



Students' Union Student Advice Centre's guide to student issues related to coronavirus

Government information about the coronavirus pandemic in relation to health / symptoms, safety and precautions, and requirements such as social distancing and restrictions on movement can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

The Students' Union's Student Advice Service recognises that, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, many students have faced - and may still be facing - uncertainty and anxiety around their course and assessments, their financial situation, and their accommodation – and that this may be having an impact on their mental and physical health.

The situation is changing regularly, as is the guidance. Therefore, we have tried to pull together some useful links and information based on our understanding of the position at this current time. We will endeavour to update this information as things change or more information becomes available, but would encourage students to also check the other sources of information given in this leaflet – and to double-check with our service if required – before taking action.

Please read the information below before you contact us, as you will hopefully find the answer or resource that you need. If you still have questions, or wish to double-check a point before taking action - or your enquiry is not covered by the information below - please contact us at: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Academic / University concerns

The University has a dedicated webpage with FAQs, which covers most queries that students will have around how the coronavirus pandemic and the measures related to it will affect them. The webpage is updated regularly. You can access it via My Hallam or directly at:

www.shu.ac.uk/coronavirus

If your question is not answered by going to the webpage above, you can contact the University Help Centre by telephone (from Monday to Friday 9am until 5pm) or e-mail, and a dedicated team of staff will try to help you.

Telephone: 0114 225 4555

Email: coronavirus@shu.ac.uk



The information in this section outlines the measures that have been announced by the University at this time, to the best of our understanding. Please check your individual situation with your Student Support Adviser or Academic Adviser.

Teaching and learning

The measures required due to the coronavirus pandemic meant that, where possible, teaching was delivered online and/or accessed remotely for the last part of the 2019/20 academic year. Initial plans and proposals for the coming academic year (2020/21) have been communicated to students by email and on My Hallam, and students will receive regular updates via these channels.

There is an online guide to accessing the library digitally:

<http://libguides.shu.ac.uk/libraryoffcampus/> If you have concerns about accessing the resources you need (e.g. for undertaking reassessments), you should contact Hallam Help in the first instance: hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk If you are not satisfied with the response or outcome of raising your concerns this way, contact your teaching team and Academic Advisor as outlined in the 'assessments' section below. You can also view our information on complaints in the 'complaints' section below.

The **Skills Centre** is continuing to offer help and support remotely; see their blog site for details: <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/skillscentre/2020/03/16/remote-offer-at-the-skills-centre/>

The University's hardship fund is no longer providing financial assistance towards the cost of purchasing equipment to work from home, except in exceptional circumstances. For more information on this and other financial support available, see the 'financial concerns' section.

Assessments and exams

Exams, including reassessments, will be delivered online wherever possible, with examination papers on Blackboard and answers submitted in the same way as coursework assignments. Departments will contact students about any exams that will not be carried out in this way, including for any reassessments during the summer reassessment period.

More information can be found here: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/current-students/student-support/student-wellbeing/coronavirus-advice/for-students#assessments>

The University has said that they are in contact with professional bodies to ensure that the measures they are putting in place will meet the professional bodies' requirements, and do not put at risk your eligibility to join a profession.

Foundation Year and Level 4 students will progress automatically on to the next level of study and are not required to complete assessments or reassessments for this academic year, unless their



course includes requirements from a professional body, or they are an apprentice studying at Level 4. Details of which courses this affects are on the University website above.

Note that if you have not passed other modules during the year so far, you should have already been contacted by your Student Support Adviser and/or Academic Adviser to discuss your options. Also, if you wanted to exit the course after level 4, you will not be eligible for a CertHE exit award under these 'pass and progress' arrangements. If you wish to discuss this option, please contact your course team; you would be required to undertake and pass assessment at Level 4.

If you are a Foundation Year or Level 4 student, please read all the relevant information on the webpages above. We understand that you will receive an 'enhanced induction' at the start of your next level, and also that your Student Support Adviser will contact you regarding any support you may feel you need in the next academic year. If you have concerns, you can contact them.

Level 5, 6, 7 and Higher Degree Apprenticeship students are expected to complete assessments. If you are concerned about being able to do so, see the information on the webpages above and the information below.

'No detriment' retakes and uncapped re-sits

The University has stated that students will have 'no detriment to their assessment' as a result of the measures they have put in place to respond to the coronavirus pandemic. We understand that Department Assessment Boards (DAB) will take into account the overall performance of your course year group, cohort performance in previous years, your previous marks and any extenuating circumstances, and may adjust marks accordingly. Student complaints relating to the industrial action and/or covid-19 measures will also be noted. Your final, confirmed, 'official' results from the DAB will be available on the Results page of My Student Record. Any other marks you see / receive are not official and will not have been through these processes at the DAB (i.e. they will not have had the opportunity for 'no detriment' adjustments to be applied if appropriate).

In addition to the above, there are some additional measures that have been brought in for this academic year only.

