



**UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO
GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION**

Research Report for Council

Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

July 2021

Prepared by
Onurcan Gokkaya

Contents

- Purpose..... 3
- On-Campus Accommodation for Graduate Students 3
 - Columbia Lake Village..... 4
 - St. Paul's University College 4
- Affordability..... 5
 - Columbia Lake Village Fees..... 5
 - St. Paul University College Fees 6
 - On-Campus Accommodation Fees Across Ontario..... 7
 - A Co-Operative Example from Concordia Student Union..... 9
- On-Campus Accommodation Availability 9
 - Graduate Families..... 9
 - Single Graduate Students..... 10
 - Off-Campus Renting and/or Subletting..... 10
- Application Process of On-Campus Accommodation..... 11
- CLV at Glance: 12
 - Community Support 12
 - Amenities..... 12
- Living On-Campus During a Pandemic 13
- Demographics of Columbia Lake Village..... 14
- Pros 15
- Cons 16
- Recommendations 17
 - For Campus Housing and University of Waterloo..... 17
 - Graduate Student Association 19
 - For Graduate Families..... 20
 - For Single Graduate Students..... 20
- The Mission..... 20
- Bibliography 21

Purpose

After getting through a rigorous application process to get into one of the top universities, the hustle is not over yet. Thousands of students come from across Canada and the world to Kitchener-Waterloo (KW) region every year and they look for accommodation that could entirely change one's experience.

The demand for accommodation in KW is enormous¹ due to three higher education institutions in the area: the University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College. One should be aware of the difference between Kitchener and Waterloo. Even though the region is generally called together, their municipal legislation is separate. To have a better idea of the municipal housing issue in KW, we highly encourage students to look at the Municipal Housing Issues Research (2020)² <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/GSA-Research-Housing-Issues.pdf>, Analysis of the GSA (2020) Vital Signs Survey³ <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/Vital-Signs-2020-Report.pdf>, and GSA Housing Survey Analysis (2021)⁴ <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/Housing-Experience-Survey-Report.pdf>

Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience research mainly focuses on living on-campus experiences for graduate students and families. For the living on-campus options, uWaterloo provides several single rooms for full-time single graduate students and eighty-two entire townhouses for graduate families; however, the availability of family townhouses is a very big problem.

The purpose of this research is (1) to layout the process and opportunities of getting on-campus accommodation for graduate students and families, (2) identify the pros and cons of living on-campus, (3) compare these opportunities with other universities across Ontario, (4) propose recommendations to improve the service of on-campus accommodation.

The report is concluded with key considerations and recommendations. We hope people reading this report will have a broad idea about living on-campus at the uWaterloo and recognize the areas that could be improved.

On-Campus Accommodation for Graduate Students

Housing or lack of it is an issue concerning many people cost-to-cost in Canada⁵, and Waterloo-Kitchener is not an exception. The rise in rent prices creates an additional cost to the students every year. Amid a housing crisis, on-campus living could be the gateway for students since they have the potential of providing high-quality, affordable, and secure accommodation.

However, when it comes to the living on-campus option, students do not have many choices; graduate students or families must choose either Columbia Lake Village (CLV) or St. Paul's University College (St. Paul). Only CLV is run by Campus Housing Department. Also considering the number of available beds and competitive prices, Columbia Lake Village becomes the prominent option.

¹ Bhavsar, K., & Bajwa, P. (2021, February 5). Why Kitchener/Waterloo is a Great Place to Invest. FiveWalls. <https://www.fivewalls.com/articles/why-kitchener-waterloo-is-a-great-place-to-buy-property-real-estate>.

² Revington N., McCulley A. (2020) Municipal Housing Issues, retrieved from: <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/GSA-Research-Housing-Issues.pdf>

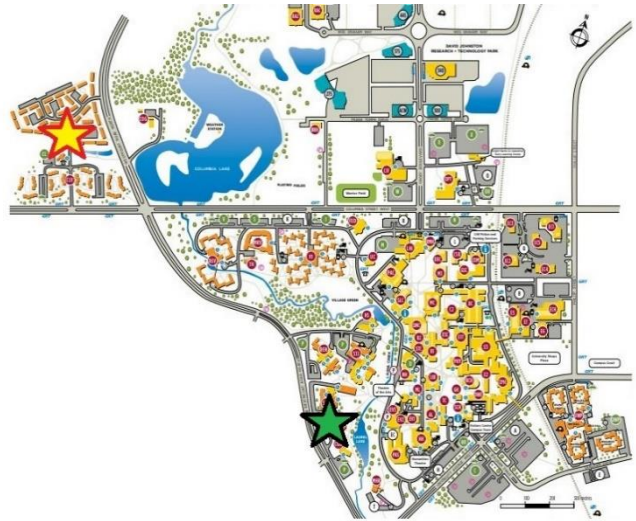
³ Salahub C., (2020) <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/Vital-Signs-2020-Report.pdf>

⁴ Salahub C., (2021) <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gsa-uw/Housing-Experience-Survey-Report.pdf>

⁵ Gordon, J. (2020). Reconnecting the Housing Market to the Labour Market: Foreign Ownership and Housing Affordability in Urban Canada. *Canadian Public Policy*, 46(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2019-009>

Columbia Lake Village

Columbia Lake Village (CLV) is located just beside Columbia Lake which is facing the university's main campus. From CLV to the faculties approximately takes twenty-five minutes on foot. The distance between CLV and the main campus is about two kilometres. This could be an advantage for some students who want to live in a peaceful environment surrounded by natural beauties, but this could be also hustle for students who do not have a car: reaching uptown Kitchener and university campus could take some time. During the daytime, CLV offers a shuttle service between CLV and Campus to short the travelling time (this service is temporarily terminated due to Covid-19).



