

Dear Landlords,

Following the government's national lockdown announcement on Monday 4th January, most students have been asked to delay their return to University. There are a few exceptions which include students on some specific courses and students with some specific needs.

As a result of this request, the University has decided that all teaching and supervision, aside from those exempt above, will be online until at least Monday 1st March 2021.

With students remaining at home, the University decided to help by offering an eight-week rent rebate to those who are now unable to occupy their room on campus. This follows a similar decision made in March 2020 where UEA was not compelled to do so but decided that offering a rent rebate was the right thing to do.

Naturally this prompts questions from students living in the private sector, such as whether they too should be entitled to a rent rebate. We are very aware of the differences between University accommodation and private sector accommodation, and it is therefore unrealistic for us to expect that all lettings agents and landlords will be able to offer rebates in support of the difficult circumstances students find themselves in.

We know many registered landlords have small portfolios and that many of you will have to make mortgage payments, or rely on rent as your main source of income.

The last year has also been financially challenging for students, particularly those who rely on income from part-time work. Many students can no longer work due to the COVID restrictions now in place. Where new part-time work has been created, students are having to compete with many others in similar circumstances.

As we did back in March 2020, we are writing today to ask for flexibility at this difficult time. We are aware the situation with COVID-19 has not led to any legislative changes with regards to rent liability, but we are once again asking that you are understanding of individual tenants' circumstances and are as flexible as possible. We know that many landlords were flexible in March 2020 and we and your tenants are very grateful to you for this.

Our hope is that you are able to offer a reduced rent, or allow your tenants to pay rent in agreed payment plans to spread the cost over a longer period of time.

We encourage students to approach their landlord or agent to discuss future rent payments, particularly if they are worried about their ability to pay. If you are approached your student tenants, we ask that you are open to having this discussion.

Viewings for 2021/22

It is now the time of year when many students start their search for accommodation for the next academic year and we would normally expect landlords and agents to see an increase in requests for viewings.

Although the housing market remains open at this time, it is our view that in-person viewings should only be completed by those who need to move within the next month, and not those looking for accommodation for 2021/22.

It is inevitable that some students will want to start their search now. For those students, we ask that you are open to providing virtual viewings, for example this might include a pre-recorded video walkthrough.

If you are approached by students wishing to proceed with your property who have not viewed the property in-person, having only viewed it online, then we would ask you to request a holding deposit to reserve the property for them, pending an in-person viewing.

Once a holding deposit has been paid, the students must agree to a deadline to sign the tenancy agreement. This is normally the 15th day after the deposit is paid but an alternative date can be agreed if needed. We hope that you and your prospective tenants can agree a date which will allow sufficient time for a viewing once the national restrictions are eased.

We appreciate no one knows when the restrictions will be eased and that it might be necessary to further extend the deadline for agreement. We appreciate your flexibility in these challenging times.

In normal times, the holding deposit would be forfeited if the students decide not to proceed with the property. Again we would ask that you are flexible and agree in writing that the holding deposit will be returned in full if the students decide not to proceed following the in-person viewing.

Government guidance on holding deposits can be found [here](#).

We thank you again for your support at this challenging time and hope that you are keeping safe and well.