Following the publication of your official results on My Student Record:

If you pass an assessment – if you are not happy with your mark, you will be able to request to take the assessment again, uncapped, during the summer reassessment period, and the higher of the two marks will be counted. There will be a set process for requesting this, with details on the Results pages of My Student Record. You will need to ask to take the assessment again **within 5 working days of receiving your results from the DAB**. It will be important to discuss with your Academic Adviser or Course Leader what mark(s) you would need to achieve in the 'no detriment retake(s)' in order to have a material impact on your overall end of year mark or final degree classification.



If you have requested to do a 'no detriment retake' and then encounter difficulties in doing this during the reassessment period, you will not be able to submit a Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA). This is because you have already passed the assessment. If you need an extension, you will not be able to request this via the normal process (again, because you have already passed the assessment). You can email your Module Leader to request an extension of up to 10 working days (if you don't have their details, check Blackboard or email: hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk). Our understanding is that you cannot request an extension for an exam.

Exceptionally, if you intended to do a 'no detriment retake' of a passed assessment (assignment or exam) during the summer reassessment period and then can't do this (even with a 10 day extension for assignments), you can email the dedicated email address again (found on the Results page of My Student Record) to explain and ask to do the no detriment retake(s) in the next academic year.

However, the University has explained to us that the aim of their 'no detriment' approach is to help students to successfully complete this academic year, and to take assessments soon after students have received the teaching. The University would caution against retaking additional passed assessments in the next academic year (e.g. from level 5 into level 6) as this may affect your ability to focus on the next academic year, and there are a variety of methods used to calculate degree classifications, meaning that retaking may not make a material difference to your overall degree result. Therefore, if you are unable to complete your no detriment retake within the current academic year, it is strongly recommended that you discuss your position with your Academic Adviser / Course Leader and Student Support Adviser.

If you DO NOT pass an assessment – you will re-sit your assessment during the reassessment period for your course and this attempt will be **uncapped**. This is the case if you are taking your first referral attempt, even if the referral is from an assessment that you did not pass in Semester 1 or a previous academic year. However, if you are repeating a whole module in 2019/20 the mark for that module will still be capped.

If extenuating circumstances mean that you cannot take your referral during the reassessment period, you will need to submit a Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) about this – see the section below. If the RRAA is accepted, your referral attempt will be moved to the following academic year. Note that, under current arrangements, normal assessment regulations will apply at that point, so if you take it next academic year your referral result **will be capped**.

If you submitted a Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) for your FIRST attempt (whether that was in Semester 2 or previously) AND the RRAA was accepted –

If you did not attempt your assessment because of your extenuating circumstances, or did not pass the assessment, you will do your assessment again as if it was the first attempt (known as a deferral) in the reassessment period. Your options after this will then depend on whether you pass or do not pass the deferral attempt. Contact your Student Support Adviser for further information about this.



If you attempted and passed the assessment, you will be able to request to do a 'no detriment retake' in the reassessment period if you wish to - please see the section on this above for more details.

In all the above scenarios, support will be available for you, but you will not have access to extra formal teaching.

The above guidance is based on our understanding of the University's procedures and regulations that have been put in place as part of their 'no detriment' approach. However, **you are advised to contact your Student Support Adviser for individual guidance and confirmation of the arrangements that apply to you** – including if your situation is not covered by one of the scenarios outlined above. If you have any additional concerns, you can contact our service at: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Students who are ill or whose studies are affected by their personal circumstances

The University is aware that students' ability to engage with their studies and submit for their assessments may be affected during this time, for example if they become ill with coronavirus, if they are required to self-isolate due to a family member or other person they live with being ill, or if they are otherwise affected by the measures being put in place, e.g. unexpected childcare responsibilities due to schools closing. In order to take this into account, the University has made some amendments to the guidance around Extensions and Extenuating Circumstances / RRAAs (Request to Repeat an Assessment).

We would advise continuing to work to your deadline(s) and sitting exams if you feel able to.

Extensions - students who have mostly completed an assignment, but need a short extension to the deadline, can request an extension. Some interim changes have been made to the policy on extensions, because of the coronavirus situation. Extensions will now be granted for 10 working days. Students can request extensions of up to 20 days for dissertations and large projects.

If you wish to request an extension, you can do this via the Request to Extend a Submission Deadline (RESD) process outlined on My Hallam: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/myhallam/study> or go to My Student Record. You can submit an extension request more than 10 days prior to the submission deadline, and you must submit a request at least 24 hours ahead of your deadline. You should continue to work on your assignment in case your request is not accepted as you would then still need to submit your work by the original deadline. However, the criteria for accepting requests has been extended to include coronavirus related issues, including illness, self-isolation, IT issues due to remote working, accessibility of learning and research materials and unexpected childcare / caring responsibilities – so extension requests for these reasons should be granted. Extension requests for coronavirus-related reasons will not require evidence to be provided, even for 20-day extensions for dissertations and large projects. Students are not required to submit work in progress with their request.



