

29 April 2021

Stand Alone
34B York Way
London
N1 9AB

To whom it may concern,

Solent University – Commitment to the Stand Alone Pledge

Please accept this letter as confirmation of our pledge to Stand Alone, and our public commitment to supporting students who are studying without the support or approval of a family network.

As a Widening Participation University, Solent University are committed to supporting students from all socio-economic backgrounds, aiming to remove barriers which under-represented groups may face. We understand the challenges faced by estranged students in particular, and in recent years have invested time and effort into improving specific support available to them.

We currently offer a comprehensive package of support for estranged students, including a named contact for these students. Other areas of support already in place are outlined below, under the 4 Pledge areas:

Finance

- An annual bursary of £1500 for all estranged students
- Prioritise estranged students for other hardship grants, including the Support Grant, Technology bursaries, the Course Costs Grant, and Summer Grant

Accommodation

- Provide 365-day accommodation in our Halls of Residence (at a substantially reduced rate over the summer months)
- No requirement for guarantors in Halls of Residence
- Prioritise accommodation for those who are homeless, and remove the need for pre-payments/deposits for these students
- Good links with No Limits, a local charity who provide independent support and advice on housing and homelessness

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Robust communication and co-ordination processes across Student Experience teams to ensure staff are aware of the support available to estranged students
- Smooth referral processes to the named contact across Student Experience teams, including Therapy and Mental Health, Student Funding, and Student Achievement teams
- Termly attendance and engagement checks, and outreach work targeted at those who fall below a certain level

Over the next 2-year period, we will commit to the following specific areas within the Pledge:

Mental Health and Wellbeing

- Removing the cap off counselling sessions for estranged students
- Developing a peer support programme for improved opportunities for estranged students to meet with those in the same position and develop social and support networks

Accommodation

- Investigating the introduction of a University Rent Guarantor scheme to give estranged students equality of opportunity to access rental

Outreach and Transition

- Improve the communication to estranged students via outreach work in schools and colleges, and via the website.
- Opportunities to work with professional mentors to increase confidence and improve graduate prospects

We also recognise that, although excellent work is already done to support those students whose engagement may be cause for concern, that more work is needed in this area in relation to early intervention, improved identification and referrals from academics. We commit to improving awareness across the University about the support available for estranged students, and to establishing easy referral protocols to the named person from across the institution.

We are excited about committing to the Pledge and anticipate your response.

Yours Faithfully



Nona McDuff
Pro-Vice Chancellor, Students and Teaching