

Stand Alone
34B York Way
London
N1 9AB

28 February 2019

Dear Sir/Madam,

The University of Essex's commitment to the Stand Alone Pledge to support estranged students

At Essex we are committed to ensuring that all students with the potential to succeed can access and succeed in their education irrespective of their background and personal circumstances. We are committed to supporting all our students, including those who may be estranged from their family and who are studying without the support or approval of a family network.

We understand that there are many complex reasons a student may be estranged and that no two estranged students' circumstances are the same. We appreciate that estranged students may face a range of challenges and have additional needs in relation to financial and pastoral support. The University and the Students' Union are committed to working together to provide the following support:

- Dedicated webpages for estranged students providing University information and sources of specialist advice and guidance and signposting external support organisations through useful links and contact information.
- Advice and guidance about applying as an independent student to Student Finance England.
- A named advisor in the Student Services team to act as a first point of contact and to provide advice and guidance throughout their time at the University.
- Although awards are not guaranteed, estranged students are considered a priority group for the University of Essex Hardship Fund if they find they are struggling financially during their course.
- When applying for on-campus accommodation as a first-year undergraduate student, estranged students have the option to select either a 39 week or 50 week contract duration length and can apply to stay in on-campus accommodation for their returning years of study. If an estranged student wishes to stay in on-campus accommodation, their accommodation will bridge the two weeks between academic year contracts to offer 365 days accommodation.

- All students living in University accommodation have a designated Residents' Assistant (RA). Residence Life provides students with opportunities to get involved and get to know each other, including organising free, or low cost, events. Residence Life operates outside of office hours, every night of the year. There are trained members of the team on call to address any issues which may arise.
- We provide a range of specialist support to students who experience emotional or mental health difficulties.
- All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students are allocated a personal tutor who is there to help them feel connected to their department, school or centre and is someone to talk to about course-related questions or concerns.
- At Essex, most departments run their own peer mentoring scheme and so how they operate varies slightly between departments. A new student (mentee) is allocated a more experienced student (mentor) to help them to settle in, and to make them aware of ways that they can get involved and make the most of their university experience.
- Our Nightline service provides a confidential listening, emotional support, information and supplies service, run by students for students. It is open every night during term-time and works to improve student wellbeing.
- The Students' Union Advice Centre offer free, confidential and impartial advice in a range of areas including money, housing and education issues.

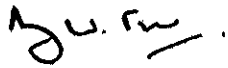
Over the next two years we commit to:

- Improve our targeted support by determining how we can best identify, and gain a better understanding of, the issues faced by estranged students.
- Encourage more estranged students to identify themselves and benefit from the support that is available.
- Raise awareness of the issues faced by estranged students by offering information sessions for professional services, academic staff, and Students' Union staff to ensure that all have the knowledge and understanding necessary to support and provide guidance to estranged students.
- Review our bursary support associated with the transition from college to University.
- Strengthen how we facilitate supported referrals to external support organisations as well as our own Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity services.

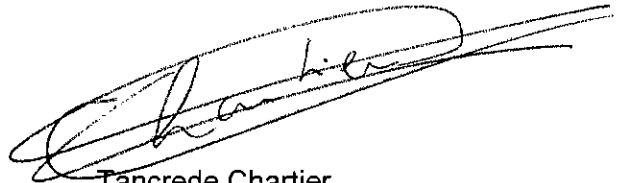
We will take action to raise awareness of the Stand Alone Pledge and of the support and advice available to estranged students both within and outside of the University.

The University of Essex, with its Students' Union, is proud to be a Stand Alone Pledge signatory.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Anthony Forster
Vice-Chancellor



Tancrede Chartier
Students' Union President