

UWS Student Carers Statement

1. Introduction

UWS is committed to supporting Student Carers both pre entry and during their studies. UWS understands the additional commitments and difficulties that can be faced when caring for someone and the challenges that this presents. The third theme of the UWS Strategy 2025 commits UWS to 'shaping our communities and society' and sets out our plan to 'create an inclusive culture which celebrates difference and unlocks the talent in our staff and students.'¹ This strategic commitment sets the context for the UWS student carers statement.

The support for student carers is guided by the UWS Cares Working Group.

2. Scope of the statement

A Student Carer is defined by the Carers Trust as: "anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or relative who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support."² This definition does not include a student caring for their child/children.

3. Statement of intent

This statement outlines the supporting structures and commitments to student carers both pre-entry and during their studies. This aligns with our strategic promise that 'UWS is a place where ability, not background, matters. UWS will continue to be one of the UK's most successful widening access universities and will develop sophisticated mechanisms to identify and support students to successfully complete their studies.'³

The UWS student carers statement of intent:

The University of the West of Scotland is an inclusive university committed to ensuring that every student gets the most out of their university experience, regardless of their personal circumstances or background. To meet this commitment, we have developed a wide range of support services to ensure that all students fulfil their potential, achieve their goals and enjoy their time at UWS. We have a strong tradition of working with student carer applicants and students and this commitment is embedded in all of our provision. This is a strategic priority for UWS and we will continue to work in partnership both internally and externally with other supporting organisations to provide information, advice and guidance so that our student carers will have a positive experience at UWS from pre-entry to after graduation.

4. Equality and Diversity Statement

The UWS equality, diversity and human rights guidance outlines the UWS commitment:

¹ <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/6217/uws-strategy-2025.pdf>

² [Homepage - Carers Trust](#)

³ <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/6217/uws-strategy-2025.pdf>

“We celebrate and value the diversity of our student and staff populations and we are committed to providing Higher Education and employment opportunities to enable people of all backgrounds to fulfil their full potential in an environment that is free from any forms of discrimination, harassment or prejudicial behaviour. We believe that it is everyone’s responsibility to deliver equality, diversity and inclusivity at UWS. We do this by creating opportunities, policies and practices that are inclusive and diverse. This is supported by our University Court, Senate and by the Vice Chancellors Executive Group.”⁴

5. Carers Support Working Group

The Student Carers statement and supporting action plan are overseen by the UWS Cares Working Group, which was formed in 2019-20.

This working group is made up of a representative group of staff from across professional services and students’ union, including in key applicant and student-facing roles. The membership will include students with caring experiences.

The Group meets twice yearly to review the UWS Carers Action Plan and discuss support for student carers at UWS.

The working group is closely aligned with work to enhance the learning opportunities and experience for care experienced students and estranged students.

6. Student Carer Action Plan

The UWS Cares Working Group oversees an annual rolling action plan which sets out detailed actions to be undertaken.

The action plan is principle-driven and sets out actions to:

- Identify
- Support
- Report

Actions are agreed annually and reviewed twice yearly by the UWS Cares Working Group. The actions are SMART targets with clear tasks, responsibilities and deadlines recorded.

7. Contextual Admissions

The UWS approach to admissions is outlined in the UWS Admissions Policy and Policy statement: <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/4154/admissions-policy-statement.pdf>

Contextual admissions is embedded within the core ethos of the University of the West of Scotland. Student carers are included in the contextual approach to admissions outlined:

‘To attract and retain students (from a wide and diverse community) who have the potential to complete their programme of study successfully and benefit from the experience, UWS identifies additional means of assessing potential to demonstrate an ability to meet selection criteria’⁵

⁴ <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/4470/equality-diversity-and-human-rights-guidance.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.uws.ac.uk/media/4154/admissions-policy-statement.pdf>

In practice, this manifests through UWS entry thresholds that separates standard entrance requirements and minimum academic standards necessary to successfully complete a degree programme to aid the progression of learners into higher education from the most deprived backgrounds. The University has reviewed its entry requirements to reflect standard entrance requirements and minimum entry requirements for entry in 2019 for applications who are care experienced, carers or estranged; who have participated in Top-Up, Access to a Career in Teaching, SWAP, Focus West or SHEP; and those from a SIMD20/SIMD40 area.

