



Information for
UCL students and
applicants who
are care leavers
or estranged from
family



Care experienced and estranged students' guide



Welcome

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I am delighted to welcome you to UCL and to introduce the support that UCL has to offer for care experienced and estranged students. Sharing their expertise and advice, our dedicated team describe how they can support you from school, all the way through to graduation.

We are conscious of the unique challenges that care experienced and estranged students often encounter as they begin their studies at university, and recognise that without support, students may find it harder to apply for, enter and remain in higher education. By addressing these challenges and working directly with students, we hope that anyone who has experienced time in care or is currently studying and living without the support of their parents feels that UCL could be a supportive place of study for them.

UCL has always been at the forefront in creating an inclusive environment and that inclusive approach continues today. UCL was an early adopter of the [Buttle Mark](#), pledging our commitment to support care leavers through the [Frank Buttle Trust](#). We were among the first universities to commit our support for estranged students with the [Stand Alone Pledge](#) (see page 18 for more information), and we are now continuing to further and better our support provision, in conjunction with the [Care Leaver Covenant](#).

Bella Malins
Director of Access and Admissions

Definitions

A **care experienced student or care leaver** has been in the care of, or been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) for a period of at least 13 weeks before the age of 16, and hasn't reconciled with their parents between leaving care and starting their course.

An **estranged student** is aged 25 or under and has been classified as an independent student on the grounds of estrangement by Student Finance.

If you are currently at school, college or sixth form and would like to know more about university before you make decisions about applying, please see the **range of events and activities on offer at UCL**. More information can be found at the website below.

We have something for all ages, right from primary school age, all the way up to year 13 and mature students. Whether you want to have a taste of university life, experience a subject of interest, or learn some study skills required for higher education, we welcome you to apply for our programmes!

▶ www.ucl.ac.uk/wp

What's the application process?

All of our widening participation programmes require an application, as we want to make sure we are selecting students from the most underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds. In the application form, we ask for personal details and information about your education and background. We also want to select those who have the academic potential to attend a university like UCL, so we also ask for a reference from your teacher.

How likely am I to get a place?

Most of our programmes are highly competitive. However, as a young person in care, or estranged from your parents, we understand that you may have encountered difficulties that your peers are less likely to experience, such as a disrupted education. For this reason, we give additional consideration and will prioritise you for a place where we can.

What is widening participation?

Widening Participation aims to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to go to university, regardless of their circumstances.



I'm not sure if I'm classed as care experienced or estranged, what should I do?

Just contact Amy (email below) and she'll be happy to discuss your situation with you. Also make contact if you're unsure about the grade requirements and academic ability.

✉ a.york@ucl.ac.uk

The Student Shadowing Scheme

We also offer a bespoke opportunity for care experienced and estranged students, called the 'Student Shadowing Scheme'. If you are in year 12 and want some one-to-one advice while experiencing a day in the life of a student, then this is for you.


The day involves shadowing an undergraduate student who is studying the subject of your choice, attending a lecture and/or seminar and having lunch together to discuss university life. This is followed by information and advice sessions with either our funding team or student support team. More information can be found at

▶ www.ucl.ac.uk/widening-participation/shadowing



Applying to UCL

If you are at the stage where you are starting your UCAS application, but find you have a few questions, or you're a bit stuck navigating the application process, then please contact Amy York (see contact below), your pre-entry point of contact for care experienced and estranged students. Up until results day, she's your go-to contact for anything to do with university.

 +44 (0)20 3108 7619

 a.york@ucl.ac.uk

Access UCL - Contextual Offers for A Level and IB applicants

If you are a care leaver and attended a UK state school for your GCSEs or A levels, you are automatically eligible to receive a reduced offer of up to two grades below the standard UCL offer for the programme you've applied to.

Why am I receiving a reduced offer?

Our Contextual Offer scheme recognises the potential of students whose personal circumstances may have restricted achievement at school or college. Research has shown that students who receive a reduced offer perform the same or above average academically at university.

How do I get this reduced offer?