Families and Single Graduate Students

Figure 1 University of Waterloo Campus Map; Yellow Star represents CLV and Green Star represents St. Paul. Yellow buildings are the main campus

CLV offers two types of accommodation: a single room and an entire townhouse. Single graduate students can rent a room in CLV North (2-bedroom townhouses) and CLV South (4-bedroom townhouses).

Families can rent one of the entire townhouses in CLV North if there is a vacancy. Please have a look at the availability section to better understand the availability of these townhouses. There are currently 430 beds available for graduate students who want to rent a room in CLV and 82 townhouses available for graduate families.⁶

Columbia Lake Village is only available for full-time uWaterloo Students. They can find more information about CLV on and apply through this website: <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/residences/columbia-lake-village>

St. Paul's University College

St. Paul's apartments are available to graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and visiting professors at uWaterloo. 1- and 2-bedrooms apartments could be rented by graduate students, however, on-campus accommodations are run on a first-come-first-serve basis, and the availability of an apartment is not guaranteed.

The other type of accommodation that St Paul offering is Suit and Private rooms: economy suit, 2-bedroom suite, 3-bedroom suite, and private room. Students can find more information about St. Paul on and apply through this website: <https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/suites-private-rooms-grad-apartments>

⁶ University of Waterloo Campus Housing (2021) Grad and Family Occupancy Numbers, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

Affordability

According to Zumper⁷, a real estate company, and Numbeo,⁸ the cost of renting a one-bedroom apartment in Kitchener is about \$1400 per month. The average 1-bedroom rent was around \$1047 in 2016⁹. This illustrates the increasing cost of living the university students must challenge with.

Renting an off-campus room or a private apartment greatly varies depending on several factors such as the location, condition, services, and floor/room plan. Market places and real estate websites should be good resources to look for a place in KW. Kijiji, Realtor, Facebook Marketplace, uWaterloo off-campus housing webpage, View It, Padmapper, and private Facebook Groups are the major websites that one could look at. You can see more information about the websites in the availability section.

Columbia Lake Village Fees

Single Room in a Town House	Fall	Winter	Spring
CLV South 4 beds	\$3,832	\$2,554	\$2,554
CLV North 2 beds	\$3,192	\$3,192	\$3,192

This price includes electricity, water, heat, internet, help desk (day-time), 24/7 maintenance and duty phone, 24/7 campus police, lounges, meeting/study rooms, game rooms, laundry room (CLV North has its own laundry machine in each unit, but CLV South residence need to use laundry room which is located at Community Centre).¹⁰

All residence could also entitle a 6 to 18% discount if they choose to have a meal plan along with their room. The meal plan is not included in the rent price.

Columbia Lake Village Family Town House Fee (2-bedroom)

Entire Town House	Monthly
CLV North (Families / 2 Bedroom)	\$1,306

The \$1,306 is for the entire townhouse. If families compare this price with off-campus options, they will find this price well below the market.

Note: Single rooms at Columbia Lake Village are rented as a 4-month contract. Current students have an option to extend or terminate their contract at the end of each semester.

⁷ Average Rent in Waterloo, ON and Cost Information. Zumper. (2021). <https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/waterloo-on>.

⁸ Cost of Living in Waterloo (2021). <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Waterloo>.

⁹ Zumper, 2021.

¹⁰ Campus Housing. (2021). Graduate, Optometry, & Student Families. Campus Housing. <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/graduate-housing>.

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

Note II: After graduation, students may extend their contract for one more term at CLV.

Note III: Parking Fees are not included in all uWaterloo residences. One must pay extra for parking.

St. Paul University College Fees

At St. Paul, rent includes heat, electricity, water, internet, common space usage, air conditioning, and laundry facility. They have a promotion for people who rent for three consecutive terms as could be seen at the table below.¹¹ The 3-term promotion provides a very good price tag for students who consider living for a longer period.

Each type of accommodation has its unique features; however, renting terms are not as flexible as Columbia Lake Village. More information about unit types could be found on this webpage:

<https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/suites-private-rooms-grad-apartments>

Unit Type	Rent
1-Bedroom Apartment	\$1,297 per month
2/2-Bedroom Apartment	\$1,633 per month

	If you rent 3-terms per room	Regular Rate for 2-terms contract per room
Economy Suite	\$3,200 per person per term	\$4,782 per person per term
2-Bedroom Suite	\$3,361 per person per term	\$4,930 per person per term
3-Bedroom Suite	\$3,200 per person per term	\$4,782 per person per term
Private Room (with bathroom, microwave and bar fridge; access to the shared kitchen)	\$3,361 per person per term	\$4,930 per person per term
*There are three terms in one academic year at uWaterloo: Winter, Fall, and Spring: each is 4 months long.		

The 3-term promotion option should be good for students who want to live in KW for a minimum of 12 months. Renting a longer time could be a problem for some students. Please look at the "Sublet" section to learn the option to live in KW for a short time.

¹¹ St. Paul University College. (2019). Suites, private rooms, grad apartments. St. Paul's University College. <https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/suites-private-rooms-grad-apartments>.

On-Campus Accommodation Fees Across Ontario

To better understand uWaterloo's fees for the residence, we would like to show the other fees across Ontario. The University of Laurier might be a great example to compare prices since it is also located in Kitchener. However, please do double-check the utility, service, or any additional fees when you do your price match.

- **University of Laurier Graduate On-Campus Fees**

Dormitory Style	Per Term	Dormitory Style / Semi-Private	Per Term
Single Room	\$3,235.88	Single Room	\$4,056.80
Double Room	\$3,235.88	Double Room	\$4,056.80

Apartment Style	Per Term
Ensuite* Single Room	\$4,558.54
Regular Single Room	\$3,687.83

* Ensuite room includes a private bathroom inside the room and a shared kitchen.

The University of Laurier would be a great example to compare accommodation prices in Waterloo since Laurier is very close to uWaterloo. Laurier's regular single room is \$143 more expensive than CLV North's regular room.¹² On top of that, while Laurier offers apartment-style accommodation, CLV North offers a townhouse; therefore, uWaterloo has a more private living environment.

