



Collaborative Estranged Student Pledge

2025-26

Your higher education journey

Introduction

Welcome to Go Higher West Yorkshire's (GHWY) collaborative Estranged Student Pledge (formerly Stand Alone Pledge), which has been designed to support you on your journey into Higher Education (HE).

We are a partnership of 13 HE providers that represents a huge range of higher education options, from universities and HE-in-FE provision, to a specialist training provider and a conservatoire.

Our resource outlines the support our member institutions offer to estranged people in terms of HE access (getting into higher education) and success in HE (addressing the barriers that prevent students from continuing and therefore succeeding in higher education) (see pages 6-7).

It also includes a 'qualification routes' graphic that identifies ways into HE depending on your level of education (page 8); Top tips and useful links for you to find out more about support that is available from a range of organisations, including UCAS and Student Finance England (page 9). It concludes with a comprehensive glossary of terms used in this resource, which will help you to understand unfamiliar HE-specific language (pages 10-11).

Depending on your life stage, you may find it useful to read and talk through the document with a friend or trusted adult, such as a teacher.

Important information

Some of the key information in this publication remains subject to change. Please check for the latest information using the websites and other resources referred to before making any decisions.

Who are estranged students?

A person is considered to be estranged if they have no contact, support, and / or approval from a family network. This is usually due to them removing themselves from a dysfunctional or damaging situation with their biological, step or adoptive family.

Estrangement is also frequently caused by a difference in values (such as religion), sexual orientation, or escaping forced marriage.

It is most common for an individual to become estranged between the ages of 16-19 but many will become so while already studying in HE.

Estranged students are also sometimes referred to as independent students.

Estranged people have additional considerations when applying and studying in HE but these should not be seen as barriers to entering or progressing in their studies.



Benefits of HE

There are numerous benefits to studying in HE and we look at some of the main ones below.

Higher level skills can be beneficial throughout your life. There are many ways to achieve higher levels skills, as demonstrated through the range of qualification types, modes of study and learning environments available across GHWY's broad range of HE providers. Your options could include studying anything from a practical Higher National Certificate, through to a full-time three or four-year undergraduate course.

Increased earning potential: Graduates have an advantage in the job market and are likely to earn more money over their lifetime than non-graduates. They are also more likely to remain employed.

Transferable skills: Students develop many transferable skills at HE that suit a range of jobs. These include time and project management; communication skills; and problem solving.

Become an expert in your favourite subject: Over the three or four years of undergraduate study, students will become an expert in their chosen subject. They will be able to choose a number of specialist areas of study as their interests develop.

Take part in extra-curricular activities: Students have the opportunity to participate in a variety of extra-curricular activities during their time in HE. These include clubs and societies, part-time student jobs, and volunteering opportunities. These provide the chance to build skills, provide social opportunities, and enhance their future employability.

Health, wellbeing and resilience: Research shows that graduates can be more resilient and cope better with life's challenges than non-graduates. It has also found that graduates tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives than non-graduates.

Social benefits: Students get to work and socialise with people from a diverse range of backgrounds throughout their time in HE. As a result, many will graduate with a strong network of friends, mentors and industry contacts.

[Find out more about the benefits of HE.](#)



"[My HE provider] has helped me during my darkest times. I feel like I can talk to them about anything. They made sure that I knew exactly who to go to if I had any problems or worries."

Support offered collaboratively

Getting into Higher Education

Activities and events: We support member institutions to make sure their staff are aware of issues around estrangement.

Disabled Learners' HE Transition Pack: If you've received SEND support or adjustments at FE, the transition to HE can be confusing and hard to navigate. We have produced a Transition Pack to help support you on your educational journey. [Read our Disabled learners' HE transition pack.](#)

Campaign support: We have promoted the Estranged Students Solidarity Week campaign each November since 2018. #WithEstrangedStudents

Succeeding in Higher Education

Sharing ideas and successes: Our 13 member institutions work together to share what has worked well and develop new ideas to support the success of estranged students.

Student participation opportunities: We welcome the involvement of estranged students in our outreach work, including creative case studies and speaking at events.

Increasing staff awareness: Our free e-training course helps HE staff to support you by raising awareness of some of the barriers estranged individuals may have faced.

Succeeding after Higher Education

Employer links: Our member institutions have excellent links with local employers, creating opportunities for us to champion the skills and potential of estranged students in the workplace.

Collaborative networks: Representatives drawn from across our 13 member institutions attend a Care Experienced and Estranged Students Network, which shares best practice.

Support offered by our members

OUR DECLARATION

We, Go Higher West Yorkshire, recognise the challenges that people face when they do not have family support. We recognise our responsibility to support estranged people so they can make a successful transition to Higher Education (HE). We hereby make a commitment to improve estranged students' life chances by widening their access to and supporting their success across all forms of HE.

