

Dear (provider's name),

This week, the National Union of Students called on university accommodation providers to waive rent payments, allowing students to be released from their contracts without penalty. We at SUBU are writing to you in the hope that you will understand the difficulties students are having to face as a result of staying in their contracts, in addition to the wider impact of the pandemic.

All over the country, Students' Unions are working together to try and counteract the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and to safeguard our students and institutions against the uncertainty of the future. We understand the potential financial losses as a result of this state of emergency, however we also believe in the importance of taking a stance of compassion and kindness.

We understand how difficult this time has been for everyone. However, we would like to see this as an opportunity to foster a sense of community, as we all unite against this common enemy. Everyone has come together to support each other in these challenging circumstances and we have seen some wonderful examples of community spirit and resilience. From the #ClapForOurCarers movement to the support for vulnerable members of our community, we have seen a shift away from profiteering and division that has characterised our society, towards one of understanding and kindness.

At SUBU, we have been working to support all students during this difficult time, many of whom have faced further setbacks to the closure of campuses. In addition to the loss of income through redundancy for many of our students, others have been asked to step up and work on the frontline of our NHS to support the national effort in combating the current pandemic. We must also consider the devastating impact this time of crisis is having on student mental health, due to the mounting pressure of finances and uncertainty around their degrees and job prospects.

We would also like to draw your attention to the wider political landscape. Paul Blomfield MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary for students, has gained cross party support from 109 MPs to ask Universities Minister Michelle Donelan to fully reimburse students from the date they left their accommodation. We hope that this shows the mounting pressure from Parliament for providers to do right by their students.

The ongoing impact of the national lockdown cannot be underestimated. Many of our students have returned home, whilst they were able to do so, for their own safety and, in many cases, to offer support and care to their families at home or abroad. With the indefinite closure of our campuses, it is unlikely that many will be able to return.

In these unprecedented circumstances, we implore accommodation providers to offer students immediate release from rental agreements and cancel all rent payments due for Term 3 for all students in your accommodation who have chosen to leave early. Where possible, we further ask providers to remain flexible on shortening or lengthening contract durations to protect those still in need of a place to stay, and to negotiate a reduced or deferred rent payment for these students where possible.

We are extremely grateful to those providers who have already put special measures in place to accommodate students in these extreme conditions, which have included early termination of rental agreements, payment plans and care packages. We are hopeful that as more and more providers understand the necessity behind this approach, others will follow suit as they recognise that this is the most compassionate action during this time.

We appreciate that these circumstances are difficult for all involved, but we urge you to do the right thing and support our students.

Yours sincerely,