with rents in Cork City after increasing by 37%. Nationally, rents have risen by 9.0% year-on-year in the average asking rent (Daft.ie, 2015). Data from the Central Statistics Office Survey on Income and Living Conditions found that those in consistent poverty are three times more likely to be in rent arrears (Housing Agency, 2015). With 15.2% of students falling below the poverty line (NERI, 2015) students are at risk from being pushed back into an already overcrowded rental marketplace.

Evidence from DKM Economic Consultants (2014) found that 45% of tenants pay up to €499 per month on average, with 395 paying between €500 and €999 with younger tenants (18-24) paying up to €499 per month, 24% paying in the range of €500 to €999. With an increase in rent, 30% of tenants received no explanation from landlords for rent increases.

4.3 Investment Into Housing

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform report titled Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021 indicates the need for high-quality infrastructure to propel a modern society and economy where the Capital Plan ‘reflects the Government’s commitment to supporting strong and sustainable economic growth and raising welfare and living standards for all’ (p. 5). The publication also states that housing is set to receive 13% of the overall sectorial share of the €27 billion Exchequer capital allocations over the six years with the driver being:

‘Demand for housing will remain high over the medium term due to demographic factors and changes in household structures, particularly an increase in single person
households. The Housing Agency estimates indicate 21,000 new housing units will be required per annum for the next number of years’

Unfortunately, the number of beds and houses needed to meet demands of students is not mentioned. With the intention of meeting the commitment of 2.1 million people employed by 2018, as set out in its Action Plan for Jobs, without taking into account houses needed by students emigration, drop-out and health issues will increase among students.

4.4 Student Housing Strategy: Change in the Sector with Regulation

It’s time to steer away from the dualist debate that exists on the private rental sector with the argument for rent control, need for better incentives for landlords and encourage developers and investors to begin construction. International housing analysis and policy focuses on secure occupancy rather than forms of rent control which have shown success in the market economy, notably in Australia and the Netherlands (NESC, 2015)

A Student Housing Strategy should see student tenants with more secure occupancy while also creating a supply-side support to increase availability of affordable rental housing for students. It is time for the Government to mobilise public authority, assets and capabilities in NAMA and other bodies to focus on and lead housing supply, land management, and affordability for students. Profit renting has a profound negative effect and can lead to shortages in the rental sector and generates crisis for all those in society. A well-developed and efficient rental market can provide affordable platforms for students, and graduates, with low-income households and enter the property ladder in the intermediate of addressing the issue of constructing purpose built accommodation

5. CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK STUDENTS’ UNION (UCCSU)

Total Student Population Size (Calculated by enrolment figures from the HEA for 2014-2015): 19,048

Research conducted by University College Cork Students’ Union (UCCSU) in 2015 found that between August 6th and 9th, only 67% of students had secured accommodation with 33% indicating that during their experience of searching for accommodation, 57% of students had difficulty finding accommodation. This is reflected from research conducted by DKM Economic Consultants (2014) of tenants in the private rented sector. Of the 23% of students who were still searching for accommodation in Cork, 14% indicated they would drop out, while 26% would sleep on a couch.

The obstacles that were preventing students from obtaining accommodation included:

- Started looking for accommodation too late and but accommodation was scarce (48%)
- Available accommodation was too expensive (37%)
- Available accommodation was poor quality (39%)

Most students began searching for accommodation in March (35%) or April (31%). While the timeline for students is unique from the transition from second to third level education due to Leaving Certificate results, CAO acceptance and the start of semester (HEA, 2015) placing students at a disadvantage in the overcrowded market. The average monthly rent is €392 was indicated as the maximum a student could afford.

From the study conducted by UCCSU, 36% of students stated they would commute from home. Evidence indicates that a student commuter and that first year students living with their parents had a high rate of non-retention at 10% significantly higher than resident students who had a non-retention rate of 4% (HEA, 2015). This is problematic for students and for institutes in higher-level education where
the average commuting time from accommodation to third-level institute was 33 minutes (Harmon & Foubert, 2009).

With the UCC Accommodation Service no longer existing, UCC have set up a UCC Studentpad for students to get property alerts emailed directly to them when accommodation becomes available that matches what their needs. Data collected from this highlights the lack of input from the State. As of April 21st 2016 - 1,882 students have been registered seeking accommodation for the upcoming academic year. A total of 369 landlords are registered with the service. Currently there is only 47 properties available for rent on the Student Pad website; of these only 10 of these accommodation options are only available for full term lease while the other 37 for the summer months of 2016.

