

Dear,

Gordon McKenzie, CEO of Guild HE

Our response to the Facilities Usage.

We are writing on behalf of the millions of students' part of the Guild HE membership that we represent, to urge you to take immediate action to address the challenges faced by our members. Institutions have had to pay out the same as any other year, but our students have not received satisfactory education or justifiable access to facilities like every other year. It is our responsibility to address this, so we have collated this feedback to support you and make the students' position and feelings as clear as possible.

We understand that the ever-changing guidance has made this academic year incredibly difficult. We have spent the year in and out of lockdowns, and Universities have had no choice but to conduct either a completely online or blended learning approach from March 2020, which is still ongoing as of the date of this letter in January 2021. Recently, arrangements have changed at short notice because of the current national lockdown and now many students are unable to return to campus until at least the end of February. Students now find themselves in a comparable situation to that of March 2020, where they are at home unable to access certain libraries, stores/ equipment, and study/ studio spaces that are necessary for many students to succeed and thrive academically.

Across the Guild HE, your member institutions include some major providers in professional subject areas including art, design and media, music and the performing arts; agriculture and food; education; business and law, the built environment; health and sports. You are officially recognised as a representative body be the advocate of choice for smaller and specialist higher education institutions, hence why we are calling upon your support, guidance and advocacy.

Institutions have had to pay out for new covid safe implementations on campus', and new online infrastructure and training. However, no student should be disadvantaged by the impacts of COVID-19 if paying fulling for a full degree. No student should be disadvantaged by not having the access to facilities they need. All students should be given the integrity of academic standards and outcomes of a practical degree upheld.

Consequently, we are asking for Guild HE support and advocate on behalf of the Universities and Students they represent to agree and promote the following points.

1. The institutions have spent millions on implementing covid safe signage, sanitizers, air conditioning, one-way systems, extra cleaning crews and so on, to ensure that students feel safe and are protected whilst using the facilities on campus.
2. The practical based degrees our students have sign up for and agreed to when deciding to pay their fees/ take out their loans, means that as consumers they have "consumer rights". They have the right from the government to be helped when treated unfairly by poor service, and not keeping to contracts.
3. A majority of students within the Guild membership felt they did not get a sufficient "quality of education" last term. Many students feel underprepared for graduation or going into their next year as they have not made high quality portfolio pieces or learnt how to use the equipment properly.

4. The impact of this year on our student's mental wellbeing and financial wellbeing has rocketed. We understand the government gave the universities a grant to help this, but it doesn't quite cover affects that can't be bought. How can we expect first-year course communities who have never met before, to not feel anxious turning on their camera in a room full of strangers? How can we expect international students to feel equal when they have to cope with time zones?

Taking into consideration all the above points, we are asking that Guild HE as our representative help us to be a bigger voice and advocate for the government to give a justified and equal treatment to small and specialist institutions, because we are not the same as historically established, conglomerate institutions. The membership is full of students that are getting an inadequate education and no access to the facilities they paid for, despite the Covid safe implementations our institutions have put in place at the government's request. The priority is to send creative and practical universities back, but we want an assurance that our students will gain this within a reasonable time of this study block/ term, and we want a public vote of confidence that Guild HE understands and supports students in this time.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Marshall, Falmouth & Exeter Students Union President
Isabelle Kinghorn, Falmouth & Exeter Students Union Education Officer

Thomas Oatey – Harper Adams Students' Union President
Lauren France – Harper Adams Students' Union Vice President.

Harriet Moore - Student Union President at Plymouth College of Art

Joe Lynch Deputy President Marjon Student Union

Adolphus Osigwe, Mont Rose Student Union President

Aleksandra Stanek, Co-President Royal College of Art Students Union

Natalie Lanzalaco, NUA Students Union President

Louise Hall, Arts University Bournemouth Student Union President
Kamila Dowgiert, Arts University Bournemouth Student Union Vice President.