



White Paper

Guide: Halls of Residence

ASSA ABLOY
Opening Solutions

How to approach accommodation security upgrades in education establishments?

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Introduction

Schools, colleges and universities are confronted with the challenging task of securing their campuses. In recent times there has been drastic cuts to education funding, the fallout of this has left universities with the unavoidable need to prioritise activities based on the limited budget available. Security is just one of many elements competing for budget within educational establishments. Consequently, when making security decisions, campuses need to ask the question, "What requires the most protection?"

Naturally, students are the core of any campus community and are one of the highest priorities. It goes without saying that schools, colleges and universities are expected to provide a safe, educational environment in which students can learn and develop. When students reside in educational dwellings, this responsibility extends to living quarters around the clock. However, the work behind the scenes that needs to take place in order to achieve this is extensive.

According to recent research by StuRents, students live in areas that experience 2.5 times more crime than residents of England and Wales as a whole, with crimes taking place around hubs of student accommodation. Therefore, any discussion about security for boarding schools, colleges or universities must begin with the accommodation, as this is the place students call home while on campus, and it should provide the same level of security as any other home.

In this guide we explore what needs to be taken into consideration in the education sector when upgrading security within residential buildings.



Where to start...

If you work at an educational establishment, whether large or small, urban or rural, you will know that the decision to upgrade security is one that is not made lightly; particularly as the process can be extremely intensive. However, with StuRents reporting that student areas average at 248 crimes per thousand residents (the national average is 99) upgrading security is currently high on the agenda for the student accommodation market.

Security managers have to ask a number of questions, that often lead to more and more questions before they begin to ascertain answers. Questions such as: Where should we start? How many student accommodation buildings should we upgrade at one time? Should the security upgrade be campus-wide or should it be rolled out in phases? Finally, and possibly most crucially, what sort of technology should we use?

Before these questions can be addressed, it is important to recognise that every educational establishment and campus is unique. Consequently, there are no outright, one-size-fits-all rules when it comes to upgrading security within residences. However, institutions can employ the following stages as a basis to come up with an appropriate solution.

Stage 1: Choose the most suitable partners for your facilities' requirements

The first and perhaps most important step in your security upgrade will be the selection of suitable partners. It is a manufacturers' job to sell the benefits of the products and solutions they offer. Therefore, discussions with sales representatives have a tendency to centre on their efforts to entice you to make a purchase. However, in order to uncover if there is any substance behind the sales patter, you can dig deeper by asking the right questions.

To gain an understanding into what the company will be like to work with on site, request details of the organisations' support offerings and ask for examples of projects. Some companies may be able to provide you with testimonials from their customers, however you may want to take it one step further and ask for references. You wouldn't hire an employee without

speaking to former colleagues of the individual beforehand; the same degree of scrutiny should be employed when selecting something as important as a security solution.

Ask for examples of challenges that have been encountered during previous projects and how the company helped to address and resolve the issues.

Find out if the manufacturer intends to just supply a product, or whether they will be on hand to provide you with a tailored product and service that is suitable for your specific project requirements. Working with a company that intends to work closely with you throughout the specification, installation and maintenance of a security upgrade will help to ensure that any issues with your project are overcome as quickly as possible.

