

29 November 2016

Ms Susan Mueller
HE Project Director
StandAlone
34a York Way
London
N1 9AB

Dear Susan

I am writing to pledge the University of Westminster's support for the Standalone initiative for estranged students in Higher Education.

Building on our roots as a diverse and innovative institution with a social conscience, we are proud to commit additional help to students who do not have the support of family capital so that they have an equal chance of accessing and succeeding in Higher Education.

At the University of Westminster, we boast more than 175 years of promoting education for all, irrespective of background and circumstances, and we know how to make a tangible difference to people's lives. We are proud of our heritage of widening participation in Higher Education and providing outstanding support to all of our students and in particular those who may have individual needs, both financial and pastoral.

We recognise that the transition to University and becoming a student is an exciting prospect, but that this process can also be a challenging period for young people studying without the support and approval of a family network. We are also aware of the difficulties that estranged students face during either study-breaks or the holiday periods when most students can traditionally 'go home' and ease back into their social networks. Our student support is designed to make the journey into Higher Education as seamless as possible for all of our students and we appreciate, in full, the challenges facing this particular cohort of students.

As a University, we pledge to provide professional support and advice to estranged students throughout their time with us as well as to ensure that there is significant learning and pastoral support across the academic year. We pledge to provide estranged students with a number of additional funding opportunities both before and throughout their studies as well as to ensure year-round access to student accommodation. In addition to this support, we will provide deposit waivers (where appropriate) for estranged students seeking to reside within University of Westminster student accommodation and for whom access to such a deposit may prove to be problematic.

We will work to build upon our existing commitments to deliver an outstanding student experience for estranged students and pledge to further enhance the impact of our outreach activities, strengthening our presence and links within our local community. We will ensure our processes enable early identification, encourage engagement and communicate available support and we will monitor progress to ensure continuous improvement.

We will work with our staff to promote understanding of the difficulties facing estranged students who can often feel that there is a certain stigma attached to their family situation. We will ensure closer collaboration with our Students' Union to improve our joint welfare support and look to further develop the broader support available to students who are estranged or disowned from their family.

As Vice-Chancellor of the University of Westminster, I am pleased to take the Stand Alone pledge on behalf of our staff; students and this institution and look forward to working with Stand Alone to help estranged students overcome any disadvantage that they may encounter throughout their studies.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,



Professor Geoffrey Petts
Vice-Chancellor and President