

A guide for parents, carers and advisors

Starting university is a significant milestone – and not only for the student. We understand that you will want to help your son or daughter settle into their new home at the RAU as quickly as possible.

Students' reactions to starting university can vary significantly; some will adapt very quickly while others might take a bit longer to find their feet. Some ups and downs are to be expected, and we hope this guidance will help you support your son or daughter in preparing for and making the most of their time at the RAU.

The Student Support Services team is based in the Student Hub at the heart of campus and includes disability support, mental health support, funding advice, and general wellbeing expertise. Whilst they are usually unable to speak to you directly due to data protection rules it is a good idea to encourage your son or daughter to contact the team directly if they are anxious about the start of university life. The team offers daily drop-ins, bookable appointments, and can also make referrals to specialist support such as counselling. They can also advise your son or daughter about how to register with the University Health Centre which is located on campus.



Parent's Guide to Starting University

Read the guidance

Encourage your son or daughter to read all the information they are sent before they arrive.

The first thing is to self-register online so do look out for that email with the link. Once registered, a lot of useful information is available on the student support pages on **Gateway**.

As well as the student support pages, there is also more information about **Student Support** and a link to the **Student Handbook**.

Your son or daughter may also find it helpful to read these useful leaflets on managing the transition to University:

– **UCS self-help leaflet on managing transition to University**

– Student Minds 'Know Before You Go' www.studentminds.org.uk/knowbeforeyougo.html

– You may find the Complete University Guide for Parents www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/preparing-to-go/advice-for-parents/ helpful.



Remember to talk

Your son or daughter may be feeling nervous, excited and even sad about leaving home, all at the same time.

Talking to them and helping them focus on the positives, whilst allowing them to share any worries they might have, will help them have realistic expectations about what moving away from home and coming to the RAU will be like.

It is important that they realise that their reactions are a normal response and part of becoming an independent adult.

Developing practical skills

An essential part of being an independent adult is developing and using basic practical skills such as cooking, laundering clothes, cleaning, budgeting and planning some structure to their days. Supporting them in learning these skills before they come to the RAU will help give them confidence in their ability to cope and look after themselves.

Planning for success

Being offered a place at university is the beginning of the journey but thriving at university often depends as much on how a student manages their transition to university life – and all the increased independence and expectations that this brings, as it does on their academic ability.

Instilling the need for balance, time to themselves, eating well, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep will help them to flourish at the RAU.

Managing expectations

If you can, try to avoid the phrase 'these are the best years of your life'. No one is happy all of the time and this is especially true at times of significant personal growth and change. Everyone will have a unique university experience and they will inevitably find some times at the RAU more challenging than others.

Making the adjustment to university level study will bring with it the need for independent study and to provide structure for their own days, rather than having each day pre-scheduled with a long list of lessons and activities.

It is important for them to realise they are not alone and that everyone will be making the same transition, and experiencing similar feelings of uncertainty. Preparing for this academic jump will be key.

Arrange support in advance

If your son or daughter has a disability or long term condition, we encourage them to disclose this to the university as soon as possible prior to arrival. This will help to ensure that the relevant support arrangements can be put in place in advance and help make the transition to the RAU as smooth as possible.

If your son or daughter is a UK national and has a diagnosed disability or long-term condition then encourage them to apply for Disabled Students Allowance from Student Finance England. The support provided by this Government Fund will be vital in ensuring they can access the in-depth support they require.

This is available to students with physical conditions, mental health conditions such as anxiety or depression, and also learning differences such as Dyslexia.

In some cases, we may be able to arrange a 'pre-sessional' visit, allowing them to get their bearings on campus and ensure their support is set up and ready to go once registration begins.

Visit our support and wellbeing pages for more information about disclosure and support: www.rau.ac.uk/university-life/support-and-wellbeing/dyslexia-and-disability

Striking a balance

Making friends is one of the first priorities for most students. If they haven't developed friendships in the first few days/weeks they

may feel worried but these things can take a bit of time. It is worth remembering that homesickness and feelings of not fitting in are very common for students moving away for the first time, as are feelings of exhaustion from socialising, and from the emotional energy spent in adapting to a completely new environment.

To help them settle in, try to maintain a healthy balance of communication, so they feel in touch with you but also free to live their life.

Discuss and agree with them in advance, the ways in which you plan to keep in touch and how regularly.

Encourage independence

Whilst it can be tempting to try to solve every problem or challenge they encounter, it's important that you resist the urge to get too involved, too soon. Help them find the various routes to support available and try to empower them to resolve any difficulties in their own way. Their sense of independence and self confidence will be all the greater for having navigated any obstacles themselves.

Family business

Many RAU students have an important role at home either in the family business, working or as care takers. This is a responsibility that is often highly valued and often a part of the reason they chose the RAU.

That said, it's important to be realistic about how much they will be able to do while also studying full time. Start a conversation in advance and keep reviewing expectations as their university career progresses so you can both relax, knowing priorities have been agreed.

Time for yourself

As well as a time of change for the student, this is often a time of change for parents too. Remember that it can take time for you to adapt too and that it's also normal for you to feel nervous, sad and excited too as the next chapter in your life begins!

Important paperwork

In order for your son or daughter to complete their registration, they will need to bring the original ID documents they uploaded as part of their self registration

If your son or daughter is receiving funding, sponsorship, or a loan to cover the cost of their tuition fees, they will also need to bring a copy of the letter from the relevant third party, confirming the amount of the funding/loan.

Useful links

↙ RAU Gateway and Student Support: gateway.rau.ac.uk/

↙ RAU Student Handbook: www.rau.ac.uk/university-life/support-and-wellbeing/student-handbook

↙ UCS Self-Help leaflet: www.counselling.cam.ac.uk/selfhelp/selfleagl.pdf/transition

Postal vote?

Now might be the time to register the student in your life for a postal vote www.gov.uk/government/publications/apply-for-a-postal-vote

Got everything?

It can help to prepare a **checklist of things your student will need** for university. From party clothes ready for Welcome Week, to washing powder, a favourite mug or bedding. And of course, materials for study such as a laptop, pens, and paper!

↙ Student Minds 'Know Before You Go': www.studentminds.org.uk/knowbeforeyougo.html

↙ TopUniversities checklist: www.topuniversities.com/blog/what-take-university

↙ Complete University Guide for Parents: www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/preparing-to-go/advice-for-parents/

