

18 January 2021

StandAlone
34B York Way
London N1 9AB

Dear StandAlone

I am writing to confirm our commitment to the StandAlone Pledge. The University of Reading is committed to supporting estranged students and recognises the complex needs and difficulties this group of students may face. We have established a holistic support package that will enable students to succeed throughout the student life cycle. A Priority Groups Taskforce, consisting of stakeholders from across the University, will meet termly and will review current service provision and recommend further development.

Our full support package can be found on our Essentials webpages:
reading.ac.uk/essentials/Priority-groups/Care-experienced-and-estranged-students

This includes:

Finance

- Estranged students receive a Care Experienced and Estrangement Bursary of £1000 per academic year for each year of study.
- Estranged students are also prioritised for hardship funds and some specific bursaries, e.g. the Digital Support Fund in response to the Covid pandemic.

Accommodation

- We offer 365-day access to accommodation, including over holiday periods.
- Estranged students who become homeless are prioritised for emergency accommodation.

Mental health and wellbeing

- We have a dedicated member of staff within our Welfare team who provides expert guidance and support and is the first point of contact for estranged students within the University.
- Peer support groups are set up at the start of term to enable students to meet others in a similar position.
- The Counselling and Wellbeing Service offers a range of support including one-to-one support either face-to-face, on the phone or over Skype, groups, workshops, online guidance, and onward referrals to other support services.

Outreach and transition

- Care experienced and estranged students have the highest priority when applying to the Reading Scholars' Programme for Year 12 students.

- We are starting to roll out one-to-one support sessions for estranged and care experienced students who are known to our Widening Participation team.

The University recognises the difficulties in identifying estranged students and aims to develop internal awareness of this student group and their specific needs. This includes clearer self- disclosure and referral pathways via more visible guidance for students, academic tutors, and support staff.

We will also include two University of Reading students who identify as estranged as members of our Priority Groups Taskforce. Their insight and lived experience will be crucial in guiding further development work.

Our dedicated member of staff for estranged students can be contacted by emailing: studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk

The University of Reading is fully committed to supporting this group of students and the StandAlone Pledge. I hope that this summary sufficiently outlines the commitment we wish to make to the Pledge but please do not hesitate to get in touch if you require further details.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Van de Noort', with a stylized flourish underneath.

Professor Robert Van de Noort
Vice-Chancellor