Note that you cannot request an extension in this way for a passed assessment, if you need more time to do a 'no detriment retake'; see the section above for more information about what to do in this instance.

Request to Repeat an Assessment Attempt (RRAA) - the deadline for submitting a RRAA is 5 working days after the assessment deadline (or extended deadline if you have requested and been granted an extension). If you think the quality of your work has been affected - or you are not going to be able to submit your assessment even with an extension - we would advise submitting a RRAA, listing any affected assessments, with an explanation. There is a general guide to RRAAs in the self-help resources (Academic) section of our website:

https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/academic/

The criteria for RRAAs (i.e. what will be considered as an 'extenuating circumstance') have been extended to include coronavirus related issues, including illness, self-isolation, IT issues due to remote working, accessibility of learning and research materials and unexpected childcare / caring responsibilities. Evidence for coronavirus related issues is not required. We have been informed that **if you submit a RRAA during the reassessment period you will be expected to explain in detail the specific issues related to the coronavirus pandemic and associated measures that have affected your ability to complete / undertake or perform well in the assessment.**

If you are submitting a RRAA because of a different medical issue, check that it meets the criteria for extenuating circumstances. Evidence for a medical issue will not be required.

If you are submitting a RRAA for a non-medical reason that is not related to coronavirus, you are required to provide evidence.

Note that you cannot submit a RRAA in this way for a passed assessment, e.g. if you are unable to do a 'no detriment retake' that you'd intended to; see the section above for more information about what to do in this instance.

It is never guaranteed that a RRAA will be accepted/upheld, so the best option is still to try to complete your work to the best of your ability and submit it by the deadline/extended deadline, if at all possible – even if you also submit a RRAA. We would recommend that you liaise with your Student Support Adviser if you are concerned about being able to complete your work. It would also be a good idea to contact your module/course leader if possible.

Appeals

You can appeal against various University decisions, including a result decision by a Departmental Assessment Board (DAB) which impacts on the application of the pass, progression, award or classification regulations.

You can only appeal if you have 'grounds' for appealing. There are two grounds which can be used to appeal. These are:



- There has been an irregularity in the application of the published regulation, policy or procedure which has had an impact on the decision
- There is relevant new evidence or information that you did not provide, and you have a valid reason why you did not submit it at the time.

An appeal must be made on the University's appeal form (AA1 form). You have 10 working days to submit this from the date of being notified of the decision that you are appealing. Please see our self-help guide on how to complete an AA1 appeal form, including guidance on how to write your statement, at:

https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/academic/selfhelpresources/

Before submitting an appeal, you should read the University's appeals policy and procedure. To access this and the AA1 form, go to:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/appeals_and_complaints/index.html

If you want to appeal against your assessment results, you can only do this once you have been notified of your official results from the Departmental Assessment Board (DAB). As mentioned earlier in this leaflet, we understand that a DAB will take into account the overall performance of your course year group, cohort performance in previous years, your previous marks and any extenuating circumstances, and may adjust marks accordingly. Student complaints relating to the industrial action and/or covid-19 measures will also be noted. An initial review of marks will take place at a Course and Module Review Meeting, prior to the DAB taking place. There will be a cover sheet for the Minutes of every DAB, and these will note any extraordinary actions taken in the DAB, such as scaling or variations to marks. This cover sheet, and the Minutes if relevant, will be looked at in the case of Appeals.

Meetings related to University rules and regulations (e.g. Academic Conduct, Disciplinary, Fitness to Practise, Capacity to Study)

These University processes are still taking place, with meetings being held online.

Students who receive an invitation to a meeting related to a University regulation should first see our self-help resources (webpages and PDF leaflets):

https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/academic/

You can then contact us for further advice and support: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Complaints

There is useful information for students about courses (including quality and delivery) and other matters on the Office for Students (OfS) website: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-guide-to-coronavirus/



The OfS has made it clear to higher education providers that consumer protection law continues to apply and that HE providers need to ensure that their contractual terms and conditions for students are fair and easily understood and that they abide by these in practice. For example, to ensure that any arrangements for making contractual changes are fair, it is necessary for providers to provide clear communication (e.g. by email) to students to notify them about the changes in advance of them taking effect, the reasons for these, the impact the changes are likely to have, and the options available to students to avoid the changes without being adversely affected. For more OfS guidance, see: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/>

Students may find it helpful to read these Coronavirus FAQs for Students by the OIA (Office of the Independent Adjudicator, which oversees how universities deal with student complaints, appeals and other processes and can also investigate complaints that have been through the University's procedures): <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/students/coronavirus-faq-for-students/>

The OIA has now issued a second briefing note here: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/latest-news-and-updates/oia-briefing-note-2-our-approach-to-complaints-arising-from-the-effects-of-coronavirus-covid-19-june-202/>

The briefing note looks at issues such as the importance of clear communication, how the OIA will look at consumer rights issues, and their approach to complaints about course delivery and quality.

