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| 27 January 2017 |  | Professor Wyn Morgan  Vice-President for Education  Office of the Vice-Presidents’  Firth Court,  Western Bank,  Sheffield, S10 2TN  **Telephone:** +44 (0) 114 2221003  **Email**: w.morgan@sheffield.ac.uk |  |
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To whom it may concern,

**The Standalone Pledge: Supporting Estranged Students**

As a university, we are passionate about inspiring people to achieve their potential. We have a long history of supporting those from disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve success in applying to university and throughout their studies with us. We work in partnership across the Sheffield City Region with fellow universities, colleges, local authorities, charities and the Higher Education Progression Partnership to support looked after children, care leavers and young adult carers. Estranged students are now benefiting from much of this support and we are pleased to pledge ongoing support for this deserving group.

Our Student Services Department provides joined up support to all students throughout their transition to higher education and beyond. Estranged students benefit from designated contacts and one- to- one support and guidance about applying to university and the Admissions Team provides advice and contextual consideration via our disrupted studies process. Designated contacts in Student Transitions and Support help them to secure 365 day accommodation and bespoke support, based on their individual needs. This includes support from other services including support for wellbeing and student counselling, disability and dyslexia support and study support. Those living in University accommodation are also supported by the Residence Life Team.

The Finance Team provides specialist advice and we are particularly proud of our enhanced bursary for estranged students (currently £4500 f/t £2250 p/t per year of study). Other widening participation bursaries and scholarships may also be available to estranged students, including financial support for postgraduate study.

The Outreach and Widening Participation team work across the region to ensure that young people in FE and the Professionals who work with them are aware of opportunities to find out more about higher education and what support is made available to those who apply to study with us. We will work in partnership with external stakeholders to identify local young people who may be estranged in FE and who would benefit from further pre-entry outreach support. Our commitment to supporting estranged students will be included in reports we submit as part of our University Access Agreement as part of our ongoing overall commitment to support those who are disadvantaged to achieve their full potential.

Over the coming two years we commit to explore further measures of support around accommodation, including exploring sponsorship for estranged students. We recognise that Standalone research identifies just over 50 students who are estranged and studying with us. We will raise awareness of the need to support such students across all of our services by delivering staff sessions with professional services and academic staff.

The Careers Service provides dedicated, priority careers advice and work experience bursaries to students from under-represented or disadvantaged backgrounds, including estranged students, to enable them to undertake unpaid work experience. We will update our website and publicity materials to make explicit mention of estranged students.

Yours faithfully,



Professor Wyn Morgan

Vice-President for Education

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| **The Pledge - Support offered to estranged students at The University of Sheffield** | | |
| **Financial Support:** | Liaison with Student Finance England - support to enable students to be assessed as independent by SFE.  Undergraduates assessed as independent by Student Finance due to estrangement, receive an enhanced University Bursary (£4,500 full time, £2,250 part time).  Students can request that their deposit is paid on their behalf by the University and repaid from either their bursary or hardship funds.  Postgraduate students may apply for additional financial support through university hardship funds. Undergraduate and Postgraduate taught students are also considered for a number of widening participation scholarships. | http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/student/estranged/financial-support  Students are advised to contact financialhelp@sheffield.ac.uk |
| **Welfare Support:** | Young people dealing with estrangement can face significant mental health issues. Student Support and Wellbeing provide a joined up, holistic approach to supporting mental health issues. Services include:  The University Health Service is staffed by health care providers with a range of experience and specialisation in mental health issues and complex mental health needs. The University Counselling Service provides a range of psychological support including, triage assessments, self-help, mindfulness, thematic workshops, group therapy and individual counselling sessions.  The Disability and Dyslexia Service provide support to with impairment or a condition that can make it difficult to undertake study-related tasks like sitting exams, reading, planning and writing assignments, attending classes and taking notes in them or delivering presentations. It provides support for those who have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or ADHD a mental health condition such as depression or an anxiety disorder or have an autism spectrum condition. | http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/health  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/counselling  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssd/ddss/index |
| **Student Advice Centre Students Union** | The Student Advice Centre in the Students' Union provides independent, confidential advice to estranged students. Including: advice, information and representation on academic, housing, finance, immigration and student welfare. |  |
| **Transition Support:**  **Outreach & Widening Participation**  **Admissions**  **Careers** | Officers provide a designated contact and additional consideration of extenuating circumstances at both point of offer and point of decision, if declared.  Outreach- raising awareness of support with LAs and schools contacts through existing links in outreach/wp work. Including a workshop by Standalone at local CPD conference for LAC/CL strategic partners.  Integrated support for estranged students and applicants: Student Services steering group includes all relevant colleagues across the student journey.  Dedicated, priority careers advice service for students from under-represented or disadvantaged backgrounds, including estranged students; website and publicity materials to be amended to make explicit mention of estranged students.  Work experience bursaries scheme provides financial support to students from under-represented or disadvantaged backgrounds, including estranged students, to enable them to undertake unpaid work experience; website and publicity materials to be amended to make explicit mention of estranged students. | http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/schools  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/undergraduate/apply/applying/disrupted  http://www.careers.dept.shef.ac.uk/discover/ |
| **Student Transitions and Support**  **Sheffield Mentors** | A named contact within the Student Transitions and Support team eases the transition for those students dealing with the impact of estrangement. Continued support through admission enrolment and beyond, providing information, guidance and emotional support. The named contact ensures students are aware of internal and external counselling and wellbeing services and how to access them. Ensuring staff in academic departments are aware of the support available from support services to estranged students.    Each student is allocated Personal and Academic Support Tutor, who plays a major role in helping students adjust to university life and get the best experience possible from their time in Sheffield. Through regular meetings and staying in touch, they build a tutor-tutee relationship, providing mentoring and guidance on both academic and personal matters.  Our 301 Centre provides comprehensive study support to all students, including those who are estranged.  Each student is offered a peer supporter from the same academic department who is in the year above. The Mentor acts as a friendly face to meet when first arriving on campus and as a source of informal information to ease transition into University life. A matching process aids a productive mentor-mentee relationship | http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/student/estranged/personal-support  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/lets/pp/support/tutors  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/mentoring  http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ssid/301 |