

Placement Students Accommodation  
Experience Survey  
2019

**Hertfordshire  
Students' Union**

#YourHertbeat

## Introduction and Background Research

Healthcare placements give students the chance to link theoretical knowledge gained via lectures and seminars with practical experience, allowing them to develop their knowledge, skills, and attitudes to fully prepare them to qualify in their chosen professions. During placements, students hold a lot of responsibility and have to conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Here at the University of Hertfordshire, several courses require students to spend a varying amount of time on placement;

- Nursing (Adult), (Child), (Learning Disabilities), (Mental Health) (50% of course spent on placement)
- Physiotherapy (first year: 204 hours of placement)
- Pre-registered Midwifery
- Radiography and Imaging (40% of course time on clinical placement)
- Radiotherapy and Oncology (approximately 18-20 weeks per year on clinical placement)
- Dietetics (28 weeks over the three years spent on placement)

Placements are designed to reflect real working life, this means students could work a standard 9-5 shift or may end up working multiple consecutive 12 hour-shifts which is extremely demanding even if you are not a student. Living in halls with students from non-placement courses who have a standard working day may not be respectful to the fact those going on placement may need to get an early night as they have to be up for 5 am.

In a recent Community Life survey at the university, general feedback showed that during the evening/night-time;

- 22% of people socialised in halls common rooms
- 41% at house parties

Social activities they usually engaged in included;

- Nights in with movies and games 68%
- Hosting pre-drinks 38%
- Hosting house parties 19%.

All these activities may disrupt the sleep of a student going on placement, specifically as the survey revealed that the main motivator for 27% of individuals to socialise in their accommodation is that they felt freer in terms of making more noise and more mess.

Other universities (Liverpool John Moores (LJM), DeMonfort, Bucks New) recognise that different course requirements – such as placements, means that it can be beneficial to offer first-year students the option to select exclusive accommodation reserved for healthcare and nursing students.

At LJM they strongly advise healthcare students only share with other students on similar courses in their first year and about 95% of them take that advice. They never mix healthcare-and non-healthcare students in flats, leaving rooms empty if they have to – on occasion they have filled one spare room with for example a female pharmacy student who we believe will be quiet.

At DeMonfort they operate an online booking system which for nursing/midwifery and paramedicine students is automatically set to only see one accommodation option. They can request to live with the undergraduate general population, but they are made aware of the students they then live with, will not be working shifts like themselves. They monitor the availability of rooms, only opening the rooms to all students after A-level results allowing for cancellations in accommodation. Non-placement students placed in this accommodation are notified they are living with students who undertake shift work as part of their degree, and that they are the minority in this quiet flat.

From this background knowledge, we went on to gather some primary evidence of our own to see if the option to live with other students on similar courses is something placement students actually wanted at the University of Hertfordshire.

## Methodology

Data was collected via an online survey, that aimed to evaluate the experiences and opinions of Health and Social Work placement students via questions surrounding their experience living in university halls accommodation during their first year.

This method was chosen as it was the most effective way to gain feedback from this sub-population, taking into consideration that many placement students spend a lot of their time off campus.

