



UUK/GuildHE
Approved Code of
Practice for the
Management of Student
Housing

14th Annual Report

September 2020



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1. Foreword – Chair of Governance Board

In welcoming you to this 14th annual report on the work of the UUK/GuildHE Code I cannot help but feel that the year has been rather like the proverbial “game of two halves”. We began this year full of optimism regarding the procurement of a new administration for the Code, the adoption of a revised Code and further enhancements to our IT infrastructure and our training provision. The year has ended shrouded by uncertainty as to the future, with concern about the reintegration of students back into their institutions but positively with a reinforced belief in the abilities, professionalism and flexibility of the staff who contribute to the safe and supportive operation of student residences.

I am certain that the next few meetings of the Sector Advisory Group and the Governance Board will be focussed on the lessons we have learned from the global pandemic and what this will mean for future versions of the Code, so that we continue to offer students residential accommodation which is the most secure, in its broadest sense, that it can be.

Despite the unprecedented difficulties of the past 7 months for those involved with the Code there have still been successes. This report notes that 42 out of 53 institutions still managed to submit audit reports on time; there was a 100% response to our request for complaints/non complaints; 6668 on line course modules have now been completed; and the number of web site users increased by more than 10% around A level results day.

There are also some areas where the need for more work is revealed. We continue to have too many mandatory recommendations from audits, especially in the Health and Safety Standards and Procedures category; the level of delegate response to the on line evaluation form for the Joint Codes Conference was poor; and it is particularly disappointing for me, although I understand why, that we have not been able to progress the tender for an administration service for the Code.

In Section 11 we show our plans for 2020/21 although how achievable these will be remains to be seen. Whatever happens I know that everyone will do their utmost to achieve them.

After such a difficult time for my colleagues in the Sector I fear that my words really cannot do justice to their endeavours this year. I gratefully acknowledge the expertise and support provided by the Governance Board, and the skill and commitment of the Sector Advisory Group, who have found time to work on the Code while under the most horrendous pressures in the “day job”. Once again, I am indebted to Mike Ball for his excellent work as Chair of the SAG and to Claire Furnival, the Code Administrator, without who we simply would not function. I also wish to record my thanks to Samuel Roseveare, our link at UUK, for his support and guidance. Finally, in commending this report to you, I wish again to register our thanks to the staff, charged with enacting the requirements of the Code in the institutions, for their exceptional work in 2020.

Andrew Nightingale
Independent Chair of the UUK AcoP Governance Board

October 2020

2. Executive Summary

This Annual Report covers the period September 2019 to August 2020.

This fourteenth annual report presents a record of the significant achievements made by the administration and governance of the Code and more importantly the positive impact it has had on improving the management arrangements for the benefit of the 261,153 students who are residents of the members' establishments. During this period, the Code operated within its set parameters and met all its statutory requirements. The Governance Board (GB) and Sector Advisory Group (SAG) met regularly, in accordance with the published annual cycle of meetings, to discharge their respective responsibilities.

Membership remains strong. 146 institutions are registered with the Code which encompasses 4,483 buildings and 261,818 bed spaces an increase of 9,139 (3.5%) bed spaces in September 2019.

Membership lists for the Code can be found on the website:

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/Documents/2020/ACOP-online-building-list.pdf>

Detailed building information can also be found on the student facing website:

<https://www.thesac.org.uk/>

Calls for audits, complaints and building information data were issued in accordance with the Code requirements, and the details of returns received from members are covered in this report.

Deadlines for the return of information to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government have been met.

The financial activities of the Code administration have been duly scrutinised by both SAG and GB and the year-end accounts have been independently audited. Key activities for 2019/20 were adversely impacted by COVID-19, but key activities delivered included:

- The tenth annual conference in partnership with the Accreditation Network UK (ANUK) Code,
- The successful development and launch of phase 2 of the online UUK Code Management tool
- Approval of time extension for 10 members audit submissions.

