

Update From President Welfare & Inclusivity

After our last letter I received a request from students' asking to lobby the government on private rentals. You can view the letter I am sending to the Minister for State [here](#). We in the SU are aware that some students in private rentals are facing a lot of uncertainty around a number of things including their current rental payments as well as concern for future accommodation come June/July when many contracts terminate but you may have already signed the contract for a new place. The letter addresses these issues and urges the Government to put in place legislation which can provide these students with some relief. Please remember that we have a draft letter available for you to edit and send to your landlord requesting rent relief.

On top of this, we are putting together a summary for all types of accommodation which will be available on the SU website early next week.

In our last letter, I also highlighted that Living Support are offering a 'care-package service' to students in the local area. I need to highlight that this service is for students who NEED help currently due to being unable to leave the house. Please only use this service if you are in the high-risk category or have coronavirus symptoms and are unable to leave the house.

If you are worried about your finances, you can apply for the hardship fund (Exeter's [here](#), Falmouth's [here](#)).

I am increasingly aware of the strain isolation is causing for students' mental health. There have been requests come through our survey for the universities to invest in online counselling services for students. Fortunately, they already do this, students of Falmouth University and The University of Exeter can access free counselling services via [SilverCloud](#); a leading platform for mental health support.

Update From President Falmouth

The past few weeks for you all have been a really confusing and stressful time, it This week we were able to produce a report on all your feedback, we presented these to Falmouth, and they are going to create a response to the recommendations from this report. Falmouth's priority is to ensure that all department level feedback is addressed directly by the departments and we will be working with your departments closely to support this. You can read our reports here.

Here are the updates I have against what I am lobbying for you guys

- Pushing for Falmouth to adopt the [National Union of Students proposal to final assessments](#)
 - o Have discussed with Head of Quality Assurance and Enchantment. Falmouth have already re-designed assessments as suggested by the NUS but this is for all students and as a result of modeling the proposals based on the University's portfolio and assessment methods: they say that under the average grade approach set out by the NUS a significant proportion of students would receive a lower classification. Falmouth's also already allow students to intermit if they wish and retake their final term, however this has significant financial implications for students (e.g. no maintenance loan, entering employment later, increased accommodation costs etc.) as a result it is always seen as a last resort and the University is actively encouraging and supporting students to try and complete/ progress as normal. Anyone thinking about exploring intermittence should contact their course team and the SU advice team at advice@thesu.org.uk.
- Better communication and clarification of what 'no student will be academically disadvantaged' means for students, and the protection their grades will receive.
 - o I highlighted with Falmouth University that communication regarding safety nets were not good enough (not reassuring, should have come out quicker). Called for another email with further clarification and to move to a model that ensures the individual protection not general protection of grades. Falmouth are devising better

comms for the 'safety net' being put in place, and firmly believe this procedure will be better for students and are trying to create better communications to come out mid week (however this is not guaranteed), we have pushed that this communication to be made sooner but where given no promises.

- Funding for students who have no access to a laptop or 4G devices to purchase devices, which enable them to complete their studies in parity with their peers.
 - o Started conversation on this with Falmouth's Head of Finance and they are looking into feasibility.

- Better communication and clarification of what 'no student will be academically disadvantaged' means for students, and the protection their grades will receive.
 - o Falmouth University are devising a procedure for the safety net and have reassured us that this procedure is 'better for students' and aim to communicate this by the middle of next week (however, this is not guaranteed). We have pushed for communication to be made sooner but where given no promises.

- Reassurance that assignments have been amended to consider mitigating factors to ensure that assignments are achievable in the timeframe given to students, and that these changes are communicated clearly and concisely.
 - o After requests from the SU, the Vice Chancellors Office sent out two emails providing reassurance (on the 3/4/20 & 20/3/20). All students are encouraged by the university to reach out to their course teams or SU course reps if they are still concerned about their workload.

- Better communication around access to Extenuating Circumstances for students
 - o Clear guidance is on your student portal with information on how to apply and more guidance was detailed in the email from the Vice Chancellors Office on the 20/3/2020 after requests for more communication.

- More detailed and regular communication from Falmouth University so students

feel reassured, fully understanding all changes to their education and the support available to them.

- o Myself and Allie Guy discussed this with The Head of QAE & the Strategic Advisor and communicated your concerns. We are waiting to see if you receive further comms around these areas: accelerated degrees update for 3rd term, further clarification on 'you will not be academically disadvantaged', assessment methods updates, international student support on visa etc, as well as a response to our most recent reports. We also asked for more personal compassion, understanding and reassurance to be included in comms.

- To have The Students' Union included in spaces where decisions are being made, not just consulted with.
 - o Asked to be included in the sub-group of academic board that was convening to make decisions and discuss the impact of corona on the 30/3/2020 to the Vice Chancellor. Solution provided was bi-weekly meetings with Strategic Advisor
 - o 3/4/2020 Asked strategic advisor to be included in the sub-group space again, my points were noted and will be taken to the VC for consideration.

Update From President Exeter

95 of our medics will graduate early today and I want to say a massive congratulations and a huge thank you for all the work they are doing and will continue to do over the coming months.

Study Abroad: I understand there is a lot of concern with students who are meant to be going on study abroad in the 2020/21 academic year, but I want to assure you that the study abroad team within the university our working to help all students affected. They are meeting today to discuss finer details including aiding students who will not have accommodation for next year as they believed they were going to be away. When I receive this information, I shall cascade it down through your subject chairs.

Postgraduate Support: Some PGR students have either chosen to stay abroad in the field or cannot return home due to flight restrictions so I have been working with the university on how we can aid and support these students from afar. This includes helping with emergency hardship funds and informal support if it is needed. To all student who are abroad, if you at all feel isolated, please get in touch with one of us, we are happy to support you or just have a chat.

Graduation: I have begun discussions with the university about graduation and how the ceremony will happen after Covid-19. The aim is to come up with viable options and then put these to the student body so that you get the decision. These options will take a few weeks to organise, but I am hoping to send them out by the end of April/early May so please do have you say.