



Chair Use only

University of Lincoln Students' Union Student Council
5th October 2015, 6pm – UL111, University Library

Motion on the Student's Union's stance on the Lincoln Student Accreditation Scheme

The Council Notes:

- The Accreditation scheme aims to be active in October
- At the time the scheme is launched, students will be starting to search for their new accommodation
- All agents will join the Accreditation scheme at 3 stars (all at an equal level)
- The scheme would currently allow boycotted agents (those who scored below an average of 3 in the Student's Union Housing Survey), to join the scheme at the same score as all other agents – at 3 stars.
- When a complaint is upheld against an agent, the agent in question would lose a star within the accreditation scheme, meaning that poor landlords will be shown up within the scheme.
- Currently, the majority of active cases from complaints arriving to the Student's Union surround bad quality and health and safety issues found when students move in.
- The new scheme has a new complaints procedure that is fair, and aimed at resolving issues that students find during their accommodation.
- Due to the complaints procedure, it may take a month or two for a complaint to result in a downgrade of score
- Landlords use a lot of pressurising language and tactics to push students to sign tenancy agreements early which the accreditation scheme does not address as it currently stands.

The Council Believes:

- The scheme focuses primarily of fixing issues when they arise, however does not actively try to improve student accommodation quality and safety before agents join the scheme.
- Whilst the scheme does not take into account the quality of housing for joining the scheme it gives power to the scheme once an agent is bought into it.
- Agents who have scored below 3 on the Students' Union housing survey, and therefore are boycotted by the Students' Union as decided by council and the Executive Committee would be allowed into the scheme with the same level as all other agents.
- The scheme would not distinguish between high quality and low quality housing at its launch, therefore students may be unaware of the housing issues currently at the lower-quality accommodations.

- That the complaints procedure is well made and appropriate for dealing with student complaints in an effective, fair, and timely manner.
- That there is an opportunity to update/influence the scheme internally as a partner at a quarterly meeting which would allow the Students' Union to fight for an Accreditation Scheme which suits the needs of students.
- That many housing issues can be solved before students move in through directly tackling rogue landlords' pressuring language and random spot checks of accommodation. (as seen in NUS Homes fit for study: only 44% satisfied when rushed into accommodation compared to 70% satisfied when not rushed)
- Dropping out of the scheme will cause a conflict with the University's Residential Services.
- There is not enough monitoring of the quality of housing.
- That the scheme does not tackle the removal of pressurising language

The Council Resolves:

- To propose the following changes / requirements to the new accreditation scheme:
 - 1) For agents that have scored below an average of 3 out of 5 on the Student's Union's Housing Survey to start at 1 star on the accreditation scheme (and similarly with those who are being boycotted by Bishop Grosseteste Students' union). Agents who have not been recorded in a survey with the University of Lincoln Student's Union or Bishop Grosseteste Student' Union must have all accommodations they provide pass an inspection following the Department for Communities and Local Government "Housing Health and Safety Rating System" (2006).
 - 2) For all agents to be spot checked on a random selection of their accommodations and to pass an inspection following the Department for Communities and Local Government "Housing Health and Safety Rating System" (2006) before being admitted to the scheme.
 - 3) Unacceptable pressurising language and advertisement techniques should automatically be deemed as a complaint and managed in accordance with the complaints process of the Code of Practice in the Lincoln Student Housing Accreditation Scheme.
 - i. Unacceptable pressuring Language is defined as using the below to get students to sign early:
 - A lack of Housing in the area.
 - High or Heavy demand for housing.
 - High quality housing being taken early.
 - Giving a deadline or date students should sign by.
 - Prices will increase the longer students wait.
 - Accommodations will be taken up quickly.
 - Students would struggle to find housing later in the year.
 - ii. Unacceptable advertising techniques are defined as:
 - Early-Bird discounts.
- That if the above has not been met before November 1st 2015:
 - 1) We, The University of Lincoln Students' Union, action our Executive to hold a referendum on the Union's affiliation with the scheme.
 - 2) Action the Vice President Welfare and Community to investigate and report to Council an alternative solution for a student housing accreditation scheme or solution of similar calibre.

- 3) For a report to be sent to the Vice Chancellor, Mary Stuart, on the Student's Union's concerns with the Accreditation Scheme.

Proposed:

Wade Baverstock, Students' Union Vice President Welfare and Community

Seconded:

Hayley Jayne Wilkinson, Students' Union President

Nyasha Takawira, Students' Union Vice President Academic Affairs

Sammi Storey, Students' Union Vice President Activities