

December 2019

Dear Susan

Re: Stand Alone Pledge for Estranged Students at The University of Manchester

This letter sets out the University's current commitment to supporting estranged students and our pledge to continue to develop this support. The University recognises estranged students as a target group within our Access and Participation Plan across the student lifecycle, from access through to progression into graduate employment or further study.

We have set out our commitment under Stand Alone's four areas of support: Finance; Accommodation; Mental Health and Wellbeing; Outreach and transition.

Finance

Estranged students who meet the income eligibility threshold will receive our Manchester Bursary which provides students for up to £2,000 p.a. for the duration of their studies. Estranged students are also able to access additional financial support from the University's Living Cost Support fund and have been identified as a priority group to receive this support, particularly during the summer vacation.

Accommodation

We have extended the 365-day accommodation guarantee which is available for care-experienced students to estranged students. We are also committed to reducing the financial burden for students through removing the need for a deposit for University accommodation.

Mental Health and Well-being

The University's well-being strategy aims to create an environment where every member of the University community is supported to feel good and function well. We have implemented the Six Ways to Well-being based on the New Economics' Five Ways to Wellbeing, a set of evidence-based actions that promote well-being in everyday life. Where students are in crisis, they can access support from the University's Counselling Service which offers confidential help with any personal issues affecting study, self-esteem, relationships, sexuality, mental health and general well-being. The University is one of the partners in the new Greater Manchester Student Mental Health Hub, the UK's first regional student mental health referral centre. We will provide guidance to staff in our Counselling Service and Student Mental Health Hub to ensure there is full awareness of the issues faced by estranged students. The University of Manchester's Students' Union also offers a confidential Advice Service and we will work with the Students' Union to establish a peer support group for estranged students.

Outreach and transition

The University has a well-established programme of outreach activities to support access to higher education and into The University of Manchester specifically. Estranged students are one of the priority groups for our Manchester Access Programme, a targeted access initiative for students in Greater Manchester which has welcome over 2,000 students from under-represented backgrounds into the University. The University uses contextual data to make lower offers to students from areas of low participation and schools/colleges where attainment is below the national average. We have worked with UCAS to raise awareness of contextual data amongst teachers and advisors which will be increasingly important for estranged students when they are able to indicate this on their UCAS form from 2020/21.

The University is a member of the Greater Manchester Higher partnership, a collaboration of the higher education institutions across Greater Manchester. Through the partnership we will raise awareness amongst students and their advisors of the support available to estranged students to enable them to access and succeed in higher education.

The University of Manchester is fully committed to supporting estranged students and we look forward to working with Stand Alone to develop our provision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'April McMahon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Prof April McMahon
Vice-President Teaching, Learning and Students
The University of Manchester