If your application to UCL is successful, you will be made a dual offer containing:

- the standard UCL offer
- the Access UCL reduced offer

To take up the reduced offer, you will need to select UCL as your firm choice and complete a 'Preparation for Academic Study' online module, along with an academic assessment. Complete the module and pass the assessment, and you will be eligible for admission to UCL with the reduced offer.

I have more questions, who can I contact?

To check your eligibility and ask a question, please email

 wp.accessucl@ucl.ac.uk

Most UK undergraduates fund the cost of university with a tuition fee loan and a maintenance loan from **Student Finance** (see URL below).

Care experienced and estranged students can get the same support as other students, but your application won't be based on your parents' income.

▼ www.gov.uk/student-finance

For care experienced students

Student Finance will consider a student care experienced if they have been in the care of, or have been given accommodation by, their local authority (LA) for at least 13 weeks before the age of 16.

After you have made your application online, Student Finance will ask you to send evidence showing that you were looked after by, or were given accommodation by, your LA.

For estranged students

Student Finance will consider a student estranged if they are permanently estranged from their parents or have not communicated with them for one year before starting their studies.

After you have made your application online, Student Finance will request supporting statements from trusted independent parties (such as a teacher, social worker, police officer or GP) as evidence to confirm your estranged status.

The charity StandAlone supports people that are estranged from family (see page 18). They have a useful **Student Support Portal** (see URL below) with advice on applying to Student Finance as a care experienced or estranged student.

▼ www.standalone.org.uk/students

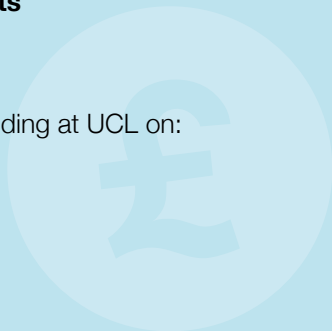
Student Funding contact

You can get in touch with Student Funding at UCL on:

☎ **+44 (0)20 7679 0004**

✉ **studentfunding@ucl.ac.uk**

🐦 **@UCLFunding**



UCL Undergraduate Bursary

The UCL Undergraduate Bursary provides certain UK/EU students with a cash bursary if they have had their income assessed by Student Finance. For more information, please visit www.ucl.ac.uk and search 'UCL Undergraduate Bursary'.

UCL scholarships and bursaries

The Student Funding Office offers a variety of awards for undergraduates. The awards we have aimed specifically for care experienced or estranged students are:

- **Unite Foundation Scholarship:** Offers free accommodation at Unite for 365 days a year. More information can be obtained on [the UCL website](#) (search 'UCL Unite Foundation Scholarship').
- **Care Leavers' Bursary / Estranged Students' Bursary:** Offers £1,000 per year, on top of any other bursaries or awards you have already secured. More information can be found on [the UCL website](#) (search 'UCL Undergraduate Funding'). We recommend visiting our web pages to see the full award information and criteria.

For awards not specific to care experienced or estranged students, please use our [Scholarships Finder](#) (search 'UCL scholarships').

UCL Finance Assistance Fund (FAF)

The UCL Financial Assistance Fund (FAF) aims to support UCL students who find themselves in financial difficulties. The fund is intended to act as a safety net for those in need and can help alleviate unexpected financial hardship – although we are unlikely to be able to provide all the funds you may need, we aim to help eligible students as much as possible within available resources. More information can be obtained on [the UCL website](#) (search 'UCL financial assistance').

Student Finance loans

If you are a care experienced or an estranged student, it is highly recommended you apply to Student Finance as an independent student. Student Finance offers a tuition fee loan in most cases and a maintenance loan is offered to students who meet the criteria for support. For information, please visit [Student Finance](#) (see URL top-left).


“Naturally, I had doubts that attending UCL would be a realistic goal for someone who cannot rely on the financial and emotional safety net that comes with a supporting family. It has been a wonderful surprise to learn that there is a community of people here who have my back and not only understand what it feels like to be in this situation but also want to genuinely see me thrive.”

