Purpose Statement
To set out clearly for students, colleagues and others, the University’s approach to offer rent rebates associated with any Government imposed lockdown linked with the Covid-19 pandemic that affects the Newcastle area. The policy aims to achieve consistency, fairness and transparency.

Applicability and Scope
The University’s rent rebate policy will apply to eligible students who have a contract to live in university-allocated accommodation during the academic year 2021-22. The fair rent rebate policy will allow some students to claim a rent rebate if they are prevented from returning to their university-allocated accommodation during the academic year 2021-22 because of lockdown measures introduced by the UK government.

Definitions
UK Government imposed lockdown - a period of lockdown affecting the Newcastle area resulting in you either being recommended to remain at your term-time accommodation, or you being unable to return to your term-time accommodation following a temporary departure.
Rent rebate – the equivalent of one night’s rent for each night that lockdown prevents you from returning to your university-allocated accommodation, up to the thresholds set out in this policy.
- If you have a tenancy agreement for a full academic year, you may be entitled to up to a maximum of 10 weeks’ rent rebate
- If you have a tenancy agreement for a semester, you may be entitled to up to a maximum of 5 weeks’ rent rebate
- You may be eligible for a rebate in respect of more than one lockdown period, but the maximum rebate you can claim is up to 5 weeks’ rent (semester students) or 10 weeks’ rent (full-year students) for the whole of your tenancy.

Eligibility
You will be eligible for a rent rebate if you meet all the criteria below:
- You were allocated your accommodation through the University and you have a tenancy agreement for all or part of the academic year 2021/22 with the University or with one of our preferred partners
- Your tenancy started before the lockdown was imposed
- Your tenancy was not cancelled before the tenancy period expired
- You have kept to your agreed payment schedule and have no arrears
- You have been prevented from returning to live in your university-allocated accommodation throughout a lockdown period because of travel restrictions imposed by the UK government to prevent the spread of coronavirus
- You apply for the rent rebate by the published deadline
Our responsibilities
We will keep up-to-date with UK Government legislation to ensure we offer relevant guidance and support to our student community.

We will aim to communicate with you within seven days of any UK Government imposed lockdown, affecting the Newcastle area, being implemented. Within this communication, we will share with you relevant legal responsibilities as well as health and safety guidelines that may be relevant to you whilst living in our accommodation.

We will make available a Rent Rebate Application Form and ask that you complete the form to notify us that you are no longer in residence and unable to return due to the imposed lockdown. We will advise on the closing date of this application, and give you sufficient time to complete the form.

When the lockdown is lifted and you can return to your accommodation, we will aim to process your Rent Rebate Application Form with 30 days and if this results in any overpayment of accommodation fees, will aim to refund them to you within 90 days of the end of your tenancy.

Your responsibilities
To comply with UK Government legislation and University advice in regards to any imposed lockdown affecting the Newcastle area.

If the UK government imposes a lockdown that affects the Newcastle area during term time, you should remain living in your university-allocated accommodation and not leave it to live elsewhere until after restrictions are lifted. This may mean staying in your university-allocated accommodation during vacation periods.

If the UK government imposes a lockdown that affects the Newcastle area outside term time, then you should remain where you are. If you are away from university at the time, you should not return to university until after restrictions are lifted. If you are still at university when the lockdown is introduced, you should stay at university until after the restrictions are lifted.

If you have been unable to return to your university-allocated accommodation during the lockdown period, when requested, you will complete the Rent Rebate Application Form within the stipulated time period, which will allow us to check your eligibility for a rent rebate.

Exclusions
The policy will not apply if:

- You did not book their accommodation through the University Accommodation Services
- Your arrival in Newcastle is delayed for reasons other than lockdown measures introduced by the UK Government.

