



Integration the key to student security

University of Birmingham - case study

The University of Birmingham educates over 30,000 students, with more than 6,000 doors providing access to student accommodation. Gallagher's integrated access control solution is responsible for providing operational continuity and creating a safe and secure environment for residents.

The University recently completed its new state-of-the-art student accommodation development, Chamberlain, which consists of a 19-storey tower and three low-rise blocks. An essential requirement was an integrated access control system, reducing the need for keys. Timothy Owen, General Manager of Student Accommodation at the University says, "We wanted to move away from using keys as students are prone to losing them and trying to manage thousands of locks and associated keys was a constant administration and financial drain."

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In order to minimise the complexity of managing a new system, the University required a solution that integrated with, or was an extension of, their existing campus access control and accommodation management systems. "We need to maintain control over access to our buildings, while ensuring a duty of care to our residents and staff so that they can go about their business as required," says Timothy. "Fundamentally, we needed a system that gives both us and our resident's confidence in the security of the accommodation."

Adaptable access solutions

A large and complex estate with buildings of different construction and age, the University needed a solution that was flexible enough to accommodate their unique requirements. Gallagher Command Centre, together with the Aperio® wireless locking technology by ASSA ABLOY Access Control, was selected as the University's preferred choice, meeting their security needs in a cost effective way while still delivering to the overall specification.

Timothy says, "The completion of our new state of the art Chamberlain development was extremely close to the date of the first student arrival, so the team had to be dedicated and work flexibly to ensure it was ready in time – which it was."



Fast facts

Industry: Education

No. of doors: 6000

Number of buildings: Three low rise blocks, a 19-storey tower and six crescents

Greatly improved student experience

The Gallagher Command Centre integration allows for the access key and student ID to be combined in to one card, offering a number of benefits to both students and staff.

Previously the accommodation arrival process required students to arrive at the University with their contracts and queue up so that a member of staff could sign them in manually and hand them the keys to their accommodation. From there students could head to their room.

"Arrivals is always a busy time but with the help of the Gallagher solution we've not only improved the student experience but also the administration process," says Timothy. "Now the student ID and accommodation key is encoded on to one card so it can be posted out in advance and access to the room automatically granted via the accommodation management system. Students no longer need to queue for keys, can get to their rooms instantly, and spend more time enjoying their arrival experience."

Duty of care

The simple act of swiping an access card automatically checks the student in and a report can be generated to show who has arrived and who hasn't, allowing staff to follow up accordingly. If the room is no longer required it can be quickly and easily re-allocated to another student, resulting in improved occupancy rates.

Using Gallagher Command Centre together with the University's accommodation management system allows staff to check on the well-being of students by monitoring the use of their access card.

The University also houses students under the age of 18, and one of the safeguarding requirements is that the University can monitor their whereabouts on a daily basis. Timothy adds, "This can be difficult to achieve with many students to track, but Gallagher Command Centre can easily confirm the time and location of our resident's last door access, providing peace of mind that students who may be uncontactable are in fact on site."

University staff are also seeing positive improvements since the installation of the new system – particularly at the start of the year. The arrivals process is now less congested and more relaxed. The team have far fewer issues than with physical keys, enabling them to spend more time on the overall student experience.

Since the installation of the first 800 bedrooms at Chamberlain, the University has already extended the system by a further 900 at Mason, with plans in place for an additional 1500 bedrooms this summer.



Creating business value

"Replacing keys with a combined access and student ID card has reduced our operational costs as we now have far fewer keys to purchase and store," explains Timothy. "The student experience has improved and staff are now free to deal with urgent matters and offer a more personal service. We can easily create reports to help us audit access and have generally provided a much more modern and secure place to live and work."

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