

Natalia Siluk

John Hill

ADPA5002

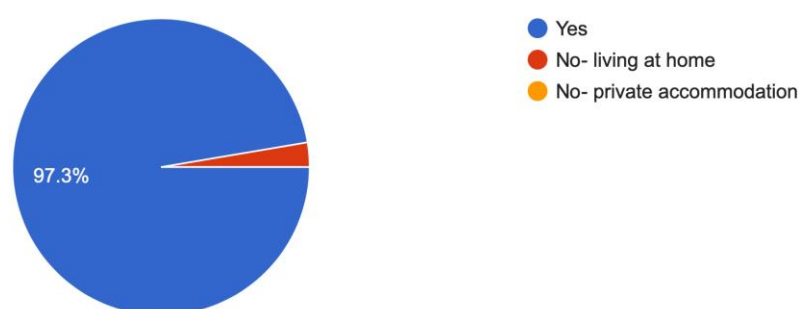
The role of information in the process of moving to university accommodation

In this study, I have explored many areas of student life and the role of accommodation in it. I hypothesise that making information about the on-campus UWTSD accommodation more available for new students applying for university will showcase the benefits of living at the site, help potential students decide if this is the university for them and reduce the anxiety that comes with the big move. For my primary research, I created a pilot study composed of 6 questions that found relevant information about my target audience, asked them to rate their experiences moving into the accommodation and asked if they had any personal tips for future students. I used a range of open questions, Likert scale questions and closed-ended questions to get a variety of information to analyse. The pilot survey was shared with Carmarthen and Lampeter accommodation students to widen my research and received 75 responses.

My first two questions were focused on identifying my intended audience for the survey, asking if they are UWTSD accommodation residents, private accommodation or living at home. This is the base line of my study as it is focused on UWTSD accommodation students.

Are you living in on-campus accommodation?

75 responses

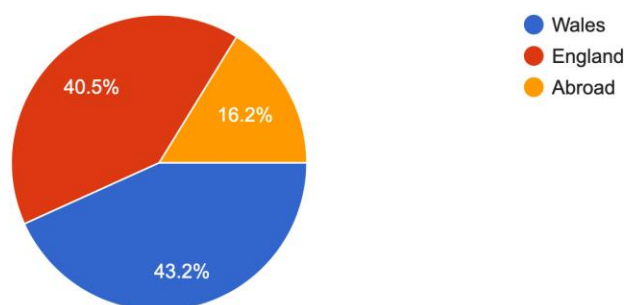


This question confirmed to me that the majority of the survey participants are part of my intended audience, with 73 being campus accommodation students and 2 living in their properties.

The next research question was to establish where the participants previously resided to lead into questions further in my study.

Did you move from Wales, England or abroad?

74 responses



The results of this survey question were what I had expected, with a slight majority of 32 participants living in Wales, 30 living in England and 12 coming from abroad. This helped me to establish my audience and consider it in my research. Moving on from my pilot study, I had to research what the role of accommodation was in students' lives and how the information on the UWTSD website supported that lifestyle or whether it could be improved. My focus was on the Carmarthen campus accommodation with considerations of other UWTSD campuses.

With the size of Carmarthen, there are not many options for student accommodation that are close and accessible relative to the university campus and established enough for new students to feel comfortable moving in straight away. Save the Student (2023) has found that 41% of students across the UK live in university halls, whilst 19% rent through private landlords, 18% live with their parents/guardians, 15% live in private halls, 3% in other and 4% in their property. 41% of students across the UK live in university halls, whilst 19% rent through private landlords, 18% live with their parents/guardians, 15% live in private halls, 3% in other and 4% in their own property.

This along with typically most UK university students' housing biographies showing a path of 'home to halls to rented housing' (UK; Rugg et al, 2004), cannot be applied in Carmarthen. With the lack of available student housing in Carmarthen, students opt to live in the on-campus accommodation for the lack of distance from the campus and being connected to the university directly, feeling safe which is a massive advantage that I feel is not showcased to its full potential.

