

# Students under the Age of 18 Years on Entry to the University of Reading

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The University of Reading is committed to equal opportunities and all applicants will be considered on their own merit and in accordance with the relevant admissions policy.
- 1.2. The University treats all its students, regardless of age, as independent, mature individuals. Students and their parents should understand and acknowledge that as the majority of students studying at the University are over 18, it is an adult learning environment.
- 1.3. However, the University acknowledges that anyone under the age of 18 is legally a child in the UK and therefore recognises the importance of stipulating policy, procedures and provisions specifically for these students in certain circumstances.
- 1.4. The information contained in this document relates to students under the age of 18 who are about to commence their studies or who are already studying at the University. Applicants, or those considering applying to the University who will be under the age of 18 when they plan to start a programme, should refer to the Policy and Procedures for the admissions of under 18s onto undergraduate programmes.
- 1.5. This Statement sits alongside the University's Policy and Procedure for the Admission of Under 18s [onto Undergraduate Programmes](#)

## 2. Parental/Guardian responsibilities

- 2.1. The University does not take on the rights, responsibilities and authority that parents and legal guardians have in relation to a child, and it will not act in loco parentis<sup>1</sup> in relation to students who are under the age of 18 years. It is a condition of admission to the University that the parent or guardian of any student who is under the age of 18 years confirms their acceptance of a place at UoR. The parent or guardian must sign and return the Parent Consent form, by doing so they confirm their acceptance of the arrangements set out in this document

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<sup>1</sup> In loco parentis (with reference to a teacher or other adult responsible for children) in the place of a parent.

and the University Policy and procedures for the Admission of Under 18s onto undergraduate programmes.

- 2.2. The University must comply with regulations set by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). As such, parents or guardians of students who are sponsored by the University under its [Student Sponsor Licence](#) must ensure suitable care arrangements are in place for a student under the age of 18 who will study in the UK. Further information on specific immigration and UK visa requirements are outlined in the University Policy on the Admission of Under 18s onto Undergraduate Degree Programmes. Policy on the Admission of Under 18s onto Undergraduate Degree Programmes.
- 2.3. Where a student under the age of 18 is from overseas and the parents remain abroad, the University requires details of a guardian for the student, who is in the UK and who will be accessible to the student and to the University should the need arise. A guardian is expected to act in loco parentis concerning matters that parents outside the UK are unable to undertake. Further information on how and when to provide this information is outlined in the [University Policy and Procedures for the Admission of Under 18s onto Undergraduate Degree Programmes](#)

### **3. Parental/Guardian involvement**

- 3.1. It is the University's usual policy that it deals directly with students (with whom it has a contractual relationship) and not with parents and this approach will also apply to students who are under the age of 18 years. The University will therefore normally correspond directly with students, not parents. The University must comply with its obligations under data protection laws. Students under the age of 18, in particular older teenagers, who are considered old enough to understand those laws and to exercise their own rights independently, have the same protections and expectations as those over 18, and any disclosures to parents (which would be considered a third party) must be in compliance with those laws.
- 3.2. While the University will always try and encourage the student to involve a parent as appropriate, it must ensure that any disclosures to parents are in compliance with the law. In many cases, this will involve the consent of the student, unless a serious concern for welfare is identified.
- 3.3. When there is a serious level of concern about the safety of a student under the age of 18 the Director of Student Services or other senior members of the University, taking into account the University's moral and safeguarding responsibilities to a student who is under the age of 18, may decide to contact their parent/guardian and/or emergency contact or other relevant authorities.
- 3.4. Where a student under the age of 18 has given prior consent to discuss/share information about them with a parent/guardian we will do so.

#### **4. Emergency Contact**

- 4.1. All students are asked to provide emergency contact details as part of the online enrolment process. It is particularly important that emergency contact details are provided for students under the age of 18 years and such students and/or their parents/legal guardians are required to supply this information. In the case of students under the age of 18 whose parents do not live in the UK, the University requires the name and contact details of an agreed nominated guardian who lives in the UK.

