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Putting Students
at the Heart of
an Outstanding
University Living
Experience


QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY BACKGROUND



Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused university with **a global reputation for academic excellence**. Based in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, the University is among the top ten schools in the UK for professional employment, with nine out of ten graduates working six months after graduation. The University partners with several major employers, including Nike, IBM, Nissan, Proctor & Gamble, the BBC, and the NHS to provide internships and employment.

World-leading research and award-winning collaborations attract students from over 130 countries to Northumbria each year. **The university has invested substantially** in their academic buildings and campus accommodations to insure students have an outstanding experience.

Client CHALLENGE

Attending a university can be one of the **most stressful challenges of a young person's life**. The uncertainties of this first year can translate into poor grades, poor class attendance, feelings of isolation, health concerns and potentially an increased drop out rate – or worse. Without a comprehensive strategy to address these challenges, the student and the University fail to build a strong connection that will support the student through this new experience.

The University was looking for an facilities management partner who could work closely with stakeholders to provide a best-in-class service, enhance the student experience, address students needs and maintain maximum occupancy levels.

Sodexo SOLUTION

To ensure high user satisfaction levels, Sodexo and the University have agreed to stringent key performance indicators and introduced a robust governance process which encourages transparent reporting against a self-auditing contract.

Sodexo's approach drives:

- Student satisfaction levels
- Mitigation of student apprehension
- Optimum occupancy
- Efficient life cycle management–happy and supervised students take more pride in their environment

Partnership Overview

- Sodexo has provided facilities management services to Northumbria University since 2014, beginning with Trinity Square (993 beds)
- Due to success of Trinity Square, Sodexo was awarded FM contract for all halls in 2016
- The largest Sodexo contract in the UK and Ireland, with 8 sites, 3,300 beds
- Oxford House encompasses Sodexo building design consultation as well as FM
 - 329 students in over 120 studios
 - 209 cluster rooms in cluster flats of 4, 6 and 8 sharing.

Scope of Services

- Facilities Management
- Asset Management/Sales
- Plant Operations and Maintenance
- Housekeeping
- Student Experience Programming
- Lease Management
- Security
- Pastoral Support
- Help Desk
- Facility design consultation

Community Outreach

- Partner with local retailers and businesses to provide valuable incentives that engage students with the city
- Invite local artists and schools to participate in an art show with winning entries displayed at Oxford House
- Preservation of historic John Dobson house incorporated as feature into the new Oxford House facility

STUDENT LIVING by Sodexo Begins Long Before Classes Do

Navigating a new city and sharing housing with strangers, taking rigorous classes, and developing new social relationships on campus can seem daunting for students living independently for the first time. Sodexo's student experience program, called **Student Living by Sodexo**, goes beyond simply managing facilities. It employs strategies and services to help students feel at home and succeed both academically and socially.

First step: matching students with the right roommate(s). This is critical to making housing an overall positive experience. To help find the right match and lessen student anxiety before arrival, Sodexo developed a flat-mate finder system. It guides student through a matching process, then using social media invites students to meet each other in advance of coming to the university. They can start to build relationships, even before they set foot on campus.

Sodexo recognizes that pre-arrival engagement is fundamental to ensuring that students feel welcome, prepared and ready for independent living.

Home Away from Home

Once on campus, some students need support in developing skills to help them live independently. Once again, **Student Living by Sodexo** is there to help students bridge that transition, such as cooking classes taught by Sodexo chefs to help students gain basic cooking knowledge. And because many students are just learning to manage money on their own, Sodexo also offers budgeting classes to help students grow their financial acumen and life skills.

These unique services reflect Sodexo's passion for helping students achieve the best possible quality of life, even after they have graduated. Residency Living Manager Tom Martin explains, **"It's exciting because we have an opportunity to actually change students' lives, save lives, educate them, ensure that they're getting all the necessary help. They spend more time in their accommodation than they do in their institutions...we have an opportunity to model and mold our residents to learn, to educate, to understand, to be independent and better people."**

And according to Martin, helping students feel at home doesn't just make them happy, it is also **good for retention**. "We want to make this the best experience we can...if we can do anything to ensure that our residents feel comfortable, feel secure, feel safe, and feel that they're making friends, that's a huge benefit to both the University and us as the service provider... but also hopefully they will want to stay in accommodation for a second, third, fourth year."

Sacha Russel, a 3rd year nursing student, agrees that Sodexo's services and amenities keep students coming back. "After my first year at Trinity Square, **I decided to renew my tenancy** and stay for an additional year. It's in a very convenient location with great amenities. The entire staff makes an effort to get to know students, including management. Security is onsite 24/7 making Trinity Square a very safe place to live."

“What is unique to Sodexo is the service that we deliver, to our students and to our clients.

We want to make this the best experience we can...if we can do anything to ensure that our residents feel comfortable, feel secure, feel safe, and feel that they're making friends, that's a huge benefit to both of us...”

