

# Independent & Estranged Students

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# Agenda

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- 2 Estranged Students**

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- 3 Our Process and Common Concerns**

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- 5 The Estrangement Caseworker**

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# How students can apply as independent

- Self Support
- Care Leaver
- Parents Outside the EU
- Both parents deceased
- Estranged



# Definition of Estrangement

A separation resulting from hostility, alienation, isolation

—

A state of separation between persons or groups.



# What is NOT an estranged student

- A student whose parents refuse to provide their financial information to support an application
- A student who no longer lives in the family home
- A student who has recently had a minor argument with a parent which will likely resolve itself



# The Process

You need to send us evidence. This is to confirm you are 'irreconcilably estranged' from both of your biological or adoptive parents.

## What you need to do

Please provide a signed and dated letter from an independent person with good standing in the community. It must confirm the following:

- their relationship to you and the length of time they have known you
- the reasons for your estrangement from both your parents and when this occurred
- current contact levels with both your parents and if reconciliation is likely

# Estrangement Form

Your details

Full name

Current employer and occupation

Work Address

Postcode

Contact phone number (including area code)

Work/business phone number

Email address

What is your relationship to the student?

## Section 2 To be completed by the person confirming your estrangement

2.3 How long have you known the student?

Years Months  
 -

2.4 When did you first become aware of the student's estrangement?

Month Year  
 -

2.5 Can you tell us your understanding of the reasons for the student's estrangement and when this happened?

*Write on a separate piece of paper and attach it to this form if you need more space.*

2.6 Has the student been in contact with either parent in the last 12 months?

No  
 Yes - please give details below

2.7 Do you see the situation between the student and their parent(s) changing in the foreseeable future?

No  
 Yes - please give details below

Now read, sign and date the declaration on the next page

## Common Concerns

Who can complete a letter/estrangement form on the students behalf?

## Examples of acceptable signatories

Please note the person who provides evidence must:

- be a person of good standing in the community
- be fully aware of your situation
- not be related to you (by birth or marriage) or in a relationship with you

These are common examples of people you might know who can provide evidence:

- Accountant
- Architect
- Bank or Building Society Official
- Barrister
- Chairman/Director of a company
- Chemist
- Chiropodist
- Civil servant
- College/University Support team
- Counsellor
- Dentist
- Director/Manager of a charity
- Engineer
- Fire service official
- Funeral Director
- HR/personnel Manager
- Journalist
- Justice of the Peace
- Local government officer
- Medical Doctor
- Member of Parliament
- Merchant Navy officer
- Minister of a recognised religion
- Nurse
- Officer of the Armed Services
- Optician
- Paralegal
- Paramedic
- Personal License holder
- Pharmacist
- Police Officer
- Post Office official
- President/Secretary of a recognised organisation
- Prison/Probation Officer
- Salvation Army Officer
- Social/Support worker
- Solicitor
- Student Welfare officer
- Surveyor
- Teacher
- Trade union officer
- Tutor/Lecturer
- Vet

This is not an exhaustive list. If you have alternative evidence please send this for us to review.

How much information does SFE need to award independence?

# Acceptable letter

*“My name is.....and I am a social worker at.....I have known....for the last 2 years having supported him through a turbulent period of his life. I can confirm that....is estranged from his parents. The break down of his relationship with them began nearly 3 years ago after they disagreed with his life choices. Unfortunately I cant see the situation changing as they have made it clear he is no longer a part of their family.”*

The letter confirmed the third party's address information and was signed

# What happens next.....

Once a student is accepted as independent on the grounds of estrangement they will fall into 1 of 3 categories for the following academic year:

- Independence granted for the duration of the course.
- Self Declaration: the student applies for the following year and indicates their situation has not changed. The original estrangement evidence will be reviewed and if satisfactory independence will be awarded without the need for new evidence
- Request for further information – the original evidence will be reviewed but if not satisfactory, new evidence will be requested

# University Bursary



**When a student is awarded independence for estrangement a letter is issued directly to the student to advise. We would send 1 of 2 letters:**

Estrangement awarded for the duration:

## **Independent student status granted for full length of course**

Your independent student status has been awarded as you're irreconcilably estranged from your parents and this status will be applied to any remaining years of your current course. You'll only need to send us more evidence if we ask you for it.

# University Bursary



**Estrangement awarded for the current Academic Year:**

## **Independent student status granted 2019/20**

Your independent student status has been awarded as you're irreconcilably estranged from your parents.

These letters can be used for university bursary purposes but it is the students responsibility to provide this information to the University.