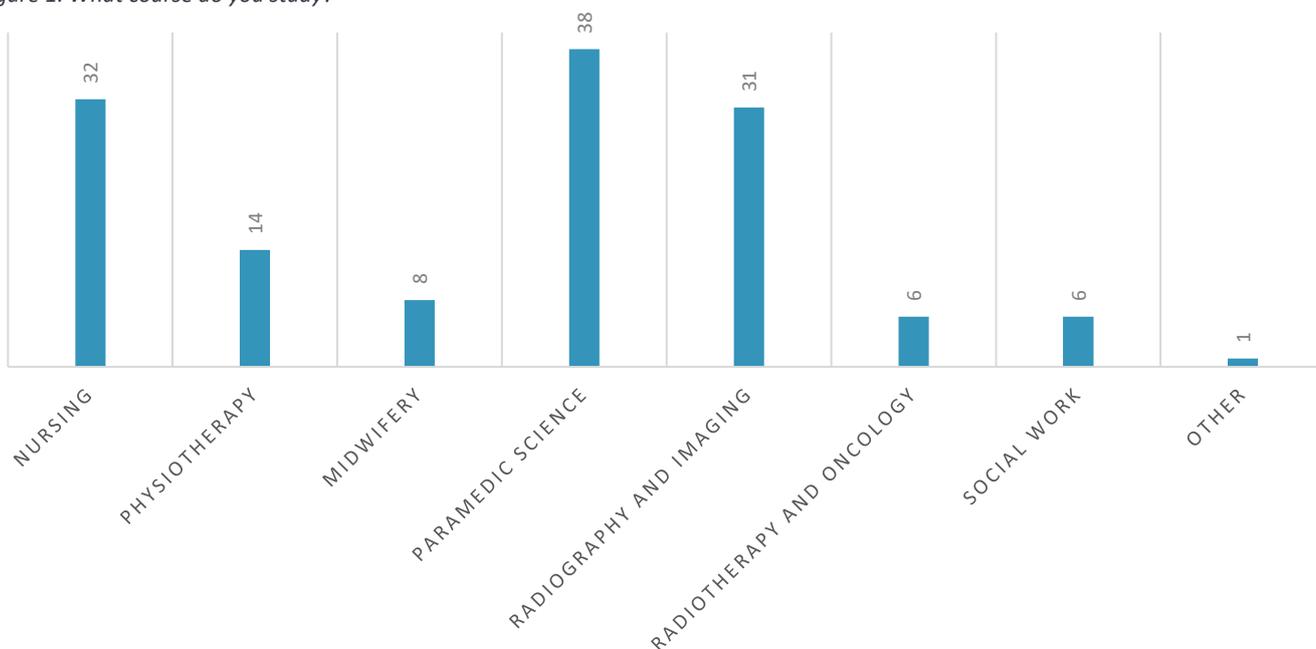
The survey was distributed to all first- and second-year students in the School of Health and Social Work (HSK) by the appropriate programme administrators. An email was also sent out to all first and second year HSK Student Representatives and School Community Organisers asking for them to complete the questionnaire, but also encourage their peers to as well.

## Findings and Implications

### Demographics

141 respondents have placements as a compulsory element of their degree. There was representation from each programme from HSK who are required to go on placement, a breakdown of school numbers can be seen in the figure below.

Figure 1. What course do you study?



## Placement hours

Figure 2. Typically, when on placement, how many hours do you work per day?

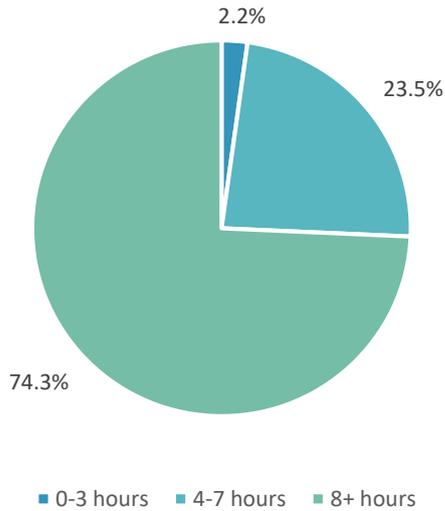
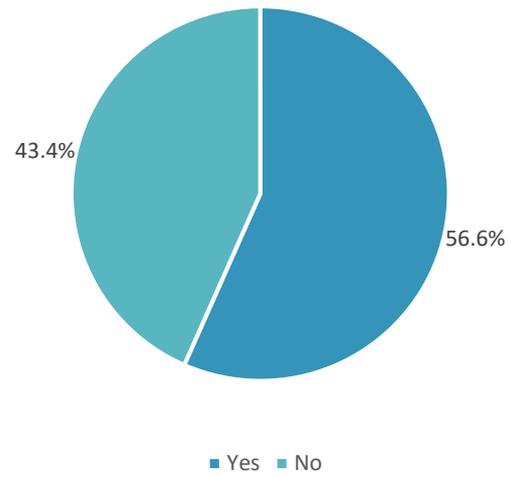


Figure 3. Does your placement require you to work anti-social hours e.g. between 20:00 and 08:00?