They are clear that providers need to engage with students' complaints and requests for tuition fee refunds, and should take steps to identify any groups of students that may be particularly affected and address their issues, and should also consider concerns raised by students about their individual circumstances.

You may also find it helpful to read the OIA's guide to complaints called 'Putting it Right'; see: <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/about-us/reviewing-complaints/what-happens-when-a-student-complains-to-us/putting-things-right/> and <https://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/2275/putting-things-right-february-2019.pdf>

If you are dissatisfied with the arrangements put in place by the University in response to the coronavirus pandemic, and if you feel these arrangements have had a detrimental impact on your learning outcomes, the University has created a **specific SC1 (covid-19) complaint form** for this, which can be found here, along with the student complaints policy and procedure: https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/appeals_and_complaints/index.html

A complaint submitted via this form will generally be investigated based on the information you provide on the form, though the complaint investigator will contact you or, exceptionally, arrange a meeting if needed.

Your complaint does not have to be teaching / learning or assessment related to use this form. If you feel dissatisfied with how the University has addressed other issues linked to the coronavirus situation, e.g. around financial hardship or students who are experiencing difficulties regarding their accommodation, you can use this form to complain about this. It will be worth considering what you plan to request as an outcome to your complaint, as it may be that there would be another more



effective way to try to get this outcome, or another route that you could try first. If you are not sure, you can contact us for advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Whilst this form aims to be a 'fast-track' way to get a coronavirus-related complaint looked at, in most instances we encourage students to use the Early Resolution stage first, to try to resolve the complaint informally. As outlined in the standard complaints process and also in the 'teaching and learning' and 'assessments and exams' sections above, the Early Resolution stage involves raising your concerns initially with the staff or service most relevant to be able to resolve your issue. In this case, this is likely to be: Hallam Help; your course/teaching team and Academic Adviser and/or Student Support Adviser; the specific University service that deals with the area you have concerns about, e.g. the University Accommodation Service; and the dedicated Coronavirus Help Centre which you can contact by email or telephone. You may also wish to raise the issue with your Course Rep or Department Rep and/or one of the elected Student Officers, especially if it's an issue that is likely to be affecting several students. The Reps are working with the Students' Union, including the Officers, to escalate issues to senior staff within the University. See

<https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/representation/academicinterests/> for more information.

Hopefully doing this will resolve your problem, but you should still keep a record of who you speak to and when, and what you say to them and what their response / the outcome is. That way, if you are still not satisfied, or the outcome you were promised doesn't happen, you can include this information if you wish to submit a Stage 1 complaint, which is the first part of the formal complaints process. If you wish to submit a Stage 1 complaint about a coronavirus-related issue, use the specific SC1 (covid-19) complaint form referred to above.

If you would like advice and support with submitting a complaint, please first read our complaints guidance information sheets on the Student Advice Centre website:

https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/academic/

The University's student complaints policy and procedure can be found here:

https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/appeals_and_complaints/index.html

Students who wish to make a complaint about a teaching-related or service-related provision, not related to the impact of coronavirus, should follow the University's student complaints process as usual.

Note that if you have a complaint related to the recent two periods of industrial action (strikes) there are separate forms for this, available on the same webpage.

The Department for Education launched a helpline to answer questions about coronavirus related to education:

Tel: 0800 046 8687

Email: DfE.coronavirushelpline@education.gov.uk

Their opening hours are:

8am – 6pm Monday to Friday

10am – 4pm Saturday and Sunday



The National Union of Students (NUS) has been running various campaigns and lobbying government during the period of the coronavirus pandemic. You can find out more about their work at:

<https://www.nus.org.uk/>

Placements

There is specific reference to students undertaking placements in the University's coronavirus website information: www.shu.ac.uk/coronavirus This information is very detailed and should give you all the information you need in relation to your placement and which members of University staff you can contact if you have concerns or questions.

Students on placements outside the UK have been contacted by the University. Further guidance for these students is on the University FAQs webpages.

If you have concerns relating to your placement that have not been satisfactorily addressed by your course or placement team, you are welcome to contact us for further advice:

advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Financial concerns

Student Finance

Instalments of student finance should have been paid as expected.

Students should continue to apply to Student Finance England for their funding for next year – the deadline for returning students (to make sure your funding is in place for the start of next year) was 19 June, so if you haven't yet completed your application for next year you should do this as a matter of urgency: <https://www.gov.uk/student-finance/continuing-fulltime-students>

We have been advised that you should complete the application based on what you expect your situation to be in 2020/21 (e.g. if you had planned to be on placement, apply as such) – if things change, you will need to submit a 'change of circumstances'.

If you had planned to be on placement and then don't do a placement year, you will be able to request the higher, usual rate of loan, but you may have to wait a while for your change in circumstances to be processed. We would caution against signing a tenancy agreement on the basis of being somewhere for a placement, until you know for sure that the placement will be going ahead.