UWS will continue to consider applicants who apply with potentially no formal academic qualifications, therefore not satisfying the standard nor the minimum entry, but have work or life experience UWS as these applicants present their own knowledge and skills that is different from a school or college leaver. UWS can support applicants who wish to study at degree level through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process which recognises prior learning in two ways: Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL).

In addition to contextual offers made to applicants with declared caring responsibilities, the following support is provided these students pre-entry:

- Dedicated, named contacts for carers from pre-admissions through student experience
- A dedicated email account for carers to contact (wecare@uws.ac.uk)
- 1-1 tailored support
- Assistance with UCAS or SAAS application
- Advice about student funding and managing your money during your studies

8. Disclosure and Confirming Carer Status

UCAS do not currently enable student carers to disclose their status through the application; but a plethora of information and support is available to applicants on the UWS website.⁶

Students are invited – through the enrolment process – to self-declare their carer status.

To support students, the self-declaration is supported by the definition of a 'carer'. The explanatory text seeks to reduce student concern at disclosing their carer status by making explicit:

'Why do we need this information?

At UWS we provide a variety of support to Student Carers, if you inform us that you fit into this category we will be in touch to outline support available.'

Students are asked to revalidate this information annually through the registration process. A student can also declare a student carer status in-year, by contacting the dedicated student contacts (wecare@uws.ac.uk)

To validate the student carer status, the University will typically seek proof of status. Some examples of what can be provided as evidence are listed below but please note that this list is not exhaustive:

⁶ <https://www.uws.ac.uk/university-life/student-support-wellbeing/care-experienced-carer-or-estranged-student/>

- 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);
- GP letter confirming carer status;
- A local authority Carers Assessment, Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement;
- Young Carers Authorisation Card;
- Other relevant documents, for example a letter from a Carers Centre, other professional, social worker, teachers, carer group or receipt of benefits.

9. Support arrangements

UWS provides 1-1 support for student carers and will endeavour to provide an individualised package of support to enable student carers to access and succeed at university. It is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of arrangements, but the following examples outline the extent of the support provided:

We Care Team

The UWS We Care Team are a consistent point of contact for student carers from pre-entry, through studies and as graduates. The We Care team seek to provide support or signposting for student carers including:

- Advice about student funding and managing your money during your studies
- Access to discretionary and childcare funds
- Access to Counselling to support emotional wellbeing and development
- Access to Silver Cloud, an interactive online tool to help you manage worry, understand your feelings and better deal with any challenging thoughts
- Help developing study skills to prepare for degree level study
- 365 days accommodation
- Access to the Careers Service during and after your studies

The We Care Team are accessible at WeCare@uws.ac.uk

Changes to study arrangements including mode, suspension and resumption of studies

Where students are struggling with the time commitment of University or their caring responsibilities consideration will be given to changing the mode of study where possible, for example from full-time to part-time, or through a temporary break in studies.

The We Care team will support student carers through this process, recognising that these decisions can have significant financial considerations, may not be available to all students (e.g. international students) and may not be available for all programmes.

Financial support

Student Carers may incur additional financial costs. The University acknowledges this and asks this question as part of any application for discretionary funding.

Approval

This statement was approved by the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group on 26 January 2021.

Monitoring and Review

This statement will be reviewed as needed due to changes in legislation, standards or sector good practice or where a reorganisation changes ownership, responsibility or accountability. All related Guidelines, Policy statements and Protocols will be reviewed annually in line with the University's Annual Compliance Monitoring Statement.

Notes and recognition:

The UWS Student Carers Statement has been developed with the benefit of identifying good practice from across the Scottish HE sector and has benefitted from resources collated by the Scottish Carers Trust and effective institutional policies implemented, notably, at the universities of Stirling, Glasgow and Glasgow Caledonian.