- Tom Martin, Residency Living Manager
Universities, Student Living by Sodexo

FORWARD-LOOKING Governance and Strategy

Northumbria University stakeholders see real value in its solid relationship with Sodexo that has developed through the company's participative management style and open channels of communication.

A monthly meeting with a structured agenda provides the opportunity to discuss the business plan against activity and to monitor compliance against the agreed KPIs. Sodexo also uses this opportunity to discuss new ways of working and innovation to support the entire University estate. Sodexo manage this process through student surveys, listening days, and monthly meetings with student reps through the Student Union, "Check Out" leaver's satisfaction cards and a reception suggestion box.

Twice a year, Sodexo conducts a formal detailed student survey and build recommendations into future business plans. Creating a sense of social spirit and encouraging student participation is woven through the company's Student Experience strategy.

Lastly, Sodexo and Northumbria jointly prepare an **annual review workshop**, which includes both companies' executive teams to create future strategy share best practices, learn stakeholder expectations and discuss business requirements.

"What you find with students and accommodation, their expectations in the UK have increased exponentially over the past few years," says Damon Kent, Director of Campus Services at Northumbria. "They want enhanced services, they want communal services and they want somewhere to live and be at home while they're here at university. Our partnership with Sodexo helps us deliver that."

The additional benefit is happier first-year students returning to on-campus accommodations for a second, third and fourth year, increasing retention rates. "Most students in the UK tend to go to private accommodation in their second and third year," notes Kent. "We're seeing an increase in students wanting to stay in university-managed accommodation."

Student accommodation is a unique offering, because students spend more time in their living quarters than in the classrooms. Not only are Sodexo's services designed to be as unique as the students it serves, the Sodexo management team has instilled a sense of caring in all employees. This level of connection ensures the best customer service and best experience Student Living can offer. When every Sodexo team member is a "Customer Care Representative" who truly care about the students and the services they deliver it shows. Many students report how remarkable it is that Sodexo team members take the time to talk and get to know their name.

“The maintenance staff are always helpful and will try to resolve any problems quickly and with a smile! I have really enjoyed my time at Trinity Square and am looking to stay here for my post graduate studies.”

- **Chloe Taylor '21**
Early years and disability studies student
Northumbria University.

“Most students in the UK tend to go to private accommodation in their second and third year... [because of experience created through Student Living by Sodexo] we're seeing an increase in students wanting to stay in university-managed accommodation.”

- **Damon Kent**, Director of Campus Services,
Northumbria University.

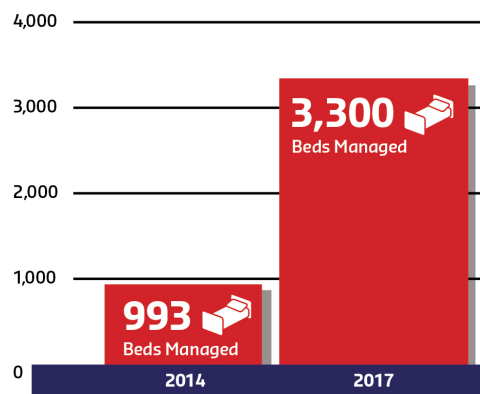
OXFORD HOUSE

DESIGNING QUALITY OF LIFE from the GROUND UP

Our relationship and results for Northumbria have create another opportunity for Sodexo to create **the optimal student experience**.

Before breaking ground on its Oxford House student housing, Northumbria University turned to Sodexo to consult with the University, architect and builder to ensure that an outstanding student experience was at the center of the facility's design and function.

Sodexo leveraged its expertise in student living and facilities management to help guide the project and inform key decisions which resulted in a facility that not only functions well, but supports students' personal growth and social interaction.



From the moment they enter the ground floor, students are met with **inviting open spaces and amenities** like study pods, a cinema room, gaming area and an outdoor courtyard, all of which foster student interaction. According to Jill Sarginson General Manager Universities, Oxford House, these common spaces have been "... **deliberately planned** so that students will always feel part of the community because they always have to pass through this social area in order to get to the block where they live. It's **promoting the social side of living here.**"

By engaging Sodexo's knowledge of what students want early in the development process, the university created a space with innovative details that make living at Oxford House convenient and comfortable. From cutting edge 24-hour security protocols to small room details like extra storage and well-placed outlets to support multiple electronic devices. Sarginson can **literally see Sodexo's fingerprint on the design**. "There's been a lot of thought put into the building...they've actually listened to what students are looking for when they go into a building to live...the details really stand out."

Engaging Sodexo as a consultant at the conceptual phase ensures that **our expertise** in Student Living service integration **is embedded** from the front of the house to each individual space. This type of design-manage-operate collaboration is the future of accommodation and facility management. Sodexo is poised to maximize the attraction/retention power of its university partners around the world.

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- Jill Sarginson, General Manager Universities,
Oxford House

Sources and Footnotes

This document was originally written October 2017

Northumbria University website, <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk>

Case Study: Northumbria University, Student Living by Sodexo

Interviews: Damon Kent, Northumbria

Tom Martin, Sodexo

Jill Sarginson, Sodexo

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