However, Laurier's location is very close to the city centre, and that could be a good advantage for students.

- **University of Toronto Graduate On-Campus Fees**

Types of Room	Monthly
Regular Single Room	\$1,203
Premium Single Room	\$1,344
Double Room (Two same-gendered occupants in a large bedroom)	\$920

University of Toronto's (UofT) regular single room price is \$405 more expensive per month than CLV North.¹³ However, one should be aware of UofT's location. The university is in downtown Toronto which is considered one of the most expensive real estate markets in North America.¹⁴

¹² Wilfrid Laurier University. (2021). Fees and Payment. <https://students.wlu.ca/student-life/residence-and-off-campus-housing/residence/application/fees.html>.

¹³ University of Toronto. (2021). Fees and Contracts. Graduate House. <https://gradhouse.utoronto.ca/fees-and-contracts/>.

¹⁴ Richter, W. (2017, October 29). The most unaffordable housing markets in North America. Business Insider. <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-most-unaffordable-housing-markets-in-north-america-2017-10>.

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

- **Western University Graduate On-Campus Fees**

Types of Room	Monthly
1-Bedroom Apartment	\$1,044-\$1,118
1 room in 2-Bedroom Apartment	\$1,060-\$1,148
Please note that furniture is not included in this rate. Upon request of furniture service, an extra fee will be implemented on top of these rates.	

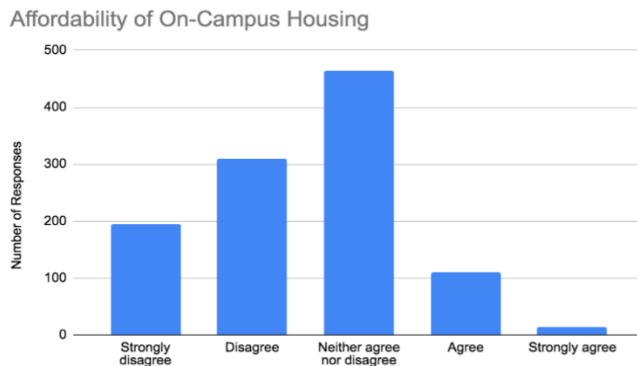
Western University is in the city of London. The city’s population is similar to Waterloo; therefore, we could consider these two university cities comparable. uWaterloo’s 1-bedroom apartment at St.Paul is \$1297 per month, and it is about \$200 more expensive than Western University. However, Western University is not all included. One must pay extra for the furniture. Therefore, we could suppose these two prices pretty close.¹⁵

In Waterloo, off-campus 1-bedroom apartments are rented at the average price of \$1400 per month.

Conclusion Remarks

This section aimed to compare rent prices from four different universities: the University of Waterloo, University of Toronto, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Western University. uWaterloo’s on-campus prices are competitive and lower in many cases. Particularly CLV North offers quite competitive prices among the other on-campus options across Ontario.

Within CLV, families have the best price tag; however, there is no availability for families. It is a good price but only available for 82 families. Even though uWaterloo Campus Housing provides competitive prices, uWaterloo students think these prices are not affordable. As one could realize from the table, students are mostly disagreed or neutral about the price of Campus Housing.¹⁶



We could conclude this data as the competitive prices do not mean they are affordable.

Campus Housing offers competitive prices, but students do not consider the market price as affordable. This may be because the housing markets are managed by private developers who may put the profit first. So being competitive is not enough to create value for uWaterloo students. If Campus Housing could manage to lower the fees and expand their bed capacity, that would be a great value for uWaterloo students.

¹⁵ Western University. (2021.). Rental Rates & Payment Options, Division of Housing and Ancillary Services at Western University. <https://apartments.uwo.ca/rates.cfm>

¹⁶ Graduate Students Association (2020), Vital Signs Survey.

A Co-Operative Example from Concordia Student Union

This co-operative student housing could be a great example for the uWaterloo housing case. This development is done by a non-profit developer and offers below-market-rate along with secure and quality service for students from Concordia.¹⁷

The table below allows people to compare the prices between the market and Woodnote Co-Op Apartment. For sure, students could find similar prices as Woodnote from the market, but then people also should question the quality of apartments below the median rent. This co-op apartment provides a quality service, below-market price, and security for abnormal rent increases.

Neighborhood Parc-La Fontaine, Montréal¹⁸			Woodnote Co-Operative Apartment¹⁹	
Unit Type	Median Rent		Unit Type	Starting Rent
1 bed	\$1,341	vs	studio	\$737
2 beds	\$1,672		2 beds	\$1,158
3 beds	\$2,700		3 beds	\$1,326
4 beds	\$2,600		4 beds	\$1,816

This example shows the possible value that Campus Housing could create for uWaterloo students.

On-Campus Accommodation Availability

Graduate Families

Along with St.Paul, graduate families can choose to stay at CLV North. However, there are only 82 townhouses available for graduate families which makes the waiting list quite long. On top of that, families who are moving out each year are so much less than single graduate students; they tend to stay longer at CLV. For all these reasons, one family could wait even a couple of years after their application to move into Columbia Lake Village North.

CLV North family rent fee is ultra-competitive compared to off-campus houses. While an average 1-bedroom apartment is being rented for about \$1400, one family could rent a 3-floor townhouse for \$1,306 per month. This might also affect having a longer waiting list.

Spring 2021	# of Town Houses	Currently Occupied	# of Families on Waiting List
CLV North	82	82	108

¹⁷ Woodnote Cooperative. 2018. <http://woodnote.coop/>

¹⁸ Average Rent in Parc-La Fontaine, Montréal and Cost Information. Zumper. (2021). <https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/montreal-qc/parc-la-fontaine>

¹⁹ Sherry, P. (2021). Woodnote student housing co-op accepting new tenants: News. The Link. <https://thelinknewspaper.ca/article/woodnote-student-housing-co-op-accepting-new-tenants>.

