



Worcester Graduate Accommodation Survey 2012

- It should first be noted that the MCR is in gratitude to the college for refurbishments made to graduate housing over the last couple of years, including various refurbished bathrooms and the new kitchens in Mitchell. There are, however, some issues universal across housing that require addressing, as detailed in this report.
- In the Richmond Road houses, numerous students raised concerns with insulation and/or inadequate heating. In the longer term, the college may wish to improve insulation to both reduce energy costs as well as in improving its environmental record.
- There appears to be a wide discrepancy between the services provided by the scouts. The college provided a list of duties that the scout should carry out and several students have pointed out that these have not always been fulfilled. Students are often reluctant to raise these problems given the inevitable awkwardness it brings so a communication system with college would be appreciated.

16 Richmond Road

Specific Issues:

None

Green Issues:

More posters telling people what they can and can't recycle would be handy, particularly for foreign students.

Communal Areas:

It would be good if the kitchen floor and surfaces and the carpet were cleaned more regularly by the scout.

Bathroom Facilities:

I'm not sure that these get cleaned as often or as thoroughly as they should. Also, the ball-cock in the toilet on the first floor doesn't quite work, so there's a constant, albeit small, flow of water into the pan.

Cleaning:

Additional Comments:

The radiator in the front hall cannot be turned on or off or adjusted.

17 Richmond Road

Specific Issues:

None

Green Issues:

Communal Areas:

There is a substantial amount of black mold near the sink, on the window edge. It has been there for years. Although I do blame myself for not having a try at removing it, it remains a mystery to me why something that important and that obvious is left unresolved by the cleaning staff for so long.

Bathroom Facilities:

None

Cleaning:

See my remark for kitchen cleaning. Other facilities are adequately cleaned.

Additional Comments:

I fail to understand why scouts spend time emptying the very few amounts I have in my room waste or to vacuum clean weekly which I would be happy to do myself, when other considerations of considerably higher importance such as kitchen surfaces are left unresolved for years. Having someone empty trivial amounts of paper from my bin daily are both unnecessary and a nuisance. I feel time would be better spent removing mold from various surfaces in the kitchen.

19 Richmond Road

Specific Issues:

Room X:

The windows need better insulation both for heat and sound. The sound coming from the street and the restaurant opposite can be disturbing even in the early hours of the morning.

Room X:

The bedhead is loose and has damaged the paint. Also, at the beginning of the year, I replaced the damaged mattress that I had.

Green Issues:

Communal Areas:

The kitchen air vent is out of order.

Generally good, extractor fan above hobs has not been working since we moved in.

Better seating would be appreciated.

Bathroom Facilities:

Well something related to the bathroom: the ceiling was leaking because of the bathtub, which maintenance fixed but the roof is still a bit of a mess. Also the shower on the top floor is moldy.

The paint of the bathroom is seriously flaking away (As a consequence of a broken air vent which has been fixed not long ago). The ceiling over the entry door (and under the first floor bathroom) has been damaged because of a leak and is now dotted with mold).

The bathroom on the second floor needs repainting - the paint is peeling badly as a fan was not fixed for several months.

Cleaning:

The only thing I am not sure about is how often the scout actually cleans the room.

No issue. Jack - our scout - is a really friendly person.

Could do with hoovering more often. Surfaces never dusted.

It would be great if the scout could make sure there is enough toilet paper, however.

A deep clean every now and again would be appreciated.

Additional Comments:

For housing accommodations: before any visit of a stranger to the house (for reading the meters, maintenance, or inspections purposes, except the scout), it would be useful to let students know about it (even with short notice) so that they can be present during the inspection if they wish so. Several items have indeed been missing in our house and it is very unlikely that either one of us or the scout is responsible for this.

The oven has not been cleaned since the beginning of the year. This is meant to be done on a regular basis. The light in the downstairs hallway has been broken since the beginning of the year.

Bad mould is growing the hallway above the entrance. Very nice gardens.

