

Policy for Students under the age of 18 years

Aims

It is a condition of enrolment with the University of Westminster that the parent or guardian of any student who is under the age of 18 years confirms, by signing and returning the attached form, their acceptance of the arrangements set out in this document. When the student reaches the age of 18, these accepted terms will automatically be regarded as agreed by the student.

Introduction

The University of Westminster is committed to equal opportunities in its admissions; this is underpinned by the University's Single Equality Scheme. All applications are considered on their individual merits. Occasionally the University admits students who are under the age of 18 years. These students and their families should understand that the University of Westminster is an adult environment; students are expected to act as adults and to assume adult level of responsibility. Students are expected to have the necessary skills to study and live independently alongside people from a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. Places are offered on the understanding that the students will be able to adapt to living away from home and deal with the practicalities that this involves. The University treats all its students as independent, mature individuals and students who are under the age of 18 years will be treated in the same way.

However, the University acknowledges that anyone under the age of 18 is legally a child and recognises that students under the age of 18 may therefore have different needs in relation to their support and wellbeing. Staff in support services and academic departments work together to ensure the wellbeing of students under the age of 18 is maintained accordingly.

Admissions

The University would wish to ensure that the student is mature enough to benefit from higher education without the sort of support they would receive in a school. The University would want to be sure that the student and their family are happy that the surroundings are suitable for them if we are in a position to offer a place within the normal academic criteria.

A prospective student who will not be 18 by 1st December in their first year is welcome to request an interview with at least one member of their family or a guardian present if possible. This allows both parties to ensure that the School and University will be a suitable environment for the student. In all cases a completed consent form will be required by the university before the student fully enrolls on their University of Westminster course. The student and their parent or guardian should complete, sign and return the consent form to safeguarding@westminster.ac.uk.

Students who are under 18 and care leavers should check our dedicated web page for further advice and your University contact. See: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/support-and-facilities/care-leaver-support> .

Students, under 18 and estranged from their parents should look at our dedicated web page at

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/support-and-facilities/student-advice/support-for-estranged-students>

Parental Responsibility

The University is NOT able to take on the usual rights, responsibilities and authority that parents have in relation to a child, and it will not act *in loco parentis* in relation to students who are under the age of 18 years.

Next of Kin (Emergency Contact)

It is particularly important that emergency contact details are provided for students under the age of 18 and such students and/or their parents are required to supply this information upon enrolment with the University. **Students under 18 will not be allowed to enrol on their course unless this information is provided.** For students whose parents are not resident in the UK, this needs to be a UK based Guardian.

Health

In rare instances, consent for emergency medical treatment may be required before parents or guardians can be contacted. The University therefore requires parents to give their consent that, in the case of such an emergency, a senior member of the University has permission to act on medical advice and do what is in the best interests of the child. **By signing the enclosed pro-forma, the student's parents or guardians indicate their consent to act in this way.**

Students who are under 18 should ensure that they are registered with a GP if they are living away from home. The easiest way to do this is by contacting the Student Health Service. They can signpost students to their local practice or register them with the Marylebone Health Centre. International students can get advice and help in accessing the NHS through the University Student Health Service. See:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/support-and-facilities/health-services>

Parents or guardians are responsible for ensuring that the University has been informed of any special needs or requirements. This should be logged with the Disability Learning Support Team. See: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/current-students/support-and-facilities/disability-learning-support>

Parental Involvement

It is the University's usual policy to deal with students and not with parents; this approach will also apply to students who are under the age of 18 years. Although those under 18 are regarded as children under UK law, they still have the legal right under the Data Protection Act (1998) for information about them not to be disclosed without their explicit consent. This means that the University is not able to give information to parents regarding

the student's progress, results or any other personal circumstance unless the student has given specific consent. The University will therefore correspond with students, not parents.

