

RESIDENTIAL SERVICES' DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

This sets out the procedure that will be followed in relation to managing residential student debt. The University's policy is to minimise all levels of debts while ensuring students are given appropriate support to pay fees owed in a timely fashion. The procedure relates to all accommodation fees and additional residential charges payable to the University. Residential Services' Debt Management Policy and Procedure has been developed to enable the University to run an efficient and effective method of debt management.

SUPPORT TO STUDENTS

In applying the procedure, the University will at all times seek to be sympathetic to, and understanding of individual student's financial circumstances. However, for the University to do so, students must communicate with the University if they are experiencing financial difficulties.

Students experiencing financial difficulty in paying their accommodation fees and charges should seek help at the earliest opportunity via:

- Making contact with the Service Co-ordinators at Residential Services

Additional advice and assistance is also available from:

- The Money Advice and Support Office.
- The Student Union Advice Centre

BACKGROUND

The University provides a range of accommodation for its students. Prior to moving into accommodation all students are required to agree and sign the terms of a licence agreement and are required to pay a reservation deposit as part of the acceptance process (this deposit is then deducted from the last terms rent). The licence agreement clearly outlines payment terms for accommodation. Students may pay for their accommodation fees in advance in full or by termly direct debit instalments. Students receiving a monthly bursary are eligible to pay by monthly standing order. Students are also emailed the Residence Regulations and are required to complete an online induction which clearly sets out the accommodation fee payment policy.

DEBT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Accommodation Fees

The fees for university residences are set by the Senior Management Team and Student Affairs Committee each Spring for the following session, and details can be viewed on the website: [Residence Fees](#). The fees include payment for gas and electricity, other than in properties managed by Student Accommodation Services.

PAYING RESIDENCE FEES

There are two options for paying residence fees:-

1. Termly Direct Debit (British Bank Accounts only)
2. Payment in advance for the whole year

1. TERMLY DIRECT DEBIT (BRITISH BANK ACCOUNTS ONLY)

- This allows for payment to be taken automatically in 3 or 4 instalments
- A statement will be issued to residents university email account at least 7 days before the expected payment date. Payments will be taken directly from the nominated bank account once each term.
- A resident must inform Residential Services immediately if the bank details have changed or the bank account has closed.
- Residents must ensure that sufficient funds are in the account on the due date as some banks may charge a fee for returning the mandate.
- The account must be able to honour BACS (Direct Debit) Payments.

2. PAYMENT IN ADVANCE FOR THE WHOLE YEAR

This can be done by:

- i. Cheque, Debit/Credit Card or Bank Transfer

NON BRITISH BANK ACCOUNT HOLDERS

International students who wish to pay by termly direct debit are advised to open a British Bank Account when they arrive and then submit a direct debit to Residential Services.

EXCHANGE STUDENTS

Exchange students who are here for no longer than one Academic Year are eligible to pay in termly instalments by cheque or debit/credit card. Students who wish to pay by bank transfer should contact Residential Services for details.

HEALTHCARE STUDENTS

Healthcare students do not need to complete a direct debit mandate; they are eligible to pay residence fees on a monthly basis by standing order, to coincide with their bursary payments. Any healthcare student who does not make the appropriate arrangements will be expected to pay by termly direct debit or in full for the whole year.

NON PAYMENT OF ACCOMMODATION FEES

If any student falls into arrears with any accommodation charges, the University will take the following steps to recover the debt.

ADVANCE NOTICE

7/10 Days (before due date)

- Residential Services will email residential students' University account, an invoice advising them of their accommodation account charges. If they have a direct debit set up they are advised of the date the funds will be taken. All students who do not have a direct debit set up are advised to pay by the payment date. They are also given the methods of payment and details of where payment can be made.

REMINDER ONE – STAGE 1

Day 4 (after due date)

- Email sent to a students' University and personal email address (es), to advise those who pay by direct debit, that their payment was not successfully collected.

Or

Day 7 (after due date)

- First reminder sent to students' University and personal email address(es) to advise them they failed to pay by the invoice due date. At this stage a student is advised that they may incur a late payment charge of £50.00 if they do not contact us by day 11.

REMINDER TWO – STAGE 2

Day 11 (after due date)

- Second reminder sent to students' University and personal email address (es) to advise them they failed to pay the monies owed following the first reminder. They are advised that account is overdue and to pay immediately, or they will be required to attend a meeting at Residential Services (a date is given). A £50.00 administration fee is charged at this stage

REMINDER THREE – STAGE 3

Day 14 (after due date)

- Any students that have not paid their accommodation fees and charges owed following reminder 2 receive a letter (hand delivered) to their term time address advising them again of the meeting and that they are required to attend a meeting with Residential Services (a date is given). This letter is also sent to their University and personal email address (es). Students are advised they can be accompanied by a representative at this stage e.g. Students' Union or friend.
- If the student does not attend the meeting their wireless internet in their room is redirected to an information page that advises them to contact Residential Services. (The internet service does not form part of the rent and is provided at no cost to the student). They are also sent a letter advising them that if they do not make contact with Residential Services within 14 days the University will be serving a Section 21 Notice on the student.

REMINDER / ACTION FOUR – STAGE 4

Day 28 (after due date)

- Having undergone all steps of the process outlined above, to recover the accommodation debt from the student and a suitable payment plan has not been agreed (or been broken), after following above steps and payment of the accommodation debt is overdue by 28 days, eviction proceedings will commence. If the student vacates the accommodation and the debt remains unpaid, the debt will be passed to a debt collection agency for processing. The debt collection agency may pursue court action to recover the monies owed. In this situation the University will reserve the right to add reasonable costs and expenses, including agency fees, legal fees and the cost of management time incurred.

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AGREED PAYMENT PLAN

In situations where a student is experiencing genuine financial hardship, the University will agree an affordable payment plan to clear the debt during the academic year. If a student defaults on this payment plan, they are contacted by telephone and email. If the student continues to default on their payment plan, it will be escalated to stage three of the above processes.

DEBT FROM PREVIOUS YEARS

The University reserves the right to refuse an application for accommodation from a returning student if they have received a 'stage three' letter or have been served a section 21 notice in previous years of stay.
