

STUDENT CARERS POLICY

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1.1	Student Carers Policy	Al Blackshaw, Senior Widening Access Support Officer	14 th June 2017	14 th June 2017

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the place of useful learning

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Student Carers Policy

1. Introduction

The University of Strathclyde is committed to Widening Access, removing barriers to study for students from under-represented groups and enhancing support provision to enable our students to make the most of their time at university. In terms of our admissions policy, we recognise three particular under-represented groups: those who have spent time in local authority care; those who reside in the 40% most deprived areas of Scotland, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD); and those who attend schools which have low Higher Education Progression Rates (HEPR).

Whilst these three groups are a specific focus for the University in terms of admissions, we recognise that disadvantage comes in many forms and that there are other groups in need of support at the University, and that support can be implemented beyond the scope of admissions. This policy recognises the challenges faced by students with caring responsibilities and sets out how the University will identify and support such students in order to facilitate success whilst upholding academic standards.

2. Scope

This policy sets out support provisions available to Student Carers. The University has a separate policy relating to staff who have a caring responsibility:

http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/humanresources/policies/Carer_Policy.pdf

3. Definition

The Carers Trust is a UK-wide charity which works with those who have unpaid caring responsibilities. The University adopts the Carers Trust's definition of a carer:

*"A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support."*¹

By extension, we define a Student Carer as a registered student of the University who meets the above criteria.

4. Identification

UCAS (the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) does not presently (2016/17) collect any data on applicants with regards to caring responsibilities; and the University does not currently ask about caring responsibilities via our postgraduate application forms. Should a student identify to a staff member that they are a Student Carer, the student should be encouraged to contact the Named Officer for Student Carers, as this is the only way in which a central note will be kept of their status, allowing for targeted communications of any pre-existing or emerging support initiatives.

The University also recognises that students may not be carers upon joining the University but may become carers at some point during their time at Strathclyde. Student Carers may be directed to the Named Officer at any stage. Up-to-date contact details of the Named Officer for Student Carers can be found on the Widening Access website:

¹ <https://carers.org/what-carer> (accessed 28 November 2016).

4.1 Evidence of status as a Student Carer

For a variety of reasons, some students may be reluctant to self-declare their status as a carer. The University seeks to operate within an environment which encourages Student Carers to come forward. However, as support for Student Carers may include academic adjustments and/or financial assistance, some form of evidence of a student's status is required in order to access these services. Such evidence may include (but is not necessarily limited to):

- A carer's assessment from a social care department²
- A young carer's card
- A letter from a recognised healthcare professional, confirming the student's caring responsibilities

Student Carers do not need to provide this evidence during their first meeting with the Named Officer for Student Carers. However, it is in their interests to provide evidence at the earliest opportunity so that it is on record should they wish or need to utilise any of the further support available to them. If the above listed options are not available or appropriate, the Named Officer for Student Carers can negotiate with the student to arrive at a form of evidence deemed appropriate by all parties.

5. The Named Officer for Student Carers

This role is assumed by a member of staff based within the central Widening Access team. The Named Officer will provide 1:1 support and advocacy for Student Carers, liaising between them and the relevant academic departments and support services in order to identify support measures and/or reasonable adjustments which may be put in place to facilitate on-course success whilst maintaining academic standards.

6. Managing Studies

The University is committed to supporting our students and enabling them to succeed. The University recognises that Student Carers are not a homogeneous group and will have individual needs. Requirements of external bodies, such as the General Teaching Council for teacher training degrees, may also impact upon the flexibility of support on offer. However, wherever possible the University will aim to tailor support for each student's individual circumstances.