#### **5. Notification**

- 5.1. The relevant Head of School, School Director of Academic Tutoring, and Student Welfare Officer will be notified of any student within their School(s) who will be under the age of 18 years on entry to the University. The Hall Warden team and UPP, our on-campus student accommodation provider, will also be notified of those students who are living in Halls.

#### **6. Safeguarding**

- 6.1. The University fosters a culture of openness. All students, and particularly those under 18, are encouraged to share any concerns that they may have in relation to any safeguarding issue with a trusted individual within their school or with the wide range of student support services, for example their Academic Tutor, Hall Warden, Student Support Co-ordinator, Student Welfare Officer and any other staff where they have built a relationship of trust.
- 6.2. As a matter of law, a person under the age of 18 years is a child in the UK. The University has a responsibility to protect those under the age of 18 years from abuse and is therefore 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 Designated Safeguarding Leads, who will contact the appropriate authorities.
- 6.3. Each academic School has a safeguarding co-ordinator who works closely with the University's safeguarding leads should a safeguarding concern be raised.

#### **7. DBS checks**

- 7.1. The University is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") and screens members of staff working in specific roles for relevant criminal convictions in line with Government eligibility guidance. Further information regarding the University's approach to DBS checks can be found in the University's [Disclosure and Barred Service procedure](#)

## 8. Welfare Support

- 8.1. The University has a [wealth of support that fosters the wellbeing](#) of all students including both pre-emptive and reactive support. We encourage all students to be pro-active about their positive wellbeing and to take up opportunities to build their resilience.
- 8.2. At the start of the Academic year the Student Welfare Team will identify all under 18 students and make direct contact with them outlining all the support available across the University and ensuring the student has contact details of their School Welfare Officer.
- 8.3. Any notification to parents/guardians regarding welfare concerns will be undertaken in line with the University's Data Protection Policy.

## 9. Academic Support

- 9.1. Individual academic support is provided through an Academic Tutor that every student is allocated at the beginning of their studies. Students are encouraged to keep in touch with their Academic Tutors, liaising as needed but with more formal checking in once a term. Should an Academic Tutor have a welfare concern about a student they will discuss this with the student if possible and/or raise this with the Student Welfare Team for further investigation.

## 10. Programme Content

- 10.1. University of Reading academic programmes are generally designed and validated to be delivered to students over the age of 18 years. Therefore, they may contain teaching materials that are 18-rated. During the application and admissions process if students and their parents/guardians are concerned about the content of the programme that they wish to enrol on, they are advised to contact the relevant [Student Support Centre](#) who will direct them, as appropriate to the relevant staff member within the School.

## 11. Discipline and Student Behaviour

- 11.1. Students under the age of 18 are expected to adhere to University policies and procedures in the same way as all other students. This includes all aspects of the University's Regulations for [Student Conduct](#) and halls of residence Residency Agreements. Instances of misconduct, whether general or [academic](#) will be managed under the [Student Discipline Procedures](#) and the [procedures for Academic Misconduct](#). All students are expected to take responsibility for their behaviour.
- 11.2. The University's [#NeverOK](#) Campaign is explicit that we are committed to ensuring an inclusive, supportive and respectful environment for all, as set out in our Student Charter, and believe that any form of bullying, harassment or

discrimination is #NeverOk. If a student has been the victim of such behaviour, we strongly encourage that it is [reported](#) so we can support the individual and where possible carry out an investigation.

## **12. Alcohol and Tobacco**

- 12.1. It is illegal for alcohol to be sold to or bought by students who are under the age of 18 years in the UK. 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. The Students' Union is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements are in place for its own licensed premises. Guidance on alcohol can be found [here](#).

## **13. Field Trips Courses**

- 13.1. Programmes 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 consent form, parents give consent for the student to take part in these activities on that basis.