# University Bursary

Any requests from a University for confirmation of estrangement status for the purpose of bursary, need to be directed to the following email address:

**[Independent\\_student\\_enquiries@slc.co.uk](mailto:Independent_student_enquiries@slc.co.uk)**

Student Finance England are unable to advise the University directly of a student's independent status without consent to share having been provided. In this scenario, a letter would be issued to the student to confirm their status. It is then up to the student to give this letter to the University.

# The Estrangement Caseworker

# The Estrangement Caseworker

- The estrangement caseworker was introduced in 2016 after a review of the estrangement process
- We have **2** dedicated caseworkers.
- Since its introduction 1093 students have accessed this service
- The caseworkers assist our most vulnerable students and resolve complex cases
- They are the direct point of contact for future applications



# The Estrangement Caseworker

**To qualify for an estrangement caseworker the student must fall within one of the following categories:**

- They are unable to obtain a professional person to reference their circumstances
- They have very recently become estranged and have not confided their circumstances to anyone other than friends or family
- Their circumstances are sensitive/confidential and therefore nobody of a professional nature is aware of their situation
- They have lost contact with the professional person who referenced their circumstances previously

**NB :** Only students who fall into one the 4 categories should be referred.  
All other estranged students will be dealt with by the independent team.



# The Estrangement Caseworker

Students are referred to the estrangement caseworker in the following ways:

- The student confirms in writing their situation and why they are unable to provide standard evidence
- The student speaks to our contact staff and explains their situation who in turn refers the student to the estrangement caseworker
- The University email the estranged inbox to advise of the students situation and that the student is unable to provide evidence



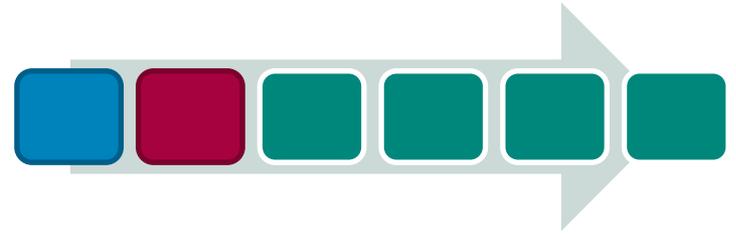
# What happens next.....

- A caseworker will assign the application and contact the student
- A convenient time will be arranged for a telephone interview to be conducted
- The information provided will be reviewed and a decision made. Next steps are agreed, including the need to provide third party evidence for subsequent applications
- The caseworker will advise the student to speak to their University (student services) so they are aware of the situation going forward



All information will be kept in the strictest of confidence

# Student Case Study



## Student

- 24/08/2017
- Student applies as estranged.

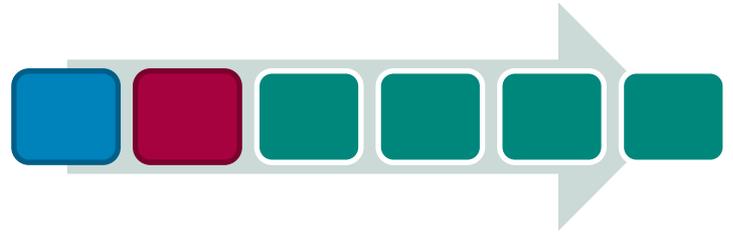
## Independent Team

- 08/09/2017
- Evidence of estrangement requested.
- The application approved non means tested.

## Independent Team

- 27/09/2017
- Letter received - unable to provide evidence.
- Passed to the estrangement case worker from the independent team.

# Student Case Study



## Case Worker

- 29/09/2017
- Case worker contacts the student and leaves a message to arrange a telephone interview.

## Case Worker

- 06/10/2017
- Student contacts and a telephone interview is performed.
- Independent status awarded.
- Email sent to the student to confirm and advised to make university aware of their situation.

## Case Worker

- 19/04/2018
- Student applies for 18/19 and emails the estrangement case worker requesting what their next step is.
- Contact made with student - situation unchanged.
- Student is able to provide evidence from university.

## Case Worker

- 28/04/2018
- Emails evidence to estranged inbox and the application means tested on basis of estrangement.