Franks Building

Specific Issues:

Room X:

Most importantly, the bathroom heaters don't have an on/off switch. When I arrived they were permanently off, until I reported it, they replaced the heater and now it's always on! Seems like a waste of energy to me. The walls could use a lick of paint, its coming off on several spots. A chest of drawers for clothes would be useful, whereas the second wardrobe cupboard is not really needed.

Room X:

Heater isn't working well, which I believe is a general problem for Franks rooms

Room X:

Light above sink still not fixed/replaced after 3 requests last term.

Room X:

Carpet is very dirty. The heater under the window is ineffective. One wardrobe is not enough. Most of the rooms in Franks have two.

Room X:

The carpet really needs to be thoroughly cleaned, especially under the bed.

Room X:

Shelves for clothing (even just one inside the wardrobe) would be really good, and a shelf or little cupboard in the bathroom somewhere.

Green Issues:

Those that do not currently use their own bags request MORE canvas bags for the Franks Building. Recycling seems adequate but is often full.

The heating arrangements could be improved, as could the lighting (e.g. motion sensor lighting in kitchen/laundry).

I don't think residents in general understand the recycle programme as I often saw trash in recycle totes and recyclables in trash bins.

Communal Areas:

The knobs on the oven are loose, and therefore it is hard to set a temperature or tell whether it's turned off completely. Some people in the building don't treat the kitchen very well, most importantly there were four occasions where someone left food on the hobs and forgot about it, so that it would have burned if I hadn't happened to find it.

People often left used cookware and silverware unwashed in the sink and generally the kitchen has been quite dirty.

Generally ok, and kept fairly clean.

Dirty dishes are always piled in the sinks and on the counters.

Broken fridge/freezer. Oven doors don't shut properly.

Hallways could do with a repaint.

Bathroom Facilities:

The bathroom heater does not have an on/off switch and is now always on. Further, the bathroom floor is dented and squidgy.

Toilet doesn't flush very well. Not a huge issue though.

Shower drain is slow.

Cleaning:

I'm not sure how often my room is hovered; it would be good if this was done at least once a week. Otherwise the scout seems to do a fine job.

Carpet is never vacuumed properly.

Please use separate cleaning cloth when wiping toilet from that used when wiping the sink since I saw the same cleaning cloth used on both fixtures on two separate occasions.

Not sure what service standards are expected, but on the whole the cleaning in the room (carpets etc) is inadequate.

It seems to be that the shower area is not cleaned every week.

Additional Comments:

Good to finally see a review like this! An automated maintenance report system would be great, where one can e-mail maintenance issues (as opposed to writing in the book at the lodge), including replies with job acknowledgements and priority assignments.

I did not feel it was fair for me to pay the same amount of rent as many of my flatmates. My room is a lot smaller than most others' and in fact I believe it is one of the smallest of the entire building. Please review the rental costs as I think the newcomers will encounter the same feelings.

- Warmth in the room was an issue in the winter until I purchased my own heater.
- Bed provided was inadequate so I replaced it.
- There is little/no air circulation in the bathroom--a fan should be installed.
- K3 Kitchen needs another refrigerator and some means to clean it.

Light bulbs in staircases and hallways were burned out and not replaced for a long while after I logged the maintenance book and created quite some inconvenience.

Nelson Street Flats

Specific Issues:

Room X:

The air vent in the bathroom has a broken grid (so it opens all the time). No air extractor over the hobs in the kitchen.

The desk and chair is not so proper for studying/working.

Room X:

1. Fridge/freezer: doesn't work properly (i.e. freezer doesn't freeze, and fridge freezes... only 1 temperature switch for the combined unit)
2. Hob knob/dial broken off, so can't use that element
3. Peeling paint in bathroom
4. Mould/grime around back/base of toilet
5. Bathtub enamel peeling and 'dirty' looking
6. Bathroom window rotting (from outside on frame) and causes damp/condensation/mould
7. No adequate fire alarm system, nor an emergency exit key to get out of gate from building
8. Underfloor heating doesn't have thermostat. Although in working order, there is only an 'on/off' switch, and hard to maintain any comfortable temperature
9. Only one internet outlet for the entire flat - need one in each room, at least!

