

To Whom it May Concern,

We are writing to you as elected Sabbatical Officers at Cardiff Metropolitan Students' Union. We have been working to ensure that our students are not negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdowns. We wanted to bring attention to the situation for student renters in the city (and surrounding areas) and to gain further understanding on what you will be doing in light of this to help support our students.

As you may already be aware, many students have now been told to stay at home and not to travel to their university accommodation, due to the recent government announcements regarding national lockdowns. As a result of this, students are expected to pay for accommodation that they are not living in, through no fault of their own. A large majority of students have also missed out on the chance to work over the Christmas period, due to hospitality and retail being closed as part of the new restrictions. These places are usually where our students would be taken on as Christmas temps, in an attempt to create some more income for themselves, to see them through the next academic term.

Not all students are being treated the same regarding their tenancy agreements which is causing confusion and anxiety about what students are entitled to receive during this time. Some students have been able to receive a rent refund from their landlord or agency, whereas others are being pressured to pay their rent early and upfront as soon as possible.

Our own institution Cardiff Met plans to 100% refund students in their university-owned halls for the time their course is completely online and has allowed students to make the decision as to whether they would like to reduce the number of weeks within their contract, allowing them to leave early with no cost to them and a number of accommodation providers around the city have understood the circumstances and have done the same, for which students are incredibly grateful. Another University accommodation provider, Unite, has pledged a 50% reduction for 4 weeks of the tenancy, as well as extending the existing contracts with students by 4 weeks for no extra charge to those who choose to stay.

Landlords within the private sector can make their own decisions concerning rental agreements during this time and many students are still having to pay full rent on time (which some are finding difficult with decreased income) for accommodation that they are not living in, thus leaving them in a difficult financial position. Is there anything that you can do in order to alleviate some of the stresses that students are currently facing? Nobody could have predicted what was to take place this year and we ask that you are to be understanding for the struggles that our students are facing.

Students were promised a blended approach to learning, with some lectures taking place on campus, which ceases to materialise now due to the lockdown announcements. With that in mind, we ask that you are mindful of the difficult situation our students have been put in, entering contracts with the intention of living in Cardiff for the duration of the academic year, and now having to stay away through no choice of their own, but attempting to alleviate risk to their own health and health of others in mind.

The National Union of Students in Wales has sent letters to the Local Government to highlight these issues that students are facing. We ask that you be considerate when making decisions that could have a disadvantageous impact to our students during this unprecedented time.

Kind Regards,  
Keira Davies  
Cardiff Met SU Vice President

& Midhun Pavuluri  
Cardiff Met SU President