March of 2016 saw a dramatic surge of students registering for the service to 627 in comparison 38 registrations in October which is also indicative of the numbers of students who were still searching for accommodation into the academic year. The increase in March collates with the year previous as conveyed by the survey when 34.8% of students surveyed began looking for accommodation in March of 2015. The UCC strategic plan 2017 states that the University will seek to dramatically increase the number of students attending outside of Munster. The survey carried out by UCCSU in August of 2015 highlighted that 28% of students had yet to secure accommodation. Within the survey 57% of students indicated they lived 45+ km from the University. In UCC an increased dependency on going to door to door has become evident as students seek out accommodation. As of the 11th of April the UCC Student Experience Project Office indicated its priority in allocating beds to international students with an estimated intake of 3,000+ international students for the academic year 2016/17. Beds across UCC’s private letting of apartments being prioritised for these students in Arcadia Hall, Eden Hall and North Quay accommodation complexes with the total allocated beds of 340 on top of University owned accommodation beds holding international to domestic student allocation ratios.

Due to reductions in the Government capital funding the University has had to grow its international student acceptance. Due to the University’s dependency on the international fees it has prioritised placement of these students in accommodation which will impact retention rates of domestic students as student stress throughout the accommodation search either forces the deferral of a year, or the intention to drop out; of the the 28.6% of students who had not found accommodation 14.4% intended to drop out. On a national scale direct impacts of students dropping out increase dependency on the Department of Social Protection as students will have not completed the required training making them eligible for the smart economy workforce.

UCCSU Welfare Officer has seen since March a dramatic increase in the number of students presenting with casework which was focused primarily around the stress students are encountering when it comes to searching for accommodation for the upcoming academic years.

“After paying €6000 last year for a single room me and two other friends found an apartment (€600 a month each) but 3 weeks after paying deposit and less than a week before we were meant to move in, the letting agent told us the property is no longer for rent as it had been repossessed

- L. Jordan (July, 2015)
DCU (Dublin City University)
6. CASE STUDY: TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN STUDENTS’ UNION (TCDSU)

Total Student Population Size (Calculated by enrolment figures from the HEA for 2014-2015): 15,993

TCDSU operate the Accommodation Advisory Service. The service is the main point for students to access information and advice relating to accommodation. It consists of three full time staff during July - October and again from mid January to mid-February and offers service in person, via email and by phone. In addition to providing information and advice TCDSU also operates a digs service. See Appendix II for more information.

Academic term in TCD begins on 23rd of September 2015. Only in person casework has been recorded up to April 2016 upon which a new system has allowed the welfare officer to log calls and emails. The majority of accommodation casework comes through calls and emails meaning the figures only reflect a small minority of the actual work.

Before term began there was an increase in the usage of service in 2014. A total of 2,922 students used the service in 2015 compared to 301 in 2012. The number of digs used doubled from 200 in 2014 to 480 in 2015.

TCD Strategic plan aims to increase international students (currently at around 10%) to 18% meaning students will see further demand for student accommodation in Dublin with a severe shortage of accommodation specific for students or housing available for students.

TCDSU surveyed students in April 2016 and found that students need affordable accommodation with closer proximity to university. Average rent paid by students studying in TCD (not including bills) was an average €490. Maximum rent (including bills) was €704 for students attending TCD. When asked, student priorities were:

- Distance to college;
- Rent;
- Transport links to college.

7. CASE STUDY: NUI GALWAY STUDENTS’ UNION (NUIGSU)

Total Student Population Size (Calculated by enrolment figures from the HEA for 2014-2015): 17,216

Data from the Accommodation and Welfare Office in NUI Galway are based on surveys and a number of users of the service (only a proportion of the total student population). Research has shown that over 60% NUI Galway students require accommodation. The search for accommodation commences in January and increases steadily until August (the biggest ‘spike’ in numbers), dropping off significantly in September to December.

For undergraduates 66% of first years prefer student residences, the remaining prefer rental of a house/flat/room. The vast majority of postgraduates prefer rental of a house/flat/room. Few are interested in owner occupied accommodation (traditional ‘digs’) although the number with this preference seems to be increasing.