This combined with the services offered by the university and the long-term credibility of the UWTSD university brand is perfect for creating a stress-free environment for students and, with the correct marketing, can persuade new students to consider UWTSD as their first choice. Zotorive (2017) study showed that a calm and peaceful environment; proximity to lecture halls; availability of study areas; spacious and well-ventilated rooms; affordable accommodation fee, and availability of electricity and water were the most important factors in students choosing accommodation, all these factors capture the essence of the UWTSD Carmarthen on-campus accommodation perfectly with the accessibility of the library, Merlin, the gym and swimming pool being big bonus points for the location.

However, these advantages are not showcased correctly and clearly on the UWTSD website, and this is where the main point of my study comes from.

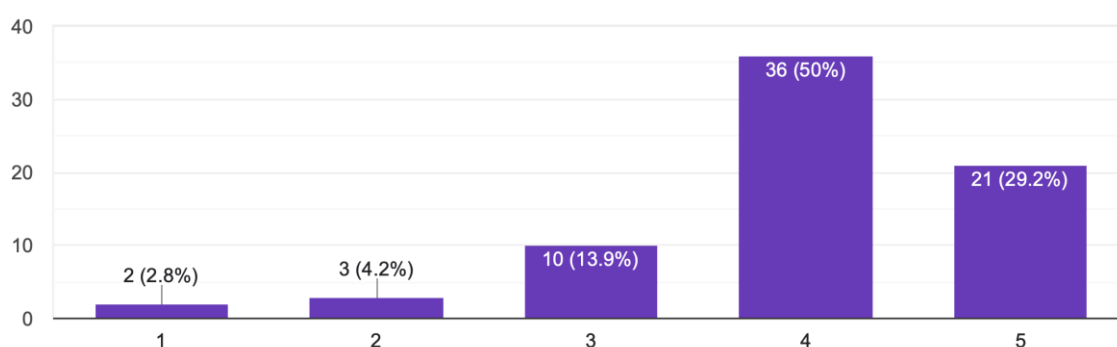
My solution to this problem is to create a specific section on the UWTSD website, where advice has been gathered from students and presented in a sleek and easily legible manner. Whilst the UWTSD website (Jan 2024) has a section on Student Life with sub-sections on accommodation, student experiences, chat with our students etc. the website does not have a section about student advice. The information relating to this topic is present on the site, however, it is not clearly and concisely presented. This along with the lack of discussion of the advantages that come with living on-campus and insight on how life is on campus, is a weakness of the website.

Moving to university is an important step in people's lives and (Student Minds, 2014) this move presents unique stressors such as forming new friendships, living away from home for the first time and managing money which are not addressed in any way on the UWTSD website. Carmarthen is a small South Wales town with a lot of history that takes some adjusting to, especially if a student is coming from a bigger city. The nightlife isn't very big and the student 'hot spots' are harder to come by; the bus times are specific and there are not many that go towards the town centre or near any of the major shops, and some things are more expensive due to the cost of living here. For example, the town is a 20-minute walk from the campus, so a car isn't necessary unless relevant for your course.

With this principle in mind, one of the main elements missing from the UWTSD website is sufficient advice on the moving-in process and how it works. For this, I asked the participants of my survey to rate how they think their experience moving into accommodation was. Whilst this question admittedly didn't find out why some participants had the experience that they did, it does show the range of experience that they had.

How well do you think your move in process went?

72 responses



Ideally, most of the participants would've voted similarly but through this we can see that no student's experience is the same. Factors that could have impacted their experiences could have been travel, family issues, over-packing and not knowing the area. Whilst these factors are hard to pin down, I strongly believe that providing students with more information about the moving-in process will help future students have a smoother moving-in process.

Students have grown up with certain expectations of university life, whether that's from films, shows or books they have watched, these expectations fall short of the real thing as students settle in and deal with a new, more independent way of life. With all these new stressors in their lives, (Amole, 2009) to support students into becoming socially integrated and mentally healthy, there are issues surrounding accommodation that impact their social life and academic performance that need to be understood and addressed explicitly. Providing students with the necessary information clearly and in one space, allows students to be more aware of the university environment and not get caught up in expectations that could fall short and break their spirits.