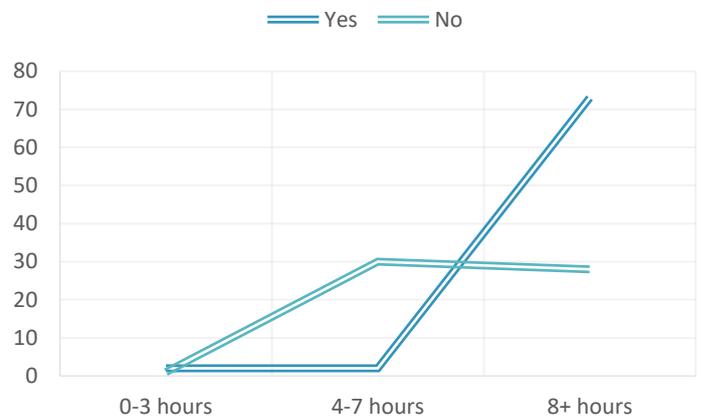


Typically, most respondents work eight plus hours a day (74.3%) when on placement.

Overall, 56.3% of respondents are required to work antisocial hours.

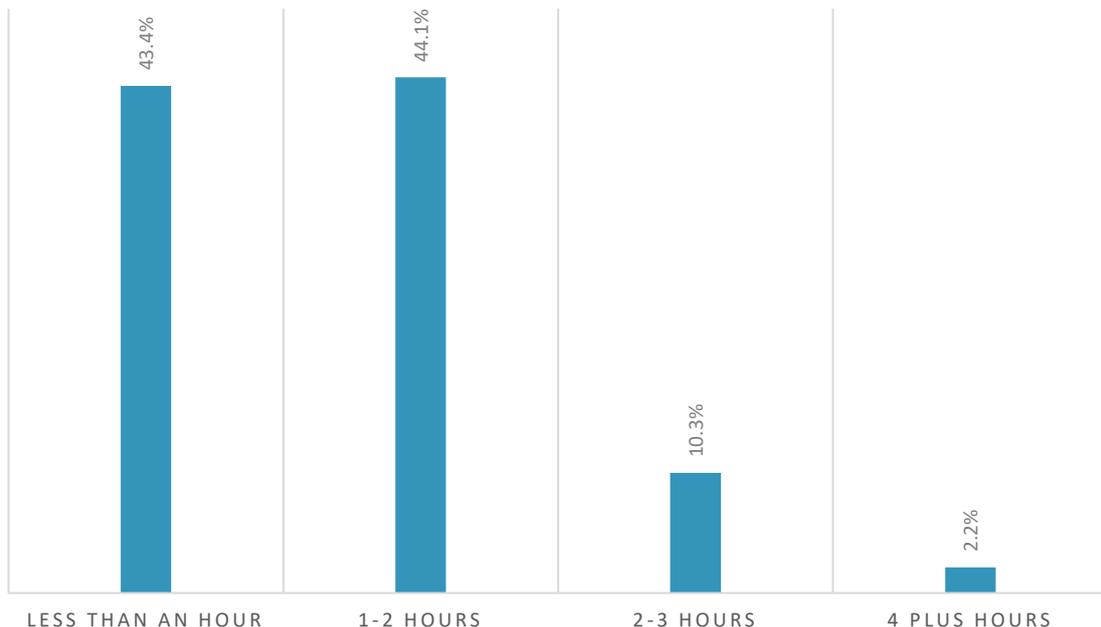
Of those who spend eight-plus hours working, 72.3% are required to work anti-social hours e.g. between 20:00 and 08:00.

The graph to the right shows that the longer hours you work, the more likely you are to be working anti-social hours.



In order to get to and from placement, the majority of respondents spend 1-2 hours travelling daily. For some, this is as much as four plus hours.