## **14. Provision of IT services**

- 14.1. The University offers email and unregulated internet services for all its students. These services are provided on an unsupervised and unmonitored basis, although monitoring may take place in response to specific concerns being raised. When using these facilities, all students are expected to act in an adult and responsible manner and to abide by the University's Online Safety Policy.

## **15. Contracts**

- 15.1. A person aged 16 or 17 years is able to enter into certain contracts (including for education) but until their 18th birthday will not have legal capacity to enter into all types of contracts. An applicant under the age of 18 will be able to apply, register with the University of Reading, and enter into a legal contract for education in the same way as an adult student. Where other contracts are required, the University may require a parent or guardian to act as guarantor and to honour all obligations under any contracts, with the University, that the student enters into prior to their 18th birthday. By signing the Parent Consent form for students under the age of 18 years, the parent/guardian agrees to this.

## **16. Student Accommodation**

- 16.1. The University will contact any students under the age of 18 not due to be living in University halls of residence to ensure they have arranged appropriate accommodation and to provide a point of contact if they have any concerns.
- 16.2. .Parents should recognise that residential accommodation offered by the University is generally intended [for the use of adults. It is likely therefore that students under 18 will be sharing with those over 18.](#)
- 16.3. University Halls of residence are owned and managed by UPP. Under the agreement with UPP, it is University of Reading staff who are responsible for support and welfare provisions of students in halls. The Halls Welfare Teams are screened via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and are trained in supporting the needs of students under 18.
- 16.4. Halls of residence are regarded as adult environments and as such neither UPP nor University staff will supervise students living in the halls. For instance, what time they return home, who they are socialising with or whether they are attending lectures. Neither can they supervise interactions between students, although they will help to mediate serious issues when brought to their attention.
- 16.5. However, the Hall Warden will make direct contact with any students under 18 years old as soon as possible after moving in. They will set up an introductory meeting to ensure the student is aware of all support available within Halls and who to contact in relation to any concerns or support needs that may arise.
- 16.6. The University will carry out appropriate risk assessments and establish control measures in relation to any disclosures of criminal convictions made by students in their University application in the consideration of admission to University Halls of residence accommodation.

## **17. Holding Office**

- 17.1. Students who are under 18 years are encouraged to join Students' Union clubs and societies but are not able to hold office until after their 18th birthday, for example, they may not be secretary or treasurer to a sports club or other students' association.

## **18. Relationships with staff**

- 18.1. The University's position on relationships between staff and students is set out in the [Staff and Student Relationships Policy](#).
- 18.2. In any event, under the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000, it is a criminal offence for any person in a position of trust (which includes members of University staff) to engage in sexual activity with someone who is under 18 years.

It is the University view that any sexual relationship with a student under the age of 18 years will be considered as gross misconduct by that member of staff. Allegations will be investigated and managed as outlined in the University's [Staff Disciplinary Procedure](#) and Safeguarding Policy as appropriate.

## 19. Data Protection

- 19.1. The University must comply with its obligations under data protection laws. Although those under 18 years of age are regarded as children under the law, students under the age of 18, in particular older teenagers who may be considered old enough to understand those laws and to exercise their own rights independently, have the same protections and expectations as those over 18, which means any disclosures to parents (and third parties) must be in compliance with those laws.
- 19.2. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, for example those connected with serious concerns for welfare, sharing of information is likely to only be done with the student's consent. Where consent has been identified as the lawful grounds for sharing information, the University is not able to give information to parents/guardians regarding the student's progress, results or any other personal circumstance unless the student has given their specific consent or where we come to the view that there is a specific and serious risk to the safety of the individual that parents/guardians or other authorities, such as the police, should be made aware of. However, if the student fails to pay any sums agreed on contract, then it will be necessary to disclose this to the guarantor and possibly to a debt collection agency.

## 20. Related Policies

- 20.1. Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy
- 20.2. Policy on the Admission of Under 18s onto Undergraduate Degree Programmes

VERSION	KEEPER	REVIEWED	APPROVED BY	APPROVAL DATE
1.0	University Secretary	Annually	UBTLSE	14 June 2023