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

This waiting list²⁰ shows that there is no available family house in any semester for new applicants. If a new graduate family wants to live at CLV, they must wait a couple of years to be able to move in.

Single Graduate Students

CLV North and South offers 430 single beds for graduate students.²¹ As seen in the table, fall semester has more demand compared to other semesters. However, winter and spring semester have also high demand. Therefore, if a student wants to live at CLV must apply early.

	Graduate Housing									
	F18	W19	S19	F19	W20	S20	F20	W21	S21	
Available bedspaces	378	374	232	458	460	192	430	430	430	430
Occupancy	380	376	212	462	294	177	293	337	196	196
Applications Received	714	497	420	830	642	517	655	512	354	354

Off-Campus Renting and/or Subletting

As mentioned before, the off-campus option varies a lot depending on the conditions. If students want a more private environment, they could look for a studio, 1-bed, or 2-bed apartment. The average 1-bed apartment is being rented at \$1,400 in KW. As of June 2021, According to Zumper²² here is the table of the average price of off-campus living in Waterloo. Students generally rent a room and share the kitchen and bathroom with other students. Renting a room starts low \$500 and could go up to \$1,000.

Entire Apartment	Median Rent
1-Bedroom	\$1,400
2-Bedroom	\$1,650
3-Bedroom	\$2,150

If one decides to live off-campus, they may look at these websites:

uWaterloo Off-Campus guidance	https://uwaterloo.ca/off-campus-housing/
Kijiji	https://www.kijiji.ca/
Facebook Marketplace and Private Groups	Ex. Student Housing in Waterloo
Realtor	https://www.realtor.ca/en
View it	https://www.viewit.ca/city/kitchener.aspx
Padmapper	https://www.padmapper.com/apartments/waterloo-on

²⁰ University of Waterloo Campus Housing (2021) Grad and Family Occupancy Numbers, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Zumper, 2021.

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

Off-Campus contracts are generally for 12 months unlike the one offered at CLV. Students can get 4 months contract at CLV or they can sublet a place from someone else.

If students rent an off-campus place and have to leave KW for a shorter period, they could sublet their places to someone else. For example, an engineering student has to leave for co-op or summer work term, he/she could post an advertisement on social media to sublet the room for one semester.

Thanks to subletting, it is possible to find shorter contracts such as 4 or 8 months. Facebook Marketplace or Facebook Groups and Kijiji could be beneficial for one looking for a short period. Fall semester has the highest demand.

However, this option is not available for the on-campus option. If one rents a room at CLV or St. Paul, the student cannot sublet the place to someone else. This may be an issue for St. Paul if the student rented the place for 12 months.

Application Process of On-Campus Accommodation

The on-campus application process is relatively easier and safer than the on-campus process. Even though renting a place is generally smooth, one should be aware of possible scammer in the real estate market and possible discrimination from landlords. It is documented that immigrants and racial minorities face discrimination in the Canadian rental market.²³ Thus, renting the on-campus process could be considered as one of the safest ones. Here are the steps a student should take if they want to live at CLV.

- Apply for residence through an online form visit:
<https://rezhomeforms.uwaterloo.ca/AppSingleGradFall.aspx>
- Approve the contract which arrives at your uwaterloo email address
- Pay your \$500 Deposit (Online) (No first/last payment or key deposit)
- Access your welcome page to see your friend(s) that you will share the townhouse (You can request a roommate, but the allocation is depended on available beds at CLV)
- Come to KW and Move-In the same day

The deposit that students pay before moving will be deducted from students' semester fees. Students may find housing-related financials through the Quest platform under the financials section. If a student is currently living at CLV, they do not need to pay a deposit every semester.



Figure 2 Survey on the application process for Campus Housing. ²⁴

²³ Revington N., McCulley A. (2020) Municipal Housing Issues, retrieved from: <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gsa-uw/GSA-Research-Housing-Issues.pdf>

²⁴ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

CLV at Glance:

For single grad students, rooms are being rented furnished; however, family townhouses come unfurnished. Fridge, oven, and vacuum cleaner are provided by CLV to all houses. While units at North have their own washing and dryer machine, units at South use a common laundry room at CLV Community Centre.

As stated in the affordability section, utilities and internet are included in the price along with technical support (IT Service), 24/7 maintenance and community (DON) support, a front desk, and access to Columbia Lake Community Centre.

At the very beginning of the report, the location of CLV is stated as a little bit off-campus. Thus, CLV offers a free shuttle service between Campus to CLV.

Community Support

Campus Housing provides competitive and high-standard community support across the residences run by the department. Besides the daytime support, students have resources that they can call for after-hours.

CPR and first-aid trained residence assistants (as known as DONs) are available to assist the emergencies during after-hours. Depending on the situation, they may provide support over the phone or in person.

DONs not only provide after-hours support but also organize socials, events, and games to build a community feeling among residents. At CLV, each student has an assigned DON in the residence and students could use their DONs to give feedback, ask a question, and get the latest updates about the university and residence. Apart from DONs, there is also after-hours emergency service support. Students could get immediate assistance in situations like toilet clog, fire alarm failure, or electricity cut out.

Examples of Socials

As mentioned above, DONs organize socials to bring Campus Housing residence together. These events and socials are generally neighbourhood-specific. For example, the DON team at CLV focus on the Columbia Lake Village community. Here are some of the previous events organized by the CLV DON team: photo contents, bingo, movie night, scavenger hunt, pumpkin carving, home cooking challenge are among the events.

Amenities

Columbia Lake Village comes furnished for single graduate students. They provide a bed, desk, security features, internet, sofa, and chairs. Apart from that, a fridge, washing machine and dryer, vacuum, and oven are provided to all units. However, units located at CLV South do not have a washing machine and dryer. Students at CLV South use a common laundry at the Community Centre.