Figure 2. How long on average is your daily travel time when on placement?



## Accommodation

Figure 3. What best describes your first-year term time accommodation?



For the purpose of this research, we were interested in those students who lived in halls of residence in their first year of university and experienced communal living with individuals they did not know before attending university. This was 48.2% of the respondents to the survey.

For those that did live in halls of residence, the most popular rooms where;

- Single en-suite room on College Lane (38.1%)
- Enhanced room on College Lane (28.6%)
- Single en-suite room deHavilland Campus (25.40%)

This shows that having an en-suite is a desired factor for these students and that they prefer to live on College Lane than deHavilland Campus.

Of those that lived in halls of residence in first year, the majority indicated that they would like the option to select to be allocated living with other placement students (58.7%), as can be seen in the chart to the right.

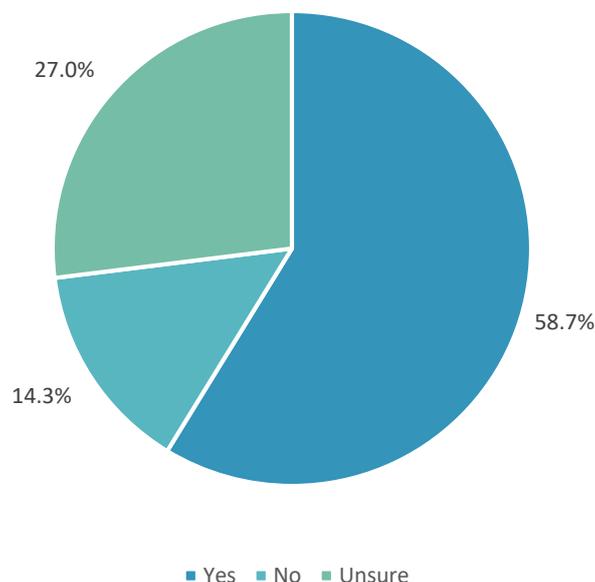
Of the respondents who did live in halls of residents in first year, they said if given the opportunity again they would choose

- Halls of residence 60.3%
- Private rented flat/house share 23.9%
- Parental/own home 11.1%
- Other 4.8%

The main reasons for thinking they would choose different accommodation were; ease of car parking, cost, and time actually spent in accommodation, but the majority of comments for moving related to noise:

*“Halls of residence was far too noisy especially during night shifts. The other students I was staying with did not understand nor were they considerate.” – 2<sup>nd</sup>-year paramedic science*

Figure 4. If there was an option to be allocated with other placement students would you have selected this when picking your first-term term time accommodation?



*"Sometimes it can be frustrating to tell others to be quiet." – 1<sup>st</sup> year, nursing*

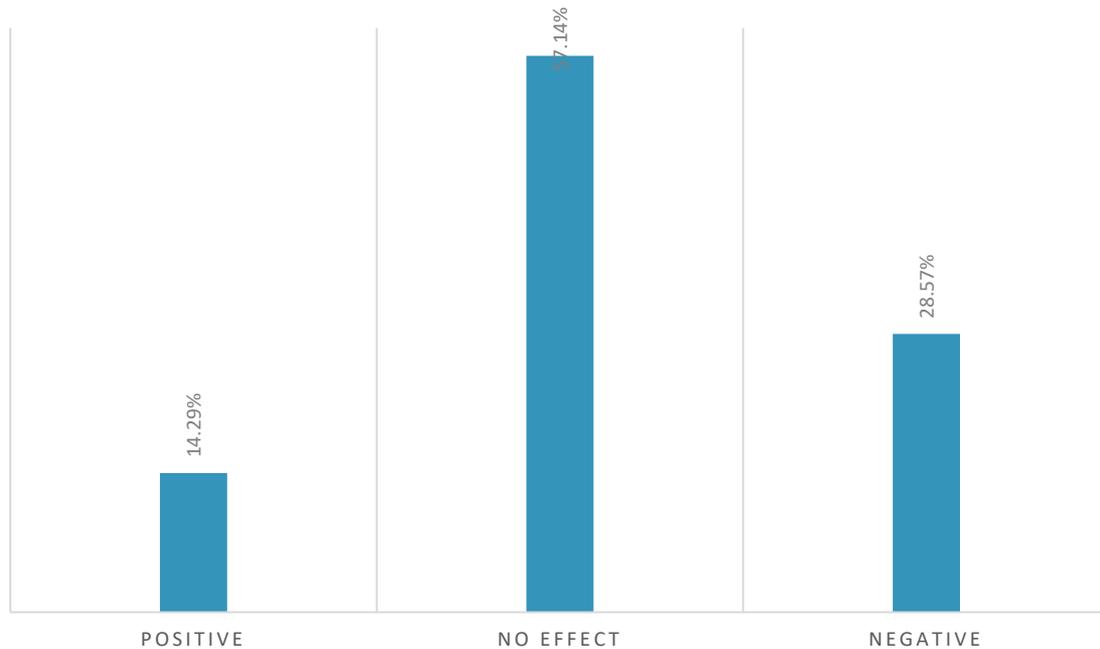
*"I was woken up by an event after a night shift meaning I didn't get much sleep before my next night shift." – 1<sup>st</sup> year, paramedic science*