If your parental / partner's income has dropped by 15% or more from the financial year they had or would have been providing documents for, you/they may be able to request that Student Finance England carries out a 'current year income assessment' instead. This may mean that you would receive a higher amount of student funding.



There is **useful information about student finance** here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/guidance-for-current-students>

Healthcare and Social Work students

For those students who are still eligible for NHS Bursaries, and for eligible Social Work students, the NHSBSA advises all NHS Bursary and Social Work Bursary students to submit their applications by 31 July to ensure they can be processed in time for the start of the September academic year:

<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/student-services>

The government has announced it will be providing additional funding support to healthcare students starting their course from September 2020. This will now be known as the NHS Learning Support Fund, and incorporates a Training Grant for all eligible students of £5,000 per academic year, in addition to previous Learning Support Fund provisions such as Parental Support of £2,000 (previously known as Child Dependents Allowance) and help towards placement-related excess travel and accommodation costs, as well as the exceptional support fund for students experiencing financial hardship. See <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund> for more information.

Students on eligible courses starting their second or third year will also be able to apply for this additional funding in the next academic year (eligible from whenever their 2020/21 academic year begins). See the above website for more information.

Certain shortage subjects will also receive additional funding, and there may be a regional incentive if applicable. These grants are only available to new students, starting from September 2020 onwards. See: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/nhs-learning-support-fund/training-grant> for more information.

If you have any concerns about payments that you are expecting to receive from the **NHS Business Services Authority** (NHS BSA), please speak to your department or contact the NHSBSA on 0191 232 5371.

Students experiencing financial difficulties

Students who are struggling financially may wish to speak to their bank about options for interest-free overdraft facilities. We would caution against taking out commercial loans, especially payday loans and other high interest forms of borrowing.

The **Hallam Hardship Fund** is still open if you are experiencing financial difficulties. If you are in hardship, you can apply again over the summer period, even if you have previously received an award from the fund. For more information about the criteria and how to apply, see: <https://students.shu.ac.uk/shuspacecontent/finance/additional-financial-help> Outline your circumstances as best you can, provide any evidence that may be helpful or that is requested, and



submit it following the instructions. Note that international students can also apply at this time. If you have any questions about your application, contact the Student Funding Team via Hallam Help: hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk

If you are financially struggling to buy food, you may be able to receive a **digital food voucher** from the Student Funding Team at the University. You should contact Hallam Help to request this (see above).

If you use up your voucher entitlement but still need help paying for food, the Students' Union Advice Service may be able to issue a **food bank voucher**. Please contact us so that we can discuss your situation with you: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

The Student Funding Team is also processing applications from students who have out of pocket expenses due to a staff or student led trip being cancelled. If this applies to you, please email Hallam Help to get the link to the form.

The deadline for the **Student Success Scholarship** for 2019/20 has now passed, but we have been informed that the new application process for 2020/21 may open earlier than usual, at the beginning of September. Keep an eye on the website for more details:

<https://students.shu.ac.uk/shuspacecontent/finance/student-success-scholarship>

International students experiencing financial difficulties – currently, International students are eligible to apply to the **Hallam Hardship Fund** – see the above section for details of how to apply. In addition, International students who are experiencing financial hardship due to an emergency or a significant, unexpected and unforeseen change in their circumstances may be eligible for an emergency loan/grant from the **International Student Emergency Fund**, see here for more details: <https://crmportal.shu.ac.uk/knowledgebase/article/KA-01321/en-us>

If you are concerned about being able to pay your **tuition fees**, contact hallamhelp@shu.ac.uk in the first instance. If you still have concerns, you can contact us for advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Students struggling with debt

The Students' Union Student Advice Service can advise students in relation to unmanageable debts. Please contact us if you wish this support: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

National Debtline has issued a factsheet for people who may be facing debt as a result of the coronavirus pandemic: www.nationaldebtline.org/coronavirus

Other useful sources of information are below:

<https://www.stepchange.org/debt-info/debt-and-coronavirus.aspx>

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/articles/coronavirus-and-your-money>



Students claiming benefits or Tax Credits

Please note that only certain groups of full-time students are eligible to claim benefits. Before making a claim, please contact us for advice. You can also see the information on our self-help webpages: https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/money/. There is also some guidance about eligibility for Universal Credit here:

<https://askcpag.org.uk/content/201400/coronavirus-and-universal-credit-for-students>

If you are a student who is eligible and currently claims benefits, and would like to know more about the impact of coronavirus on your benefits, please contact us for advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk There is also some information here:

<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/>

There have been changes in the Local Housing Allowance amounts for those claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit for help with rent costs.