When searching for accommodation 2 out of 3 students searched with at least one other person. Almost 90% of students found accommodation within one month. 30% needed to travel at some stage during the year due to lack of immediate accommodation. 80% would be satisfied to travel between 2-5km and this drops to 40% when increased to 6-10km

The number of students in student residences was 2,531 (Corrib Village, Dunaras etc.) The numbers of student beds advertised by the Accommodation and Welfare Office from the private rental sector was 1.635 in 2013-2014 and decreased to 1,405 in 2014-2015.

On NUI Galway campus, the construction process of building phase 1 of 429 bed residential accommodation is currently under way with phase 2 expected to be finished by 2020 (an additional 450 beds).

The Accommodation Office advertises for rental properties from May through to September and does a leaflet drop of
11,000 in the residential areas adjacent to the University. Two new web site facilities have been purchased to advertise student accommodation in Galway at no cost (StudentPad and Housing Anywhere).

The three staff work who in the office have accommodation as a key part of their role. NUIGalway also work closely with local residents and their representatives, work with the students’ union and others to ensure that students abide by the Code of Conduct – this has borne fruit as the numbers of complaints on related behaviour have come down in the last three years.

The University has met with NAMA, the City Council, numerous developers, auctioneers, property management companies, banking organisations, accommodation providers and potential property providers who might supply student accommodation commutable distance to the University in order to encourage and work with them in order to provide additional student accommodation.

8. AN ARGUMENT FOR AN IRISH STUDENT OPERATED HOUSING TRUST CASE STUDY: DUWO (NETHERLANDS)

DUWO is a Dutch student-housing corporation set up after the Second World War to assist with a huge lack of student accommodation in the Netherlands. DUWO now operate 29,000 properties of varying types across the majority of the large Dutch university towns including Amsterdam, Amstelveen, Delft, Den Haag, Deventer, Haarlem, Hoofddorp, Leiden en Wageningen. This accounts for a quarter of all students housing demand in these areas.

The activities covered by the DUWO are:

- Helping students to find accommodation outside of DUWO properties;
- Operating a ‘search for property’ database;
- Conducting research on student accommodation;
- Building student accommodation of various types;
- Acting as landlords to student properties owned by DUWO;
- Operating an online ‘find a tenant’ service;
- A student focused ‘find a roommate database’.

Not only do DUWO provide accommodation but also the student focus allows the corporation to carry out studies on student need and the demand for different elements of property. At present Ireland has no body which carries out student focused housing accommodation studies; engaged bodies have only vague ideas of demand and cannot respond as a result. Property rentals and search up to the point of signing the lease are operated through DUWO's website. From signing the lease the website indicates that

“(...) I think the accommodation situation is so stressful if I knew it was this bad I wouldn’t of gone to DCU as much as I love it, the stress is surreal. Commuting isn’t an option for me either as in science I have so many hours. It’s ridiculous. I get the full SUSI grant, which I appreciate a lot, but with the way the rent is going in Dublin you’d need double the full grant to cover just your rent

- T. Byrne (August, 2015)
  DCU (Dublin City University)
the operational aspect of DUWO’s property transfers to the regional officer and is managed by local managers. DUWO’s leases are specifically written so that only students can use the property. Students must vacate the property 6 months after graduating to keep a consistent turnover of student accommodation.

USI is a structure which could perfectly adapt itself to operating a student-housing corporation. This can work in conjunction with students, property developers, investors, local councils, insurance brokers, and deposit retention services. USI can work with partner companies to establish a student-focused policy mirroring that of DUWO. As a longer-term goal, a Student Housing Strategy would consider a fully functioning Irish Student Housing Trust with a Board of Trustees, staff that operates in Munster, Connaught and Dublin.

Deposit retention is a key area of conflict for student rental. To prevent these issues arising in the same way when the Irish Student Housing Trust is functioning in its capacity as a property owner/manager an independent third party deposit retention scheme is advised. Furthermore the Irish Student Housing Trust can promote and encourage the use of independent deposit retention services for students renting in the private sector with other landlords.

An Irish Student Housing Trust can provide information on this and help to grow the culture of independent deposit retention. European countries with more stable, affordable and socially inclusive housing systems provide modest support for large-scale provision of secure rental accommodation by non-profits (Housing Agency, 2014).

