

26th February 2021

Dear Mark,

I am writing to you in advance of Monday's UEB meeting, where I know some of the following matters will be discussed and also following the close of our recent All Student Vote.

SUSU received a petition request regarding students' fees (along similar lines to the informal petition previously seen by UEB). Having very quickly achieved the required 250 signatures, the petition then proceeded to the All Student Vote stage. 4,832 students voted, with 98% of voters backing the idea that international students should be given a tuition fee rebate. You will be very aware that there is a strong demand at a national level – echoed in the feedback we receive at a local level – that all students feel they should receive some kind of rebate on their tuition fees for this exceptional year.

We recognise that the University has done its best, often very successfully to move learning online but would respectfully remind you that during the major disruption caused by industrial action in 2018 and 2019, students were told they could not have a refund on their tuition fees because those fees did not just pay for teaching, they also paid for facilities such as the gym, sports facilities and the library. All these facilities have obviously not been available to students for a significant part of this academic year. While we of course recognise that these circumstances are beyond the University's control, acknowledging and responding to the impact on students is not and we believe students are entitled to some kind of rebate.

We have also received a lot of feedback from students, in particular the international January starters, who are very worried that they will be required to come to Southampton as soon as Government guidance permits this, and either cannot or are not willing to do so. There are many reasons for students to be in this position, including the lack of flights from their country to a lack of confidence in the UK's handling of the pandemic to needing to shield.

I would like, therefore, to ask you to consider and reply to the following four requests which I put to you on behalf of the student body:

- 1) All students, particular international students (due to the level of their fees and the disproportionate impact they have experienced) should receive a refund for the academic year 2020-21
- 2) Students who cannot or do not wish to return to campus from 8th March or 12th April should receive an equivalent learning experience (with the exception of those students who are required to attend a face-to-face component of their course in order to progress/graduate). Those students not wishing to return should not be disadvantaged as a result.
- 3) Students who cannot or do not choose to return to campus when they are allowed to should be released from their Halls contracts with no charge incurred for Term 3.
- 4) The University should commit to continuing to work with SUSU and our academic reps to address issues of the consistency of quality of all aspects of this year's learning experience, including assessments and feedback. In due course, we would also like to explore the positive aspects of this year which are worth retaining in future years, even when a return to our previous normality is possible (the flexibility offered by recorded lectures, for example, as well as the use of Teams).

I would be very happy to give further detail of any of the above points.

Kind regards,

Olivia

