



University
of Worcester

A Guide for Parents

2010/11



The University of Worcester's Relationship with Students and Parents

Going away to university is an exciting time for students and their families, but the sheer amount of new things to take in can make it quite stressful. This guide is intended to alleviate some of those worries and inform you of a few University processes.

Time at university can be a period of great personal development for a young adult. We respect students' rights to live their lives as adults and have therefore developed the following principles:

- We trust students to be able to manage their own affairs, including decisions and responsibilities around academic, financial and personal issues.
- We respect every student's right to privacy in their academic and personal lives. In return for this respect we expect them to act responsibly (in accordance with the University's Student Code of Conduct) and they will be held accountable for their behaviour. It's inevitable that from time to time students make mistakes; on these occasions the university is committed to doing its best to help them learn and grow from their experience.
- We will endeavour to make available to students all the University resources that they will need to successfully develop academically and personally.

We leave it to our students to decide whether and when to involve their parents. Don't be surprised if they decide to solve problems themselves with the help of the many support services on campus – Personal Tutors, the Student Experience Team, Security staff, Programme Advisers and Counsellors – and without involving you..

Situations occasionally arise when it is appropriate to involve parents, such as a health or safety emergency or when a student engages in behaviour that calls into question the appropriateness of their continuation at the University. In these rare situations, we generally encourage students to communicate directly with their parents. The Data Protection Act 1988 prevents us from disclosing any personal details about a student to a third party, including parents, and therefore it would only be in extraordinary and exceptional circumstances that the University would make direct contact with you.

We encourage our students to speak frankly to you about their academic progress and other aspects of university life. These conversations and your support mean as much to students as all the written policies and procedures.

Important University Policies

As adults, all students are responsible for their actions in and out of the classroom. The University therefore expects them to comply with its policies and guidelines.

The Student Code of Conduct

Students are expected to show respect for the rights of others and themselves, both in and outside of the University. Any complaint of misconduct by a student is dealt with in accordance with the University's Student Code of Conduct.

“The essence of misconduct under this code is improper interference, in the broadest sense, with the proper functioning or activities of the University, or those who work and study within the University, or action which otherwise damages the University.”

The Student Code of Conduct covers a range of issues, including physical assault; theft; forgery; sexual harassment; misuse of university equipment, funds or computer accounts; illegal file-sharing; using false IDs to obtain services to which the student is not entitled; and misrepresentation in seeking student housing or other university benefits. Each issue is dealt with on an individual basis, with potential sanctions ranging from written warnings on student files, to suspension of the student and even expulsion. A criminal offence could lead a student to be subject to prosecution by external authorities. The University is obliged not to attempt to deal with potentially serious criminal offences under its own internal procedures.

The Student Complaints Procedure

We are committed to resolving quickly and fairly any dissatisfaction a student may have with the services provided by the University or the Students' Union. As a usual first step, we encourage students to attempt to resolve the issue with the appropriate tutor or other individual. If the problem cannot be resolved through this informal approach then the student has the right to use our Student Complaints Procedure.



Dignity at Work and Study

We are committed to developing a culture in which all individuals are accorded dignity, courtesy and respect. Any unacceptable behaviour is identified and dealt with quickly, fairly and sensitively.

Any form of harassment can create a threatening and intimidating environment with adverse consequences for study, general health and well being. The University recognises that such behaviour is not always intentional. One of the joys of university life is being part of a diverse and wide ranging population. Differences in culture, attitude and experience are therefore to be expected, but so is consideration for others. Misinterpretation of social signals can result in differences in perception and what may be perceived as unacceptable to one person may be perceived by others as normal social behaviour. Complaints of this nature will be resolved through informal procedures wherever possible. However in cases where this proves to be impossible formal action will be taken under the Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

Procedures for Late Submission of Written Coursework Assessments

There are situations when students may find that they are unable to submit their written work on time. Coursework submitted within five days of the published deadline will be marked but the grade awarded will be capped at the minimum pass mark unless a claim of mitigating circumstances is made and upheld.

Procedures for Dealing with Claims of Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances

The University recognises that sometimes events happen suddenly and unexpectedly to students over which they have no control and which can have a serious effect on their capacity to complete assessment items on time.

Mitigating Circumstances are acute, severe and unforeseen changes in a student's circumstances which are outside of their control and occur immediately before or during the assessment period, and which the student believes have adversely affected his/her academic performance.

Such situations include: serious illness; serious illness of a partner, relative or friend; bereavement; excessive employment demands which are substantial and temporary (it is not expected that full time students will claim on this basis); any other factor having a **substantial** effect on performance.

A young man with short dark hair is smiling and looking towards the right. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a colorful, abstract graphic design. He is sitting at a light-colored table with a white cup that has a black square pattern near the top. The background is a solid dark red color.