3. Governance

i. Meetings

The Governance Board oversees the strategic direction and operation of the Code. It met twice during this reporting period, October 2019 and due to COVID-19, it met virtually in March 2020.

The Sector Advisory Group's aims and objectives are to monitor the Code's key operational processes, oversee and support membership compliance, and recommend any changes or improvements to Code content or management processes. During this reporting period the SAG met on three occasions: November 2019, February 2020 and virtually in June 2020.

In recognition of the need to demonstrate an open and transparent approach to decision making, a Register of Members' Interests was compiled in 2014. This has been updated as GB and SAG membership has changed. Declarations of Interest are noted at the beginning of each meeting and recorded on an annual basis.

ii. Changes in legislation since the last report

There have been no changes in legislation which have materially affected the Code during this period.

iii. Changes to the Code since the last report.

There have been no changes to the Code this year.

4. Membership of the Code

146 institutions are registered with the Code (136 in England, 9 in Wales and 1 in Northern Ireland).

Establishments wishing to sign up to the Code are required to submit a letter from the vice-chancellor or principal formally stating that intention and undertaking to adhere by the provisions of the Code. A list of all buildings to be included in the Code is required and establishments seeking membership are also required to supply an audit report. Verification of eligibility and compliance is the responsibility of the Governance Board, advised by the SAG. There were no new members joining the Code during the period covered by this report.

5. Audits

i. Procedure

It is a requirement of the Code that an establishment's internal audit procedures must include an assessment of how well the management of student accommodation satisfies the provisions of the Code. This year there were 53 audits due to be undertaken against the Code. The administrator has liaised closely with all respective code members and received satisfactory audit returns from 42 establishments.

10 institutions applied for an extension to their audit submission for 2019/20 because of the impact of Covid 19. The extensions granted, permitted the final audit report to be submitted as soon as logistically possible, with a deadline of 30th April 2021. The agreed extensions do not affect the institutions original audit cycle dates (3 yearly), consequently, subject to a satisfactory submission by 30th April 2021, the authorised institutions will be required to submit the subsequent audit report in 2 years, by 30th April 2023.

At the time of writing this report, the remaining institution which has yet to provide an audit or request an extension has been advised to provide a full audit report with proposed management actions to the October 2020 Governance Board Meeting, where their continuing eligibility for membership will be considered.

All received audit returns were scrutinised by the SAG at its June 2020 meeting.

ii. Findings

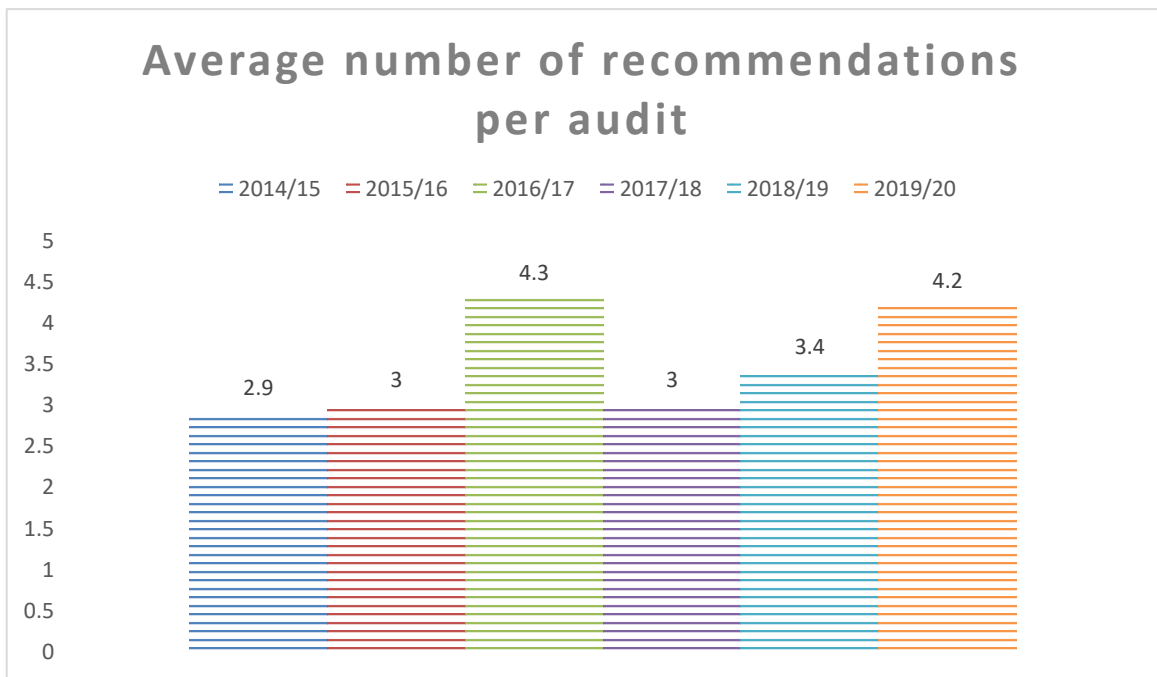
During 2019/20, 10 institutions were fully compliant with all mandatory elements of the Code and thus received no mandatory audit recommendations. The table below