Child Protection/Safeguarding

As a matter of law, a person under the age of 18 years is a child. The University has a responsibility to protect those under the age of 18 years from abuse and is obliged to report any suspicions or allegations of abuse of children to the appropriate Children's Social Care service. Any such suspicions or allegations will be reported to the University's appropriate designated person, who will contact the appropriate authorities.

Notification of Age of Student

The relevant Course Leader, Faculty Senior Tutor and Residential Support Manager will be notified, prior to enrolment of any student within their Faculty or residence who will be under the age of 18 years on entry to the University. Other staff may be notified at the discretion of the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Contracts

As a general rule, those under the age of 18 are unable to enter into legal contracts. Where contracts are required, e.g. for tuition fees or accommodation, the University requires parents or guardians to act as guarantors and to honour all obligations under any contracts with the University that the student enters into prior to his or her 18th birthday. **By signing the enclosed pro-forma, the parent agrees to this.** Failure to pay debts due to the University could result in studies being suspended.

Student Accommodation

Not all of our halls are suitable for younger students though there are a few places available in halls at the Harrow Campus (places subject to consent from a parental or guardian). As living in London may be considered to present an added dimension to safety of the student, the University would consider it advisable for younger students to be resident in their family home or with extended family.

Students under 18 who do apply for halls will be given priority for our own rather than nominated halls¹. Parents should recognise that residential accommodation offered by the University is generally intended for the use of adults and that, save in exceptional circumstances (e.g. relating to health issues or disability), special arrangements cannot be made.

For further information on accommodation see:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/study/prospective-students/student-accommodation>

Field Trips & Exchanges

¹ Nominated Halls are those residences which are contracted by the University and managed by external companies.

Courses may involve compulsory or optional field trips, excursions or other periods of study away from the University. The University is not able to take any additional responsibility for a student who is under the age of 18 years in relation to such activities. Unless indicated otherwise, **by signing the enclosed pro-forma the parent/guardian gives consent for the student to take part in these activities on that basis.** Students taking part in exchange programmes with other institutions will be required to adhere to the policies and procedures applicable to that place.

Alcohol and Tobacco

It is illegal for alcohol or tobacco to be sold to or bought by individuals who are under the age of 18 years.

The University will take reasonable steps to seek to ensure that the law is not broken in relation to licensed premises under the University's control but cannot undertake to supervise any individual student. Individuals are subject to random checks in relation to their age when using any licensed premises in the UK. The Students' Union is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for its own licensed premises.

Relationship with staff

Under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust (which may include members of University staff) to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years.

Holding Office

Students who are under the age of 18 are encouraged to join University or Students' Union clubs and societies but are not able to hold office until after their 18th birthday (this is because Officers carry legal responsibilities). Their participation in certain activities may be limited.

Additional advice for students under 18 and outside the UK

Those under the age of 18 applying to the University of Westminster, whose parents live outside the UK, are required to provide details of a guardian based in the UK. This is as well as parent or guardian details. The university also needs to know who you would want us to contact in the case of emergencies.

The University will only be able to enrol a student under 18 if the details of the UK based guardian have been provided. Those without a contact in the UK who is willing and able to act as a guardian there are agencies who will, for a fee, make arrangements for you. The Association of Educational Guardians for International Students (AEGIS) inspects and provides accreditation to guardianship organisations in the UK in line with current UK legislation. www.aegisuk.net.

Those without a contact in the UK need to make arrangements to obtain a guardian before completing and returning the consent form and will not be allowed to register as a student until those details have been provided.

Changes to next of kin/emergency contact/guardian details

You must inform the University straight away if there are changes to any of the contact details provided. It is your responsibility to change these on the Student Record System (SRS). We will only use these contacts in line with data protection legislation and respecting confidentiality.

Why we need the 'Consent Form'

We ask that parents/guardians fill in the consent form having read the document above so that the University can offer appropriate support and safeguarding for students who are under 18 and may be either more vulnerable or not have the same rights older students.

In signing the form the parent or guardian will be accepting the arrangements outlined and responsibilities on of the student, themselves and the University.

David Shacklady
10th October 2017