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Suggestions for Parents

1. Let go

They may turn to you for advice but let them make their own decisions, solve their own problems, and pick their own courses. When they pick their courses, we advise them to base their decisions on intellectual passion, not perceptions of which course is safest or most pragmatic.

2. Listen and reassure

Moving away to university can be a major life change and it's not unusual for students to feel overwhelmed at some point in their first year. They may call home, fearing that coming to university was a mistake. Listen, encourage and reassure. Suggest they talk to their personal tutor, a Student Adviser or one of the Student Experience team. The University offers many support resources, such as help with study skills, counselling and academic programme planning.

3. Conversations about lifestyle choices are much easier before students come to University

Problems like binge drinking are issues all young people face. Talk to your children in advance about the choices they are likely to confront when at university – it makes it easier for them to determine what they value in their own behaviour and that of others.

4. Stay in touch, but not too much

Between their busy schedules of study and socialising and changes in their sleeping patterns, it's common for a new student to forget to call home as often as they might. Don't be surprised if they don't respond immediately to your calls, emails and texts.

5. It's not all about the grades

Every parent wants their son or daughter to realise their potential, but try not to focus solely on grades. Talk to them about academic staff, which classes they enjoy, what they are learning and what they are doing for fun. Students usually put plenty of pressure on themselves, and need to know that you believe in them.

6. Help them to learn the difference between disappointment and failure

Many students are used to achieving good grades but university study is challenging. At some point, most students experience something they choose to label as failure. Assure them that their best effort is all you expect.

7. Encourage them to submit all pieces of assessment

It is important that students attempt all their assessments, even if they think they are not going to do well. The feedback they receive, even on poor attempts, can be important and useful. Non-submission or non-attendance will receive a worse penalty than failure; so bear this in mind should your son or daughter raise this with you.

8. Encourage them to learn for the sake of learning

Most students have the opportunity to select free-choice modules outside of their main area of study. Suggest they study a subject they may have never studied before. Many students are accustomed to concentrating only on achieving the results needed for University admission. Encourage them to learn for the sake of learning.

9. Encourage them to get to know academic staff, and particularly their personal tutor

All of our staff will do their best to help students get the most out of university life. Those students who build relationships with their tutors invariably achieve more than those who don't.

10. Call us if you are concerned or need reassurance

We are limited by the Data Protection Act about the information we can share with you. Nevertheless, if you are concerned or need reassurance please contact the Student Experience Team on 01905 542161.

Key Services

University staff are committed to supporting students through all aspects of university life, including difficult times. We have a range of staff and services available to help your son or daughter wherever they need them. Most are part of Student Services or Registry Services, which are both based in the Woodbury building on our St John's Campus.

Student Experience Team

Part of Student Services, the Student Experience Team offers support to make the transition into student life as effortless as possible. They can help with various issues associated with communal living and settling into a new environment and also run numerous events around the themes of health and wellbeing including: personal safety, stopping smoking, coping with exam stress, and moving into private rented housing. They should be the first point of contact for any student dealing with issues such as: homesickness, conflicts in accommodation, problems with settling in, anti-social behaviour, personal safety, bullying and harassment.

Careers Advisory Service

Located in Student Services, the Careers Advisory Service works with students, graduates, University departments and employers to help students plan and manage their careers and lifelong learning, from pre-entry to graduation.

Chaplaincy

The University of Worcester Chaplaincy Service provides spiritual support to all our students whether they are members of a faith or belong to no faith tradition. Our Chaplain, part of Student Services, is pleased to see anyone for a chat and a mug of tea. She can put students in touch with local churches and other faith groups and, along with members of other local faith groups, provides a listening ear and a chance to talk.

Student Welfare & Financial Advice

Part of Student Services, the Student Welfare and Financial Advisors can offer advice on a range of topics, including student loans and grants, bursaries, debt management, trust funds and charities, welfare benefit and general financial queries.

Please encourage your son or daughter to get in touch with the Welfare and Financial Advisors as soon as possible if they experience financial difficulties at any time during their time as a student. For example, if they are experiencing delays in receiving financial support to which they are entitled our advisers may be able to arrange short term loans and other help.

We advise our students to be particularly aware of independent finance companies or 'loan sharks' masquerading as official student loan providers. These companies advertise on social networking sites known to be used by students. They charge extraordinarily high rates of interest that could never realistically be repaid by anyone on a student income and should be avoided at all costs.

Counselling and Mental Health Team

The team, part of Student Services, is staffed by professionally trained practitioners who are experienced in helping people from many backgrounds and cultures and with a wide range of personal and life issues.

Disability and Dyslexia Service

Located in Student Services, the Disability & Dyslexia Service is fully staffed by experienced professionals who cater for a wide range of needs, offering support to students on an individual basis. They provide advice and support to students who have dyslexia, sensory or physical impairments and other difficulties. They can also offer advice on accessing technology such as voice recognition and text-to-speech software.

