

SFE will, as far as possible, satisfy themselves that the estrangement is genuine and that for the time being reconciliation is impossible (or at least highly unlikely).

It is not enough that you 'do not get on' with your parents or that you have had a serious disagreement recently.

The fact that you may choose to live apart from your parents is not itself sufficient evidence of an irreconcilable estrangement.

Similarly irreconcilable estrangement cannot be inferred simply on the grounds your parents refuse to co-operate with SFE in the financial assessment of your funding (e.g. by not replying to letters or refusing to complete income assessment forms), or does not provide financial support to you.

These factors could, of course, be expected to be present if there has been a genuine estrangement.

To prove estrangement, SFE will require a letter on headed paper from a professional person detailing circumstances of your estrangement. This letter could be from:

- a social worker,
- teacher/tutor,
- advice worker,
- doctor,
- police officer,
- welfare officer,
- minister of religion
- from Jobcentre Plus (if claimed Income Support as an under 18 because of the situation).

This person should include:

- details (including dates if possible) regarding the nature of the estrangement,
- if reconciliation is unlikely,
- how long they have known you,
- how long they have been aware of your circumstances
- what their relationship is to you.

Further information on estrangement

If you are estranged and would like more advice on this issue visit:
www.standalone.org.uk/students

If you think you should be classed as an Independent student, please contact SFE or a Student Funding Advisor.

Student Funding Team:

- Visit us in the Student Hub, **RM050**, or
- phone **023 8201 3427** or
- email: student.funding@solent.ac.uk

Student Finance England (SFE):

- Tel: **0300 100 0607**
- *Address any correspondence to:*
Student Finance England
PO Box 210
Darlington
DL1 9HJ



Claiming Independent Student Status

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Student Funding Team

Student Hub (RM050)

Tel: 023 82013427

Email: student.funding@solent.ac.uk

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What does being an independent student mean?

Being assessed as independent means Student Finance England (SFE) will **not** take your household/parental income into account when working out your funding allocation. They will only look at you (and partner, if applicable).

To be considered INDEPENDENT, at the start of the academic year - usually 1st September, you will need to fulfil one or more of the following:

- You are **over 25** *or*

- You are **under 25** *and*:

⇒ Are married/in a civil partnership (even if the marriage or civil partnership has ended *or*

⇒ have care of a child under the age of 18 *or*

⇒ Subject to certain exceptions you were looked after by a local authority throughout any three month period ending on or after the date on which you turned 16 and before the first day of the first academic year of your course *or*

⇒ have no living parents *or*

⇒ Where the household income assessment is based on the income of one parent (e.g. where the parents have separated) and that parent dies, no parental income is required, even if that parent has a partner *or*

⇒ If your parents cannot be traced or it is not practical or possible to contact them *or*

⇒ If your parents are residing outside the European Community and SFE are satisfied that the assessment of your parental income would place you in jeopardy, or it would not be reasonably practicable for them to send a contribution to you in the UK. This might apply if you are a refugee or have been granted exceptional leave to enter or remain in the UK *or*

- You have **supported yourself** for **at least 3 years** prior to the start of your course

Any period of self-support, however short, may be counted, provided that it occurred **before** the start of the course (the periods of self support do not have to be continuous i.e. they just have to total a minimum of 3 years).

Periods of self-support include, among other things:

- employment,
- receipt of benefits,
- paid holidays,
- breaks between jobs when you have supported yourself from savings, *and*
- paid periods of work experience on a sandwich course (other than the current course)

It is not stipulated how much you must have earned to be classed as self-supporting. However, to qualify, you must be able to prove that you have earned enough to support yourself during the period in question. SFE will use a guide amount to assess you by.

If you were working part-time living rent-free with your parents then you would **not** normally be regarded as self-supporting, *unless* you can clearly demonstrate that you have contributed appropriately to the household budget.

Evidence needed by SFE:

- P60'S,
- P45'S,
- wage slips,
- letter from employers,
- statement of income from the HMRC or Jobcentre Plus,
- Tenancy agreements,
- household bills,
- bank statements etc

Or

- You are **permanently ESTRANGED** from your parents:

Parental income is **not** included in the income assessment when you are irreconcilably estranged from your parents.

Therefore you can be regarded as independent when:

- ⇒ You have not communicated with either of your parents for the period of one year before the start of the academic year for which you are being financially assessed *or*
- ⇒ You can demonstrate on other grounds that you are irreconcilably estranged from your parent.