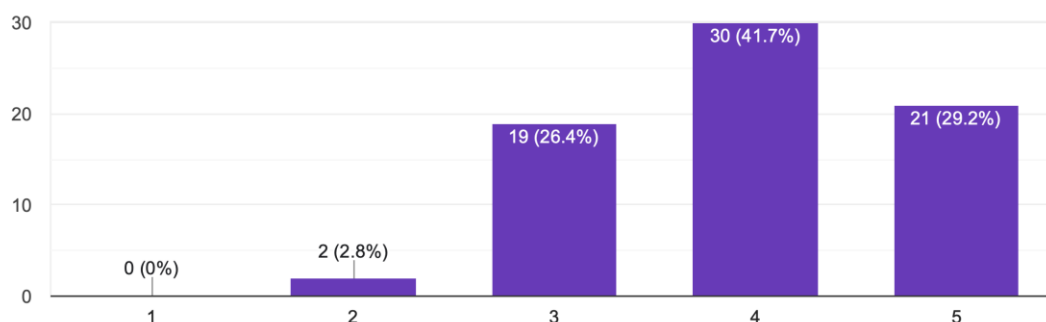
With knowledge of the UWTSD Carmarthen and Lampeter students, I have collected recommendations of advice and information I think should be included on the UWTSD website, some of which I have included in my pilot survey as a test to understand what information other students would respond well too.

What is available when living on campus is not showcased, living on campus you have access to the library, gym, the Merlin, and the swimming pool all close to you, something that is a big selling point of other bigger university accommodations that many use as a big part of their marketing. Information about the UWTSD Carmarthen campus services is not represented in the student life section, students must specifically search for it on the website or learn about it at open days. This lack of information affects possible new students trying to learn about the university through the website and possibly discourages them from considering UWTSD as one of their top choices. Including the on-campus services and how close they are to the accommodation would showcase the natural appeal of living on the Carmarthen campus and calm possible queries and stress of new students.

A question asked on the survey was concerned with the safety of moving their belongings to the university and how confident the participants were.

How confident were you about safely moving all your belongings to university?

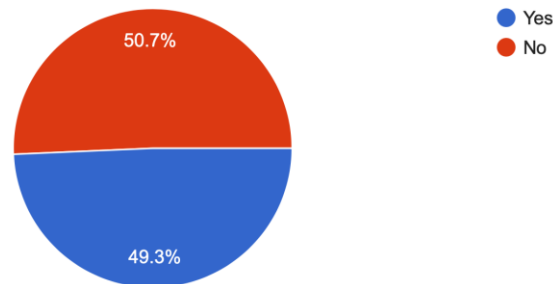
72 responses



The answers to this survey question were within the same range of confidence, this was asked to follow the next question of using a postal service to minimise the hassle of the moving process. The results of this survey question surprised me as I expected more of a divide in the answers and a stronger favour of not having to use a postal service due to most of the students living in Wales and having help moving in.

Would the move in process been easier if you were able to use an affordable postal service to send boxes of your items?

73 responses

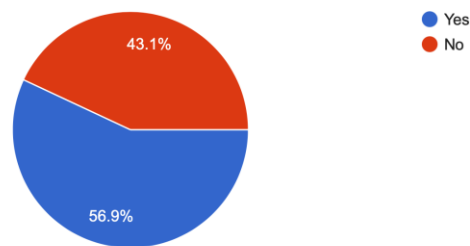


The answers to this survey question were closely equally divided with 37 participants voting no whilst 36 voted yes. From the answers to this question, I concluded that having written advice listing possible options for moving in would be beneficial to students struggling with moving to UWTSD accommodation.

Leading on from this, I also recommend creating a specific section about the transport options to the separate accommodations and locations. This would include a map of the location to show the proximity of the university to the town centres, where the train stations are located, whether there are local taxi services available and modes of transport available to travel home for the holidays. Whilst trains are one of the most accessible transport services, as a university student living in the cost-of-living crisis, it is important to be aware of travel options that could be more favourable towards individual budgets. This survey questions specifically used the National Express Coach services as an example, these coach services go all around the UK and in comparison, have the potential to be cheaper than travelling by train.

