



# QAHE Limited Carers Policy for Students

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## Version Control

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## 1. Introduction

At QAHE Limited (QA Higher Education), we are committed to fostering an inclusive, supportive learning environment where all students can thrive, academically, personally, and socially. We recognise that some students have significant responsibilities outside of their studies, providing unpaid care and support to family members or others with physical or mental health conditions, disabilities, or substance dependency.

These students, often referred to as student carers, may experience additional barriers to success, including challenges with time management, mental health, financial pressures, and limited access to social or extracurricular opportunities. These pressures can have a direct impact on academic performance, progression, and overall wellbeing.

This policy has been developed to:

- Acknowledge the diverse experiences and contributions of student carers
- Promote equity and ensure student carers are not disadvantaged in their studies
- Set out the university's approach to identifying and supporting student carers
- Encourage understanding and compassion across the university community

By formally recognising student carers and offering tailored support, QA Higher Education aims to ensure every student has equal access to the full student experience, regardless of their circumstances.

## 2. Policy Ownership

This policy is owned by the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team at QA Higher Education.

- The Head of Safeguarding and Student Wellbeing is responsible for the implementation, monitoring, and review of this policy.
- Day-to-day coordination and support for student carers are managed by the Welfare Team within the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Team.
- The policy will be reviewed annually or as required to reflect legislative changes, institutional priorities, or feedback from the university community.

## 3. Scope

A student carer is a student who provides ongoing unpaid care and support to a family member, partner, or friend who is:

Student carers may be undergraduate, postgraduate or full-time students, including those on distance or blended learning courses.



## 4. Definitions

The following definitions are used within this policy:

### 4.1. Student Carer

A student carer is a student who provides unpaid care, support, or assistance to a family member, partner, or close friend who is unable to cope without their help due to one or more of the following:

- A physical disability
- A long-term illness or medical condition
- A mental health condition
- A learning disability
- Substance misuse or addiction
- Age-related conditions or frailty

Caring responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Personal care (e.g. bathing, dressing, feeding)
- Managing medication or medical appointments
- Providing emotional support or supervision
- Helping with household tasks (e.g. cooking, cleaning, shopping)
- Providing childcare or looking after siblings
- Translating or interpreting for someone with communication needs

Student carers may live with the person they care for or provide support from a distance. The caring role may be regular or fluctuating depending on circumstances.

### 4.2. Unpaid Care

Care is considered unpaid when it is provided without financial compensation. This does not include employment in a paid caring role or placements undertaken as part of academic study.

### 4.3. Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes or accommodations made to academic processes, timetables, or assessments to ensure that student carers are not disadvantaged due to their caring responsibilities. These are provided on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the student.

### 4.4. Named Contact for Student Carers

A designated member of staff within Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing who acts as the primary point of contact for student carers. This person coordinates support liaises with academic departments and helps ensure student carers are aware of their entitlements and options.



## 5. Policy Statement

The aims of this policy are to:

- Identify and support students with caring responsibilities
- Promote awareness and understanding among staff and peers
- Ensure carers are not disadvantaged in their academic progress
- Provide flexible support and reasonable adjustments where appropriate
- Protect the privacy and dignity of student carers

## 6. Responsibilities

- Students: Are encouraged to inform the institution of their caring responsibilities and engage with the support offered.
- Staff: Are expected to respond with empathy, maintain confidentiality, and direct students to appropriate support services.
- Student Support Services: Will provide advice, support, and signposting to internal and external services.

## 7. Related Policies and Procedures

- QAHE Safeguarding Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Student Attendance and Engagement Policy for the relevant partner university
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy

## 8. Implementation Procedures

The successful implementation of this policy relies on coordinated efforts across academic departments, student services, and QA Higher Education leadership. The following procedures will ensure the policy is embedded into university practice and effectively supports student carers.

### 8.1. Awareness and Communication

- The policy will be published on the QA Higher Education website and student intranet.
- Information about support for student carers will be included in:
  - Student handbooks
  - Orientation/induction materials
  - Staff training and development programmes
  - Academic advisor and personal tutor briefings
- Awareness campaigns will be run periodically to encourage disclosure and reduce stigma.



