

## Elected Officer Q&A (29.04.20)

### On Tuition Fees:

**Q: “Will there be any discount from the University on our tuition fees for this year?”**

*A (RIDA): Unfortunately, the University will not be subsidising tuition fees at this point, simply because they’ve tried their best to move everything online. I appreciate that students won’t be able to make use of campus services, but the University’s point is that if it starts giving refunds, there won’t be a University to come back to, because they won’t be in a good financial position. Plus, when students do come back next year, they will have to cut back on a lot of facilities, so that’s why they’re not offering any subsidisation.*

*From a Representation point of view, it’s not that we haven’t raised this issue, but no Universities across the country have subsidised tuition fees—and UH won’t be either—because if they do, they won’t be in a stable financial position to open next year. Instead, we’ll be fighting for Value for Money, because we fully appreciate that you didn’t sign up for online classes. As these are unexpected circumstances, and as long the University continues to provide students with online alternatives for teaching and learning, we’ll be sticking to the Value for Money side of things instead.*

**Q: “Can I request an extension on paying the rest of my tuition fees for this year?”**

*A (RIDA): They are looking into this on a case by case basis, so if you do think you want to set up a payment plan, the best thing to do would be to email Student Finance (<https://www.gov.uk/contact-student-finance-england>), who should be able to tell you if it would be possible.*

### On COVID-19 Relief Fund:

**Q: “Can Postgraduates apply to the COVID-19 relief fund too?”**

*A (RIDA): The Hardship fund is inclusive of all students, so anyone experiencing financial difficulty at this time can apply. International students are being prioritised though because there are other funds Home students can tap in to, such as UFAF. There have been a lot of applications so far, so it’s unfortunately closed for now, but we’re trying to grow the fund so that it can re-open.*

**Q: “Do we have to give the money back to the University later on?”**

*A (RIDA): You don’t have to give the money back; once it’s been awarded to you, it’s yours.*

**Q: “I’ve applied for the COVID-19 relief fund, but haven’t heard back yet – when can I expect to?”**

*A (RIDA): The average waiting time is around 4 weeks, so as long as you’ve submitted all of your evidence, you should hear back from the University within that timeframe.*

**Q: “For International students, is there any further financial help available other than this fund?”**

*A (RIDA): At this point no, but we are lobbying for an additional pot of money specifically for this, and have successfully passed a policy on it at national level, but that’s all work in progress for now.*

On Placement Students:

**Q: “With regards to students who should be on placement, what is going to happen if the Schools are still closed and social distancing is still in place?”**

*A (RIDA): For cases where it's a mandatory part of the course, such as in HSK, the University will be reaching out to ensure these placements are still available to students, but in cases where it's optional, it will be down to the employer as to whether students are taken on or not.*

On Network Fluctuations:

**Q: “Some students are facing difficulties with Wi-Fi and network fluctuations – how is this being considered by the University in the context of online exams?”**

*A (RIDA): I'm not sure what the University are doing about this, but I can report back to them on it.*

On Safety-net Policy:

**Q: “What will happen to Semester B entrant students that do not have Semester A results as a reference for a baseline mark?”**

*A (RIDA): It will be the average of what you've done so far, so that could be your first-year grades if you're a second-year, or pieces of coursework you've done in Semester B. If there's nothing to judge on, I'm not fully sure how it will be calculated, but can look into that for you.*

**Q: “If you defer an exam from Semester B, will the safety-net policy still apply?”**

*A (RIDA): Yes, as long as we're talking about 2019/20, the safety-net policy will still apply.*

**Q: “How are the classifications working for students who predominantly have AB, if the frozen average is not applicable? Is the weighting the original or has it changed?”**

*A (RIDA): It's my understanding that the weighting hasn't changed, but please email me so that I can find out the finer details.*

**Q: “Does the safety-net apply to the overall module grade or does it apply to each piece of coursework specifically?”**

*A (RIDA): Don't take my word for it completely because I don't know that level of detail, but I would imagine it applies to the overall grade, not individually piece by piece.*

On Exams and Assessments:

**Q: “Some Mature students may be slow typers, and have other responsibilities (e.g. childcare) that prevent them from completing exams within a certain timeframe – is there any support in place for these cases?”**

*A (RIDA): The University should be giving everyone a 24 or 48 hour window in which to complete exams etc., so that no one is disadvantaged, but if there's a specific time slot that you can't do, it would be best to let your Programme Leader know so that they can look into an alternative.*

**Q: "My exams are only 2-hour exams, so I'm worried that I won't be able to complete them on time?"**

*A (RIDA): I'm not sure what course or School this is, but please do email your module leader or programme leader and highlight this situation to them, and if you copy me into those emails too I can also chase up on it. They should be giving you at least a 24-hour timeslot in which to complete them.*

*From what I understand, it should already be a University wide policy that these exams have a 24-hour submission window. If not, please email your programme/module leader and copy me in.*

**Q: "What is the University doing with regards to dissertations due in September?"**

*A (RIDA): The University should still be providing online support in the same way, but if you think this is inadequate, please drop me an email (specifying course and School) and I can take it forward.*

**Q: "Do you think the science labs will open soon to start MSc dissertations in June?"**

*A (RIDA): It's most likely the case that they won't be open at this time.*

**Q: "If a student is deferred, should they submit the assignments or attend the Semester over again?"**

*A (RIDA): It depends when you've deferred to – if it's June (2020) then you should still be engaging with classes and submitting your assignments then.*

**Q: "I applied for my grades transcript for a job application – do I have to wait for the lockdown to be relieved before I get this?"**

*A (RIDA): If you get in touch with the department, they should be able to send it to you electronically or by post.*

On Virtual Teaching/Learning:

**Q: "Do you agree with the quality of the University's online teaching?"**

*A (RIDA): It definitely differs from course to course, but we can acknowledge the large amount of work the University has put into moving everything online. That doesn't mean that all classes are the best they can be, which is why, if you do think the quality is lacking, we encourage you to get in touch with us, your SCOs or your Student Reps, so that we can try our best to address those concerns.*

**Q: "A lot of students don't have laptops (/computers) that match the specifications of the University's policy – some haven't got microphones, for example. Are the University helping out with this in any way?"**

A (RIDA): The University had around 80 Chromebooks (all they had), which they gave out on a first-come-first-served basis. However, there are some students they can't reach out to (e.g. overseas), so what they're doing in those situations is accepting SAC forms that highlight this fact, in order to defer exams.

#### On Societies and Events:

**Q: "How are the Creative Writing Society delivering their sessions?"**

A (SAJ): For specific queries on individual Societies, it's best to contact the committee directly as they'll be able to tell you about their plans.

**Q: "Will the SU have a student-led Teaching Awards this year?"**

A (SAJ): This is something we're currently talking about, and will be doing further down the line, so we'll be able to tell you about it soon.

#### On Accommodation:

**Q: "Some people have cancelled their on-campus accommodation contracts – will their things be kept safe?"**

A (RIDA): The University will be keeping all belongings safe in their own storage, and will let you know when you'll be able to collect it.

**Q: "I'm an International student living off-campus, and my contract ends in June – if I'm not able to leave the country by then, will it be possible for me to move into an on-campus room?"**

A (RIDA): I believe the on-campus rooms can be moved in to, so that could be an option, but your landlord should also be able to extend your contract as well, if you were planning to stay in your current accommodation for longer. If you need any specific help with that, you can contact our Advice and Support team, who are still taking student appointments via Skype or email.

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Our response to COVID-19: <https://hertfordshire.su/your-support/coronavirus/>