Recognising student housing as city planning issue would mean that NAMA properties could be sold directly to student housing developers, preventing the need to bid on the open market and bringing down the prices as a result. It would also mean zoning of student housing areas. Section 50 properties in Irish tenancy law denote exactly the type of property that suits student accommodation, apartment blocks without parking. There is a case to be made for zoning of college towns to accommodation the large student population. There is a danger of creating student sections of town, which are poorly kept and generally neglected by property managers. Fallow Fields properties near Manchester University are an example. The student housing trust would be required to properly integrate student-focused areas into the city and ensure that they are properly resourced. This can be done in conjunction with the local city and county councils as part of their city/business development plans, particularly given the potential of student residences to boost local business.

The Committee and Minister of Housing should consider that funding up to €90,000 to hire a Student Housing Officer that will work with the USI (USI), and liaise with relevant stakeholders to fulfil some of the activities outlined by the DUWO above. This will allow the Government to tackle other housing issues while USI begins building towards an Irish Student Housing Trust, conducting research, and alleviating the pressure from students’ unions and students in searching for accommodation in the short-term. In the initial period we should focus on the provision of non-traditional housing for students as students do not have the same housing requirements as the general public. From this perspective it would be invaluable to examine the work of student housing trusts across Europe.

This can be done in conjunction with the local city and county councils as part of their city/business development plans, particularly given the potential of student residences to boost local business.

The establishment of a student housing trust has numerous benefits for both students and the general population. Removing students from the private rented market frees up space and reduces competition for space. Additionally some non-traditional housing options can be provided much faster and cheaper than alternative options.
REFERENCES


NAME: G. Byrne
College: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "Shocked and disheartened to find out I wasn’t guaranteed a room on DCU campus, usual guarantee is 500 pts, jumped up to 570 this year, leaving me 10 pts short. Didn’t get any other accommodation halls, and ended up luckily finding a digs in Santry after being glued to property/renting websites everyday."

NAME: L. Jordan
College: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "After paying €6000 last year for a single room me and two other friends found an apartment (€600 a month each) but 3 weeks after paying deposit and less than a week before we were meant to move in, the letting agent told us the property is no longer for rent as it had been repossessed."

NAME: M. Farrelly
Course: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "I had a deposit put down on a place for myself and my friend about 3 weeks ago (so well before CAO results came out), it was pulled with out any real reason. I’ve been working 9am - 5pm all summer saving up for a place and now can’t get anywhere. The market is just horrendous. I was in Dublin from the minute I finished work to 10 O’clock last night at viewings, one of which was a basement with a tiny window for €620 a month"

NAME: D. Bridges
College: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "It has been hard to find accommodation near my college. Another problem is that is it so expensive to find anything reasonable. I found one house but by the time I got back to the landlord the room was taken"

NAME: T. Byrne
College: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "I think the accommodation situation is so stressful if I knew it was this bad I wouldn’t of gone to DCU as much as I love it, the stress is surreal. Commuting isn’t an option for me either as in science I have so many hours.. It’s ridiculous. I get the full SUSI grant, which I appreciate a lot, but with the way the rent is going in Dublin you’d need double the full grant to cover just your rent"

NAME: G. Romhanyi
College: DCU (Dublin City University)

Quote: "I’m in receipt of Special Maintenance grant (€657/ month) from SUSI and getting literally €0 form my parents - it is extremely difficult to find accommodation that I can actually afford. I live in Donegal so commuting is not an option. My family lives here, and I am staying here for the summer to avoid rent costs in Dublin"
## APPENDIX II: TCDSU ACCOMMODATION SERVICES USAGE DATA 2012 - 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Used the service via phone, email or in person</th>
<th>Registered an account on our search for property site</th>
<th>Clicked on Accommodation FAQ on tcdsu.org</th>
<th>Number of digs offered</th>
<th>In person casework relating to accommodation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>July 27th - September 12th 2015</strong></td>
<td>Calls: 1179&lt;br&gt;Email: 1473&lt;br&gt;In Person: 270</td>
<td>(801 landlords logged on to our <code>place an advert section</code>)&lt;br&gt;Total: 1533</td>
<td>Total: 5023</td>
<td>Total: 480&lt;br&gt;Total: 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>August 4th - 10th March 2014</strong></td>
<td>Calls: 571&lt;br&gt;Email: 750&lt;br&gt;In Person: 578</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total: 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>August - end September 2013</strong></td>
<td>Email: 677&lt;br&gt;In Person: 310</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>August - September 2012</strong></td>
<td>Total: 301</td>
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UNION OF STUDENTS IN IRELAND (USI)

Student Housing Submission to the Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness