

Response to COVID-19

Student numbers, risk mitigation and the issue of fees, credits and refunds

The issue of how members are dealing with student numbers, risk management and particularly, fees (see point 3 at page 3), has generated many queries. There is no uniform measure amongst the colleges and halls, however, here is a brief national snapshot provided by the Executive Committee and Dr Brenda Holt (Melbourne chapter). Further information will be provided as it becomes available.

1. Student numbers

- **ACT**

ANU residents, especially domestic students, in the range of Halls, Colleges, Houses and Lodges have been encouraged to return home if safe to do so. As at 6 April there were still some 2,200 students in residence on campus, many of course international students unable to return home. John XXIII College has closed, with a small number of residents transferred to Wright Hall.

- **New South Wales**

Numbers are down at all University of Sydney colleges ranging from St John's full closure from 8 April to significantly fewer numbers at other colleges. St Andrew's is accommodating just 22 (of 390) students.

Students at UNSW's halls of residence who have been unable to leave have been relocated to apartments with ensuites. Residency levels at UNSW's Shalom College, New College and New College Postgraduate Village are approximately 50%. Levels at Warrane and Creston would be somewhat higher.

- **Queensland**

Cromwell has paused operations until further notice and International House has closed operations with around twenty students in residence. St John's has 15 students in self catered accommodation. Emmanuel, Duchesne, St Leo's and Women's have reduced numbers and continue with catering.

Kings, Grace and Union College continue to operate with over 50% occupancy.

- **Tasmania**

University is now nearly all online, with the exception of some courses where practicals have to occur. University run accommodation is about half full, with students able to break leases with no penalties. One University accommodation building has been taken over by the state government as a place to quarantine COVID19 cases if necessary. Jane Franklin Hall (only independent College in Tasmania) has about 80 in residence. Most are students who cannot get home or have chosen not to.

- **Victoria**

Mannix College at Monash University made the difficult decision to cease operations on 22 March until further notice.

Each of the ten residential colleges within The University of Melbourne remain open with occupancy varying from 10% to 65% due to being expressly encouraged to depopulate in case of an outbreak. As a case in point, St Hilda's has 55% interstate students and once state borders started closing, families were keen to have their children home. All but 2 NZ students went home (10). There are now 80 students in residence out of 220.

- **Western Australia**

Each of the six residential colleges within The University of Western Australia (UWA) remain open with occupancy varying from 40% to 80%. UWA has moved online, however, key areas of the University are available to students including the main library.

2. Food service and risk management

- **ACT**

There has been a strongly coordinated approach to risk management and care across the ANU University managed, independent and commercial operations, guided by 'RiskLogic, with the development of an 'ANU Residential Standards and Essential Requirements' document and, from it, the preparation of 'Outbreak Management Plans' for each residence. These compliance and protocols documents are constantly updated and a compliance team has been formed daily to visit each residence to monitor, advise and report on implementation of management and care procedures. Self-contained rooms in the Packard Wing of Bruce Hall, Laurus Wing of Ursula Hall, and in the UniLodges have been set aside for self-isolation if required.

Initially all heads of residences met each morning by ZOOM, convened by the Director of Residential Experience who is working closely with the DVC Academic and the new DVC Student & University Experience. These meetings now occur twice a week.

- **New South Wales**

Food service at the Colleges of the University of Sydney varies. One college is serving food in pre-packaged containers with the dining hall open but under restrictive conditions as dictated by COVID-19 requirements. One dining hall has restricted numbers to no more than 25 people in the hall at any one time. Another college will introduce a 'take-away' model after the Easter break.

- **Queensland**

Catering has ceased at Cromwell, IH and St John's.

All Colleges with smaller numbers continue to provide online tutorials and pastoral support online.

- **Tasmania**

Jane Franklin has been in "lock down" but is not shutting down and is enforcing all the regulations that need enforcing eg. hygiene. Non student facing staff are working from home or are on leave.

- **Victoria**

Trinity and Ormond are in complete lockdown (no one can come in or out). Most colleges are 'mostly locked down' allowing students to still do things within the law (go for exercise, essential things). All Melbourne colleges are diligently offering academic tutorials online and pastoral care/social support as much as possible online (eg. still offering variety night, but it is online).

UM has moved online and has been completely closed since the 24 March. UM (DVC, Academic and DVC, Student Life) meets with the College Heads every Wednesday via zoom for regular updates. The Heads and UM working closely together to manage student population and communications. This has included the Head of University housing. Heads of each college speak via zoom 3 times per week with very close relationships and support.