*"My flatmates couldn't understand that loud music and parties effected my sleep during the day too because I had night shifts." – 2<sup>nd</sup>-year paramedic science*

*"Other student that do not have antisocial placement times are not considerate and make lots of noise. In a private rental, all people could be studying similar things." – 2<sup>nd</sup>-year paramedic science*

Those who did stay in halls of residence for their second year put that down to convenience, getting to meet new people and safety.

Figure 5. Has communal living had a positive, negative or neutral impact on your ability to undertake placements?



More respondents indicated that communal living had more of a negative than positive impact on their ability to undertake placements, however, the majority indicated it had no impact.

Comments indicate a lack of respect for the hours they work, noise levels and lack of sleep as main factors for communal living having a negative impact on their ability to undertake placements:

*"Only due to the flatmates I live with not being appreciative that the course we do is demanding and on placement it is long hours and it's exhausting so they are loud at night. However, it is easy to just come back to uni accommodation after a long day." - 2<sup>nd</sup>-year physiotherapy*

*"Some flatmates don't understand or aren't considerate of when we are on placement i.e. night shifts and sleeping during the day and continuously make noise." – 1<sup>st</sup>-year midwifery*

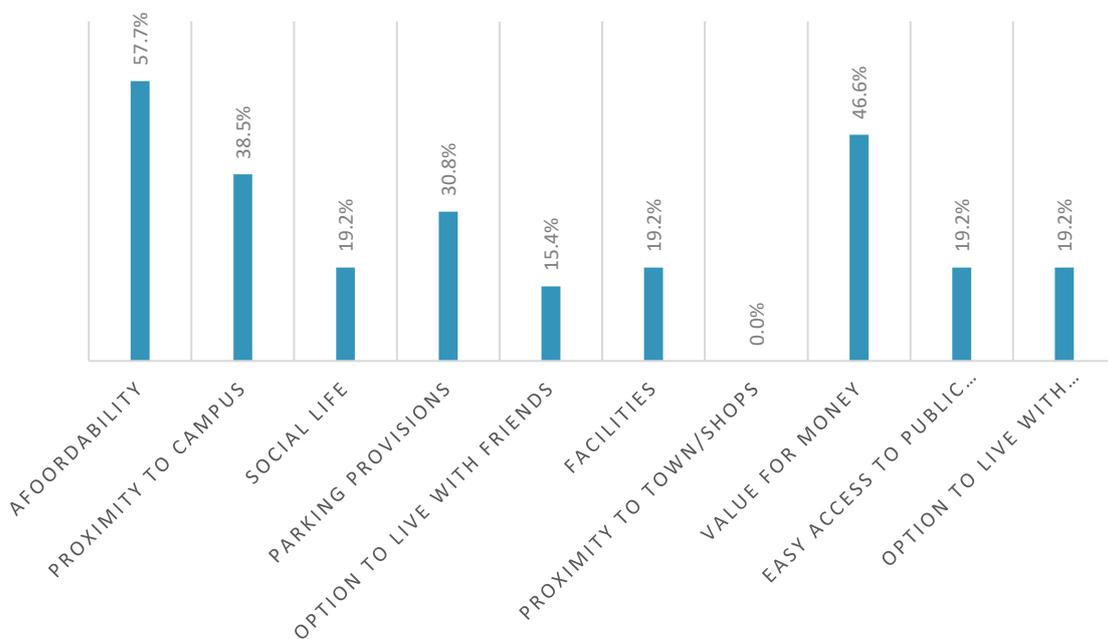
One important comment highlighted the positive impact of living with other placement students had.

