**USUCON – Wednesday 5 December 2012**

**Annual Rent Increase Implementation Date**

Rent increases are approved annually by USG in February following benchmarking of sector, competitor and local rents, and consultation with all key stakeholders including the Students’ Union through USUCON and the Campus Services Advisory Board. These annual rent increases do not then come into effect until August. Previously this has not been a significant issue other than it has created some disparity with the charges levied by Venue Essex for summer conference business, with external customers being charged a different rate in July than those attending conferences in August / September.

However, there is now a new dynamic with the establishment of the bespoke Edge Hotel School model which is predicated on a 2 year fast-track degree with multiple intakes in October, January, April and July. Based on this recruitment cycle, students could in future start their course with the Edge Hotel School in Spring, when they would also take up their accommodation; and hence these students would pay a lower rent than other University of Essex students taking up their accommodation at the start of the winter term for virtually the entire duration of an academic year. It would not seem equitable that students living in adjacent bedrooms could be paying different rental levels for an extended period of time.

**Therefore, it is proposed the annual rent increase should in future be effective from 1 April of each year rather than from the start of August.**

Clearly this would not affect contracts already in existence – in other words students who have already entered their accommodation at the start of an academic year have contracts at a fixed rental level valid for the entirety of that year. The impact would only be for any new accommodation tenancies issued from April.

The rationale for this new policy is that Edge Hotel School students, who would be on a 52 week tenancy owing to the nature of their 2 year degree, would then pay rent in line with other students starting their courses in the winter term for the majority of their letting period.

The other ancillary benefit of this modification would be that conference delegates during the summer would pay a consistent fee for their accommodation throughout this period; and at the increased level, hence generating additional surplus available for the University to reinvest in the core activities of education and research.

**Peter J Church BA (Oxon)**

**Director of Campus Services**

**25 November 2012**