You will not be eligible for a rent rebate at any time if:

- You are living in your university-allocated accommodation – even if there are lockdown restrictions in force
- You leave or return to your university-allocated accommodation part-way through a lockdown period
Exclusions (Cont’d…)

- Your tenancy ended before its contracted expiry date
- You left the UK during your tenancy and are prevented from returning to the UK or if you have to spend a period in quarantine when you return to the UK
- You are prevented from returning to your university-allocated accommodation because of restrictions that apply in your local area but not in the Newcastle area

Additional Information

This policy is supplemented by a series of Frequently Asked Questions which are detailed below and aim to provide further clarity on the rent rebate policy.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the University’s policy on rent rebates during the pandemic?
The University’s rent rebate policy will apply to eligible students who have a contract to live in university-allocated accommodation during the academic year 2021-22. The policy will not apply to students who did not book their accommodation through the university.

The fair rent rebate policy will allow some students to claim a rent rebate if they are prevented from returning to their university-allocated accommodation during the academic year 2021-22 because of lockdown measures introduced by the UK government. This policy does not apply if your arrival in Newcastle is delayed for reasons other than lockdown measures introduced by the UK government. If you are delayed for reasons relating to travel, visas, family circumstances or anything else, please contact the accommodation team (allocations-enquiries@ncl.ac.uk) to discuss your options.

How much is the rent rebate?
The rebate will be the equivalent of one night’s rent for each night that lockdown prevents you from returning to your university-allocated accommodation, up to the thresholds set out in this policy.

If you have a tenancy agreement for a full academic year, you may be entitled to up to a maximum of 10 weeks’ rent rebate.
If you have a tenancy agreement for a semester, you may be entitled to up to a maximum of 5 weeks’ rent rebate.

You may be eligible for a rebate in respect of more than one lockdown period, but the maximum rebate you can claim is up to 5 weeks’ rent (semester students) or 10 weeks’ rent (full-year students) for the whole of your tenancy.

Who will be eligible for a rent rebate?
You will be eligible for a rent rebate if you meet all the criteria below:

- You were allocated your accommodation through the University and you have a tenancy agreement for all or part of the academic year 2021/22 with the University or with one of our preferred partners
- Your tenancy started before the lockdown was imposed
- Your tenancy was not cancelled before the tenancy period expired
- You have kept to your agreed payment schedule and have no arrears
- You have been prevented from returning to live in your university-allocated accommodation throughout a lockdown period because of travel restrictions imposed by the UK government to prevent the spread of coronavirus
- You apply for the rent rebate by the published deadline

You will not be eligible for a rent rebate at any time whilst you are living in your university-allocated accommodation – even if there are lockdown restrictions in force.

You will not be eligible for a rent rebate if you leave or return to your university-allocated accommodation part-way through a lockdown period.

You will not be eligible for a rent rebate if your tenancy ended before its contracted expiry date.

Cont’d...
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Cont’d…)

Who will be eligible for a rent rebate? (Cont’d…)
You will not be eligible for a rent rebate if you left the UK during your tenancy and are prevented from returning to the UK or if you have to spend a period in quarantine when you return to the UK.

What is meant by university-allocation accommodation?
If you made your application for accommodation to the University and were allocated a room by the Accommodation Team in either University-owned accommodation or with one of our partners. This could be a room offer made by us to Abodus Students, Downing Students or Unite Students or via a direct referral to Abodus Students as long as you accepted the room within the stipulated timescale on our referral email.

Is the rent rebate available only to students prevented from returning to their accommodation?
Yes, the rent rebate is only for students who have moved in before lockdown. Students who live in their accommodation during lockdown are not eligible for a rent rebate. Rent rebates are available (subject to the terms of this policy) to students who left their university-allocated accommodation during their tenancy and are unable to return to their university-allocated accommodation during a lockdown that affects the Newcastle area.

If pandemic restrictions (in or outside the UK) prevent you from taking occupation of your university-allocated accommodation on your planned tenancy start date, you must let the university accommodation team know as soon as you can at allocations-enquiries@ncl.ac.uk. You should keep the university informed of your expected arrival date. You will only be charged rent from the date of your arrival. The rent rebate policy does not apply to late arrivals.