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

According to the Campus Housing survey above²⁵, students living at CLV are quite satisfied with the physical amenities. Only “bed” has less than 50% satisfaction rate. Security features such as door locks have an %80+ satisfaction rate. Internet access is among the best services; however, it also has 10% of extremely dissatisfaction. We conclude this data as the problem about internet access at CLV is specific to a location. In that specific location, students are having problems accessing the internet, but the rest of the community has no problem with the internet.

OVERALL SATISFACTION OR DISSATISFACTION OF THE PHYSICAL AMENITIES AT CLV

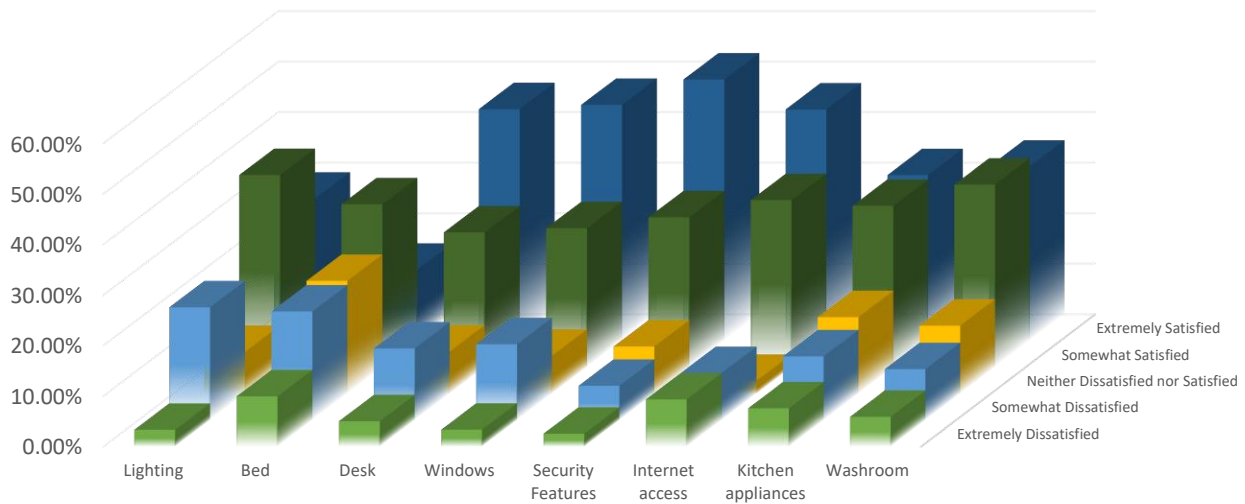


Figure 3 Overall Satisfaction Survey on Amenities at CLV²⁶

Living On-Campus During a Pandemic

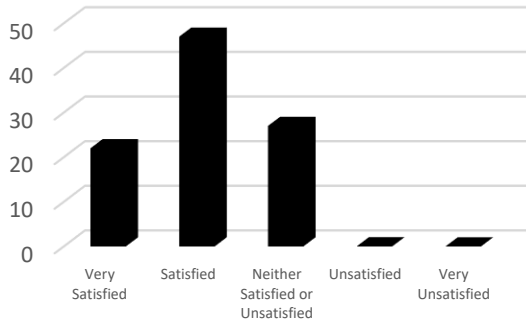
The world has been getting through a period like no other. Almost everything has changed in people’s lives and some of them might not look like same ever again. For sure, the university and on-campus life also have changed a lot. Campus Housing has adjusted its services accordingly. CLV management adjusted the number of people living in the same unit to prevent to spread of the virus, implement signages around the neighbourhood and started a robust communication strategy to inform the residences living at CLV. Most students expressed that the communication strategy was clear enough. According to a survey done by CLV management, about %90 percent of students said they made a good decision by choosing CLV. Most of them were satisfied and found the communication strategy very clear.

²⁵ Ibid.

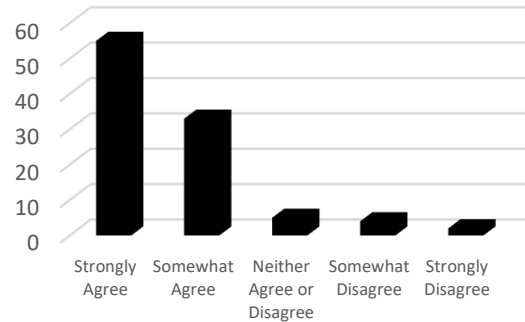
²⁶ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

In general, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with Campus Housing's physical changes to your residence spaces to help stop the spread of COVID-19? (%; n:118)



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? I made the right decision to live in residence during the COVID-19 pandemic. (%)



How would you rate the clarity of the email communications from Campus Housing (housing@uwaterloo.ca)? (%)

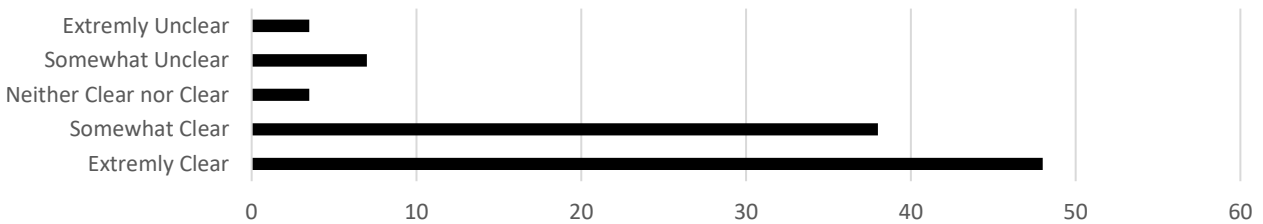


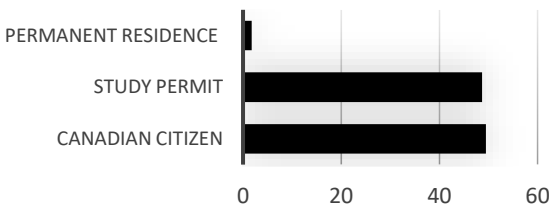
Figure 4,5, and 6: Survey on Living on Campus During a Pandemic

27

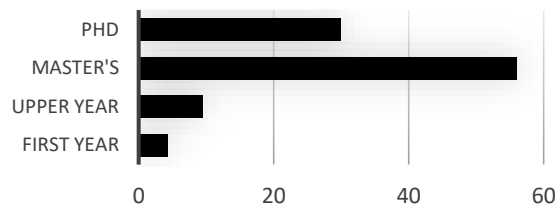
Demographics of Columbia Lake Village

KW has a great diversity. One can feel this diverse community when steps out of any of KW's street. Columbia Lake Village also welcomes people all around the world. We would like to present a variety of data to illustrate how diversification looks like at Columbia Lake Village.