*"Living with other students who know when I'm on placement, and who are sometimes on placement themselves, meant they understood when flat needed to be quieter." – 1<sup>st</sup> year nursing*

Of the 26 respondents in first year who lived in halls of residence, 69.2% have decided to change their choice of housing for second year.

The most popular factors that would make these first years stay in halls of residence are; affordability, proximity to campus, value for money and parking provisions, seen in the below graph.

Figure 6. What factors would influence your decision to stay in your current accommodation? (Select up to three)



Of the 37 second year respondents who lived in halls of residence in first year, 86.5% changed their accommodation type, with the majority changing to a privately rented house or flat share (81.6%)

The most popular factors that lead to the change in accommodation for these respondents were; value for money, cheaper alternative, freedom to choose who they lived with and noise levels (Figure 9).

The most popular reasons for students staying in halls of residence were; proximity to the university, value for money, and the ability to balance the demands of placement and academic life (Figure 10).

It is clear that value for money and affordability is very important to students, provisions for parking are also of importance to placement students in choosing where they live.

Figure 7. What factors determined you to change accommodation for your second year? (Select up to 3)

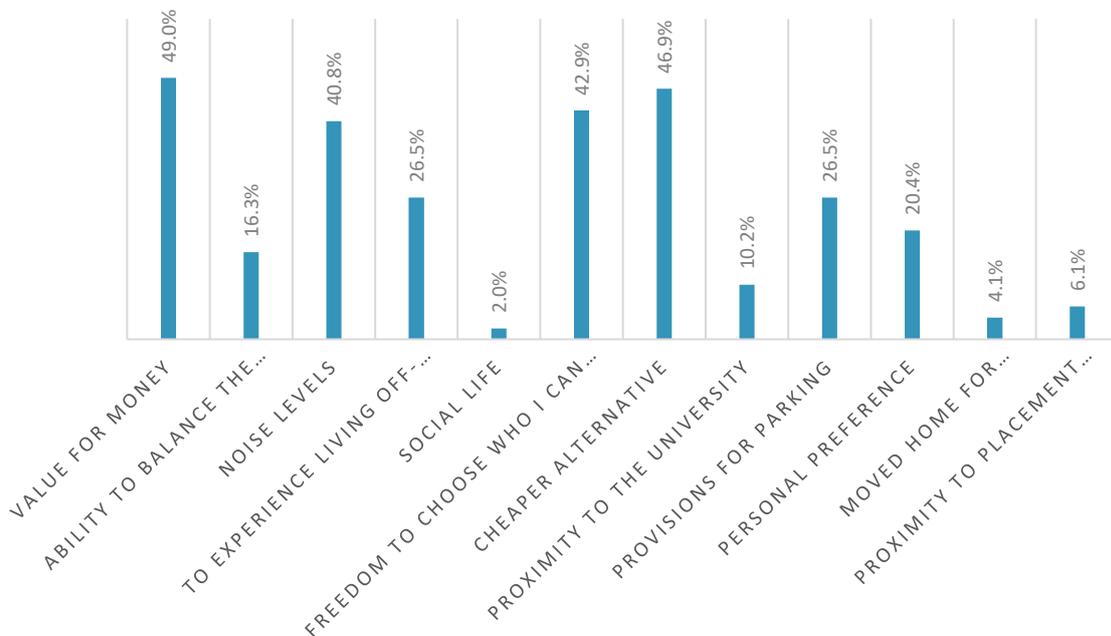
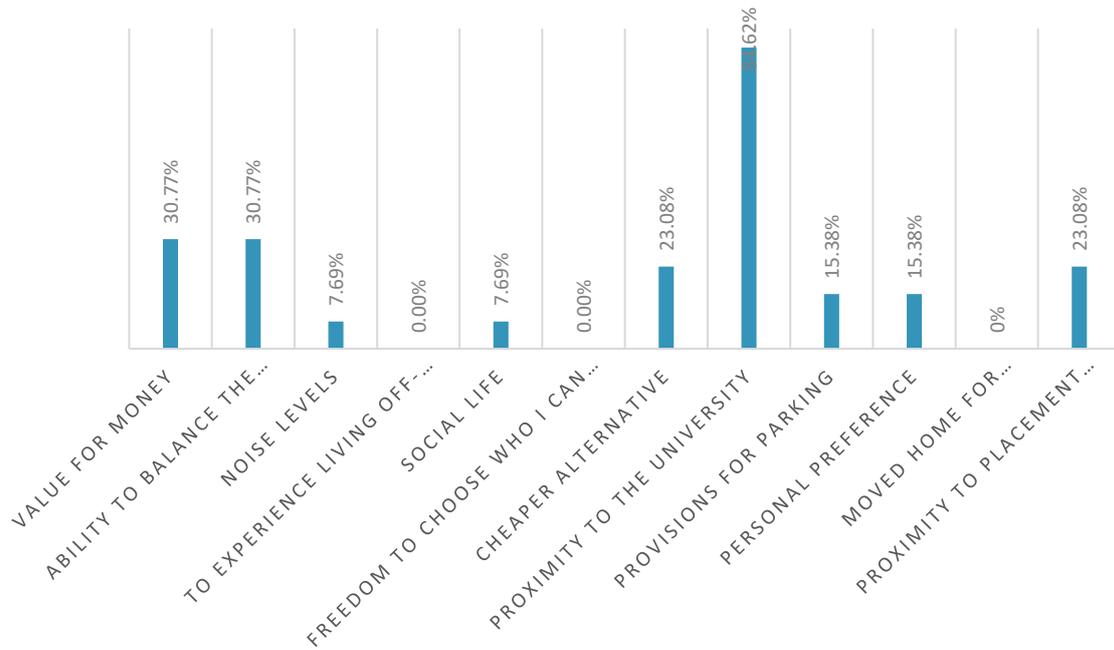


Figure 8. What factors determined you to stay in the same accommodation for your second year? (Select up to 3)



