

Guide for Estranged Students



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CONTENTS

01

WHAT IS AN ESTRANGED STUDENT

02

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS AND ACCOUNTS

03

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

04

LIFE AT UNIVERSITY



EDUCATION

14% of estranged students surveyed had suspended or deferred their current course of study; 27% had considered doing so. The main reason was financial stress

https://www.standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Access-and-Retention.Final_.pdf

HEALTH

65% of estranged students surveyed consider themselves to have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition.

29% reported having a mental health condition

<http://www.unite-group.co.uk/campaign/new-realists-report>

HOME

30% of estranged students surveyed were registered or had considered being registered homeless before their course began

<https://www.standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/StandAloneUNITEfoundation.pdf>

WHAT IS AN ESTRANGED STUDENT?

Estranged students, as classified by Student Finance, are between the age of 18 to 24 and have little to no contact with their parents.

<https://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/exchange-blog/2020/january/estranged-student-s-guidance-update/>

Estranged students often also lack the support of a wider family network. A student may become estranged before entering higher education or during their studies.

Estranged students differ from care-leavers and care-experienced students as they remove themselves from their parental home without the intervention of the local authorities. Estranged students are classified on a case-by-case basis by Student Finance, with references and evidence needed to prove estranged status.



AM I AN ESTRANGED STUDENT?

ESTRANGED STUDENTS:

- Have not communicated with their parents for at least one year before the start of their academic year that they are applying to student finance (this time period can be less if evidence shows the estrangement to be irreconcilable)
- Cannot trace or contact their parents
- You may become estranged during your time at university and so can apply as an estranged student going forward
- If both parents are deceased you are classified as an orphan

EVIDENCE OF ESTRANGEMENT

Evidence is needed for Student Finance to assess estrangement. More information can be found on page 9



ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Estranged students may not have had access to essential documents or accounts, such as medical documents and bank accounts.

Here is a list of essential documents, items and accounts you need to be able to survive independently as well as links and tips on how to recover them.

A close-up, slightly blurred image of a person's hand holding a black pen with a silver tip, writing on a white piece of paper. The background is out of focus, showing what appears to be a desk or table.

ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS

Birth certificate

Can be obtained online at <https://www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/>. Register with General Register Office and apply via HM Passport Office

Passport

Can be obtained online at passport.service.gov.uk.

ID

Can be obtained online at validateuk.co.uk and other ID websites

Driving licence

Lost, stolen or replacement driving licence can be obtained from the DVLA

Results certificates

Replacement GCSE/A Level result certificates can be retrieved by contacting the appropriate exam board

Proof of address

Bank statements or medical records can be used as proof of address even while living in temporary accommodation

Medical records

Can be obtained by contacting your GP and providing details to prove your identity. GPs will not pass on any information to family members

Deed poll

In certain cases, changing your name by deed poll may be necessary. Forms can be found at gov.uk/change-name-deed-poll. A lawyer's help is beneficial. Some organisations only accept an 'enrolled' deed poll ie court approved



ESSENTIAL ACCOUNTS

Bank account

Setting up a new bank account requires ID, such as a passport, and proof of address. Universities can provide evidence of your 'home' address being in university accommodation.

A pre-existing bank account, that your family may have access to, can be secured if you provide evidence of identification and explain the situation, providing a letter of evidence and contact details of an independent adult.

Social media

Social media accounts that are compromised are almost impossible to recover due to inability to prove your own identity once locked out of an account. If your social media accounts are compromised (or your family attempt to impersonate you) it is faster to get as many people as possible to report your old (or fake) accounts and have them deleted rather than attempt to get the company to investigate the situation.

UCAS account

If your UCAS account and university applications are compromised or deleted, contact UCAS at 0371468 0468. For more information see page 9

Email account

Email accounts that are compromised are almost impossible to recover due to inability to prove your own identity once locked out of an account. It is also difficult to get accounts shut down. Inform all your contacts of the situation and to block the old email address.

Phone contract

A phone contract is essential for living independently, giving you quick access to help, support and your accounts. Having a phone number is also essential when setting up accounts and proving your identity.

Student finance account

As with your UCAS account, your Student Finance applications can be restored. For more information see page 10.

APPLYING TO UNIVERSITY

Applying to university while estranged can be a difficult process.

This guide will help with some difficult areas of the UCAS and Student Finance applications.

Information about applying as an estranged student can be found on the UCAS website
<https://www.ucas.com/estranged-students>

Your applications and accounts, as previously mentioned, are essential.

If you become estranged after applying, there are ways to secure your accounts.



