

## Accommodation Survey 2010 Results

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### Background Information:

The accommodation survey, approved by the JCR Committee and General Purposes Committee, aimed to ascertain the opinion of the undergraduate body on various issues concerning College accommodation. It was hoped that it could be used to aid rent negotiations in Lent 2011, as well as be a general indicator for both the JCR Committee and College as to the aspirations for future room projects.

The choice to carry out a survey, and particularly online, was the result of poor participation in JCR meetings and elections. Though it is unanimously agreed that this is due to relative content in JCR and College policy (with no controversial motions being submitted for open meetings), a new way of ascertaining JCR opinion needs to be found.

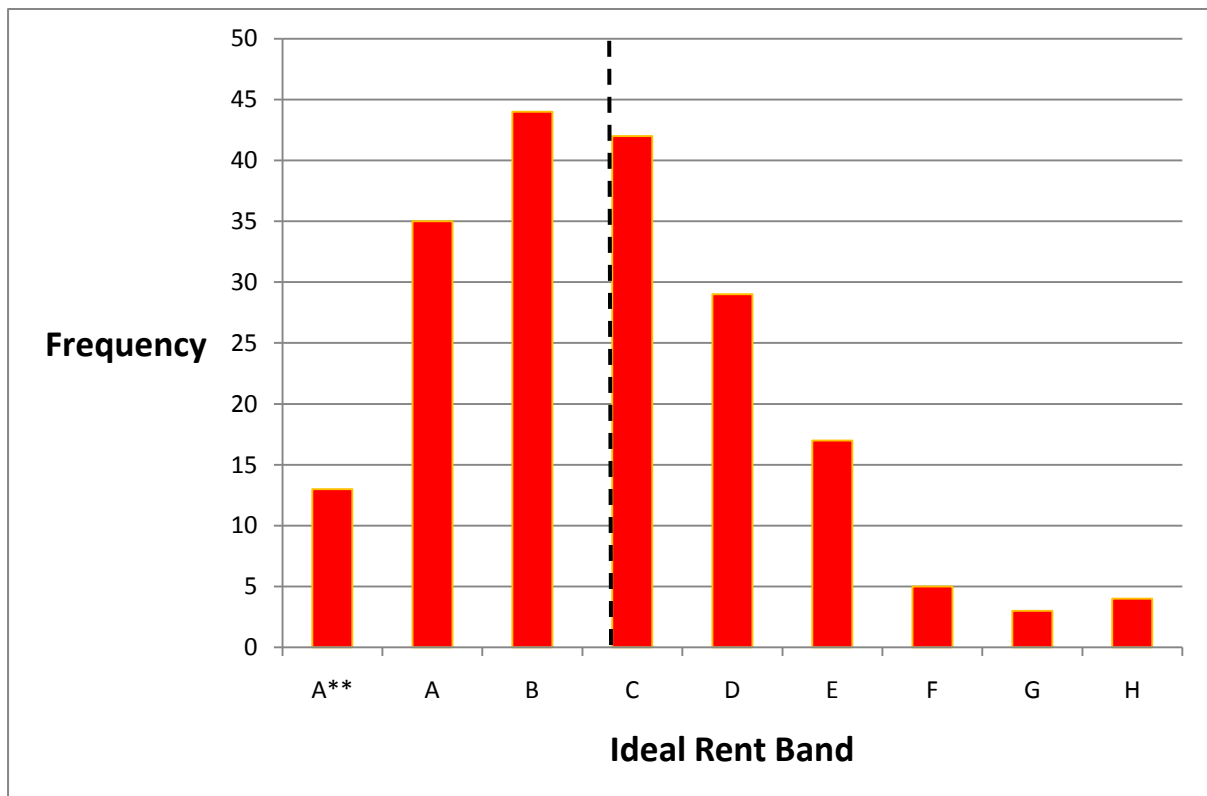
The survey was carried out online using the website ballotbin.com, and managed by the JCR Internet Officer, James McGinnigle, in liaison with the JCR President. It was carried out between the 24<sup>th</sup> November and the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2010 (Week 8 of Michaelmas term).

### Survey Results:

204 students (out of a JCR body of 428 members – 48%) participated in the survey. 115 Male, and 89 female.