Status of CLV Residences



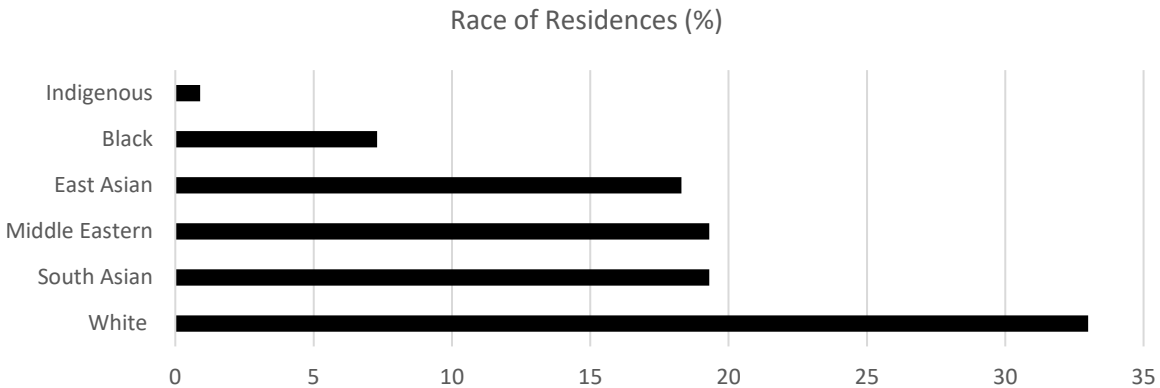
Residence Group



²⁷ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

Figure 7,8, and 9: Explaining the diversity at CLV²⁸



This data shows that CLV has a very diverse community from across the world making the neighbourhood vibrant and international. Students who chose to live at CLV should be ready to meet with people from different cultures during community socials. That might be quite fun for some.

Pros

Campus Housing at uWaterloo sincerely doing a good job in terms of providing decent accommodation at a competitive price for graduate students. If we compare the price, type, service, and support of other university campus houses, uWaterloo could be described as very competitive. Here is a list of the positive areas of Campus Housing:

- **Easy Application Process:** The application process could be considered as one of the safest ones among the options. Once you are on the Campus Housing Website, the application process is very smooth to navigate.
- **Lower Deposit:** Campus Housing only requires a \$500 deposit which will be deducted from the student's first-semester fee. There is no need to pay first/last month rent and key deposit, unlike on-campus housing.
- **Safe and Organized Neighborhood with Other Grad Students and Families:** Even though the community itself is very diverse, everyone is a student at CLV making the neighbourhood calm and safe. On top of that, there are campus police visiting CLV quite often.
- **Friendly Management (Great Landlord):** Probably everyone would agree on the importance of having a good landlord. The management at CLV is super friendly and pro-student! This could be seen in the surveys. Despite CLV North is run by Campus Housing, maintenance and services are provided by a private company.
- **Community Support:** Students' needs, requirements, feedbacks, and concerns are always welcomed. There are several people that students could easily reach out to and talk with about any issue.

²⁸ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

- The great price point for families: While an average single-bedroom apartment is being rented for about \$1400 per month, graduate families could rent 3 floor and 2-bedroom townhouses for \$1306. This price tag is not beatable.
- Location for people who like quiet places: Columbia Lake Village is located just beside the lake. Some units have a lake view, the others wake up with bird songs. Therefore, CLV is a great location if one wants a quiet and green place.

Cons

For sure uWaterloo has a lot to improve as well. It is a top higher education institute, but unfortunately, rising prices are making get this education less affordable every year. Accommodation is an expensive cost for the students. Campus Housing offers a great price for families. A well below market price option for sure helps families. However, the number of available townhouses for families is very low, and this makes to get this opportunity almost impossible.

For single graduate students, prices are not as competitive as family houses. The University of Waterloo could help students by lowering the rent prices like in the example of Concordia's Co-Op apartment.

- Location of CLV is a little bit far from other on-campus residences. However, it is still very close to the campus. Students should also be aware of their monthly transportation pass, which is included in the tuition fee. Taking transportation in KW is free if you are a full-time student. CLV also offers a free shuttle service from CLV to Campus.
- Some units do have reliability problems with the internet: In the satisfaction survey, some students express their problem with the internet connection. This could be solved by finding which units are having the problem of getting strong internet signals and work to improve this coverage issue.
- Long Waiting List for Families Due to Lack of Family Oriented Housing: Ultra-competitive prices, low circulation, and the lack of family-oriented housing make the waiting list quite long. Families could wait years to just move into CLV. Housing development in Waterloo is particularly focused on undergraduate students and this causes a shortage for graduate students who need to accommodate their families²⁹. This undergraduate focus is also valid for University of Waterloo Campus Housing as well.
- 4-Bedroom & 1 Bathroom ratio for CLV South: Living with four people and one bathroom might not be the most desirable scenario for graduate students. They may want more freedom in their places. So, graduate students must be aware of this house plan if they want to live at Columbia Lake Village South.
- Lack of Air Conditioning (A/C): People may think Canada is snowy every day, but this is not true. Once the summer is around, rooms could get very hot. For this situation, CLV houses do not offer an A/C.