outlines the number of recommendations concerning mandatory elements of the Code from the 41 audit reports received and provides a comparison with the numbers received in each of the previous five years.

The data indicates an increase in the number of mandatory elements that are identified during the audit process as needing to be addressed.

iii. Average mandatory recommendations per audit over previous 5 years:

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Average number of recommendations per audit	2.9	3.0	4.3	3.0	3.4	4.2
Total Recommendations	66	103	242	70	108	171
Number of Audits	23	34	56	23	32	41



This may be starting to show a pattern that the more audits undertaken in a year the greater the average number of recommendations. This will be monitored to see whether there is a pattern, or it is just coincidental.

All the recommendations rated as high risk have been reviewed by the SAG with regards to the nature of the risk involved, including an assessment of the management response and the timescale for remedial measures.

- As of 23rd September 2020, there were a total of 29 outstanding mandatory recommendations across 15 institutions that require follow up action and subsequent confirmation that the agreed management action has taken place.
- The Administrator is seeking confirmation that these actions have been implemented from the institutions concerned, and any exceptions will be reported at the Governance Board meeting in October 2020 following which any relevant action will be implemented.

iv. Specific compliance

The sections of the Code receiving the most recommendations were:

Code Section	Number of Audit Recommendations	Section Compliance
2.5	13	All H/FEE's should have a formal policy that ensures that a suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) is conducted by a competent person for all residential accommodation covered by the Code. The FRA and significant outcomes must be recorded in a formal report. Copies of the FRA should be made available to external agencies
2.18	9	All portable appliances supplied by an H/FEE, or used in the premises by H/FEE staff, must be inspected and maintained in accordance with an establishment's PAT policy. Where arrangements exist for the testing of students' personal electrical equipment these should be set down in the PAT policy. The H/FEE must make students aware of the PAT policy, and any procedure for having students' personal electrical equipment tested.
2.20	7	All premises must be provided with hot and cold water to appropriately marked taps. Any cold-water supply that is not drinking water must be clearly identified.

The section references of the Code changed with the introduction of the revision last year.

The mandatory element most failed last year was (then) Section 2.17 of the Code, which requires that portable appliances supplied by an H/FEE or used in the premises by H/FEE staff, must be inspected and maintained in accordance with an establishment's PAT policy. This audit recommendation has appeared as one of the three highest every year since 2018.

The graphics below shows a breakdown of the total number of mandatory recommendations identified under each section of the Code.