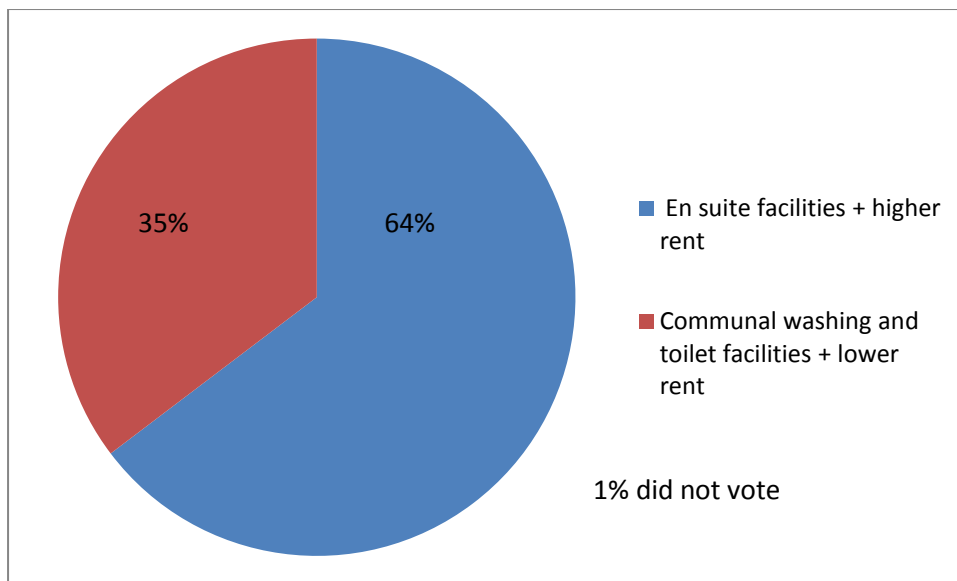
I have chosen to expand on the four questions which I believe allow for clear and useful conclusions to be drawn. The raw data can be found in Appendix One.

Figure 1. What would be your ideal rent band at Downing?



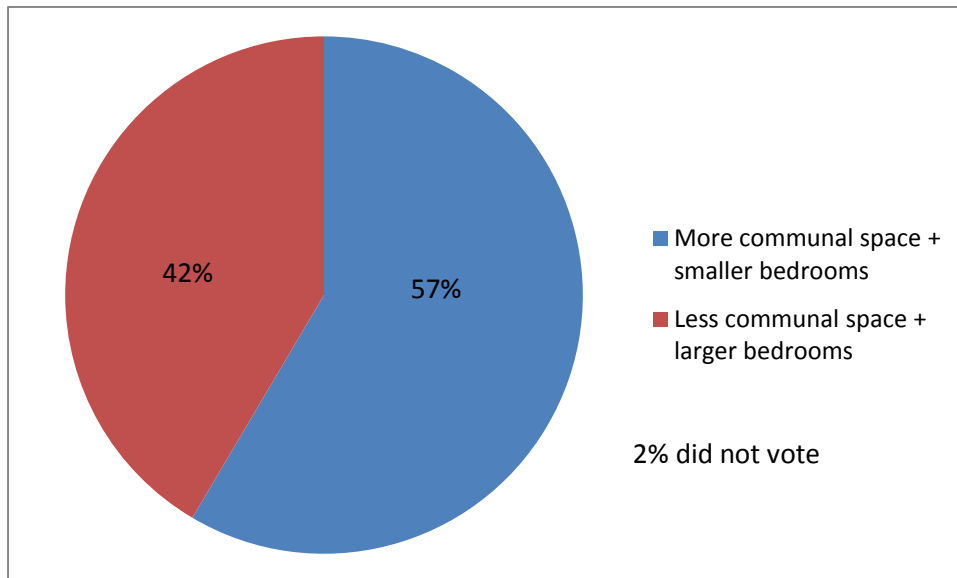
The mean for these data is indicated by the black dotted line, with C rent band currently being at £107/week. At present, there are 273 rooms (67% of 410 rooms available) available which are either B, C or D rent band, reflecting pretty well the 57% of students who would prefer those rent bands. An interesting point to note is that 72% of students would be happy to spend the entirety of a maintenance loan on rent for a year (C band and above). It would interesting to know how many students use their maintenance loan (if they have one) to pay their rent, or receive support for this from parents. Overall then, current college provision seems to match demand from the student body.