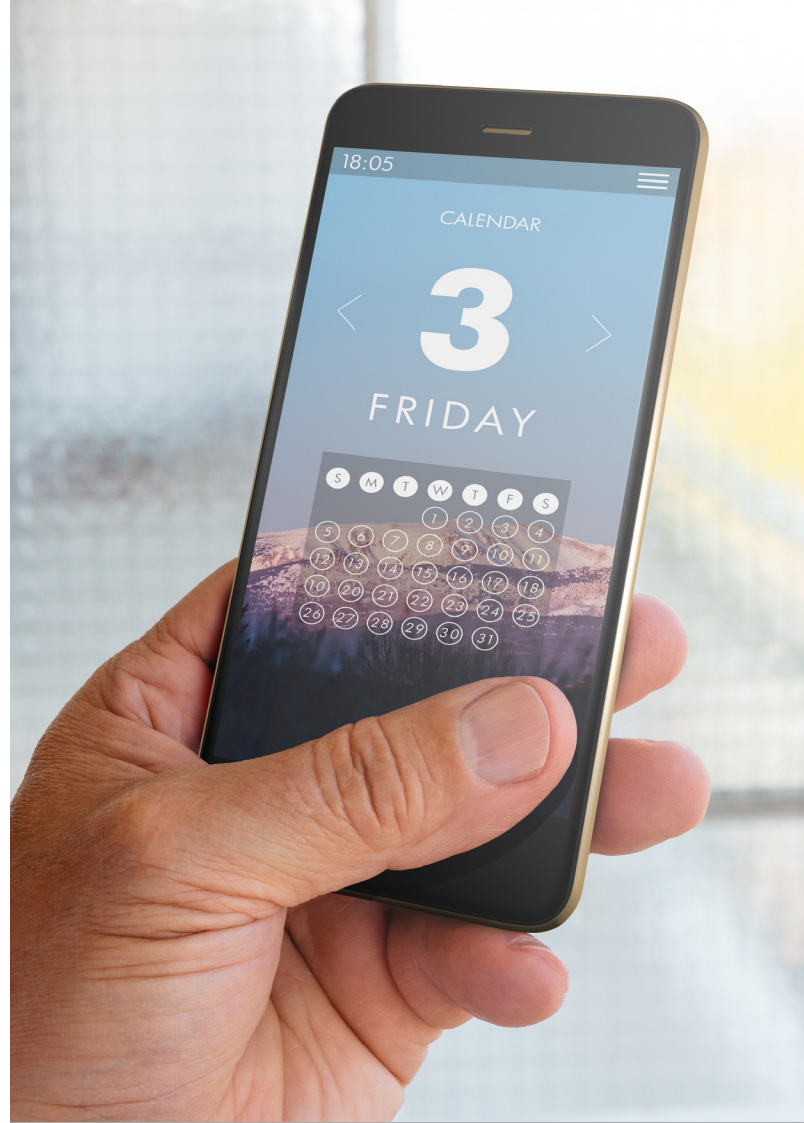


Stage 2: Create a schedule for the upgrades

Timing is the next area that requires consideration. It is essential to map out a comprehensive schedule, which will be informed by whether the upgrade is campus wide or in phases.

Scheduling an upgrade has become more difficult due to the multi-purpose nature of schools and universities. For example, halls of residence are being increasingly rented out as accommodation in the summer months, as a way for the university to raise additional funds. The long summer holidays used to be ideal for maintenance and improvement projects, however this is now a thing of the past.

In order to make the most of the time you do have, detailed scheduling needs to take place, which calculates how many units will be installed per day. With the right level of consideration, planning and collaboration from all parties involved, it may even be feasible to upgrade security with the students present in the resident halls.



Stage 3: Consider future proofing

As technology is advancing rapidly and new products are launched every day, it is best practice to think about the upgrade path of a security system at the beginning of a security upgrade. As we have already established, upgrading security in any building is a major undertaking, one you probably don't want to have to repeat in the near future. In order to ensure that you do not commit to a solution that is likely to become obsolete quickly, select a solution that can support your growth and future technologies.

According to UCAS, early indicators show a rise in 2016 university applications, which may increase the demand for universities to build new halls of residences. It is essential that student accommodation providers consider security systems that are adaptable for extensions. Choosing a system that benefits from open software will provide more flexibility and enable the integration of third party products. This will help education establishments to react faster to changing security demands. During the service life of a security system, it is also likely that new regulations or security threats will emerge. Investing in future-proof security solutions will help to mitigate longer-term risks in student accommodation.



Stage 4: Walk your buildings

A site survey is critical. Just assessing one door and then assuming every door is the same is a mistake. A thorough walk through of halls of residences will alert you to a host of issues, particularly in older buildings, that may present serious challenges that have the potential to set your project back significantly if not accounted for. Anticipating risks will help security system suppliers to advise of the most effective measures to mitigate them.

Each safety or security challenge is unique; therefore the customer must help the security suppliers understand how the layout of a building relates to:

WHO can enter a protected area.

WHERE individuals can go within a building.

WHEN individuals can enter a protected area.

HOW an individual can gain entry to a protected area.

For example, within university halls of residence there is often a mix of public and private spaces. Estates and facilities managers are charged with the difficult task of allowing a level of freedom of movement and restricting access to sensitive areas. From securing personal possessions in student bedrooms, to allowing the right level of access to communal areas, halls of residences present a wide spectrum of security issues and require specific solutions. Site surveys will help to determine the different levels of security required to protect students and staff in student accommodation.



Madeira Road halls of residence - Arts University Bournemouth (AUB)

Conclusion

The most effective access control solutions come as a result of collaboration between the supplier, and the customer. When choosing manufacturers and installers, choose wisely. You are not just selecting a technology; you are embarking on what will hopefully be a long-term and productive partnership. It is essential that everyone shares the same objectives and works as a team, regardless of whether things are going smoothly or if problems are being encountered along the way. The ability to overcome challenges as a collaborative team is essential to the success of security upgrades that will work well in to the future.

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