- **Western Australia**

UWA has in place a Critical Incident Management Team with a team leader on this committee representing student residences. Heads of each college are in constant communication and are sharing of resources and information.

3. Fees, credits & refunds

- **ACT**

ANU residents, especially domestic students are being encouraged to return home if safe to do so and, in the ANU Halls for example, without penalty in breaking contracts (e.g. no early termination fee applied and deposits refunded) and with priority for residence on return. The refund of fees and the exact terms of return to campus when possible are being finalised.

- **New South Wales**

Treatment of fees varies between the **University of Sydney Colleges**. St John's has fully closed their college from 8 April and will offer a 50% refund on Semester 1 fees which can operate as a credit against Semester 2. Other colleges have instituted the following:

- Charge students in full for the first four weeks of semester, and offer a 2/3 credit on charges associated with the remainder of Semester 1.
- Provide a 55% rebate for use on Second Semester fees calculated from the end of week five to the middle of the winter holidays.
- Suspend fees from either 6 or 20 April dependent on whether rooms have been emptied or not.
- 60% discount on the second instalment of Semester 1 fees for students who are absent from the college.
- Some colleges are still working on the issue of fees with their Council to communicate a decision after Easter.

New College and New College Postgraduate Village reports on their approach to refunds and credits being:

1. Contracts can be terminated with a break fee.
2. Contracts can be terminated temporarily with a deposit carry-over to their new contract.
3. Membership can be retained at a 50% rate.

Their college portal has been set up to allow people to indicate their decision and securely provide their bank details for rapid processing.

- **Queensland**

The UQ colleges are operating as follows: Cromwell College and International House are have offered refunds from date of departure.

St John's students not in residence are not expected to pay fees from their date of departure until the date College resumes full operations. Students who have paid in advance are able to have their fees credited.

- **Tasmania**

Jane Franklin Hall is offering a 25% rebate to students who have elected to go home, the 25% is in line with a discount generally offered in a limited way to students who have to leave College for placements or field trips, the offer has been extended until the end of Semester 1.

Jane's Council has established an Emergency Management Committee that meets twice a week, made up of Principal, Dean, Operations Manager and 2 Council members.

Planning for Semester 2: The Council has also established a Recovery Management Committee to look at what comes next for Jane – first meeting is 21 April. With the JobKeeper funding, plus other grants (both state and federal) and substantial expenditure cuts, Jane will not have to go into its limited reserves for the year but recovery plans starting now are crucial. Jane is working through how to keep students for 2021. They are aware that what they do about fees and contracts for second semester will also impact on 2021. Utas will be making offers for 2021 on teacher recommendations. These offers will start to go out after Easter.

- **Victoria**

For those students who have left college, some colleges are crediting a 'service fee' of utilities and food around the value of \$3500. UM colleges Medley and IH gave a pro-rata refund. Newman followed. Other colleges are crediting between \$7,000 to \$10,000 on the last invoice to those who left college. Some are yet to decide how to handle such refunds but are leaning towards 'service fee' remission. All colleges are assessing individual student financial hardship case by case and providing a number of initiatives including payment plans, cessation of payment and student employment.

UM has launched a [COVID19 Financial Hardship Grants scheme](#) to support on-shore students who are most in need, with one-off financial grants of \$7500 due to the impact of COVID-19. UM has also launched a similar grant for international students.

Planning for Semester Two: The Melbourne Colleges are bullish about an in person domestic Semester 2. It is clear that they will not get international students mid-year, nor get the international students who have left to return. They are imagining the university offers to be a hybrid of online/in person offerings to accommodate the international students. Colleges hope to hear next Wednesday what the University's plans for second semester are.

- **Western Australia**

Each of the colleges are dealing with these issues the same but differently. The balance between a student focussed approach (departure without financial penalty, supporting international universities and governments as well as adhering to and supporting students through state and federal government recommendations) and continuing to be financially viable is a challenge. All colleges are assessing individual student financial hardship case by case and providing a number of initiatives including payment plans, cessation of payment and student employment

UWA has launched a COVID19 Financial Hardship Grants scheme to support on-shore students who are most in need, with one-off financial grants due to the impact of COVID-19. The scheme amounts to \$1 million with much of the fund generated from philanthropy.

Planning for Semester Two: The colleges are expecting a further reduction in numbers due to mid-year graduations, departure of Exchange students as well as a minimal intake of Semester Two students, particularly international students who traditionally make up the bulk of new arrivals. Colleges are also waiting for confirmation of a re-designed UWA second semester before planning/reviewing lease dates, new fee structures, rooming and facilities issues.