SUPPORT OFFERED BY HE PROVIDERS	Bradford College	University of Bradford	University Centre Calderdale College	University of Huddersfield	Kirklees College	University of Leeds	Leeds Arts University	Leeds Beckett University	Leeds College of Building	Leeds Conservatoire	University Centre Leeds	Leeds Trinity University	University Centre Wakefield
GETTING TO HIGHER EDUCATION													
Dedicated estranged student web-page	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Clear definition of estrangement on your website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	
Experiences on campus	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	
Contextual admissions*		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓
Application support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Outreach support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
HEP acts as rent guarantor**											✓		
SUCCEEDING IN HIGHER EDUCATION													
Wellbeing support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Named contact for estranged students	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Support with the transition to Higher Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Accommodation support	✓	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	✓	n/a	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓	n/a
Graduation costs support	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	
Additional financial support***	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Training to help staff understand the experiences of estranged students	✓				✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
SUCCEEDING AFTER HIGHER EDUCATION													
Employment support****		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

* This is when HE providers can consider additional information, such as back-ground factors, to make decisions on individual applications and achievement to identify potential, particularly where this may not be evidenced through grades

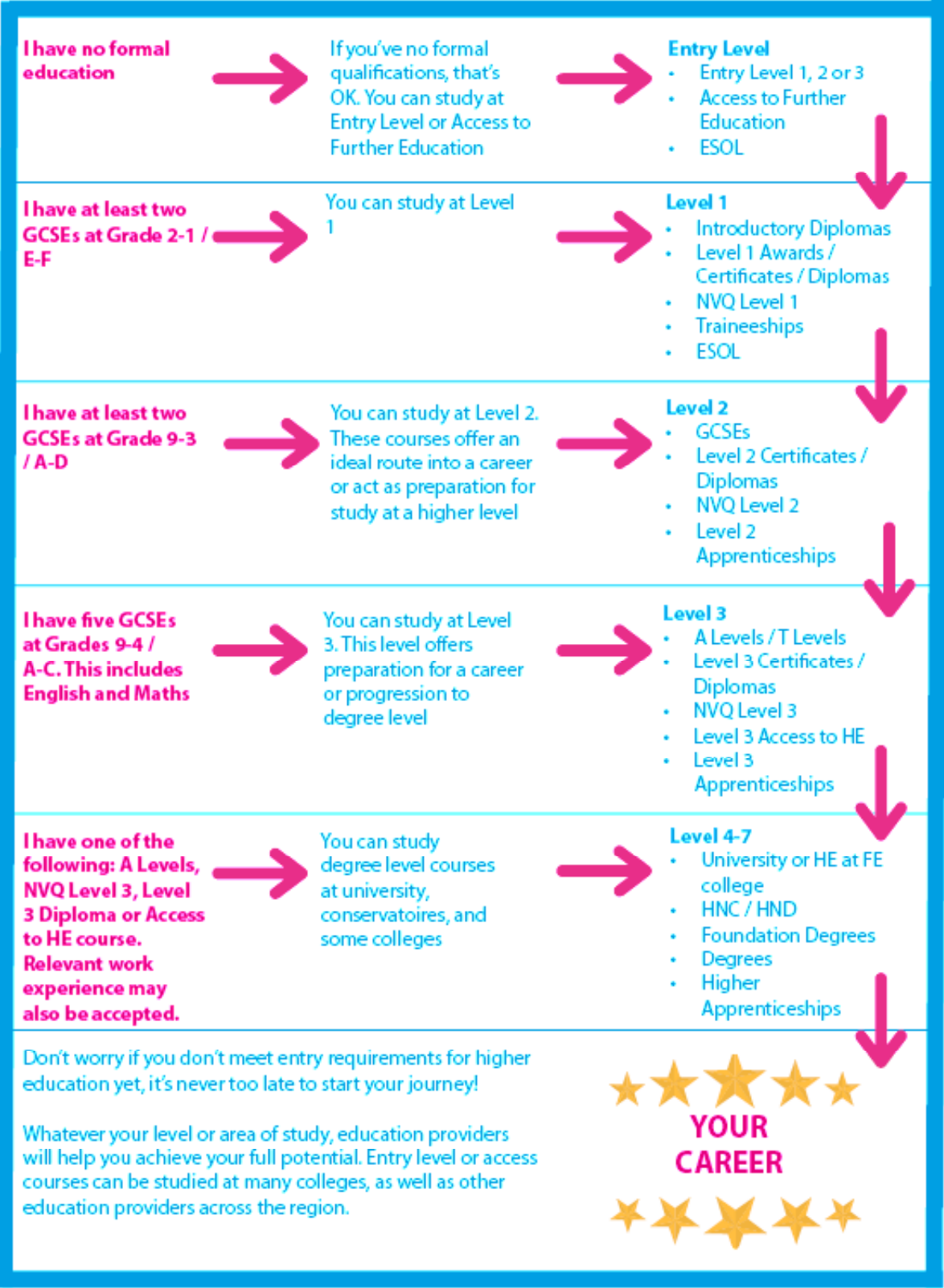
** Provision of a guarantor for rent is common practice in the UK and gives landlords the security that rent will be paid on time and in full

n/a HE provider does not own accommodation but may be able to offer support in securing somewhere to live

*** This could include bursaries, support with budgeting, or scholarships

**** This could include mock interview support and 1:1 consultations with careers advisers

Qualification routes



With credit to Bradford College

Top tips

Speak with a named contact at one of our 13 members. They can answer your questions and show you around campus. They can also direct you to colleagues to discuss your personal circumstances; anything from caring responsibilities to a criminal record.