1. VERY dirty sofa coverings - even after washing several times, cushion covers are very dirty and stained.
2. Kitchen dining table legs very unstable and falling apart."

Green Issues:

There appear to be no canvas bags at the Nelson Street Flats but none have been requested. Recycling facilities appear to be adequate.

Communal Areas:

No air extractor over the hobs in the kitchen.

Bathroom Facilities:

The toilet and the wash basin were cracked when I received the flat. The toilet has been fixed and I was told that the wash basin would be fixed as well.

The shower is very weak.

Cleaning:

Despite paying a lot in rent each month, we don't get a cleaning service in Nelson Street flats. Looking at the list of duties that scouts are supposed to do, I would LOVE to have a scout come in bi-/weekly to help with the cleaning, as I often don't have the time given my busy work schedule.

Additional Comments:

There should be more graduate housing available for couples.

The flat was extremely dirty when I received it. There was food leftover in the fridge and the bathroom seemed like it hadn't been cleaned for months.

Lights in the staircases have been broken for months.

Worcester Cottage

Specific Issues:

Room X:

Window cracked since my arrival in October. Was reported in the beginning, someone came to have a look and nothing happened after.

Room X:

Yes, there are serious issues, but I fear the problem is irresolvable. The floor in my room is not level, so all the surfaces and furniture in the room sit at an angle. Although the housing office sent workers to adjust the bed early in Michaelmas term, the bed is still not flat. The floors are particularly troublesome for me, because I have a chronic back problem. Also, in particular, it is uncomfortable to work at my desk because the chair and desk are noticeably slanted.

Green Issues:

There appear to be NO canvas bags in Worcester Cottage. These are requested. The recycling facilities are adequate.

Communal Areas:

The kitchen is not cleaned often enough.

The fridge is too small for six people. We lack space.

We would like to have a LOUNGE facility since we do not have any yet.

Bathroom Facilities:

Cleaning:

Scout is not very regular. He comes and cleans whenever he wants (sometimes no cleaning - apart from emptying the bin - is done for 2 weeks or more).

I'm uncertain which days the scout will empty the bins or clean from one week to the next, I think this would be easy to rectify with a simple notice in the kitchen so we're all aware of when to expect what. I don't think my room is hoovered or dusted regularly, and my bathroom is not cleaned frequently enough. The kitchen cleaning has noticeably improved this term.

My bathroom has never been cleaned since the beginning of the term. And my room has been cleaned only once, so I had to do that every time by myself.

The cleaning service is irregular: it is impossible to know which day and at what time the scout will come (in fact it changes every day and week). The cleaning of the room is limited to emptying the bins and hoovering the carpet (once every two or three weeks). The bathroom has NEVER been cleaned. Finally and most importantly, if I leave the bin outside, the scout keeps knocking on the door, when in fact I do not want to be disturbed. So the two main issues with the scout are privacy and regularity of cleaning. I

would like a fixed schedule for the cleaning and privacy when I do not want to be disturbed. Thank you in advance!

Surfaces are never dusted, the bin is not emptied daily, and the scout enters the room even when the bin is placed outside the door.

Additional Comments:

Thanks for all the work that was done to get Worcester Cottage ready to such a high standard before we arrived. And thanks for all the work that has been going on in the garden this term.

There is not enough space for bikes.

Worcester House

Specific Issues:

Room X:

The sink is not terribly well fixed to the wall. This has been fixed before, and it's no longer likely to fall off, but in the long term it might be nice to fix it properly.

Wardrobe is small and there is very little drawer-storage space, but then there's not room for another piece of furniture.

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Room X:

A new bed would be nice

Room X:

The only thing is the mattress is getting quite old and lumpy. A new one would be good.

Room X:

The sink and unit and carpet could be replaced. The room needs repapering and painting.

