

Student Carer Policy

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1. Introduction, Scope of the Policy, Policy Statement and Equality and Diversity Statement

This policy provides advice and guidance to:

- Students who, during their studies at GCU, are caring unpaid, for a relative or friend who could not cope without their support.
- University staff that have a role in advising or supporting students who are carers or those who anticipate becoming a carer.

1.1 Scope of the Policy

This policy covers both prospective and current GCU students who have an unpaid caring responsibility for someone who is ill, disabled, are experiencing mental distress or affected by substance abuse.

The support provided by the student may happen at any time during their university career and there may be unpredictability in terms of commitment, consistency and time scales.

The university appreciates that caring responsibilities can fluctuate over time and care can often be either 'short' or 'long' term. With this in mind, the university recognises that each carer's needs are unique.

The policy does not cover those with parental responsibilities, unless for a disabled child, or those employed in a caring capacity. See the GCU Carers webpage for further information about how a carer is defined within the Carers (Scotland) Act (2016).

1.2 Policy Statement

Glasgow Caledonian University is committed to providing a rewarding Higher Education opportunity and experience to applicants with the potential to benefit from, and contribute to the GCU experience, mission and values. Caring responsibilities should not prevent students from succeeding; therefore, we are committed to being as flexible as feasibly possible to assist students in their university education.

1.3 Equality and Diversity Statement

GCU is committed to providing a culture and environment which is inclusive of all sections of society and responsive to the needs of individuals. We do this by promoting equality, valuing diversity and ensuring that our University community adheres to our [Dignity at Work and Study Policy](#).

We are committed to treating carers fairly, and having an inclusive and supportive environment for students who have caring responsibilities. We recognise our duty under the Equality Act (2010) to prevent discrimination, including discrimination by association, which is when you are discriminated against because of the protected characteristic (e.g. disability, age) of someone you know or are caring for.

2. Rights and Responsibilities

This section covers rights and responsibilities for students, staff and the University.

2.1 - Contextualised Admissions

The University will reduce the Scottish Higher/Scottish Advanced Higher offer requirements by one grade, for one subject only, for those applicants who meet one or more of the contextual factors. The University will make a contextualised offer to an applicant who has been identified as a Young Carer (a young carer is a carer aged 18 or under). This data is provided by the applicant on their UCAS application within the personal statement and/or reference and verified by the Admissions and Enquiry Service. Please see the [Contextualised Admissions Policy](#) for further details.

2.2 - Disclosure and Confirming Carers Status

Disclosure of caring responsibilities can be made as part of our admissions process (via personal statement), annual registration, to a Student Wellbeing Adviser, or a member of staff.

Confirming student carer status is the responsibility of the student. If there are changes to the student's circumstances, it is the student's responsibility to advise the university. As carers exist in a variety of different situations, proof of status can come from many different sources.

Some examples of what can be provided as evidence are listed below but please note that this list is not exhaustive:

- Self-certification regarding the nature of the caring duties and how this may affect their studies, including how long they anticipate this will last (in the form of a short statement, which is included in the Student Carer Plan);
- A GP letter confirming carer status;
- A local authority Carer's Assessment, Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement;
- Young Carer's Authorisation Card;
- Other relevant documents, for example a letter from a Carer's Centre, other professional, social worker, teachers, carer group, or receipt of benefits.

2.3 - Contacting the Student Wellbeing Advisers or other

As a university, we recognise that some of our students will have caring responsibilities and to best support the student carer, we will work with individuals to minimise the impact this will have on their studies.

The Student Wellbeing Adviser (SWA) within the student's academic school is the first point of contact for undergraduate and postgraduate student carers. However, if the student feels more comfortable speaking to someone in their academic department, then they can inform them directly. The staff member should then, with the student's permission, inform the wellbeing team so any necessary support can be put in place. If the student approaches the SWA first, then they can assist the student in how best to approach their school and advise on what support can be put in place.

- The SWA is responsible for signposting the student to appropriate services either before or following completion of the Student Carer's Plan for example Student Funding and Wellbeing.
- The SWA is responsible for signposting/referring to the appropriate academic member of staff for discussion regarding a potential Student Carer's Plan.
- The SWA is responsible for monitoring that a Student Carer's Plan is completed (or updated), where this is required, receiving a copy of all completed plans.
- The SWA is responsible for collation of data and reporting on the implementation of the policy.
- The SWA will also be the main contact for prospective students with caring responsibilities. Any queries regarding studying at GCU as a carer can be dealt with by the SWA.

2.4 – Contacting the School

Once the student has disclosed their carer status to the SWA or school staff member, then the SWA is responsible for notifying the personal tutor or year lead of the student's carer status and, with the student's permission, providing them with a copy of the supporting documentation.