²⁹ Revington N., McCulley A. (2020) Municipal Housing Issues, retrieved from: <https://s3.us-east-1.amazonaws.com/gsa-uw/GSA-Research-Housing-Issues.pdf>

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

- Water Quality (However, this is more likely a municipal-wide concern, not CLV specific): Water quality issue is a big concern for students living at CLV. Even though, the management says that tap water is drinkable, many students hesitate to drink it. This problem is significantly coming from the municipality, but Campus Housing should not sideline this concern just because it is not only dependent on them. They might change the pipes or start negotiating with the municipality to improve the quality of water. Campus housing a very big stakeholder of the City of Waterloo.
- Garbage: There are two main issues for garbage at CLV: First, they do not offer a green bin where you can place your food waste. Second, the garbage bins generally do not have a cap. If the bins are full and it is a windy day, the papers could end up on the streets!
- Shopping: Previously mentioned on this report, CLV is not located at the centre of Waterloo; therefore, nearby services and resourves are limited. The closest shopping plaza is about 1km or 14 min on foot. This is the closest area that students can do their groceries. Students have to take bus to reach to megacenters and discount markets. We highly recommend to check the location of CLV and nearby shopping plazas.
- Move-out day and \$150 extra payment: CLV demands students to leave about 2 days before the next term and ask \$150 flat fee if they want to spend their 2 days at their residence. For example, if the next term starts on May the 1st, management asks student to leave on or before April the 29th. However, they offer student to stay at the residence if they pay extra \$150. We believe, uWaterloo could make the moving-out experience better and cheaper. If this is the market standars, uWaterloo should set the bar higher and enhance the experience of their own students.
- Unbalanced Rent Payments for CLV-Sounth: CLV-South's fee is significantly higher for Fall Terms compare to other two terms.(Please see the table below.) Despite CLV-South provides 4-bed and 1-bed option for graduate students, the rent is higher than market average for the fall term. Some students also expressed their unsatisfaction for CLV-South's washroom, furnitures comfort, and lack of living spaces for 4 people.

Single Room in a Town House	Fall	Winter	Spring
CLV South 4 beds	\$3,832	\$2,554	\$2,554

Recommendations

For Campus Housing and University of Waterloo

1. Identify the Units That Have an Internet Coverage Problem

About %22.5 of Columbia Lake Village residences were not satisfied with the internet quality. This clearly shows that some of the units are struggling with internet coverage problems. This could be solved by finding which units are having the problem of getting strong internet signals and work to improve this coverage issue.

2. Garbage Bins and Sorting

The University of Waterloo has declared Climate Emergency and commit to significantly reduce its greenhouse gas emission by 2050. Having said these targets, Columbia Lake Village does not even have a food waste bin for their residences. CLV management should immediately provide a green bin to the neighbourhood and control the sorting of garbage. New policies could be implemented to make sure all residences comply with the sorting guideline.

Secondly, some of the garbage bins do not have a cap; therefore, once they are full, the wind carries them to the street. This kind of occasion happens quite often during windy days.

3. Expand Campus Housing and Lower the Prices

University of Waterloo's land expands to a very large area; thus, one could say that there is plenty of space to increase campus housing bed capacity. We also could see that Columbia Lake Village has been expanded over the years. However, this is far from enough.

We see that current graduate families experience a lack of on-campus housing. Campus Housing could be a great value creator for uWaterloo students by providing the most affordable, secure and easy accommodation in KW.

There are a couple of good university campus housing example across Canada that provides a high-quality and lower price on-campus accommodation. Woodnote Co-Operative housing is only one of them. Lowering the price would eventually increase the demand for campus housing; therefore, without expanding the bed capacity, this could create an even longer waiting list. However, if uWaterloo can find funding to expand the campus housing bed capacity, this could give a great competitive advantage to uWaterloo Campus Housing.

Campus Housing is already doing a good job in terms of providing a high level and student-friendly service to the students, but this could be better by providing more opportunities at a lower price than the market. This could be only possible with the help of the University and all levels of Government.

3.1 Free Parking for Students

To start reducing the cost of living, uWaterloo could make parking free. Grad students who live on the campus pay parking fees at two locations both at the faculty and at the residence. We therefore could consider this payment as double since students are technically paying a parking fee to park on-campus where they live, so why would they need to pay again to park somewhere else on-campus?

uWaterloo could bring a new parking membership for students living on-campus to park anywhere on-campus without paying two tickets. They could use this parking ticket for their accommodation and their faculty visit.

4. Better Signage Around Playgrounds

Columbia Lake Village has several playgrounds, and many children attending these areas during the daytime. Drivers should be really careful while driving in the neighborhood due to the number of children around the roads. Columbia Lake Village should have better signage to get drivers' attention and let them be aware of the children playing around.

5. Graduate Families Council

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

There is a Single Graduate Student Council, and their meeting recordings are available online, so having a Graduate Families Council will help to record the issues that families experience about the on-campus living opportunity or lack of it.

6. Live Dashboard to Show Current Available Rooms

By providing daily data about the availability of rooms, campus housing could make the process clear for students. They would have an idea of the current demand and available rooms. The data of new applications received, current occupancy, and available bed spaces exist, but they are not publicly available. If this data could be presented on the Campus Housing website, the process could be much easier for students.

	Graduate Housing								
	F18	W19	S19	F19	W20	S20	F20	W21	S21
Available bedspaces	378	374	232	458	460	192	430	430	430
Occupancy	380	376	212	462	294	177	293	337	196
Applications Received	714	497	420	830	642	517	655	512	354

Graduate Student Association

1. Clear Communication

The GSA could send an immediate message to the new students about on/off-campus housing. There is a need for clarity on the number of currently available beds. GSA could send an email, and Campus Housing could make an interactive website showing currently available beds. With clear communication, students who consider applying to on-campus accommodation will have an idea of supply and demand. This information might help students to speed up their decision-making processes.