RECOVERING YOUR ACCOUNT

If your account becomes compromised you can recover your account by phoning UCAS at 0371468 0468

If your family have control of your email and passwords then they may attempt to cancel or block your UCAS applications, or reject any offers.

It is useful to have a teacher with you to support you and help prove your identity. With this help it is possible to reset your email address and password and restore your applications. It is worth also contacting all universities you have applied to and explain the situation, and to change any contact information they may have. This will prevent them accidentally contacting your family instead of you.

PERSONAL STATEMENT

You can mention your estrangement in your personal statement. Whether you choose to discuss your estrangement in your personal statement is up to you. Focus on challenges you have overcome and how you are succeeding in applying to university despite all else!

A guide to help estranged students with their personal statement can be found on the UCAS website

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-personal-statement/estranged-students-your-personal-statement>



STUDENT FINANCE APPLICATION FOR UNDERGRADUATES

Applying to Student Finance for loans can be completed online, but further evidence of estrangement will have to be sent by post. Student Finance will provide you with a 'Confirmation of Estrangement form' which can be filled out by an independent adult i.e. a non-family member or a member of student support services at your university can advise you on how to complete the form.

Evidence can include:

- 1) A letter from a social worker
- 2) A letter from Jobcentre Plus showing the receipt of benefits due to estrangement
- 3) A letter from a teacher
- 4) A letter from a doctor

Confirming estranged status will have to be repeated every year during your undergraduate degree

<https://www.standalone.org.uk/guides/student-guide/>

The HE list on the Stand Alone website tells you who to contact at most universities:

<https://www.standalone.org.uk/students/supportatyouruniversity/>



STUDENT FINANCE APPLICATION FOR POSTGRADUATES

Applying for Student loans as a postgraduate is a slightly more difficult process if your undergraduate degree was not in your native country.

In order to be eligible for student loans from your native country (e.g. Student Finance Wales) your home address must have been in that country for the last three years. However, estranged students often use their university address as a 'home' address, and this can cause difficulties during the application process.

Student Finance's online application cannot be completed by an estranged postgraduate in this situation, and so a paper application must be completed. There is also no 'Confirmation of Estrangement form' as provided for undergraduates, so your referee must write a letter of evidence on headed paper for Student Finance.



STUDENT FINANCE APPLICATION FOR POSTGRADUATES

The problem is further exacerbated if you have spent any time living with a relative in a foreign country (for example, during university holidays when accommodation is not provided) or have taken a gap year abroad.

Student Finance may, in this situation, consider you an international student - thereby not accepting your nationality and making you ineligible for Student loans. This can be rectified by calling Student Finance and explaining the situation in person. Asking for your case to be passed to the manager's office can result in a fast resolution and the reinstatement of your student loans.



LIFE AT UNIVERSITY

Settling into life at university can be a difficult process for all students. However, certain periods, such as the holiday periods can be particularly difficult for students without a parental home.

Here we will discuss certain aspects of life at university including accommodation, finances and mental health.

The HE list on the Stand Alone website is a good place to find support:

<https://www.standalone.org.uk/students/supportatyouruniversity/>

FINANCES

If Student Finance accept your application as an estranged student, you will receive the maximum amount available in both loans and grants.

In order to maintain this funding, an estranged student must not have any contact with parents, and so must not attempt reconciliation or face losing their estranged status.

Sensible budgeting, student discount codes, second-hand textbooks and employment within the university are all options for raising and saving money as a student.



MENTAL HEALTH

29% of estranged students surveyed reported having a mental health condition.

<http://www.unite-group.co.uk/campaign/new-realists-report>

Universities offer many channels for support, such as university counselling services, mental health facilities, welfare officers and student helpers

There are also many websites and resources such as Nightline, 7cupsoftea and more.

The NHS also offers free counselling, though there may be a waiting list.





ACCOMMODATION

Estranged students face particular problems when it comes to accommodation, especially during the holidays. Moving belongings at the start and end of each term is a great problem for estranged students.

Universities may offer year round accommodation to estranged students, or give them accommodation with international students or graduate students (as both internationals and graduates often receive year round accommodation).

It is worth contacting your university as soon as you have an offer to discuss potential accommodation arrangements and avoid homelessness in the holidays. The HE list on the Stand Alone website is a good place to start: <https://www.standalone.org.uk/students/supportatyouruniversity/>
If your university or college is not on that list, contact student services and the Student Union.



CORONAVIRUS

Everyone's experiences during this pandemic will be unique but here is some overarching advice for estranged students.

- Secure your accommodation with your university
- Enquire into financial hardship funds from your university if necessary
- Keep in contact with friends, especially if you are living alone