There is information about the effect on Tax Credits here:

<https://askcpag.org.uk/content/201050/tax-credits-and-coronavirus>

If you currently receive tax credits or other benefits and are not sure whether to claim Universal Credit instead, please contact us for advice first: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Students who work

The government announced a package of measures for workers affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Students should see Citizens' Advice and Government (gov.uk) information regarding employment rights, sick pay and other issues that may be relevant to students whose work is affected by the coronavirus pandemic:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support>

Note that this information is for the general public and it may direct you to claim benefits if eligible. However, entitlement to most benefits, including income-related benefits such as Universal Credit, is restricted for most full-time students. If you are a full-time student and thinking of claiming benefits, please see our information here:

https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/advicehelp/money/ and contact us for individual advice at: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

If you normally work but you are ill or self-isolating because of having coronavirus symptoms, or because you are living in a household with someone who has symptoms, you may be able to claim **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** if you can't work and if you meet the other conditions for SSP. See more information here: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus/worker-support> and here:

<https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>



Some workers were eligible to be put on **'furlough'** if their employer did not have any work or pay for them because of the pandemic, or because they shut their business temporarily. However, your employer will only be able to use the scheme to pay you if either:

- you've already been furloughed before 11 June 2020
- you're returning from maternity leave, adoption leave, paternity leave, shared parental leave or parental bereavement leave (if you're returning from one of these types of leave, your employer must also have used the scheme to furlough other employees)

See this information from Citizens Advice about the government's **Coronavirus Job Retention scheme (including furlough)**: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/work/coronavirus-if-your-employer-has-told-you-not-to-work/>

For information about **flexible working, working from home** and other measures that may enable you to continue working during the coronavirus pandemic, speak to your employer or see the citizens advice or gov.uk weblinks above.

Accommodation

Leaving your current tenancy early

This information refers to Assured Shorthold tenancies. Other tenancies may have different terms and conditions. Please contact the Student Advice Centre if you don't have an Assured Shorthold tenancy or you are not sure what type of tenancy you have: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Most tenancies that were in place when the coronavirus pandemic and associated measures started will now be coming to an end. If you do still need advice regarding leaving your current tenancy early, please contact the Student Advice Centre as above, or see the following detailed information on the Shelter website about negotiating a 'surrender' of the tenancy with your landlord: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_tenants_can_end_a_fixed_term_tenancy

It is very important to follow the correct procedures and get everything agreed in writing. If the landlord doesn't agree to you leaving early but you still do so, you will remain liable for the rent until the end of the fixed term. If you have a joint tenancy agreement because you share a house with other people, you will also need to discuss it with them and all the tenants must agree to you surrendering the tenancy (and therefore any arrangements that you are trying to agree with the landlord to facilitate this).

The Student Advice Centre can advise in individual circumstances, but please be aware that we may not be able to negotiate a release from your tenancy, and you should speak to your landlord about your position in the first instance. If you contact us, please provide an outline of what steps you



have taken to date, and any correspondence with your landlord, as well as an explanation of why you wish to leave your tenancy.

Difficulty paying your rent or mortgage

If you are having difficulty paying your rent or mortgage, please see the section above regarding 'financial concerns', and this information from Citizens' Advice about measures brought in as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, to give additional protection from eviction to tenants who may be struggling to pay their rent: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/health/coronavirus-what-it-means-for-you/>. Also see the section on 'eviction' below.

Some provisions have also been put in place for people who have mortgages but who may struggle to pay at the moment.

More information about both of the above issues and other coronavirus-related housing concerns is at: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus

It is important that, if you are having difficulty paying your rent, you communicate with your landlord. In many circumstances, landlords will be happy to come to a payment arrangement with you and/or your guarantor.

Joint and several liability

If your tenancy is a joint tenancy with your housemates all tenants will have joint and several liability for the rent. This means that if you have paid your share of the rent but a housemate has not, the landlord is not limited to pursuing the person who did not pay and can hold you liable for the unpaid rent.

It is at the landlord's discretion who they pursue for rent arrears in a joint tenancy. Often, if the person who has not paid has a guarantor this will be who the landlord will contact first.

Possession action / eviction or being asked to leave your home

Note that if you live with your landlord there are differences in the rules relating to this – please see the Shelter website or contact us for advice.

Your landlord cannot refuse you entry to the property or remove your belongings, even if you have rent arrears.

If a landlord wishes to end your tenancy due to rent arrears, they must follow a strict legal process. They must first serve a legally valid notice seeking possession (the length of this notice period has temporarily been extended to 3 months in most cases). Once the notice has expired, they must apply to court for a possession order. The final stage is applying for a warrant to enforce the court order. A tenant who remains in the property throughout this process is not committing any civil or criminal offence and remains liable to pay rent for the time they occupy the property.



Landlords who evict tenants without following this process risk committing a criminal offence under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977 and can be punished with fines, compensation claims and in serious cases custodial sentences.

If you are concerned about being asked to leave your home, for whatever reason, see the Shelter website for more information on your rights:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus?utm_source=vanityurl&source_medium=direct#Eviction_and_being_asked_to_leave

In addition to your standard rights, some changes were put in place because of the coronavirus situation. This includes all court action for eviction being on hold until at least 23 August 2020.