No rent rebate will be offered to students who have to self-isolate at the start of or during their tenancy period.

What should I do if the UK goes into lockdown?
By staying put, you reduce the risk of spreading infection.

If the UK government imposes a lockdown that affects the Newcastle area during term time, you should remain living in your university-allocated accommodation and not leave it to live elsewhere until after restrictions are lifted. This may mean staying in your university-allocated accommodation during vacation periods.

If the UK government imposes lockdown that affects the Newcastle area outside term time, then you should remain where you are. If you are away from university at the time, you should not return to university until after restrictions are lifted. If you are still at university when the lockdown is introduced, you should stay at university until after the restrictions are lifted.

We offer flexible start dates if the UK government imposes lockdown that prevents you from travelling to Newcastle in time to start your tenancy, and you will only be charged rent from the day you are able to travel to Newcastle.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Cont’d…)

What if I want to leave or return to my accommodation before the lockdown restrictions are lifted?
We will not prevent you from leaving or returning to your accommodation part-way through a lockdown, but remember it is your responsibility to comply with any government restrictions that are in force.

We are not offering rebates to anyone leaving or returning to university-allocated accommodation during a lockdown period.

The rent rebate is only available to those students who are not in residence during the full lockdown period. If you choose to leave or return to your accommodation during the lockdown period, then you will not be eligible for a rent rebate and you must pay all rent due under your tenancy agreement.

How do I apply for a rent rebate?
You must notify our accommodation team as soon as you become aware that you will not be able to return to your university accommodation because of lockdown restrictions. We need to know for health and safety reasons, such as being able to account for people in the event of a fire evacuation, and so that we can flush out water systems in unoccupied rooms as a precaution against legionella.

We will send out a Rent Rebate Application Form if the situation arises where rebates will be available. At the same time, we will remind students of the eligibility criteria, stipulate how to submit the application, and state the deadline by which applications must be submitted. All correspondence will be sent to the student at their Newcastle University email address. We will not process applications received after the deadline.

You should only submit a Rent Rebate Application Form if you are eligible for a rebate. Our staff will carry out spot checks and disciplinary action may be taken against students who wrongfully apply for a rebate.

When will I receive my rent rebate?
We will aim to process rebates as quickly as possible, but how quickly we complete the process will depend on the number of applications received, staff availability and a number of other factors. Remember that if there is a lockdown, our teams are likely to be extra busy to ensure your accommodation remains a safe space.

Processing rebates means a lot of extra work for some of our staff and we ask you to be patient whilst applications are being processed. It may be several weeks after lockdown ends before we are able to finalise rebate eligibility.

If your rebate is processed before you have made your last rent payment, the rebate will be used to offset the remaining rent that you owe. We will inform you of what your reduced payments are going to be. If your rebate is processed after you have made your last rent payment, we will aim to refund you within 90 days of you vacating your accommodation and returning keys at the end of your tenancy.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Cont’d…)

How do I appeal if my application is turned down?
When you enter into a tenancy agreement, you commit to pay rent throughout the tenancy period – whether you are living in the accommodation or not. That is the case in private-sector accommodation as well as university-allocated accommodation. The University’s pandemic rent rebate policy is therefore a concession to students because of lockdown measures introduced by the UK government. We have tried to make the policy fair, and we will apply it consistently, but the rebate is at our discretion and there is no appeal process.

Will I still have to pay rent during the lockdown period?
Yes, your rent will still be payable in accordance with your payment schedule. You must not stop paying rent during the lockdown period, as this will disqualify you from the rebate. To be eligible for the rebate, there must be no outstanding rent payments on your account. If you are struggling to meet your scheduled payments, contact our accommodation finance team (accommodation.finance@ncl.ac.uk) as soon as possible to discuss your options.