Green Issues:

All appears to be well, the canvas bag scheme is working to reduce the number of plastic bags used and the recycling facilities are adequate. The house would like MORE canvas bags.

Communal Areas:

We only have 3 chairs in a safe condition to sit on, as well as 4 which are broken (and regularly do break if you forget as you sit on them). This is because people have taken kitchen chairs for their rooms as you the ones provided are uncomfortable, broken and you cannot be expected to work well sat at your desk on them.

The kitchen is a bit small for 9 people

The kitchen equipment is not great. The hob is temperamental and some of the rings (especially the left front) do not heat up properly. A lot of the chairs in the kitchen (and lounge) are broken, with loose seats or falling apart.

The lounge is not really a lounge. It could do with an actual sofa or two (a comfy one), and then it might get used as a social area.

Bathroom Facilities:

Simply, Worcester House needs another shower. One shower, and at that a very poor one (it takes a long time to have a shower as there is little water flow), is very difficult between 9 people, particularly in the mornings. As far as I know, no one uses the bath on the first floor. It would be much better use as another shower room.

The 1st floor toilet and bathroom have a sloping floor, and if you stand underneath them you can see the ceiling sagging. The last we heard from college was this: ""...I am sorry but have not heard about this before! I have mentioned this to David Nightingale (Head of maintenance) and in his opinion it is not something to worry about but I have requested him to show it to a building structure specialist who also works as our Clerk of Works. I will let you know of his findings and suggestion."" from Nighat, on 17th January. Also the 1st floor toilet has no hand washing sink. The bath is unused, partly because of the floor, but also because noone uses a bath in a student house, meaning all 9 of us share one shower. We'd rather have a second shower than a bath.

The second floor toilet gets cleaned daily but the shelves, and skirting boards in the room get thickly covered in dust.

The painted walls in the second floor shower-room are grimy. The shower has no pressure to it. The extractor fan was full of dust, so thick it was difficult to peel out, and does not get cleaned. Overall you leave the shower feeling grimier than when you got in. Ideally it'd be nice if it was tiled instead of the grimy brown lino it's covered in.

Cleaning:

When I moved in the room was utterly filthy, but then you've heard all about that before. The carpet is poorly vacuumed; this seems to be because the hoover provided is inefficient and doesn't pick up the dirt though, rather than the scout not vacuuming. My sink does not get cleaned.

The problems with cleanliness seem to be endemic across the graduate accommodation, not just Worcester House, suggesting a problem with the monitoring of the scout's work. It is filthy, and unacceptable to move people into rooms in that state and make them pay for it. When we moved in every surface was filthy. The walls in the hallway, bathroom and my room CHANGED COLOUR when I cleaned them. I don't actually understand how it's possible for walls to get that dirty. Skirting boards hadn't been cleaned. The floor of the kitchen gets mopped, but not always swept first, so dirt just gets rubbed into the floor. I have seen the scout vacuuming the stairs but tell-tale bits of fluff/fabric/paper don't get picked up - see previous comment regarding the vacuum cleaner provided.

Overall, we are very happy with Lawrence (the scout), who does a very good job at making Worcester House livable. The main issues are really the facilities of the house, especially the shower situation. If anything could be rectified, it would be to have new showers. Currently, Worcester House feels very below standard compared to any other College accommodation, and yet the price does not reflect this. With better washing facilities, and the ones that we, as students, need (i.e. showers) I feel the price might actually be justified.

Yes, but they look very old and dingy, which makes them look dirty however much the scout cleans.

The scout can't clean properly with the hoover that is provided and until the house is given a deep clean there is little point him doing anything other than out bins.

Additional Comments:

Plaster from the skylight over the stairs falls down sometimes when it's really bad weather. Looking at the cracks in the corner of the basement kitchen has got to raise questions about the structural safety of the house.

There is also an issue with the two bathrooms (one a toilet, the other a toilet and bath). The floor seems to have sloped downwards, and we are concerned for the structural integrity of the house in that area.