Repairs & Maintenance



Landlord Tenant Relationship



General



Anti-Social Behaviour & Disciplinary Procedures



Health & Safety Standards & Procedures



Health & Wellbeing



Environmental Quality

6. Complaints

146 institutions were invited to return information on complaints/non-complaints from which we received a 100% return.

129 institutions returned no complaints in respect of code compliance issues. Of the remaining 17 institutions a total of 39 complaints were recorded, of which only 2 complaints now remain open.

The largest area of complaint was Section 3, Health and Safety Standards and Procedures with 11 complaints being logged. Section 3.5 was the most common cause of complaint. *When undertaking planned works, consideration should be given to the potential impact on residents and inconvenience / disturbance should be kept to a minimum at all times. Planned works should normally avoid sensitive periods, such as exams, and a minimum period of 7 days' notice given to residents. For any urgent works, a minimum of 24 hours' notice should be given unless the circumstances require an immediate response.*

The second largest area of complaint was Section 4, Environmental Quality (9) with Section 4.4 the most common case of complaint *The H/FEE is expected to ensure that as far as possible residential areas are kept free from pests and properties are well maintained to deter any potential infestation. Arrangements for reporting infestations must be made clear together with the anticipated response times.*

These complaint areas are reviewed by the SAG and GB to see if there is a pattern which might indicate a requirement for further modification of the Code; clarification of the Code wording; or if the matter informs a topic for further training.

7. Financial information

- i. The 2018/2019 accounts were audited by Hawsons Chartered Accountants and presented to the Governance Board in October 2019. The accounts highlighted an in-year income of £91,322 and expenditure of £82,795 leaving a surplus in operation for the year of £8,583. A deficit of £9,239 had been budgeted for after a proposed bed space fee increase was not implemented as originally planned in March 2018. The accounts recorded no in year debt.
- ii. The carried forward reserve balance for year ending 31 July 2019 was £85,067, which is within the tolerance level for maximum budget reserves. Maximum budget reserves state a maximum for the end of year net assets should be in the region of £85,000, with a 25% tolerance level above this to enable effective planning for larger projects.
- iii. The in-year accounts for 2019/2020 reveal a healthy balance and no historic or in-year debt for membership fees. The year-end accounts (31 July 2020) have been audited by Hawsons Chartered Accountants and are due to be reported to Governance Board for approval at its October 2020 meeting.

8. Membership meetings

i. 10th Joint National Codes Conference

The 10th National Codes Conference was held on 15 December 2019 at The British Library in Central London and attracted registrations from 121 delegates, one of the largest turnouts in the history of the event. In terms of representation from the two Codes, the split was less even than it was the previous year, with 56.2% from UUK Code members and 43.8% from the ANUK/Unipol Codes.

Delegates were invited to complete an on-line evaluation form. Regrettably only 14 delegates responded (11.5%) but all areas analysed rated between good and excellent. The lowest score was for the food provision. This is an on-going problem as the cost of food provision is very high in London for a comparably poor offering.

The two best received sessions were Enabling Access for Disabled Students and Tenancy Fees Legislation.

Due to Covid-19, in the best interests of members it has been decided that the 11th Joint National Codes Conference will be a virtual online event, 9 sessions will be delivered over 3 weeks from 2nd November 2020.

ii. 6th UUK/Guild HE Accommodation Code Members Practitioners' Conference

The 6th Practitioners' Conference was due to be hosted by the University of Manchester on 16th June 2020. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19, this event was postponed until 2021.

9. Engagement

Information about the UUK Code and its registered buildings are contained on 2 separate websites:

- a dedicated student facing website www.thesac.org.uk
- web pages within the UUK website contain member and auditor information <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/Pages/accommodation-code-of-practice.aspx>

The web traffic report for the student facing website www.thesac.org.uk revealed that the site had 32,591 users during the period August 2019 – July 2020, pleasingly up 10.3% on same period the previous year. The highest usage occurred during a 2-week period from the 17th August 2019 which links to the A Level results release date when the need for students to decide on and understand accommodation alternatives is probably greatest.