2.5 – Implications for Study

The SWA will then liaise with the personal tutor or year lead and will discuss with the student how the caring responsibilities are likely to impact on their studies.

A Student Carer's plan should be agreed between the student and the SWA detailing any arrangements required during the period in which care is being provided.

The nature of the caring responsibilities should be outlined in the plan alongside the predicted duration of the situation. Once completed, this plan should be signed by the student and personal tutor confirming mutual understanding of any arrangements that are required and have been agreed.

A copy of the plan should be given to the student and also to other appropriate members of staff. However, the student's permission should be sought before passing on any information.

Specific examples of the types of arrangements that may need to be considered can be discussed with the SWA when a plan is being created. It may be useful to include the SWA in any planning meetings between personal tutor and the student, provided both parties are comfortable with this.

2.6 - Withdrawal from or Suspension of Studies

In some situations, the student may need to withdraw or suspend their studies. Alongside the personal tutor, the student will decide whether a break is required and how long this should be. Before this timescale is agreed, consideration should be taken in regards to the academic requirements of the student's course. At any point, if there are changes which relate to impact of caring responsibilities, the student should inform their personal tutor who should respond appropriately in regard to the arrangements that can be put in place, including potential to extend the student's overall period of registration.

Where possible, the student should keep in regular contact with their Personal tutor so that the university can ensure that the appropriate support is put in place. If new arrangements are made following initial agreements, then the Personal tutor should be involved in these decisions and provide approval.

After discussions have taken place, if the student decides that it is best to withdraw from their course, then make sure this is clear with the Personal Tutor for the necessary support and administration processes to occur. See [Regulations for Taught Student Registration, Suspension of Studies and Withdrawal](#)

Once the student is ready to return, they should contact the SWA and the Personal tutor. Each party can then work in conjunction to plan an appropriate return to study, taking examinations into consideration where necessary.

If a student has withdrawn from their course, they will need to follow standard application procedures in order to recommence in their studies.

2.7 - Financial Considerations

There are a number of scholarships and bursaries offered to GCU students which can be very helpful in regards to financial support whilst studying. Information regarding these can be accessed using the following links:

[GCU Finance and Funding](#)

[GCU Scholarships](#)

If the student has decided to withdraw or take time out from a programme of study, they must advise the Programme Administrator in writing. The date of last attendance is used as the date of withdrawal or time out to calculate any fees due.

For detailed information and guidance on withdrawal fees and refunds please refer to the [Fees and Refunds Policy](#)

SAAS may also be able to help with funding. They have created a [document](#) to advise on what additional funding is available for some student carers.

3. Guidance for Staff

This purpose of this section is to provide guidance for staff who are supporting student carers and for any staff member who has an advisory or supporting role. It is important that students with caring responsibilities are treated fairly and in line with the Dignity at Work and Study Policy.

Staff should be aware of the [Data Protection Guidance](#) and be sensitive in their approach when working with students with caring responsibilities.

3.1 - Initial Contact

Once a student has disclosed their caring role to a member of staff, an initial response should occur within 7 days. After this point, plans and arrangements for support should be made as quickly as possible and put in place. If the student has contacted the SWA directly, then, with the student's permission, the Personal tutor should be informed.

3.2 - Appropriate Arrangements

Some examples of the types of arrangements that could be made are listed below. Please note that due to the nature of the caring role, it is not possible to provide a definitive list of special arrangements.

- Recognising the need to arrive late or leave early in order to place their cared for person(s) in appropriate daytime care
- Agreeing periods of authorised absence and making arrangements for the student to catch-up on lectures/tutorials missed for reasons relating to caring responsibilities to ensure that they are not at an academic disadvantage
- Providing timetables, wherever possible, at least one month in advance to allow the student to make necessary alternative care arrangements and recognising that such students may not be able to attend academic activities in the event of late changes to timetables
- Ensuring that the student has adequate opportunity to make up missed time e.g. through access to any missed materials, or rescheduling of practical activities
- Taking account of caring responsibilities on courses which require an external placement. Priority should be given to ensuring the placement is within reasonable travelling distance to accommodate care arrangements
- Providing at least a few weeks' notice of placements to allow the arrangement of alternative care

- If viable, consideration of a transfer to part-time study (Please note that international students in the UK with a Tier 4 General Student Visa are not permitted to change to part-time study).

3.3 - Academic Standards

Whilst every attempt should be made to support the student, precaution should be taken to ensure that this flexibility does not impact on the student's ability to meet the required academic outcomes. Any requests for arrangements to be made must be carefully considered before they are approved or rejected. If a request is refused, then the reasoning should be put to the student in writing with sufficient detail and advice regarding what arrangements can be made should be detailed.