### Other Comments

Students were asked if they have any other comments that would help us improve their accommodation experience whilst on placement.

Recurring themes were;

- Rent alternative as placement students do not spend a lot of time living in their halls. Maybe booking monthly or termly as opposed to the whole year. These comments are highlighted in grey.
- Parking priority for placement students is important. These comments are highlighted in purple.
- Stronger campus presence to control noise levels. These comments are highlighted in green.
- Living with the general UH population being problematic for working placement shifts. These comments are highlighted in blue.

The comments show that students who go on placement face many issues and barriers due to their accommodation options.

"Please can we be located placements that is not far to travel to especially for those who are non drivers. it can be very expensive and if we don't have student loan it can cause a risk of non attendance due to financial difficulties."

"Make it cheaper as we have to be away for the placement period so the accommodation goes into waste."

"I would upgrade the windows to be better sealed"

"Students required to be on placement should be given priority for parking. I did not get a parking space on campus for my first year and this made my experience very inconvenient. Especially when I was finishing a shift at 4 am in December and having to walk back to my flat in the snow for 20 minutes after a 12hour shift because that's the closest I could park my car. This was all despite there being 40+ empty spaces every night round the back of newton court and even when I contacted the parking team I was told there were "no more parking permits available" or something. This was extremely unfair."

