



## **Bangor University Student Support Services**

### **Coming to Bangor University: a guide for Parents/Guardians/Carers of new students**

Coming to university is an enormous step for students, leaving behind family and friendship support networks, perhaps for the first time, and all that is familiar. In the first weeks there is a lot of adjustment to make; making friends, joining social activities, settling in to accommodation, finding their way around, starting a course and academic work, and completing all the necessary administrative procedures.

Whilst most students settle in very well and have an extremely enjoyable time during these first few weeks, this can also be a very anxiety-provoking and exhausting time and it is not therefore surprising that some students feel homesick or worry that they will never fit in. Most students will know no-one at University, and making friends quickly can sometimes be a matter of luck. The first people students meet are those living with them in halls: if students find that they don't get on immediately with those they are to live with, they might assume that friends will be difficult to find. There will, however, be plenty more opportunities to make friends on courses and in the societies and activities that they choose to join. And peer guides will be on hand in the first weeks to help students join in social activities and find their way around.

How well a student settles in the first few weeks here can also be affected by recent or past experiences or current factors, such as:

- Previous educational experiences
- Attitude to life
- Change in family circumstances e.g recent loss, illness
- Student's health & well-being
- Experience of the course
- Practical issues, such as problems with finance and accommodation.
- Or sometimes, just an unexpected adverse reaction to being away from home

### **'Give it Time'**

When students are unsettled, encouraging them to 'give it time' can be very helpful. Many of the problems that students experience at the beginning are a normal part of the transition. Feelings of having no connections here will get better as students make friends and settle down to the normal routine of university.

### **Support within the University**

Support of all kinds is available for students in the university, and there is an extensive support network in place to assist students at every stage of their academic life. If you are concerned about how well your son/daughter is coping in

the first weeks, encourage them to find someone with whom they can discuss how they are feeling. These people include Halls Wardens, Personal Tutors, other staff members of the academic schools, members of Student Support Services and Peer Guides. The University Counselling Service is very aware of the difficulties that can be experienced in settling in and runs extra individual drop-in sessions at this time

Everyone is aware that coming to university can be difficult for a number of students and it can be helpful for students to know that they are not alone in feeling unhappy and unsettled. Each student will be helped to make the changes necessary for them to settle in.

### **Supporting the student**

Having a parent/carer at the other end of a phone, willing to listen, a link to a familiar environment can be very helpful. Encouragement to join in activities and to keep occupied can be useful for many students. Whether to encourage students to stay for weekends, or to come home for them, can be a dilemma for parents/carers, and it will really depend on the individual as to what is appropriate, or perhaps a reasonable outcome will be arrived at by trying both.

Staff at Bangor University will be understanding and supportive of students with difficulties and encouraging your son/daughter to communicate with staff if there are problems is crucial. For more information about the University and what is available, please visit our website; our Student Support Services have a wide range of provision for students, and staff are friendly and approachable.

### **Thinking of leaving?**

Sometimes students feel unable to stay on. If students are thinking of leaving or changing course it is important for them to realise that this can be freely discussed with staff within Student Support Services who have expertise in guiding students to make the right choices for them. Where this is the case, they will be supported in leaving and encouraged to think positively about alternative pathways, including deferring their course start date, applying to another university, or taking some time out. There are many other options to consider and it is important that leaving is not seen either as a failure, or as something to be ashamed about, but a matter of wrong place, course or time. Students feeling this way can talk in complete confidence about their concerns to a member of staff in Student Support Services.

This information can be found on the University Web pages and Intranet

<http://www.bangor.ac.uk/studentservices/>

### **Contacting the University**

Sometimes parents/guardians or carers may be concerned enough to contact the University themselves. If you do so, it is important to remember that the University does not have the right to share information about students without their permission. The University is required to comply with the Data Protection Act and will not legally be able to disclose what may seem to parents to be very basic information to which they are entitled; we will not, for example be able to confirm a student's attendance at the University or their address, which may come as a shock to you. However, staff will be understanding of your concerns, and will do whatever they can to assist you.

The need to contact the University may occur at any time during a student's course, not just in the first few weeks, we have developed this guide on what the University can do to help, and what we cannot do. Rest assured that we will work to achieve the best outcome in every situation.

**The following guidelines apply to a range of instances where the University will seek to assist parents/guardians/carers:**

- The University will contact the parent/guardian (or any other person nominated by the student), or will supply information, via the Registrar's Office, to the relevant statutory authority in any circumstances where a student's emergency contact is needed (e.g. in the event of an accident, or where the student has been deemed by the appropriate staff group to be at serious risk). [Further advice is available from Student Support Services on such procedures].
- If a parent/guardian/carer is seriously concerned about the wellbeing of a student, the University will make appropriate enquiries as to the student's situation. In exceptional circumstances, the University is able to relay a message to a student on behalf of a parent/guardian but cannot confirm if the message was received.
- The University will direct parents/guardians/carers to any relevant information that is publicly available, for example University procedures; Rules and Regulations; information on fees and financial support; details of core modules and assessment methods for individual courses; Student Support Services.
- If a parent/guardian/carer wishes to complain on behalf of a student about any of the University's services, the University will supply information on the University complaints procedures; however, students must lodge the complaint or appeal themselves.
- The University will release information to a parent/guardian/carer only with the express written consent of the student and will on receipt of such consent communicate directly with the parent/guardian/carer acting on behalf of the student.

**\*Student consent**

- Under exceptional circumstances, for example due to major illness or debilitating accident or disability a student may give consent for a parent/guardian to act on their behalf.
- Consent will normally be given in relation to a specific matter. For example, if a student has given consent to a parent/guardian pursuing a complaint on his/her behalf, the parent/guardian will not have access to information relating to the student once the complaint process has been concluded.
- Ongoing consent may be given to the parent/guardian of a student with complex support requirements and where the situation is unlikely to change. The decision will be determined by the nature of the student's disability.

## **What the University cannot do, without the Student's permission**

- Although it may seem unreasonable, the University cannot confirm whether an individual is a student at Bangor University.
- Unfortunately, the University cannot provide details of a student's address, their attendance, or their general whereabouts.
- The University cannot discuss details of a student's academic progress or any other matters related to the student's records (e.g. payment of fees).
- The University cannot give information on optional modules chosen by a student, or give specific details about a student's timetable, assessments or assessment dates.
- The University cannot provide details of any disciplinary action being taken by the University against a student.
- The University cannot provide an update on any ongoing investigations related to a complaint or appeal lodged by a student.
- The University cannot instigate an investigation, under our complaints procedure, based only on a third party's account of a situation.

## **In Conclusion**

The University is committed to providing the best possible environment for students to thrive and succeed, with a range of services and provision designed to create a supportive network. Major concerns raised by parents will always be given serious consideration, and staff will work to achieve the best outcome for all.