



F/T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

To: All University and College Principals

27 March 2020

I am very aware that I am writing to you during unprecedented times. At the outset, I want to thank you all for your effort as we respond to Covid-19. I am grateful for the invaluable work you are actively engaged in to ensure students are supported, both in terms of continuity of learning and their wellbeing. I am equally aware of the challenges you face in supporting students, particularly those remaining in student accommodation.

At the outset, can I make it clear that the Chief Medical Officer and Scottish Government's advice is that students remaining at college and university accommodation should stay where they are and not attempt to travel home, even if that is to another part of Scotland.

This is in line with medical directives across all four UK nations. Whether they are living in student halls, or private rented accommodation, they should remain there and stay indoors while current restrictions are in force.

I understand that this is a worrying time and many students will want to be with their families. Nevertheless, staying put in accommodation and adhering to the directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer and the Scottish and UK Governments is the best way to slow the rate of transmission of Covid-19, protect our NHS from being overwhelmed and save lives.

I am sure that, as institutions and providers, you will continue to provide those students who remain in university, college or private sector student accommodation with the vital support and services (such as catering, WiFi and enhanced cleaning) and security of accommodation they will need.

I am grateful to you for the work already undertaken to support student mental health and wellbeing, and trust that wellbeing and counselling services in institutions will continue to function using online and other platforms during this immensely difficult time. I am also aware that other students may have already left their accommodation to be with family, friends and loved ones, before the current conditions were announced but could also still benefit from being able to access those services should they choose to.

In conclusion, I am asking that, in addition to your ongoing support, for those students who are remaining in accommodation, you look sympathetically on any need for them to extend their stay beyond existing arrangements.

Equally, I am also asking that for those who have returned home and are having to ask to break agreements, you look on their situation sympathetically and continue to be as helpful as possible to avoid disadvantaging them. I welcome the steps a number of institutions and providers have already taken in this respect, to avoid students being disadvantaged.

My officials will be in regular discussion with all providers of student accommodation to help us work together to find solutions to issues as they emerge.

I am copying this letter to the networks involving student accommodation providers, so that it reaches not only all universities and colleges, but also private sector providers of student accommodation, who also are playing such an important role in supporting students.

I thank you and your teams for all your hard work and continued commitment as we respond to this crisis.

Yours sincerely,



RICHARD LOCHHEAD
Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

Cc:

Alastair Sim, Director, Universities Scotland
Shona Struthers, Chief Executive, Colleges Scotland
Ken Milroy MBE, Chair, Colleges Scotland
Karen Watt, Chief Executive, Scottish Funding Council
Liam McCabe, President, NUS Scotland
Jo Blair, Regional Representative (Scotland), Association for Student Residential Accommodation (ASRA)
Jan Capper and Moray Notman, College and University Business Officers (CUBO)
Jill Stevenson, AMOSSHE –The Student Services Organisation