



TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN  
**STUDENTS' UNION**

# Open Letter To Trinity College Dublin On The Housing Crisis

*Friday 10 March 2023*

Dear Provost Linda Doyle,

We are currently in the middle of a cost of living crisis and a housing emergency. TCD Students' Union (TCDSU) cannot look at the current landscape and say that Trinity College Dublin is acting with the best interests of students and staff at heart. The Dublin rental market has collapsed. Trinity has joined private student accommodation providers in exploiting the crisis. Over the last decade, it has hiked rents in Trinity-owned accommodation to extortionate prices that are unaffordable to most of its students. Our community needs an administration that acts with empathy at heart, rather than profit.

On September 8th 2022, TCDSU published an open letter demanding that the College act on the housing crisis and enable students to engage in hybrid-learning. Despite the union's best efforts in helping students find safe accommodation, we were alarmed at the sheer number of students at risk of dropping out, deferring, arriving in Dublin homeless, or commuting long distances. Our Welfare & Equality Officer stressed that hybrid learning must be urgently expanded to support the hundreds — if not thousands — of students facing the choice of abandoning their education or becoming homeless during their studies. In September, we also emphasised that hybrid learning isn't the solution to the housing crisis. It results in students being isolated from society life, sports, and campus. But we needed the College to fulfil its duty of care and provide immediate support so that its students could continue their studies.

Your TCDSU President, Education Officer, and Welfare & Equality Officer have continuously raised this issue at University Board, Student Life Committee, and other key decision-making bodies. We are disappointed in College for not prioritising student welfare, and for continuing to emphasise (as per the Senior Lecturer's email dated 26th of September) that "the University Calendar (Part II B, II. Academic Progress, paragraphs 17-25) makes clear what is expected of you in terms of attendance and the potentially very serious consequences of persistent or significant absence, which include refusal of permission to sit examinations and the requirement to repeat the year". How can we be expected to

continue our studies in the midst of a cost of living crisis that leaves so many of us far away, homeless, or struggling to pay basic expenses?

Housing is a human right. TCD Students' Union calls on Trinity College to fulfil the following six requests immediately. This is not the first time these asks have been brought to College, specifically having been presented to Student Life Committee and various other College Committees by your union representatives. The asks are reasonable and we will pursue escalated action should they not be fulfilled.

- 1. An immediate freeze on all accommodation rents and utilities for the academic year 2023/2024, to be reviewed and agreed after 2 full academic years.**
  - a. Trinity continues to [hike on-campus student accommodation prices](#). This is unacceptable. Rents need to be reduced — but all we are asking for is an immediate freeze.
  
- 2. A review of the current pricing structures in Trinity-owned Accommodation.**
  - a. As TCDSU has reiterated throughout the year to College, there is scope for varying the costs of Trinity accommodation to allow for a more financially diverse group of students to avail of it.
  - b. The first option, and most ideal scenario, would be that Trinity accommodation prices are reduced across the board. However, even if this option is not possible, alternative methods should be investigated.
  - c. A second option would be to have a sliding scale of rent prices within each area of accommodation (i.e., within Front Square, within Goldsmith Hall etc.). Despite the different accommodation types being segmented by price, there is discretion within each accommodation of the different types of rooms available. Within a particular accommodation type a student can receive a variation of accommodation set up (single bed, shared bathroom versus two single beds, ensuite etc.). A sliding scale could be enacted thereby allowing rooms with certain set-ups (single bed, shared bathroom) to be charged at a lesser rate than other rooms (two single beds, ensuite).
  - d. This model would mean that students are not segmented based on their financial ability to afford particular accommodations, allowing for an inclusive accommodation experience for students.
  
- 3. Cohesive and clear messaging from Trinity College Dublin to incoming and current students.**
  - a. Students deserve to know the reality of what they are facing before they arrive at Front Gate on the first day of Freshers' Week. Trinity College Dublin must provide standardised information to all students on the accommodation options available to them.
  
- 4. Commitment to work with the Students' Union on the [USI Cost of College Campaign](#) and Government lobbying efforts.**
  - a. The ongoing accommodation crisis has resulted in many knock-on effects that affect students. There are broader areas of concern that require legislative changes and

governmental action – and therefore should be areas of lobbying for the Trinity community as a whole.

- b. College should be proactive in its own lobbying efforts to increase public funding for higher education, and to alleviate the cost of living crisis. We should be able to collaborate on this issue and combine forces as staff and students. There is currently little to no method of strategising as a unified force. While we will certainly diverge on many issues, we urgently need an action plan as to where the College will strategise transparently and openly with the Students Union.

**5. Commitment that Trinity’s future housing developments will include the provision of family units.**

- a. Trinity students are a diverse group of people. There is a lack in the provision of family units, which needs to be addressed to cater to the needs of all students.

**6. Trinity Emergency Accommodation Protocol**

- a. We need further supports for students facing immediate homelessness. Due to the lack of streamlined protocol, students can find themselves in precarious situations due to scenarios such as stakeholders not being contactable, becoming urgently homeless outside of standard working hours, if the student lacks a support network in the country. A standardised protocol needs to be formalised to ensure the safety of students in extreme circumstances. This may include, but not be limited to, a formal protocol for circulation amongst Trinity services and staff, a specific and centralised point of contact to handle such cases, or an expanded Accommodation Advisory Service with dedicated staff for emergency scenarios.

Students will not support a college that does not prioritise housing justice. Escalated action will be taken if we do not receive further correspondence and a commitment to these demands being met by **April 1st**.

Yours Sincerely,

Gabrielle Fullam,  
President,  
TCD Students’ Union.