

Bath Spa University
Students' Union

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Dear Richard Smith and Directors of the Board of Unite,

We are writing to you as representatives of students at Bath Spa University regarding your decision to offer students a 50% rent discount during the national lockdown. Whilst this is a step in the right direction and we welcome the recent decision to extend the discount until 8 March 2021, we believe it is completely unfair to expect students to pay anything at all for accommodation they have been told by Government they cannot live in.

Unite Students have partnerships with many universities around the country, often making them a first choice for a lot of new students deciding where to live when they start their studies. It has been over 10 months since the UK first went into lockdown and during this time the hospitality and entertainment industry has effectively been closed and has been one of the hardest hit sectors during the pandemic. Students heavily rely on the hospitality and entertainment sector for part-time work during their studies to cover costs that their loan and/or grants may not be able to cover. With students being promised that things would get better when they registered for this academic year in September 2020, many did not expect to still be in the position where there are few jobs available, and have therefore found themselves in difficult financial situations. A 50% reduction for 7 weeks is simply not enough during this time.

Whilst we understand and appreciate that you offered rent rebates to students during the first lockdown in March 2020, we are still very much in the midst of the pandemic and we believe the support you provide to current students should go further. Unite Students has 177 properties in 27 cities across the UK and is growing. In 2019, Unite Students revenue was £156.2 million, the Chief Executive saw their total remuneration (salary, bonus and pension) increase from £2.1m in 2018 to £2.7m in 2019. Despite handing out £2.7m to the Chief Executive last year, Unite is expected to access an initial £50m from the Government's Covid Corporate Financing Facility. The majority of universities, including Bath Spa University, have given full rent rebates to students in their accommodation and given your strong financial position,

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your offer is particularly disappointing. Bath Spa University students in Waterside Court and Charlton Court are frustrated that their rebate falls short of that offered to their peers in University managed accommodation and we believe the right and moral thing for you to do is offer a full rebate for the entire lockdown period.

We are calling on you to reconsider your decision and demonstrate your commitment to students, in an already particularly hard time.

Yours sincerely,

Megan Robertson
Vice President Welfare and Community

Emily Casey
President

Ceri Bailey
Vice President Education

Jack Mapston
Vice President
Opportunities