60% of visitors are from the UK followed by The USA at 4.57% (a decrease of 53%), China (4%), India (3.2%), and Netherlands (2.5%).

Whilst there was a significant decline in website visits originating on devices from the USA, there was an increase in the website traffic originating from devices in 7 of the top 10 visits by country compared to 2019. There appears to be a significant increase in traffic from The Netherlands, Austria and Finland, whilst Japan, Germany and Italy dropped out of the Top 10 visits by country, to 14th, 12th and 11th place respectively, having all seen a reduction of visits.

- i. Website analytics by location for the student fronting Code website
www.thesac.org.uk

Country	Date Range	Users	%age change
United Kingdom	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	21813	10.3%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	19785	
United States	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	1645	-53%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	3495	
China	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	1461	36.6%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	1070	
India	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	1177	54.5%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2018	762	
Netherland	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	905	596%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	130	
Finland	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	842	3019%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	27	
France	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	717	54.9%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	463	
Hong Kong	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	496	32.3%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	375	
Austria	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	471	895.7%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	48	
Spain	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	445	-1.3%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	451	
Overall Users	01-Aug-2019 - 31-Jul-2020	35948	10.7%
	01-Aug-2018 - 31-Jul-2019	32482	

10. Activities 2019/20

- A review of the bed space charge took place in March. SAG recommended it should increase to 45p per bed space with no increase in the minimum charge of £130 per member. This rise was approved by Governance Board in March 2019 as part of a 3-year staged increase.
- The membership and buildings lists were updated and submitted to the MHCLG. The UUK and student facing websites were also updated.
- The 10th Annual Joint Codes Conference was held on 15 November 2019 in London (see Section 8i).
- A Practitioners' Conference due to take place at the University of Manchester was postponed due to Coronavirus (see Section 8ii).
- The on-line Induction and Training tool is in place to support member institutions with 1673 active learners registered. They have started 6888 course modules of which 6668 have been successfully completed.
- The UUK review of the Code to assess its ongoing placement within UUK/ ownership and the procurement of future administrative support has been delayed due to Coronavirus.
- The online management tool for all UUK Code members was further developed to record complaint returns and outcomes.

11. Plans for 2020/21

- Adopt the recommendations of the UUK review as appropriate and subsequently procure an administration service.
- The 11th Joint Codes Conference will be held virtually in November 2020.
- Members will be asked to update their buildings list and the information will be submitted to the MHCLG in spring 2021.
- Complaints returns will be analysed and reported to SAG in June 2021.
- 25 scheduled audit returns plus an additional 10 delayed audit returns from 2019/20 will be analysed and reported to SAG in June 2021.
- Following the success of the 5th Practitioners' Conference in July 2019, the 6th conference will be held in Manchester in June 2021.
- Continuing development of the UUK Code management tool to generate automatic email reminders for matters relating to audits, findings, complaints and building lists.
- Update of Code members promotional material.
- Update the E-Learning tool modules to align with new Code.
- Identify new Chair designate for the SAG

For more information on:

- The Code
- Terms of reference
- List of members
- Registered buildings

Please visit

<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/Pages/accommodation-code-of-practice.aspx>

www.thesac.org.uk

APPENDIX A

GOVERNANCE BOARD TO THE UNIVERSITIES UK/GuildHE ACoP FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT HOUSING

Independent Chair	Andrew Nightingale	anight66@googlemail.com	01206 825396 07712 385024 (mob)
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2 UUK Member	Chris Hale	Christopher.hale@universitiesuk.ac.uk	
	Samuel Roseveare	Samuel.Roseveare@universitiesuk.ac.uk	
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APPENDIX B

SECTOR ADVISORY GROUP TO THE UNIVERSITIES UK/GuildHE ACoP FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF STUDENT HOUSING

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	Vacancy		
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1 AUCSO Member	Vacancy		
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