6.1 Flexibility

Student Carers may be required off-campus at irregular times in order to carry out their caring responsibilities. If this is likely to be the case, the Student Carer should aim to meet with their Adviser of Studies at the earliest opportunity in order to discuss how much time they envisage needing off-campus and when. The Adviser of Studies will advise the Student Carer on their options, aiming to be as flexible as possible whilst ensuring that disruption to the learning experience is minimised. Student Carers can either contact their Adviser of Studies directly in order to initiate the conversation, or they can approach the Named Officer for Student Carers

² A carer's assessment can be obtained free of charge. More information is available at: <http://www.careinfoscotland.co.uk/topics/how-to-get-care-services/assessment-of-your-care-needs/how-to-get-it/>

who can advocate on their behalf. The University will endeavour to support Student Carers wherever possible but a reasonable level of attendance is expected and required in order to ensure on-course success.

6.1.1 Flexibility in Emergencies

Emergencies may arise which lead to a Student Carer missing class time without being able to inform their Adviser of Studies and/or class tutor in advance. In such instances, at the earliest reasonable opportunity the Student Carer should contact their Advisor of Studies and/or class tutor in order to explain the situation and be informed of which learning activities were missed and how to catch up on the missed knowledge.

6.2 Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals

Personal Circumstances are defined in the University's Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure as "circumstances beyond a student's control which may adversely affect their ability to study or their performance in assessment". Student Carers may utilise this procedure if necessary and the Named Officer for Student Carers can provide assistance in navigating the process; therefore if applicable, this section should be read in conjunction with the University's Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedure.

6.2.1. False Declaration

In line with section 1.12 of the Personal Circumstances & Academic Appeals Procedures, the submission of a false Personal Circumstances claim or appeal will be regarded as making a false declaration in order to receive special consideration by the Board of Examiners or Appeals Committee or to obtain extensions to deadlines or exemption from work. This is an offence of academic dishonesty and may result in disciplinary action against the student.

7. Financial Support

Student Carers may incur additional financial costs due to, amongst other things, increased travel between their place of study, home, and place of caring responsibilities (which may or may not be the same as their home). In cases where financial assistance is administered via forms, the application forms should include a space for Student Carers to declare any caring responsibilities.

7.1 Priority Consideration

Priority consideration does not guarantee that an offer will be made in every circumstance, as all applications for financial assistance must be considered in context against other applications from students with varying backgrounds, characteristics, circumstances and needs. Some awards may also have priority groups other than student carers. For clarification on specific priority groups and the selection processes for each type of financial assistance, the relevant award administrator should be contacted for guidance.

7.2 Monetary Awards

The University has a range of scholarships and bursaries and wherever possible – and within the context of considering the needs of other students with financial need – Student Carers should be given priority consideration for awards. This can be via the form of undergraduate scholarships, bursaries, or the Discretionary Fund.

7.3. Extra-curricular Engagement

The University recognises the transformative power of Higher Education beyond the classroom, and as such Student Carers should also be given priority consideration for funded places on extra-curricular activities, such as short-term study abroad opportunities. Additional awards which may be available, such as financial support to enable students to undertake internships, should also be targeted directly to Student Carers.

7.3.1 Extra-curricular Engagement – USSA

The University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA) has created a Participation Fund, financed by the University's Alumni & Development department, in order to enable financially disadvantaged students to take part in extra-curricular activities. Staff should bear this in mind and highlight this fund to Student Carers.³

8. Internal Support Services

The University has a range of support services which all of our students may access and where appropriate Student Carers should be made aware of such provision. This includes services such as the Study Skills team, Student Counselling, the Student Financial Support Team, Student Health Service, Disability Service, and Chaplaincy.

9. External Support Networks

There are a range of charities and organisations which support those with caring responsibilities. The Named Officer for Student Carers should highlight these to Student Carers and liaise with such organisations for advice, support, and the sharing of best practice wherever possible.

10. Expiration of named awards

Some named awards in this policy, such as the USSA Participation Award, are in operation at the time of writing (academic year 2016/17). Future provision is dependent upon the availability of funding, so staff should check that relevant funding streams are in operation prior to directing a Student Carer to them. A note of a named award in this document does not guarantee its perpetual availability in the future.

³ <http://www.strathstudents.com/participationfund>