## 8.2. Identification of Student Carers

- Opportunities for students to self-identify as carers will be provided at key stages:
  - Through self-referrals by emailing the Welfare Team at: qahe.welfare@qa.com
  - During meetings with student support staff, or wellbeing services
- Staff will be trained to sensitively identify and refer students who may be carers but have not disclosed their status.

## 8.3. Referral and Support Process

1. **Initial** **Disclosure**  
Students who disclose a caring responsibility will be referred to the Welfare Team within the Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Service and will be asked to provide evidence of their Carer status.
2. **Support** **Needs** **Assessment**  
A confidential meeting will be arranged to discuss the student's needs and develop a tailored support plan. This may include:
  - Academic flexibility (e.g., deadline extensions, lecture recordings)
  - Wellbeing and mental health support
  - Financial guidance or hardship fund applications
  - Information on external carer support organisations
3. **Coordination** **of** **Support**  
With the student's consent, the Named Contact may liaise with:
  - Academic departments
  - Disability or wellbeing services
  - Finance teams
4. **Ongoing** **Review**  
Support arrangements will be reviewed regularly to reflect any changes in the student's caring responsibilities or academic situation.

## 8.4. Staff Responsibilities

- All staff should:
  - Be familiar with the policy and support procedures
  - Respond to disclosures with empathy and confidentiality
  - Refer students to the appropriate services
- Academic departments should work with Student Services to provide flexibility where reasonable and necessary.

## 9. Monitoring and Compliance

The Safeguarding, Student Life and Wellbeing Services will:

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- Collect feedback to assess the effectiveness of support services
- Report annually to the Student Welfare Risk Panel and Academic Board

Policy updates will be informed by feedback from student carers and relevant stakeholders.

## 10. Equality Impact Assessment

### 1. Purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment

The purpose of this Equality Impact Assessment is to ensure that the Student Carers Policy does not discriminate against any individual or group and that it promotes equality, diversity, and inclusion in line with the Equality Act 2010. It also identifies any potential adverse impacts and outlines actions to mitigate them.

### 2. Protected Characteristics Considered

This policy has been assessed for its potential impact on the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

### 3. Summary of Impact

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact	Possible Risks	Actions
Age	Recognises young adult carers (often under 25) and provides tailored support.	Older student carers may feel overlooked.	Ensure support materials reflect a range of ages and life stages.
Disability	Supports carers of disabled people and raises awareness of disability.	Carers with their own disabilities may face double disadvantage.	Ensure support plans recognise students who are both carers and disabled.
Gender Reassignment	Inclusive language used throughout.	Risk of uninformed staff responses	Provide staff training on inclusive communication.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Inclusive of carers supporting partners/spouses.	Risk that carers in less visible partnerships may not disclose.	Make clear the policy applies to all relationship types.
Pregnancy and Maternity	Acknowledges overlap between parenting and caring.	Risk that needs are overlooked when roles overlap	Ensure support plans cover both caring and parenting responsibilities.
Race	Policy applies equally to all backgrounds; may benefit communities with higher caring expectations.	Possible cultural stigma or reluctance to disclose caring role	Provide culturally sensitive information and outreach.



Religion or Belief	Caring may be shaped by religious duty; policy allows for flexibility.	Risk that faith-related caring duties are misunderstood.	Include faith awareness in staff training and case studies.
Sex	Women are more likely to be carers; policy promotes equity.	Risk of unequal uptake, with women disproportionately disadvantaged if support is weak.	Monitor uptake by gender and adjust support if patterns emerge.
Sexual Orientation	Inclusive of all relationships and family structures.	Risk of invisibility if examples used are heteronormative.	Use diverse examples and case studies in awareness materials.

## 11. Data Protection

QA Higher Education is committed to handling all personal data in line with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Any information disclosed by student carers will be:

- Collected with the student’s consent
- Used only to provide appropriate support and adjustments
- Accessed only by authorised staff on a need-to-know basis
- Stored securely and retained only as long as necessary

Information will not be shared outside of QA Higher Education without consent, unless required by law or for safeguarding reasons.

Students have the right to access, correct, or request the deletion of their data. For more information, contact the Data Protection Officer at [Insert Email].

For full details, see the QAHE Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notices.

## 12. Further Information

For queries, please contact the Welfare Team: [qahe.welfare@qa.com](mailto:qahe.welfare@qa.com) / 0203 921 0163

## 13. Review

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or upon significant governance, legal, or regulatory change.