Figure 2. Preference for En-suite accommodation or communal bathrooms:



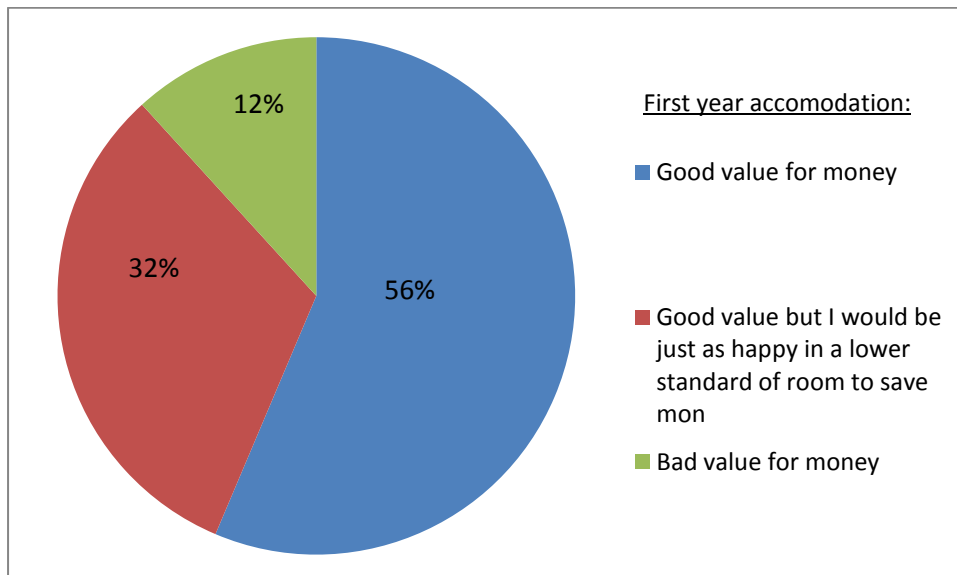
This question was asked in response to concern from the JCR Committee that future accommodation developments might comprise more of the more expensive en suite accommodation. The results clearly show that this would not be a problem, and there is enough provision of rooms with communal bathrooms on Lensfield Road and on college staircases.

Figure 3. Preference for communal space over bedroom size:



The preference for communal space above (though not as defined as that for en suite bathrooms) points to the enjoyment that is gained by those living in houses which have larger kitchens, such as 58, 36 and 38 Lensfield, as well as the kitchen refurbishments in J, K and M. It is recommended that the College consider this in future housing redecorations, particularly in houses such as 40-44, where kitchen space is limited, but some rooms are larger in size.

Figure 4. Opinion on 1<sup>st</sup> Year Accommodation:



This question was suggested by the JCR Committee on the back of concern that Freshers are not given enough opportunity to live in cheaper accommodation, such as that available in J and some rooms in L. Though students are happy with value for money, the fact that a third of students would be happy in cheaper first year accommodation should be taken into consideration. For example, I Staircase could be made available to freshers, and one of the Kenny's could be made available for the ballot.

## General Conclusions:

A key issue with the results is that it was later ascertained that data could not be attributed to each individual voter, and all data were stored separately on the website. This prevented any analysis of how current accommodation, as well as gender, affected decision making. If future surveys are to be carried out online, a solution to this needs to be found, perhaps by using a different website, or setting up our own survey system on the JCR website.

I was hoping that some trend would be seen between current rent band and spending, as well as to what extent students have ended up in their desired accommodation, but due to the problem explained above, this has not been possible. This largely renders the results uninformative for rent negotiations, other than those in Figure 1.

However, though the results from this survey have been mixed, and hindered by data collection, there are some key points that should be taken from it.

1. Students are happier in general paying higher rents, demonstrated by Figures 1 and 2.
2. Students would largely be happy for future accommodation developments to be geared towards a conferencing standard of rooms, though with communal space.
3. The possibility of changing the accommodation available to freshers should be looked into, especially considering the cross-year participation that contributes successfully to Downing's ethos.
4. The participation in this survey was more than the participation in the first round of JCR elections in 2010 (193) and 10 times the size of the last JCR Open Meeting. Added to this is the fact that more concerns regarding JCR policy are aired on the JCR website nowadays rather than in JCR meetings. The next JCR may wish to explore the use of surveys and online resources more regularly, and perhaps change the format of JCR Open Meetings. What would this involve?
  - Altering the constitution to allow for the use of online surveys, and developing a more long term solution on the JCR website. There are a number of JCR members who would be capable of creating such a solution, but it is important to get them involved in the JCR.
  - There should be a quicker mechanism for approving surveys through GPC. The approval of this survey took two GPC meetings (though this was certainly necessary considering the content of the survey). For example, the JCR Executive could clear the content of a survey purely with Senior College Officers.
  - The JCR would need the ability to carry out a survey in a short space of time. This would allow a survey to be carried out on the back of a motion being submitted for a JCR or DCAC Open Meeting.