If your landlord begins possession action, and you were not planning on leaving your property, you should contact the Student Advice Centre for further advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

You can also contact the Tenancy Relations Officer at your council if you think you are being evicted illegally (for Sheffield, see: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/tro>).

Court action for arrears

Possession action is uncommon for students because the process can be lengthy, and the tenancy may come to an end before it can be completed. Landlords of students are more like to seek the payment of rent arrears using small claims or money claims processes.

Rent arrears are more likely to result in this type of action if the tenant has ignored the issue or refused to pay, and this has the potential to result in a County Court Judgement (CCJ) being made against you. CCJ's can seriously damage your credit rating and can impact your ability to obtain further rental accommodation in future.

For the landlord to take this type of action they must be able to show that they have attempted to resolve the situation with you directly and that the court is being used as a last resort. If a tenant has engaged with their landlord to make a realistic and affordable payment arrangement the landlord is far less likely to be able to obtain a money order against you.

Further information from the Citizens Advice Bureau on being pursued for debts can be found here: <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/debt-and-money/action-your-creditor-can-take/if-youre-being-taken-to-court-for-debt/>

Note that if tenants are jointly and severally liable and one tenant doesn't pay, if the other tenants are pursued by the landlord for outstanding rent, they may then take action through the courts to recover the money from the tenant who hasn't paid.

Guarantors

The majority of landlords will have asked tenants to provide a guarantor. This means that if you are unable to, or choose not to, make payments which you are liable for, the landlord can pursue your



guarantor. There is not set legal format to these kinds of agreements and the specific wording of the agreement will determine what the landlord is able to pursue a guarantor for.

If the guarantor agreement does not state otherwise your guarantor is likely to be held liable for any rent/costs that you have joint and several liability for (see above).

Staying on longer and extending a tenancy

Your current tenancy will usually continue as a periodic tenancy if your fixed term contract ends, so long as you still live there. See this website for more details about staying on longer in your current accommodation:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/renewing_your_private_tenancy

You can't be evicted unless your landlord follows a strict process (see the section on 'eviction' above), so you can continue to live in the property. However, even if this is just for a few days, it could be said that you have extended the tenancy, e.g. that it has become a periodic tenancy, and therefore your landlord could say that you owe further rent on a monthly basis (if that was how the rent was normally paid).

If you need short-term accommodation, you can contact Accommodation Services at:

accommodation@shu.ac.uk as they may be able to provide or suggest short-term accommodation in Snug-accredited properties.

Repairs and gas safety checks

Landlords are still expected to meet their repair obligations, and tenants who are living with serious hazards that a landlord has failed to remedy can still be assured of local authority (council) support to address this. Contact your local council if your landlord is not undertaking essential repairs that you have notified them about.

If you are concerned about contractors or other people coming into your home, the government recommends that – if it is reasonable, safe for you and carried out in line with other government guidance – tenants should allow local authorities, landlords or contractors access to their property in order to inspect or remedy urgent health and safety issues. You could be breaking the terms of your tenancy agreement if you do not allow this. See:

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/repairs/repairs_and_inspections_access_to_your_rented_home for more details.

Recent changes to guidance on working safely mean that landlords can now take steps to address wider issues of repairs and safety inspections, provided these are in line with public health advice. New Government guidance on working safely in people's homes has been published which sets out in what circumstances landlords or contractors can safely visit properties to carry out inspections and repairs.



Whilst the government understands that current restrictions may obstruct some routine and statutory inspections, they expect landlords to make every effort to meet them.

Annual gas safety checks are still a legal requirement. Your landlord should rearrange any gas safety checks that are due, if they cannot go ahead safely because someone in your home is at high risk or self-isolating.

For more information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-and-renting-guidance-for-landlords-tenants-and-local-authorities>

Signing up for a new tenancy / moving home / collecting your belongings

If you have already signed a new tenancy but are thinking of trying to end this tenancy before you move in, you are generally still bound by the tenancy agreement whether you move in or not. However, depending on your reasons, the landlord may be more flexible or willing to negotiate, and there may be some other provisions that could help you. To check your options, see: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_to_end_a_tenancy_before_you_move_in for more details.

If you are considering signing up for accommodation for next year, there is no hurry as there is plenty of student accommodation in Sheffield. Note that if you sign a tenancy agreement, **this is a legally binding contract which can be difficult to get out of** if you change your mind later (see: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/how_tenants_can_end_a_fixed_term_tenancy, and the information in the paragraph above).

If you do wish to sort out your accommodation for next year soon, the Students' Union and the University recommends **Snug accredited properties**. Snug is an award-winning student landlord accommodation scheme, which is managed by Sheffield City Council and the two universities and students' unions in Sheffield. Snug was set up to ensure that students get high quality, properly managed accommodation, so that their time in Sheffield is both safe and enjoyable. The University's accommodation service only advertises Snug accredited properties, and it is important that you ask whether the property you're considering is Snug accredited.

