

Generally, estrangement means you have little or no contact with your parents and this is unlikely to change.

How do I know if I qualify as an estranged student?

You could apply for student finance as an estranged student if you are under 25 and:

- you haven't had any contact (either verbal or written) with either of your biological / adoptive parents for 12 months or more, prior to starting your course; or
- your relationship with your parents has broken down within the last 12 months and you don't expect this to change in the near future.

We may be able to consider estranged status for those estranged from their parent's for less than 12 months, but this would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If you're irreconcilably estranged from your parents, you won't be asked to provide any of your parent's financial details. We know that it may not be possible or safe for some students to ask their parents for their income details. If this applies to you, then you may be able to be assessed as being an independent student. This means that once you send us evidence, we will award maintenance support based on your own income and where you are residing during your studies.

Common examples of estrangement can include students that have no relationship with their parents and are living with friends, living in supported accommodation, or living with other family members such as aunts, uncles or grandparents.

If you are under a Special Guardianship Order (SGO) and have minimal contact with your parents, you may be able to apply as an estranged student, but this would be considered on a case-by-case basis. If you are deemed ineligible for estranged status due to regular, meaningful contact with your parent(s), then you would need to apply for your student finance in the standard way, which includes providing your parent(s) income details.

Each application for estrangement is reviewed based on your individual circumstances.

And remember, you should always apply for student finance as soon as possible to allow sufficient time for your application and evidence to be reviewed before starting your course.

How do I apply as an estranged student?

If you already have evidence of your estrangement, sending us a copy is usually the fastest way to demonstrate estrangement (for example, a letter from your teacher, doctor, support worker or local authority etc which confirms that you aren't in contact with your parents). The letter will need to confirm their relationship to you and the length of time they have known you (this normally needs to be a minimum of 3 months). If your Higher Education Provider i.e. University is providing this letter, there is no minimum set time that they need to have known you. The letter will also need to confirm your estrangement from both parents, the duration of your estrangement, the level of contact you have with your parents and that reconciliation is unlikely.

However, if you don't have any evidence to confirm your estrangement nor have you previously made any third party aware of your situation, you can complete and digitally upload a letter or a Confirmation of Estrangement Form which can be found in your online account. You can also use our form finder at www.sfeEngland.slc.co.uk/estrangement/ to download a copy. Your application for estrangement will then be assessed on a case-by-case basis. This would normally result in a telephone call between you and one of our trained Independent Assessors.

If you make your university or college aware of your estrangement, they can support your application by completing an Estrangement form. The person from your university or college supporting your application does not need to have known you for three months in order to provide this information they just need to be aware of your Estrangement.

What else do I need to know?

If you qualify as an estranged student, you will usually only be asked to provide evidence of this once. However, you may be asked to provide additional evidence of your continued estrangement when you apply for student finance in later years of your course. For example, if the estrangement occurred recently (usually within the last 12 months), or if reconciliation with your parents seems possible.

Universities and colleges can also provide estranged student support. You can talk with advisers who are usually found within the Student Services, Student Wellbeing or Student Union Teams at your university or college. There is also independent support available from UCAS.

Important links

UCAS - www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/individual-needs/estranged-students

Office for Students: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/equality-of-opportunity/effective-practice/estranged-students/

Student Finance England: www.sfengland.slc.co.uk/estrangement/

EaCES: www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/imo/your-stories/estranged-and-care-experienced-students/