With services like the National Express coaches, would you consider this as a travel option for half terms?

72 responses



The results of this survey did not overwhelming surprise me, out of the 72 participants 31 voted no whilst 41 voted yes. The National Express services are cheaper than the train services, but they do not travel to the smaller towns around the UK whilst the train lines are built specifically to provide people with access to any part of the UK no matter how small. Many of the students on campus live in Wales in smaller towns where the coach services might not reach as easily, or they live locally enough to have family/guardians with the ability to pick them up for the holidays.

However, with many students living in England, it is also reasonable for students who can use these services to save money and use them rather than using the more expensive train option. I think that including these travel options to the UWTSD campuses would be beneficial to students who are anxious about the moving process and helping to support students who live further away from their respective UWTSD campuses.

One of the sections on the university website that could be improved is the accommodation section, more specifically the Carmarthen campus. With the stress of living independently for the first time, it is important to know what to expect in their rooms, Joan (2010) concluded that students who were not satisfied with their living conditions performed poorly compared to satisfied students who were satisfied and this principle can be applied to the lack of images of the current rooms the Carmarthen accommodation can offer and how it can cause unease in students wanting to learn at the university. Whilst the university offers open days where potential students can come to have a tour of the accommodation, many students cannot make it to these due to distance or other issues. This means they are unable to see the accommodation and how life in Carmarthen is, student accommodation is where many university students spend most of their time (Piper, 2017) and is an invaluable part of student life. Many potential students could have seen the lack of imagery of the accommodation and decided to not look further into learning at the university due to the uncertainty of their future living conditions.

Lastly, I ended the survey with an open-ended question of advice the participants would give to future students. Out of the 73 participants, I received 30 responses, which is a good result from a short pilot study. Topics that were mentioned were not to overpack, getting to know some of your flatmates beforehand, being polite to everyone, a car being ideal, only packing essentials, planning your journey, bringing comfortable items, saving the porter's numbers and many more. All this advice is something that should be included on the UWTSD website in an easy format, student life is an enormous part of university life and students should help each other to learn from individual experiences.

In conclusion, my study confirmed that creating a specific section on the UWTSD website for student accommodation advice would be beneficial to future students. My hope for this study is that updates are made to the UWTSD website to show the advantages UWTSD accommodations, From this point, the information from the survey

has been requested by the UWTSD accommodation team so I have high hopes changes can be made.

Bibliography

Amole, D. (2009). Residential Satisfaction in students' housing. [online] Available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0272494408000479> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2024].

Brown, L. (2023). *National Student Accommodation Survey 2023 – Results*. [online] Save the Student. Available at: <https://www.savethestudent.org/accommodation/national-student-accommodation-survey-2023.html> [Accessed 19 Jan. 2024].

Joan, N. (2010). Effect of students' living conditions on their academic performance in secondary schools of Goma Sub County, Mukono District. [online] Available at: <http://makir.mak.ac.ug/handle/10570/3234#:~:text=From%20the%20study%2C%20the%20fo>

[llowing,negatively%20affects%20students%27%20academic%20performance](#). [Accessed 19 Jan. 2024].

Piper, R. (2017). *Student Living: Collaborating to Support Mental Health in University Accommodation*. London: Student Minds.

Rugg, J., F. and Burrows, R. (2004). Housing Advantage? The role of student renting in the constitution of housing biographies in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 7(1), pp.19–34.

Student Minds (2014). *Grand challenges in student mental health*. London: Student Minds.

Tullu, M.S. (2019). Writing the title and abstract for a research paper: Being concise, precise, and meticulous is the key. *Saudi Journal of Anaesthesia*, [online] 13(5), pp.12–17. doi:https://doi.org/10.4103/sja.sja_685_18.

UWTSD (n.d.). *Student Life | University of Wales Trinity Saint David*. [online] www.uwtsd.ac.uk. Available at: <https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/student-life/>.

Zotorive, S. (2017). *Students' Accommodation and Academic Performance*.