

Vice-Chancellor's Office

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To whom it may concern

### The standalone pledge: Supporting Estranged Students

Advancing knowledge, inspiring people and transforming futures is at the heart of everything that we do. UWE Bristol is proud of our diverse student body and is committed to providing equal opportunities and avoiding discrimination on any grounds. We are particularly focused on understanding and removing barriers that may prevent students from succeeding. We work in partnership with organisations from across the Bristol City Region and beyond, including other Higher Education providers, schools, colleges, local and health authorities, and third sector organisations to develop tailored pathways of support into university for students.

Our work to support children in care and care leavers includes a collaboration involving relevant partners, including virtual schools, across a geographical area encompassing 8 local authorities. We also work with neighbouring collaborations across the South West to ensure that care leavers in this wider area can experience Higher Education support from further afield. Working with virtual schools we support children in care to visit universities and provide support and information for foster carers and key contacts for the children so that they are informed and able to support the young people they work with to make appropriate choices.

We are proud of the success of care leavers at UWE Bristol. We have provided a support package aimed at removing potential barriers to their engagement at university that is designed in consultation with care leavers in our university so that we are sure it meets their needs. We are pleased to see that care leavers now have good rates of retention and success and from 2016/17 we have expanded this support to include estranged students. UWE recognises that the lack of family contact and support networks can be extremely challenging for young people. Starting out in university life is challenging time for any student, doing this without the traditional family support systems adds additional hurdles and disadvantages.

**UWE Cares** provides students with the following support:

- A transition taster event and a tailored welcome event prior to full enrolment to introduce students to student life and the support on offer
- A £2,000 Bursary in year 1 and £1,000 in subsequent years
- A named contact from the point of application right through to graduation
- Coordinated support with academic, support and employability services and named contacts within the Disability and Student Support Services, and Money Advice team.
- 365 day accommodation guarantee in UWE Accommodation, support with deposits and guarantor
- A dedicated Student Union Society
- A £500 Graduation Bursary

We have learnt over the last year that the nature of estrangement can vary enormously between students, no one person's experience is the same. As a result we have become more flexible in the definition we use in order to support all students that need it, and we will continue to adapt and develop in response to our students over the coming years.

Quite often estranged students have had no professional support, had told very few people of their estrangement and have been left to cope alone. With our encouragement, identifying themselves as estranged has been a huge step for some, and has been the catalyst to them receiving the support they deserve.

We have been extremely impressed by the resilience and determination of the young people we have worked with. We are proud to work with estranged students; to smooth the path for their success at UWE Bristol and we are eager to build on what the university and our students have achieved so far this academic year by continuing to develop a responsive and successful support scheme.

We value the opportunity to take this pledge in order to explicitly state our commitment to supporting estranged students. We look forward to working with Stand Alone as well as external partners and other institutions to develop and enhance our provision.

Yours faithfully,

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

Professor Steve West CBE, DL  
Vice-Chancellor, President and Chief Executive Officer  
UWE Bristol