



Jayne Bryant MS  
Chair of the Senedd Children, Young People and Education Committee  
Senedd Cymru  
Cardiff  
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24 July 2023

Annwyl Jayne,

**Re: International students**

Thank you for your correspondence, dated 6 July 2023, regarding international students. I want to assure the committee that I share your concerns about the current cost-of-living.

With regards to the items raised in plenary on 14 June 2023, I cannot respond specifically to the examples from Rhondda. It was not clear if these were students from Cardiff Metropolitan University.

I can, however, clarify the support we offer to students and the information we provide before and after their arrival. This is specific to our institution and, as above, I cannot speak for other universities.

**Information for students**

We give advice to international students before they apply, arrive and enrol. We do this via the website, a personal conversation, the student engagement provider and direct contact with the recruitment team and overseas representatives. We emphasise to students the full costs associated with living in Cardiff.

We inform international applicants of the high demand for privately rented accommodation in Cardiff. We recommend alternative options, like student halls, and clarify that they are not suitable for families.

Students are advised not to travel with family, who should only join once suitable accommodation is secured. We also signpost to guarantor service providers, like Housing Hand, which are used widely across the UK sector.

Accommodation webinars are delivered pre-arrival and are recorded and circulated to all international students. It is made clear that failure to secure accommodation can mean:

- Increased costs associated with short-term accommodation.
- Inability to open bank accounts, register with a GP and/or register a child at school.
- Negative impact on studies.
- Poor attendance, resulting in the withdrawal from the course and loss of visa.

We continue to work on these issues via a Student Community Partnership board with Cardiff Council, South Wales Police and the city's other universities.

**Arrival in Wales**

As a practical measure, we give international students funds on arrival, both as a welcome gesture and recognition of the time needed to open a UK bank account. The funds are allocated to their Met Card, so can be spent on food and drink and course-related costs.

Once students are 'on campus', they are invited to welcome events before induction week, at which the accommodation office and other student services are present. Students also attend a presentation with advice about accommodation (how to search, what to avoid and realistic associated costs).

At induction, students meet key teams from across the university and with their new cohort. A cohort meal is provided on campus together and we provide subsidised social trips to orient them to Cardiff and the UK.

## Off-campus issues

Whenever we have been made aware of students approaching services in the community, we have provided our contact details to the service providers. We have asked the providers to pass the relevant details onto any students to allow us to give the appropriate support.

This has happened on occasion this year, but the information provided to us has been anecdotal and non-quantified; the community project or centre has not been able to confirm if these were students at the University or how many had presented. Nonetheless, we have sent reminders to all international students on the support that is available whenever we have heard of non-campus problems.

We have a dedicated International Student Welfare Support team that supports students before arrival through to until their graduation. As well as that team, international students who have more complex needs can access services available to all students. This includes support with money, wellbeing, disability and dyslexia. You heard more about our mental health support in your recent inquiry on the matter, advocating that the Cardiff-based Mental Health University Liaison Service be rolled out across Wales.

## Universities UK guidance

In June, Universities UK issued a [report on best practice for international recruitment](#). It advocated or highlighted the following, all of which happen or are being trialled at Cardiff Met:

- Earlier deadlines for high demand courses
- Deadlines for deposit payments.
- Earlier deadlines for applications and deposits
- Pre-CAS (Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies) interviews to ask about dependants.
- Work via the UK Agent Quality Framework to support agents and agent aggregators.
- Performance assessments or monitoring for agents.

To reiterate, we do not take the issue lightly and continue to work with the student body, Council and universities in Cardiff. As always, I would be happy to discuss any issues pertaining to the University in further detail with you, the committee and wider Senedd.

Yn gywir,



**Professor Cara Aitchison**  
**President & Vice Chancellor**  
**Cardiff Metropolitan University**

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