# To conclude

- You are able to advise a student who SFE can accept as an acceptable third party signatory
- You are aware of the information required in order to award a student independent status on the basis of estrangement
- You can identify a student who will require an estrangement caseworker
- You are aware of the estrangement caseworker process



## Remember

- **University Bursary Letter Requests to: [independent\\_student\\_enquiries@slc.co.uk](mailto:independent_student_enquiries@slc.co.uk)**
- **Estrangement caseworker queries to: [estranged@slc.co.uk](mailto:estranged@slc.co.uk)**

# Helen German

Independent Student Assessor



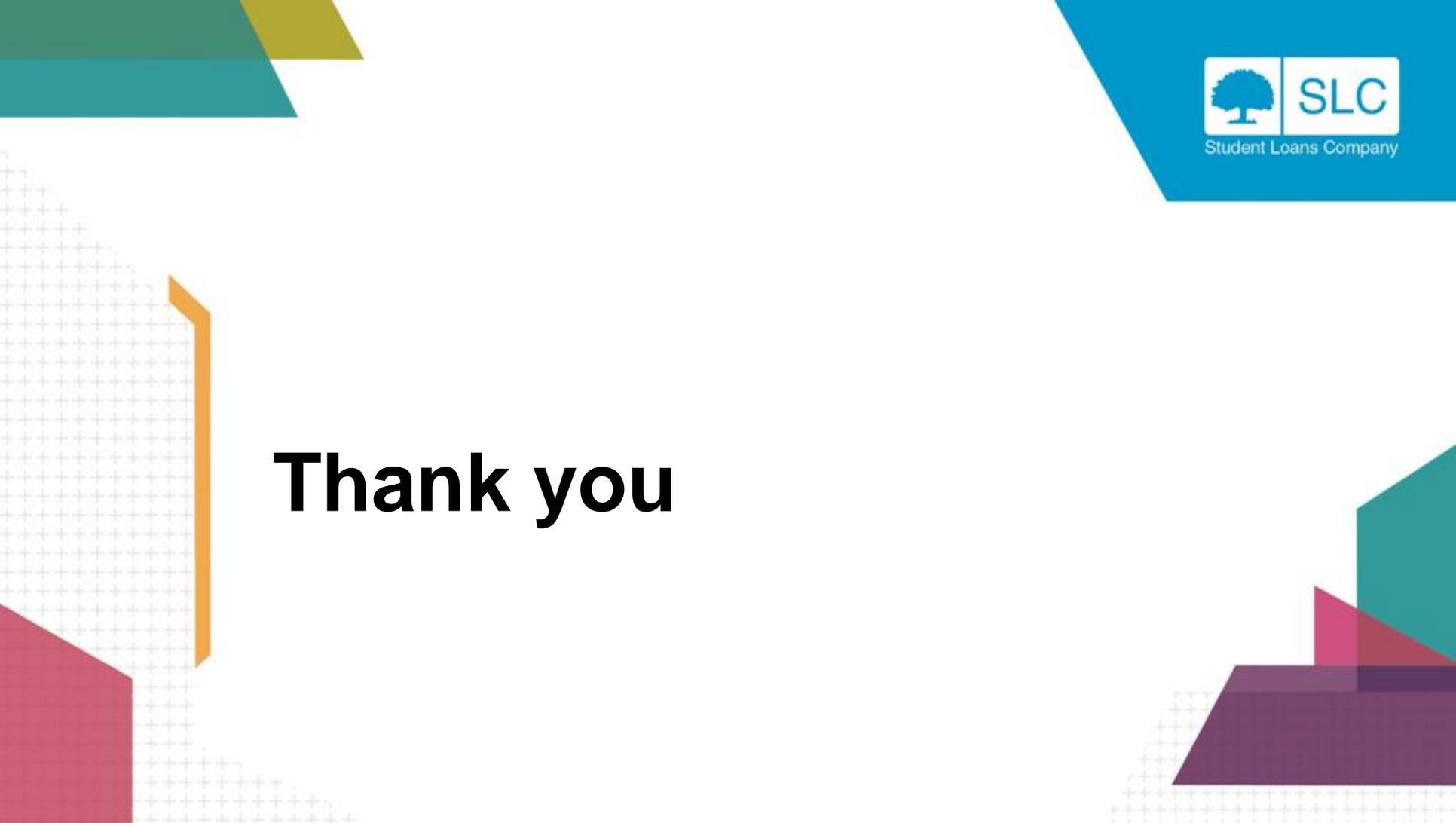
Helen\_german@slc.co.uk



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<https://www.slc.co.uk/>

The slide features several decorative elements: a teal and yellow geometric shape in the top left; a blue triangle in the top right containing the SLC logo; a white grid pattern in the bottom left and bottom right corners; a red shape in the bottom left; a purple and pink shape in the bottom right; and a vertical orange bar on the left side.

**Thank you**