

## CASE STUDY: HobSensus - UWE Bristol



Chris Shellard is a Project Manager and Maintenance Supervisor for student accommodation at the University of the West of England (UWE). He is responsible for the day to day running of heating, lighting, access, and other practical aspects to ensure students are comfortable and safe across the 3,000+ rooms.

Safety, and in particular kitchen safety is top of his priorities. National statistics suggest that across the 1.7 million rooms within the UK student accommodation estate, there are the equivalent of five fires every week during a typical academic term. 80% of these taking place in kitchens\*.

Chris explains, "Although not a common occurrence, we perhaps have a kitchen incident, once a year at UWE, fortunately our smoke detection and fire alarms prevent its escalation". Even so, Chris and his team searched for additional surety in terms of a preventative device that would avoid any incident causing fire alarms to be activated.

They use a building energy management system, and Chris spoke to Prefect Controls, the company behind their heating control, Irus, to see if they had any suggestions. The response was HobSensus - a product launched in 2021, designed specifically for the student accommodation market.

HobSensus reduces the risk of kitchen fires as it prevents hobs from being left switched on when the kitchen is unattended. It has a timer with 15-, 20-, 30- or 120-minute run times, enough for most pan-based meals to be cooked. When the time elapses, should the person preparing the food forget to turn the hob off, the power will be automatically cut.

The clever part is the 64-zone sensor that 'watches' the cooking surface, measuring the temperature in each zone. If the heat approaches a dangerous level an audible warning is sounded, and the green active lights begin to flash amber. If no action is taken and the temperature continues to rise, the warning sound becomes

more intense and the lights flash red. Then, before flashpoint is reached, the power is cut to the hob.

Chris initiated the introduction of HobSensus to UWE, and since 2021 has installed more than a thousand units across several properties at the Frenchay Campus in Bristol.

He continues, "We initially trialled about 100 rooms, and it just worked, so we rolled it out across the whole site. Since installation, touch wood, we haven't had any fire incidents at all! When installed mid-term, we had to explain why there was a change happening, to some students, and show them what to do, but Prefect provided a sticker that goes next to the unit with operating instructions and a QR code that takes you to a video explaining why and how etc. It's easy to use, just press the red button, then carry on as usual. With new intakes of students, they don't question it, they realise it's for their benefit and they just get on with it."

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HobSensus integrates with Irus to enable other features. From the secure portal, managers can check the battery level of any units that are not hard-wired to their power units, check on power usage of individual hobs, and view a trigger log to see if there are kitchens where the unit is activated more often than usual. HobSensus can also connect to detection pads that will alert the portal to leaking water in the kitchen. Fire and smoke alarm systems can also integrate HobSensus. In the event of a need to evacuate a site, the system will automatically turn all the hobs off as kitchens are hurriedly cleared.

Chris concludes, "Installation went very well, and was straight-forward considering most rooms were occupied. Prefect gave us a schedule and stuck to it, and they have very good aftercare, with training, issue solving and providing instructions, videos and all those kinds of things. Automation of this kind just makes my job a bit easier".



Cleverly simple  
**control** of energy.

(\* Source - Electrical Safety First)