Alison, BAsc Arts and Sciences care experienced student



Enquiries

Natalie Humphrey is UCL's primary contact for all care experienced and estranged students. If you have a question and don't know where to start, or if you'd like to chat to someone about your concerns, please get in touch with Natalie.

 +44 (0)20 7679 0100

 student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk

Disability, mental health and wellbeing support

SSW drop-ins and appointments

Student Support and Wellbeing (SSW) provide a safe and non-judgmental space for you to talk confidentially about any issues you may be experiencing with your health, wellbeing and disability support.

You can attend one of the daily drop-in sessions or make an appointment to discuss concerns that may be affecting your studies. These can include:

- personal / emotional challenges
- mental health difficulties such as anxiety or depression
- disability or long-term health conditions

Drop-in sessions are only suitable for brief enquiries. If you need support with a more complex issue or enquiry, please contact us to book a longer appointment.

☎ **+44 (0)20 7679 0100**

✉ **student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk**

➤ **www.ucl.ac.uk/students/student-support-and-wellbeing**

Student Psychological and Counselling Services (SPCS)

Student Psychological and Counselling Services (SPCS) are dedicated to help you with any personal, emotional and psychological concerns you may have.

The service can provide you with short-term counselling, cognitive behavioural therapy, psychiatric support and psycho-educational groups.

In order to arrange an appointment, you will need to first complete an online registration form that can be found [online](#) (search 'UCL SPCS register'). Once you have completed the form you will be invited to an initial consultation with the appropriate counsellor.

➤ **www.ucl.ac.uk/students/support-and-wellbeing/student-psychological-and-counselling-services**

More support at UCL

Accommodation support

UCL will provide 365-day accommodation for care leavers in their first year and, if needed, for subsequent years of study.

If you need 365-day accommodation and/or accommodation beyond your first year at UCL, please contact Siobhan Cosgrove

☎ **+44 (0)20 7679 6110**

✉ **s.cosgrove@ucl.ac.uk**

Students' Union UCL

Students' Union UCL is a not-for-profit organisation that is independent of UCL. The Union is run by students who are elected each year.

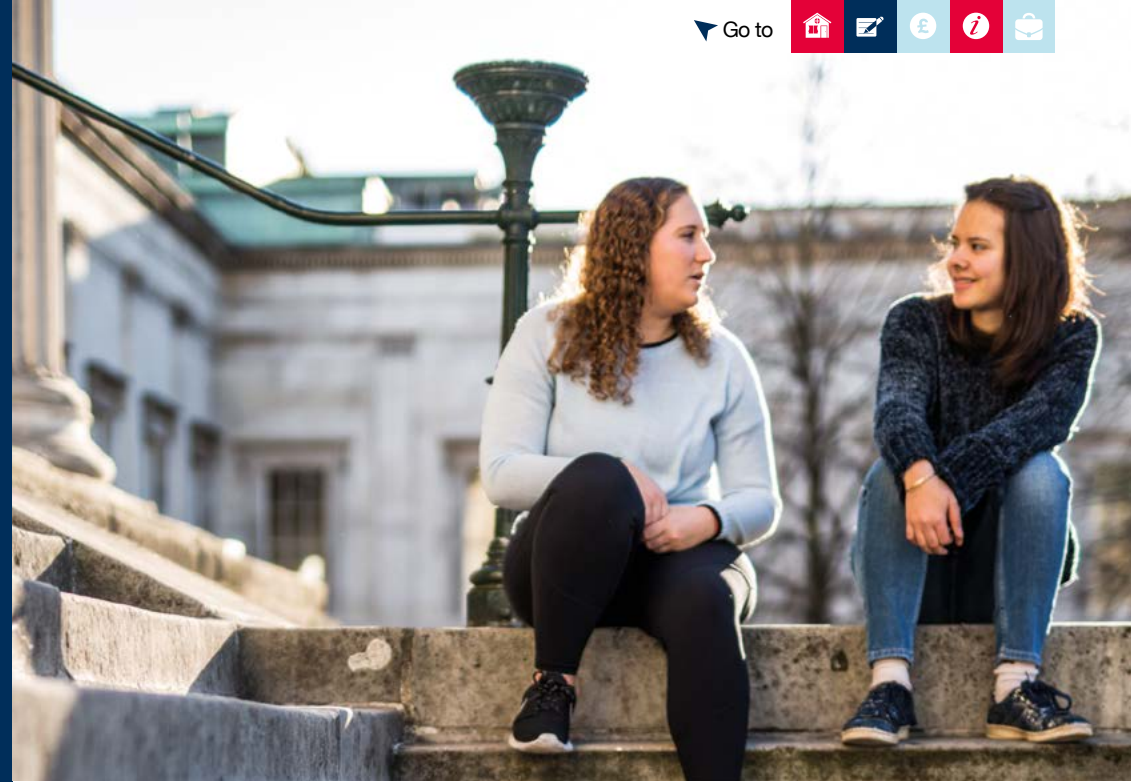
The Union aims to provide a range of services to help you make the most of your university experience.