If you son or daughter has, or thinks they may have, a disability or medical condition which might adversely affect their studies they should contact our Disability and Dyslexia Service for advice about support and funds which may be available through the Disabled Students' Allowance

Complaints & Appeals Officer

Located in Registry Services, the Complaints and Appeals Officer can advise on claims for exceptional mitigating circumstances, complaints under the Student Complaints Procedure, and appeals against academic decisions.

Programme Advisors

Located in Registry Services, the Programme Advisory Service assists students in the planning and registration of their programmes of study. They can assist with planning selections of modules, explore the implications of changing course, discuss a possible course transfer, deal with matters arising from decisions of the Examination Boards, raise general inquiries about the Undergraduate Modular Scheme.

Students' Union Student Advice Service

Some students prefer to seek advice from outside of the University structure. For these students there is a Student Advice Service located in the Students' Union. The Student Advice Service offers confidential advice, information and representation to all University of Worcester students on any issue relating to student experience. They offer support in academic issues, financial matters, housing problems, consumer queries and much more. No issue is too small and the support offered is tailored to students' needs. Students can drop in to make an appointment, phone 01905 740800 or email thesas@worc.ac.uk for advice

Personal Tutors

When new students arrive at the University they are given a Personal Tutor. The Personal Tutor will be their personal link with the University and is usually someone involved in the teaching of their degree programme of study. The Personal Tutor can advise and support students in academic and other matters. Students can go to them at any time for advice and help, whether about choice of modules, or any other aspect of University life. They may help students directly or refer them to other relevant support services. Students meet their Personal Tutor at the beginning of each semester, and at other times as appropriate. Some tutors offer regular drop-in sessions.

Advice

from John Ryan, Registrar & Secretary

What can parents expect during the first year?

Expect great change. You may be surprised how much your child grows in confidence during their time at university.

Some students thrive on the independence they are afforded whilst others find this more challenging. Those who fully engage with university life adapt most quickly and gain the most from their experience. Encourage your child to get involved as much as possible.

How does the Data Protection Act 1988 affect the University's communication with parents?

Our primary relationship is with our students. The Data Protection Act protects all individuals' right to privacy, so the University is not permitted to share personal information about individuals with third parties, including parents, without the express permission of the individual. Therefore, the University would not normally contact parents, unless there is an emergency. However, in exceptional circumstances (for example where we believe a student is at risk) we believe parents should be involved. In these situations we will first urge your son or daughter to make contact with you before taking the initiative ourselves.

If a first year student experiences a crisis, who will know?

Other students living or studying with your son or daughter will probably be the first to know. In our experience students are very responsible and are quick to take the initiative if they feel someone needs help.

Community Development Workers, part of the Student Experience team, work with students, particularly during their first year, to develop and maintain a safe, inclusive and supportive community and are also on hand to offer support, advice and guidance. Often personal tutors and teaching staff sense that something is wrong. If a member of staff, or student, is concerned about the welfare of a student there are a number of internal agencies they can contact for help and advice as detailed in the Key Services section of this Guide. If the situation is serious I would be brought in to advise.

Who do I call if I think my son or daughter is in crisis?

In the first instance call the University's Main Reception on 01905 855000. Depending on the time of day they will put you through to an appropriate member of staff or if necessary contact emergency services. Our reception is staffed 24 hours. After any necessary immediate action has been taken there will be a series of conversations among the people most involved in the student's life. Keep in mind that it can be tricky if you ask that we not reveal that you called, because it is hard for us to intervene out of the blue.

Do you have advice for the parents of first year students?

I encourage you to trust that you have done a good job in raising your son or daughter. Know that they are on the verge of becoming independent adults in charge of their own lives. If you sense that they need help making sense of competing opportunities, or with feeling a sense of belonging, or if they seem to be struggling, remind them of the guidance available on campus, starting with the Student Experience team. At the University of Worcester, we expect students to make their own decisions, but we don't expect them to go it alone.

Important Information to Parents

Emergency Procedures

The University's emergency management programme has been in place for many years and is kept under regular review.

If an emergency occurs, the University's website will be updated regularly with appropriate information. The University can also send out mass email and text notifications to students.

Safety at the University of Worcester

The University has its own in house Security staff who are on site 24 hours a day. The Security staff work closely with West Mercia Police so can address all emergency issues if and when they arise.

Sending letters and packages

All post to the University's halls of residence is dealt with by our porter service. Some halls have their post delivered whilst in others the students are required to collect their post from the porters' office. Please ensure that you check you have the right room details for your son or daughter.

Parking on campus

Parking spaces are limited at the University. We do not encourage students to bring a car with them since they can access all the facilities they require via public transport or walking. Any student with a particular need to bring a car to University will be required to purchase a car parking permit (www.worcester.ac.uk/finance). Visitor parking is available in the University's pay and display car parks.



www.worcester.ac.uk

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Printed: August 2010