See this website for current guidance in relation to undertaking property viewings and moving homes: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/government-advice-on-home-moving-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

See also:

<https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/news/article/6013/Moving-in-our-out-of-Sheffield-this-Summer-Read-our-top-tips/>

If you need to return to collect belongings, also see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-he-providers-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/actions-for-he-providers-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak#leaving-or-collecting-belongings-from-student-accommodation-in-england>



Deposits

If you are having difficulties getting your deposit back because of reasons related to the coronavirus situation, please contact us for advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

The deposit protection requirements have not changed. Landlords (and agents acting on behalf of landlords) must continue to uphold all of their legal obligations relating to Tenancy Deposit Protection, and the usual process to return a deposit should be followed if a tenancy ends during the outbreak.

For guidance on getting your deposit back, see our self-help guide at:

<https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/selfhelp-housing/> or
<https://www.savethestudent.org/accommodation/how-to-get-your-full-student-house-deposit-back.html>

Complaints about landlords / accommodation providers

If students believe their accommodation provider is behaving unfairly or improperly during the pandemic, they can report them via one of these routes:

<https://www.coronavirus-business-complaint.service.gov.uk/>

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards/>

If your landlord has signed up to an accommodation code of good practice, such as that run by Universities UK and GuildHE, or Unipol and ANUK, and you are having problems with the property or landlord, you can make a complaint:

<https://www.thesac.org.uk/>

<https://www.unipol.org.uk/the-code/how-to-complain>

If your property is Snug accredited, you can contact the Student Advice Centre to report an issue: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

It may also be relevant to use the University's complaints process. You can seek further advice from us first if you are not sure about whether this is a suitable route: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Redress schemes

Unless your accommodation provider is an individual landlord it is likely that they or the letting agent they use should be signed up to a government approved redress scheme who you can take complaints to, you may wish to write a formal complaint to the provider over their handling of the matter and then if you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint you can take it to the redress scheme. The following link focuses on letting agents, however accommodation providers who run student halls also need to be signed up to one of the schemes.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/private_renting/letting_agent_redress_schemes



Coronavirus symptoms whilst living in a rented property

If you need to self-isolate because you, or someone you live with, have coronavirus symptoms, it is a good idea to let your landlord know. Ensure you follow the government guidelines on self-isolation: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> If you have any concerns about this, contact us: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk or the University's coronavirus Help Centre (see the beginning of this leaflet for contact details).

International students

There is very clear and detailed information and guidance for International students on the University's webpages: www.shu.ac.uk/coronavirus (click on 'for students').

The International Experience Team is contacting International students directly with general advice and guidance, but if you need to contact them for individual advice please go to: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/current-students/latest-news/support-service-for-students> and scroll to the International Experience Team section.

Erasmus students should also see the University's webpages.

You may also find it helpful to look at information on the UKCISA website: <https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students>

Please look at all the relevant sections of this leaflet, e.g. regarding financial concerns, accommodation, assessments and exams, working, etc. and contact the Student Advice Centre if you have any questions or need advice: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Your wellbeing

At this stressful time, there has been a lot of information and guidance produced about ways to keep well, both physically and mentally.

Mind have produced this guide: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>.

Government guides are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing> and the NHS have compiled information about wellbeing apps: <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health/>

If you wish to access the **University's Student Wellbeing service**, for support with how you are feeling about the coronavirus and related issues, or about another matter that is affecting you, please go to: <https://www.shu.ac.uk/current-students/latest-news/support-service-for-students> and scroll to the Student Wellbeing section.

Advice & help

STUDENT
ADVICE
CENTRE



You can register with the service or look at the links to self-help information that you may find useful in the first instance.

If you need urgent support details for emergencies and out-of-hours help can be found on the Student Wellbeing My Hallam page <https://students.shu.ac.uk/shuspacecontent/wellbeing/help-urgently>

In addition, details of other advice and support providers are listed on the Students' Union Advice Service's Get in Touch page: https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/contactus/

If you need help because of **domestic abuse** in your home, see this information on the Shelter website: https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/coronavirus#Domestic_abuse. If you are in Sheffield, you should contact: <https://sheffiddact.org.uk/domestic-abuse/get-help/>

See <https://www.akt.org.uk/> for resources for LGBTQ+ young people aged 16 – 25 who are experiencing homelessness or living in a hostile or abusive environment. For support in Sheffield you can contact SAYIT, a social support service for LGBTQ+ young people: <https://sayit.org.uk/>

This leaflet is provided in good faith, collating the information that is currently available. We are endeavouring to keep it updated; however, as the situation is changing rapidly, we cannot accept responsibility for any decision you make based on the information in this leaflet. Please see the www.gov.uk and www.shu.ac.uk/coronavirus websites for the latest guidance, and contact us if you wish to check anything: advicecentre@shu.ac.uk

Please note that the Students' Union's Advice Service is currently working remotely, using online and email advice. Please see our self-help resources on our website: https://www.hallamstudentsunion.com/advice_help/

Last updated: 3 July 2020