You can join one of their 250 clubs and societies, volunteer or attend one of their events to connect with people who share your interests.

Students' Union UCL can help you to get involved in campaigning and other opportunities to make a positive difference.

They also run bars, cafes and shops around campus.

➤ **studentsunionucl.org**



Transition mentors

Transition mentors are second- or third-year students from your degree programme that can help you to settle in and provide advice on academic topics, support services and administrative tasks that you need to complete as a first-year student.

Each first-year undergraduate student is matched to a transition mentor and you will meet your mentor at a welcome session early in your term.

▶ www.ucl.ac.uk/students/academic-support/transition-mentors

Personal tutors

If you are a student on a taught programme at UCL, your department will assign you a **personal tutor**. Your personal tutor will help you to get the most out of your studies, as well as providing encouragement and support during your time at university.

Attending tutorials will give you a chance to reflect on your progress generally and tutors can help you to develop an independent style of learning. Your personal tutor can also help you to identify opportunities outside of your studies that you may want to get involved in.

If you're struggling with work or personal issues, your personal tutor can offer advice and put you in touch with specialist services.

▶ www.ucl.ac.uk/students/academic-support/personal-tutors/personal-tutoring

Peer support scheme

Besides the services the UCL administration can offer you, there are also opportunities to connect with your fellow students who study without family support. UCL has a student-led support group that would love to welcome you as a member to share your experiences of uni life, find great people to hang out with on holidays, organise events and workshops, and to be there for each other when things get tough or a celebration is in order.

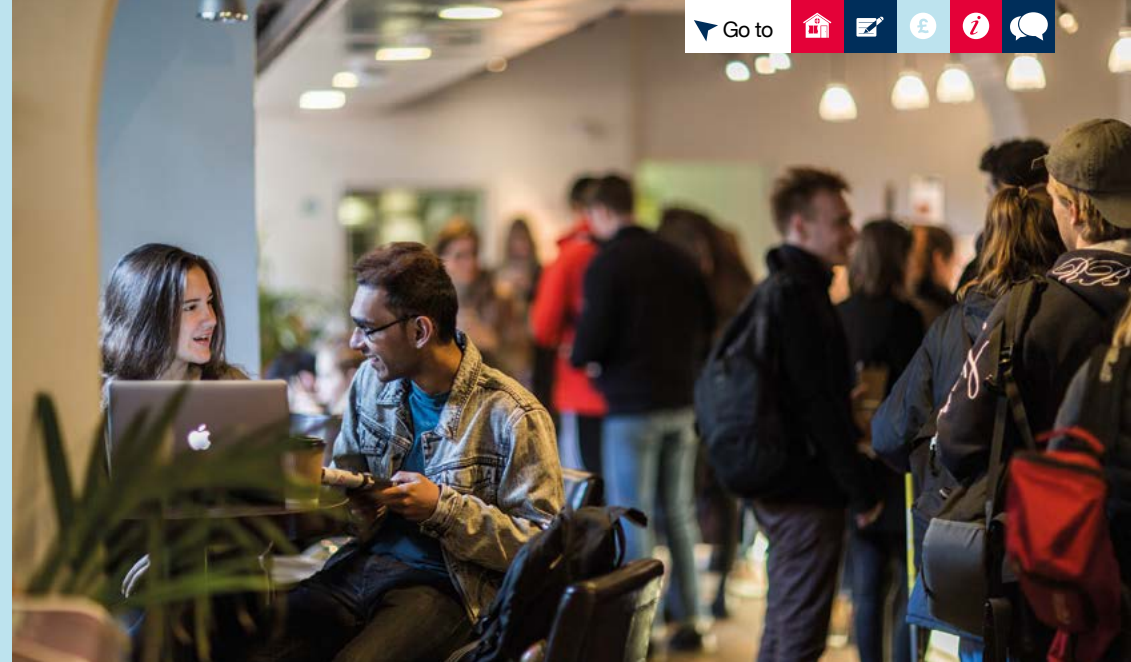
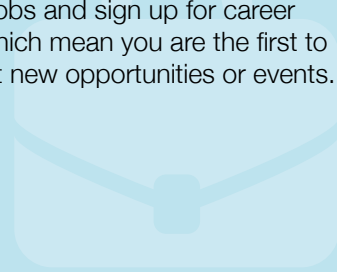
To become a member of this group, please contact:

✉ student.wellbeing@ucl.ac.uk

UCL Careers has a team of experienced career professionals who are dedicated to helping you find jobs or options for further study. You can visit us at our office and talk to a careers consultant, whether you have a clear idea of the path you want to take or are just beginning to think about career ideas.

We can guide you on how to build a portfolio of experience so that you're in a strong position when applying for jobs. When you reach that stage, we can give you application advice and interview practice. We also run workshops, which cover topics from improving your CV to finding and funding a PhD.

UCL Careers has connections with more than 1,000 employers in the UK and around the world. Recruiters and employers visit our campus throughout the year to participate in a range of careers events and activities. Our extensive online resources allow you to search for jobs and sign up for career updates, which mean you are the first to know about new opportunities or events.



As a care experienced or estranged student, you are also invited to join UCL Careers Extra. This is a programme of additional support for UK undergraduate students who belong to one or more of the following groups:

- Neither parent went to university and you went to a UK state school
- Care leaver
- Carer
- Disabled
- Household income below £25,000 (as declared to Student Finance England)
- Black African, Black Caribbean or mixed Black African/White or Black Caribbean/White

If you sign up to UCL Careers Extra, you will be added to a circulation list for targeted employer events and programmes. You will also be eligible to apply for bursaries to help cover the cost of undertaking internships and will be able to access longer careers appointments, extra careers events that are exclusive to UCL Careers Extra students and preferential booking for some UCL Careers events. Find out more **on our website** (search 'UCL Careers Extra').

- www.ucl.ac.uk/careers
- www.ucl.ac.uk/careers/about/eligibility/careers-extra

StandAlone

What is StandAlone?

They are an organisation who support people of all ages that have become estranged or disowned from their family or key family member. They run support groups, provide information and advice online and lead on research in this field.

What is the StandAlone pledge?

The pledge helps universities to develop support and enable students estranged from their families to stay resilient.

UCL took the pledge in July 2017 and has committed to improving support in four key areas: finance, accommodation, outreach, and mental health and wellbeing. Since taking the pledge, we are proud to offer varied forms of support outlined in this guide, from student support groups to bespoke bursaries.

▼ www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk

Propel

Propel is a searchable website for care leavers, providing information on the support available to you at colleges and universities across the UK. Just like UCAS, where you can research universities, Propel allows you to view the support each institution offers in one place. You can quickly check whether your favourite institutions offer bursaries or 365-day accommodation.

▼ www.propel.org.uk/UK

Care Leavers' Association

The **Care Leavers' Association** is a charity aimed at improving the lives of care leavers of all ages. They run campaigns and projects, they're an advocate for change at all levels of government and provide training for a range of organisations. We recommend you check out their 'Young People's Project', which has useful guides and videos.

▼ www.careleavers.com



UCL Access and Widening Participation

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 Discover UCL

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 www.ucl.ac.uk/wp

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