The very long waiting list for family housing should be clearly and immediately communicated with graduate families. Since some graduate families might think to move to CLV in the first year, and it might create disappointment to face a couple of years-long waiting list. This long waiting list is not mentioned in any part of Campus Housing's website.

GSA should also send a living off-campus guideline to students who cannot or do not want to live on-campus.

2. GSA Advocacy on Graduate Housing

Graduate Students Association is a powerful stakeholder at the University of Waterloo; therefore, they could realize the problem the students are struggling with and engage with the university's legislatures to tackle these issues. The recommendation included in this report, student interviews, and housing councils could be good resources to identify the issues. For this research, the lack of affordable on-campus housing appears as the most critical issue for graduate students.

3. Stakeholder Management

Housing is not an easy issue to solve. There will be a need for different levels of stakeholder collaborations such as Federal, Provincial, and Municipal Government, the University, GSA, WUSA, other student organizations, faculty members, and developers. Therefore, instead of expecting one institution to solve this issue, we may try to organize a committee bringing all stakeholders together. GSA and WUSA could be the pioneers of advocating for this committee. This committee's focus should be on developing quality and affordable housing options for students, unlike the private developers who focus on gaining more profit.

Concordia's Co-Op apartment could be a great inspiration for GSA to start advocating for affordable housing development for uWaterloo students.

For Graduate Families

Graduate families theoretically have an option to live on-campus at CLV in their first year, but practically they do not. First-year families must find an off-campus alternative before coming to Waterloo. However, if the family's intention to stay in KW longer than a couple of years, they should strongly consider righting their name on the waiting list **as soon as possible**. So, families should get on the list even before looking for off-campus accommodation. They will not be offered a place from CLV for their first year but getting into the list early will make an advantage for the next years.

For Single Graduate Students

Columbia Lake Village may look like a good option for people coming from another country or region and do not know a lot about KW. These people may take advantage of the easy and secure application process that CLV is providing for students. Students also have a great opportunity to change their place if they do not satisfy with CLV or find a better place to move in. It is a hustle-free and convenient process.

But even before even getting started off looking a place, students should decide on these factors:

- Length of stay
- Budget
- People they want to live with (if they have)
- Location
- The convenience of booking a place

Students who sign a one-term contract will be offered an option to extend their contract with only one click. Therefore, they will have the flexibility to try campus housing in their first year.

The Mission

There is no doubt that Canada is going through a housing crisis, and this affects students the most. We now started to talk about student homelessness. The rising cost of housing leaves students to live in undesirable and overcrowded places. Campus Housing and GSA should not try to provide a competitive price for the students because the market that they are competing in is already far from affordability.

GSA Research Report Graduate Students On-Campus Residence Experience

GSA and WUSA could act as the pioneers and push the university to create a vision for affordable housing development for uWaterloo students. If uWaterloo leaves the market to for-profit companies, we may see a continuous rise in the prices, and it may affect students' academic performance as well.

uWaterloo Campus Housing has the potential to create real value for students, and they have already shown that they could provide a high-quality and competitive service for them. However, there is a lack of available housing and according to the majority of students, existing housing is not affordable. Being competitive amid a housing crisis is not enough to create real value for students. The University of Waterloo has the ability to create a partnership with the stakeholders to develop affordable units for the students within the University's borders.

Bibliography

¹ Bhavsar, K., & Bajwa, P. (2021, February 5). Why Kitchener/Waterloo is a Great Place to Invest. FiveWalls. <https://www.fivewalls.com/articles/why-kitchener-waterloo-is-a-great-place-to-buy-property-real-estate>.

² Gordon, J. (2020). Reconnecting the Housing Market to the Labour Market: Foreign Ownership and Housing Affordability in Urban Canada. *Canadian Public Policy*, 46(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cpp.2019-009>

³ University of Waterloo Campus Housing (2021) Grad and Family Occupancy Numbers, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

⁴ Average Rent in Waterloo, ON and Cost Information. Zumper. (2021). <https://www.zumper.com/rent-research/waterloo-on>.

⁵ Cost of Living in Waterloo (2021). <https://www.numbeo.com/cost-of-living/in/Waterloo>.

⁷ Campus Housing. (2021). Graduate, Optometry, & Student Families. Campus Housing. <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/graduate-housing>.

⁸ St. Paul University College. (2019). Suites, private rooms, grad apartments. St. Paul's University College. <https://uwaterloo.ca/stpauls/suites-private-rooms-grad-apartments>.

⁹ University of Toronto. (2021). Fees and Contracts. Graduate House. <https://gradhouse.utoronto.ca/fees-and-contracts/>.

¹⁰ Richter, W. (2017, October 29). The most unaffordable housing markets in North America. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-most-unaffordable-housing-markets-in-north-america-2017-10>.

¹¹ Western University. (2021.). Rental Rates & Payment Options, Division of Housing and Ancillary Services at Western University. <https://apartments.uwo.ca/rates.cfm>

¹² Wilfrid Laurier University. (2021). Fees and Payment. <https://students.wlu.ca/student-life/residence-and-off-campus-housing/residence/application/fees.html>.

¹³ University of Waterloo Campus Housing (2021) Grad and Family Occupancy Numbers, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

¹⁵ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

**GSA Research Report Graduate Students
On-Campus Residence Experience**

¹⁶ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

¹⁸ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

¹⁹ University of Waterloo Campus Housing, W21 CLV- Grad Student Families, & Optometry (2021), Residence Experience Survey, <https://uwaterloo.ca/campus-housing/>

Figures:

Figure 1 University of Waterloo Campus Map; Yellow Star represents CLV and Green Star represents St. Paul. Yellow buildings are the main campus

Figure 4 Survey on the application process for Campus Housing

Figure 5 Overall Satisfaction Survey on Amenities at CLV

Figure 4,5, and 6: Survey on Living on Campus During a Pandemic