4. Fit to Sit

Students with caring responsibilities may feel they need to use the [Fit to Sit Process](#) due to the nature of their caring role. No evidence is required for this process and student carers can use this in addition to having a Carer Plan in place.

5. Other Support Services

Information about supports for student carers can be found on our web pages: [Support for Carers](#)

6. Complaints

Where a student is dissatisfied with the arrangements offered in line with their caring responsibilities, they can access information regarding the [Complaints Handling Procedure](#)

Student Carer Plan

Section 1

Full Name	
Student ID	
Year of Study	
Programme of Study	
Email Address	
Personal Tutor/Year Lead	
Has Carer Status been verified?	
Has student given permission to share the Carer Plan with relevant staff?	
Review Dates	

Section 2

Aspects of Study or Engagement with University that might be impacted by the student's caring role, e.g. attendance, placements, managing deadlines, concentration, fatigue.

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Section 3

Arrangements requested to support the student in their studies	Agreed by department?

Section 4

Comments/Guidance from Department:

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Please email the relevant SWA to confirm that this Carer Plan has been read and agreed

Plan has been read and agreed by:		Date:
Student:		
Personal Tutor/Year Lead:		

[Support for Carers](#)

Find out more about GCU's Supports for Student Carers

[Carer Aware](#) is an online training module which has been developed by Carers Trust Scotland and The Open University in Scotland with funding from The Scottish Funding Council. The module will help university staff to understand the challenges faced by many student carers and provides guidance on how to improve support for these students at university.

[The Student Carer Experience in Scotland](#) (2020)

The research illuminates the lived experiences of student carers across Scotland's colleges and universities, including the perspectives of those supporting them. Through an investigation of the challenges student carers face, and the barriers to accessing support, the research makes recommendations and suggestions to improve the studying experience for carers.

Appendix 1: GCU EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

1. DESCRIBE	
1.1. Name of policy/strategy/decision	Student Carer Policy
1.2. Owner	Student Wellbeing
1.3. Date	02/12/2016
1.4. Aims of policy/strategy/decision	The purpose of this policy is to outline GCU's commitment to supporting our student carers and outline the rights and responsibilities of staff and students. This is so that GCU can ensure that we are supporting Student Carers appropriately.
1.5. Who does the policy/strategy/decision affect?	Students, staff, applicants, visitors
1.6. Could there be any potential implications for equality, or people with protected characteristics?	This policy aims to support the principles of Equality & Diversity, and ensure that students are not discriminated against. This policy applies to all Student Carers, regardless of personal characteristics or circumstances.

2. ASSESS	
What are the implications, positive or negative (and evidence for this) of the policy/strategy/decision in relation to GCU's duty to have due regard to the need to:	
2.1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation?	There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as it will allow student carers some support and framework surrounding their situation.

2.2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy is based on flexibility for a group who could be viewed as at a disadvantage.

2.3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it?

There is likely to be a positive impact on this duty as the policy is centred around breaking down barriers and raising awareness to remove prejudice.

3. ACTION

3.1. If a negative impact has been identified, how will this be addressed?

Until the Policy and guidance are implemented, it is not possible to gauge any negative impact. However, the implementation process will be monitored and data will be gathered in relation to the relevant protected characteristics that may be affected; any negative impact will inform the future review process of the Policy and guidance. Overall, there is no direct negative impact on the protected characteristics, as this applies to all students and the principles of the policy support equality and diversity. Although the policy itself is free from discrimination overall, ultimately it is the application and implementation of the policy that provides the scope for discrimination e.g. prejudices or attitudes of staff supporting their students. Therefore, there is potentially a development need for those involved in implementing the policy, and appropriate information will be provided to staff.

3.2. If changes have been made to the policy/strategy/decision as a result of this assessment, outline the changes

N/A

4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

4.1. How will the implementation of the policy/strategy/decision and its impact on equality be monitored and reviewed?

The Policy will be reviewed annually alongside all Student Wellbeing Policies.

5. PUBLISH

Please email this completed form, along with the policy/strategy and any other relevant information¹ to equality@gcu.ac.uk for publishing on the Equality and Diversity website and annual reporting in line with Equality Act 2010 requirements.

6. SIGN OFF

6. SIGN OFF		
6.1. EIA Owner	Signature	Date
6.2. Equality and Diversity Advisor	Signature	Date
	Adrian Lui	02/12/2016

¹ Information or evidence may be removed if it is commercially sensitive or personal information