



Queen Margaret University

EDINBURGH

Ms Rebecca Bland
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Stand Alone
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28 May 2019

Dear Ms Bland

Stand Alone Pledge – Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

Queen Margaret University is committed to widening participation amongst students inhibited from entering Higher Education for social, economic or cultural reasons.

Our Outreach and Community Engagement (OCE) team works in partnership with a range of stakeholders to increase the participation of people from non-traditional groups, including those that are first generation to go to Higher Education; from low progression schools; reside in communities in the lowest 20-40% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (MD20/40); articulating students from Scotland's Colleges; Care Leavers; Student Carers and Estranged Students.

Estranged students face similar barriers to accessing and staying in Higher Education as Care Leavers. However, very few estranged young people receive statutory or social services support for their family breakdown. Through the provision of a dedicated toolkit of support, we believe the University can make a positive impact on breaking down these barriers and improve the experience and outcomes for estranged students choosing to study with us. I am therefore delighted to commit Queen Margaret University to the Stand Alone Pledge.

Please see below a brief outline of our current support provision for estranged students:

Guidance and Support

We are working to ensure that estranged students are fully informed about courses, admissions procedures and the student experience so as to enable them to make informed choices before entering university. Post entry to the University, we will prioritise places for estranged students across a range of services, including the QM Advance and Direct Entrant Induction Week programmes, and our QM Connect mentoring programme.

Financial Support

We support estranged students to access all funding available to them, including welfare benefits. Where students have difficulty in providing evidence of estrangement, we will work with them to remove barriers and to advocate for them. In addition, we prioritise access to Discretionary Funds for this group of students.

Accommodation

We support estranged students to access accommodation, within our own Student Accommodation and via external providers. We have a comprehensive accommodation guide for students outlining advice and information on local student accommodation providers, and pledge to explore offering

estranged students 365 days a year accommodation as part of our 2-year action plan for estranged students.


Mental Health Support

Our Wellbeing Service offers support for mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, and promotes building up resilience and healthy living to support estranged students throughout their journey through university. We advise on help and support for mental health issues, and provide a full counselling service for those students requiring additional support. In addition, our Stay-on-Course Programme provides rapid support to those students whose attendance record, identified through our Electronic Attendance recording, suggests that they might require additional support. Such need is also identified through our Thinking of Leaving project, and/or through a referral by a Personal Academic Tutor or other staff member.

We have recently appointed Callum Maguire, Head of Outreach and Community Engagement (OCE) as a dedicated point of contact for supporting and sign-posting estranged students. Callum will also take responsibility for the production and delivery of a 2-year action plan for estranged students (cmaguire@qmu.ac.uk).

Queen Margaret University is proud to commit to the Stand Alone Pledge, and will strive to continually improve and adapt the support provision offered to our estranged students.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Wend', written in a cursive style.

Professor Petra Wend FRSA FRSE
Principal and Vice-Chancellor