Talk to people you trust about the benefits of HE, what may be important for you to consider as an estranged student, and what is the best path for you. This document is a useful conversation starter.

Tick the 'estranged student' box when applying for courses through UCAS to ensure you have access to all the support on offer. This information will be treated in confidence, and will not affect the outcome of your application in any way.

NNECL (National Network for the Education of Care Leavers) has a useful resource to help you think about the outcomes you want for yourself in relation to your current family situation, or life without a family network. [Read more about NNECL.](#)

You can email us at ghwy@leeds.ac.uk and we will help to signpost you to further information.

Find out more

GHWY: More details about the support offered by our 13 member institutions, as well as links to case studies and useful resources. [Read more about GHWY.](#)

Prospects: Careers advice including a skills quiz, with information on study options and work experience. [Read more about Prospects.](#)

Discover Uni: A resource to help people decide about their HE choices and compare courses. [Read more about Discover Uni.](#)

Not Going to Uni: Training and development opportunities, including degree apprenticeships and HE at colleges. [Read more about Not Going to Uni.](#)

UCAS: Portal for people applying to university, including finance information and career options. [Read more about UCAS.](#)

Student Finance England: You can complete an estrangement form to confirm that you are irreconcilably estranged from your parent(s) in order to receive financial support.

Future Goals: Provides careers and education inspiration and support as well as free upskilling courses for all ages across Leeds City Region. [Read more about Future Goals.](#)

Glossary of Higher Education terms

Access to Higher Education is a diploma that prepares students (usually aged 19+) who do not have traditional qualifications to study in higher education. [Find out more about Access to HE.](#)

Apprenticeship - A paid job where the employee learns and gains valuable experiences through on-the-job training, supplemented with 20% of their time completing classroom or distance learning with a college, university or training provider. It leads to a nationally recognised qualification.

Conservatoire (or Conservatory) is an institution that specialises in the performing arts. The programmes they offer focus on practical learning and performance.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is a combination of ideas, approaches, and techniques that will help individuals manage their own learning and growth

Entry Level qualifications provide learners with an introduction to education. They are designed for people who do not feel ready for GCSEs, or equal qualifications, or have not studied in a long time. They are offered in a wide range of subjects including Mathematics and Computer Science

Foundation degree is a combined academic and vocational qualification that is the equivalent of two-thirds of a Bachelor degree or a Higher National Diploma (HND)

Further Education (FE) refers to any education after secondary school that is not an undergraduate or postgraduate degree (e.g. A-levels).

Go Higher West Yorkshire (GHWY) is a partnership of 13 Higher Education Providers that works to achieve common goals on access to and success in HE for those from under-represented groups. Refer to the last page for a full list of our members.

Graduate - a person who has successfully completed a course of study or training, especially a person who has been awarded an undergraduate or first academic degree.

Higher Education (HE) takes places at universities and Further Education colleges and normally includes undergraduate and postgraduate study.

HE-in-FE - Many FE colleges offer a wide range of HE programmes. These might appeal to people who want to stay close to their home to study, or want to continue studying at the FE college they have already attended. Applications are usually made directly to the institution.

Higher Education Provider (HEP) is any institution that provides higher education qualifications, including universities and other approved organisations. Applications are usually made through UCAS.

Higher National Certificate (HNC) is a vocational, work-related Higher Education qualification that prepares students for a particular job and/or career. It is equivalent to the first year of a degree.

Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) is an alternative to apprenticeships or degrees. It has been developed in partnership with businesses to ensure learners get the specific training and skills they need for their chosen careers.

National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) is a registered charity dedicated to transforming the educational outcomes of individuals with experience of being in care.

Specialist training providers offer 60% or more of their courses in one or two subjects.

T Levels are technical-based qualifications that have been developed in collaboration with employers and businesses. They are broadly equivalent to 3 A Levels.

Undergraduate (or Bachelor) degrees are an academic step up from A-levels (or their equivalent). They are typically completed at a university or other higher education institution.

Universities are institutions of higher education where people can study for degrees in several academic disciplines. They also carry out academic research.

University Centres offer Higher Education courses in a Further Education setting.



"I have had constant support from my personal academic tutor and other lecturers if I have ever struggled with keeping up my workload or personal issues."



GO HIGHER

WEST YORKSHIRE

Bradford College

 UNIVERSITY of
BRADFORD

 **UNIVERSITY
CENTRE**
Calderdale College

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring global professionals

 **KIRKLEES
COLLEGE**

 **LEEDS
CONSERVATOIRE**

 **UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS**

 **LEEDS
ARTS
UNIVERSITY**
1846

 **LEEDS
BECKETT
UNIVERSITY**

 **Leeds
College of
Building**

 **University
Centre Leeds**

 **Leeds Trinity
University**

 **University Centre**
at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group
