

## **Support for Students Aged Under 18: Code of Practice**

From time to time the University of Chester enrolls students who are under the age of 18. Whilst most students will reach the age of 18 within a short period, the University must formally recognise these students as legal minors and take appropriate measures to support their welfare until they turn 18. The University of Chester's policy is to treat under 18 students as close to other students, from the outset as far as practicable.

### **Key Considerations:**

#### **1.1 Contractual Capacity**

A University is deemed in law to have a contractual relationship with its students and there is no difficulty in including students under 18 within this concept. Contracts with persons under 18 are enforceable if they relate to 'necessaries' (which include education and accommodation), and the only problem that arises is with contracts falling outside the definition (an example of which is agreements relating to student loans). To ensure that all contracts are enforceable it is suggested that the University of Chester should obtain a signature from the parent or guardian on any contractual documentation. The current practice with loans is to ask students to confirm the agreement when they reach the age of 18 and it is recommended that this practice be followed in any similar situation.

#### **1.2 Safeguarding**

The University of Chester, in common with all educational establishments, has statutory obligations in this area, and must assume that students under 18 come under the category of 'child' for this purpose. Child protection awareness involves responding to concerns raised by or about students aged under 18 whilst at the University. Any suspicions or allegations relating to the abuse of such students should be brought to the attention of the Director of Student Services, who is required to liaise on the matter with the appropriate authorities in accordance with the University's [Safeguarding Policy](#).

#### **1.3 Staff-Student Relationships**

Under the provisions of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, a member of the University of Chester staff who is in a position of trust in relation to a student under 18 and who engages in sexual activity with or directed towards such a student may in doing so be committing a criminal offence.

#### **1.4 Alcohol and tobacco products**

It is an offence for a person under 18 to purchase alcohol or tobacco products (and, conversely, to sell alcohol or tobacco products to such a person). It is also an offence for any person to purchase alcohol or tobacco products on behalf of someone under 18, whether it is for consumption on licensed premises or publicly elsewhere (e.g. on the street). The University of Chester will make every effort to ensure that the law is not broken in respect to its licensed premises. The Bar and Security team will be notified of students who are under 18.

### **1.5 Information Sharing with Chester Students' Union**

The University of Chester will share information on under-18 students with the Students' Union to facilitate their involvement in university life. This includes sharing data necessary for student participation in societies, events, and related activities while ensuring that all privacy and safeguarding requirements are respected. Students who are under 18 years are not allowed to hold office, for example, they may not be secretary or treasurer to a sports club or other students' association.

### **1.6 Parental Involvement**

The University of Chester's policy is to correspond with students, regardless of age, (with whom it has a contractual relationship) and not with their parents and this applies equally to students under 18. However, parents of under-18 students will be informed of this policy and the University's Code of Practice for minors prior to commencement of studies (see Appendix 1).

Irrespective of an individual student's age, parental correspondence regarding an individual student may only be entered into in specific and limited circumstances e.g. that contact is necessary to protect the vital interests of an individual student. Staff are reminded that they should not discuss with other persons (including parents) an individual student's attainment, attendance, behaviour or any other related matters. Further advice may be obtained from the Data Protection Officer and/or Director of Student Services.

### **1.7 Accommodation**

It is the student's responsibility to organise accommodation for the duration of their studies. The Residential Life Team will be made aware of any students under the age of 18 who are living in university-owned accommodation. This

### **1.8 Awareness within the University**

The University's Admissions team (Home or International) will inform Student Services by 1<sup>st</sup> September, or as soon as possible thereafter, of any students who will be under the age of 18 at enrolment. The Admissions team will provide Student Services with a copy of the Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement form.

Student Services will then send a letter to the Dean of the relevant Faculty and Head of Division whose undergraduate entry is expected to include a student(s) aged under 18. The Dean of the relevant Faculty and Head of Division will also receive a copy of the letter sent to the student and their parents/guardian (see [Appendix 1](#)) together with this Code of Practice.

As detailed in 1.4, 1.5 and 1.7, Student Services will also send a letter to the Bar Manager, Security Team, Chester Students' Union and Residential Life Team to ensure they are aware of any students under the age of 18 studying at the University of Chester.

### **1.9 Support**

Each student under the age of 18 will be supported by a designated member of staff, Chloe Anderson, within Student Services. During the first week of their course, under-18 students will receive direct communication from their link support member and invited to a welcome support meeting. Students will be asked to check in monthly with the link member of support staff and encouraged to reach out for additional support whenever needed. Once a student reaches their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, the link member support staff will close this additional support arrangement and communicate this with the student via email with a reminder of the support available to all students at the University.