Can I cancel my tenancy instead of claiming a rebate?
We are not offering special cancellation terms for reasons related to the pandemic and our standard terms and conditions will continue to apply if you want to end your tenancy agreement early.

If your tenancy agreement is cancelled during the tenancy period, this may affect the amount of any rebate we will allow you.

If the university has to adopt online teaching for a substantial proportion of the academic year and you are instructed to return to or remain at your address outside the Newcastle area, then we will announce any special terms and conditions on which students may apply to cancel their tenancy agreements.

What if I withdraw from university?
We are not offering special withdrawal terms for reasons related to the pandemic and our standard terms and conditions will continue to apply if you want to withdraw from university. Withdrawal from university may affect the amount of any rebate we will allow you.

What if lockdown continues beyond the end of my tenancy period?
If you are away from your university-allocated accommodation at the time, your tenancy will end on its expiry date. You will be given a reasonable opportunity after lockdown ends to collect any belongings you left behind. We will dispose of any belongings that are still in the accommodation or shared areas after the collection deadline, in accordance with the tenancy agreement.

If you are living in your university-allocated accommodation when your tenancy period expires, and a lockdown prevents you from leaving the Newcastle area, you will be allowed to continue living in your university-allocated accommodation. If you have not claimed a rent rebate during the tenancy period, you will be allowed to stay rent free for the first 10 weeks of lockdown (5 weeks if your tenancy agreement was for one semester only). If you claimed a rent rebate during the tenancy period, your rebate will be reduced in proportion to the number of additional days’ stay at the end of your tenancy, and you will have to pay rent if you stay on for longer than the period covered by the rebate.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (Cont’d...)

What if lockdown continues beyond the end of my tenancy period? (Cont’d/…)
If there isn’t a lockdown in force at the end of your tenancy period but you are living in your university-allocated accommodation when your tenancy period expires and have tested positive for covid-19 (coronavirus) we will allow you to stay rent-free for up to 10 days after the end of your tenancy period, provided you self-isolate during this time.

If UK restrictions do not prevent you leaving Newcastle, but you are unable to return to your home country, you should contact the accommodation team (allocations-enquiries@ncl.ac.uk) to discuss your options.

What about international travel?
If you need to travel to the UK to start your tenancy and your travel arrangements are disrupted by the pandemic, you will only have to pay for your accommodation from the date that you arrive.

If you are due to arrive in the first semester, your room will remain reserved for you until 25 October 2021. If you have not given us a confirmed arrival date by 25 October, your accommodation contract will be ended – but you can apply for our accommodation again once you know your arrival date. If you are due to arrive in the second semester, we will also hold rooms for a reasonable time without charge – but the cut-off date has yet to be published.

If you leave the UK during your tenancy period and are prevented from returning to the UK, or you have to spend a period in quarantine on your return to the UK, you will not be eligible for a rent rebate or any other rent concessions.

Do lockdown restrictions have to apply to the whole of the UK?
To qualify for a rent rebate, lockdown restrictions must affect the Newcastle area. If there is a local lockdown in your home area it is your responsibility to comply with any travel restrictions. We are not offering a rebate to students who are prevented from returning to their university-allocated accommodation because of restrictions that apply in their local area but not in the Newcastle area.

Will there be a rent rebate if it is legal to travel but we are advised against it?
You have a responsibility and a duty to comply with any regulations made by government which restrict freedom of movement in order to control the spread of covid-19 (coronavirus). The rent rebate will apply during periods where the government has made such regulations. You are recommended to follow any guidance issued by government in order to control the spread of covid-19 (coronavirus). Where travel is lawful, but the government has advised against it, the university will have discretion to determine whether the rebate policy should apply or not.

Where travel is lawful but the university has advised against it, the university will apply the rebate policy.

I’m living in preferred partner accommodation, but I booked with them direct. Can I claim a rent rebate?
You will not be eligible for a rebate under this policy if you did not book your accommodation through the university. However, your preferred partner may operate its own rent rebate policy and you should ask them about it.