"Allow longer contracts for students on placement over the summer and provide discounted rates as placements are unpaid which puts a lot of financial pressure on students."

"I think the university in general is doing well on trying to maintain the campus and noise or disturbance levels. However, some corners on campus are often crowded with individuals hanging round. Furthermore, I can hear people just walking around on levels above me, a lot of knocking from visitors, etc. Rooms aren't very sound proof, but I do appreciate that all points aren't easily fixed."

"Come up with a placement student rent alternative it isn't fair that we waste thousands on halls when we don't live there! I'm in more debt than I should be because of living in halls and having to pay rent on somewhere I was not currently living in."

"More security should be on campus during nights when there is an event in the forum. As when I was on placement some Wednesday nights I didn't get to sleep till 3 am and then had to wake up and get ready for placement at 6 am meaning I had to run off of 3 hours of sleep for the whole day."

"It would be really helpful if the university offered different contract lengths. If you had the option to book termly, this would save a lot of money and lots of rooms sitting empty whilst people were away on placement. We have to arrange accommodation before we are assigned placement sites, so it can be hard to plan."

"It would be good, if possible, to provide alternative accommodation for those who have to pay for secondary accommodation for placement. Being in halls was expensive as we would not be living there most of the time. Also having the opportunity to be placed with other placement students would be nice as you can have someone to relate to so you are not on your own."

"Do accommodation contracts so students on placement pay less for campus accommodation when they're not here otherwise so many first years are getting robbed of so much money because they don't know any better."

"Can you please not have loud event on during the day at the oval as one woke me up after I had finished a night shift so I was sleeping during the day before going into another night shift and I was doing 12hour shifts and this event meant I did not get much sleep so I was tired before even starting my next shift."

"Some placements run through non term times - meaning that accommodation is more expensive and you have to look for alternatives, for example, I had placement after my accommodation at de hav ended so had to pay a lot more somewhere else, in order to be able to get to my placement."

"I feel that placement student would greatly benefit from living together for both emotional and social support."

"Make sure there is parking available for De Havilland students or make sure all student with placement are placed on college lane and given a permit."

"I found student who do no have placement do not respect as much."

"They make as much noise and mess as they please."

"Make parking applicable to all placement students. Living on De Hav with no offer to switch or nor provide parking proved challenging."

"I think parking should be prioritised for students with placements when living on campus. Otherwise, students are forced to park in the surrounding streets and annoy local residents."

"Living with like minded people i.e. those on your course and on placement at the same time."

"Make accommodations for students exceeding 20+ hours a week cheaper as there placement takes up most of time. From my experience I did 37.5 hours on top of part time work to afford my accommodation which was hard to manage."

"For some reason, at the start of the year I was told that I would be guaranteed a 51 week contract, however this turned out to not be the case. Therefore, due to my contract not being long enough, I am having to move out during my studies."

"Put people from similar course together, to avoid unnecessary drama."

"Allocate nursing and midwifery student together in a quieter location off campus. For example, set aside a court for placement students only so we can be accommodating of each other."

"Better response from security to noise complaints outside buildings."

## Conclusion

Students who go on placement face many barriers to success highlighted through this survey. Their accommodation choices can impact their ability to undertake placements which are a core component of their degree.

The survey revealed many things to consider in regards to accommodation issues for placement students.

## Recommendations

1. Offer placement students the option to select to live with other placement students in their first-year accommodation in halls of residence.
  - a. When considering what accommodation to offer, placement students value an en-suite, prefer to live on college lane due to parking provisions and cost due to not spending a lot of time in their accommodation.
2. If select accommodation cannot be offered, consider:
  - a. Looking into parking provisions at deHav, students indicate this is something that is valuable to them, but placement students are not offered priority. This may aid in ease of living and transport as a placement student.
  - b. Provide increased training for security on how to effectively deal with noise complaints – if students feel they can turn to security and receive the help they need when dealing with noise at late hours it will ease the individuals time living in halls