Student Carers Policy

1: Executive Summary

This strategy document details the University of Aberdeen’s policy and action plan regarding applicants and students who are unpaid carers.

The University accepts the following Carers Trust definition of an unpaid 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.

The University of Aberdeen is committed to supporting applicants and students who are unpaid carers.

The University is a supporter of the Carer’s Trust (Scotland)’s Going Higher in Scotland campaign. The Carers Trust (Scotland) was consulted during the production of this document.

The University also works with local providers of Young and Adult Carer support services.

This document details the University’s commitments to applicants and student carers and the actions it will undertake to fulfil these promises.

Section 2 of this document details the University’s key commitments and policies for applicants and students who are unpaid carers.

Section 3 of this document details the action plan that will enable the institution to deliver on its commitments. These actions will allow the University to implement new services and support mechanisms for unpaid student carers.

Section 4 details how the University will review its student carer’s policy and action plan. It also details how the institution will evaluate the implementation of its action plan and the experience of student carers.

As stated above the University of Aberdeen is committed to support unpaid carers as both applicants and students. It is anticipated that this document will evolve and expand over time. This document will be reviewed in March 2018.
2: Policies and Key Commitments

2.1: Key Commitments

As per the recommendations of the national *Going Higher in Scotland* Campaign the University is committed to achieving three main aims for unpaid student carers. These are as follows:

- To identify the number of carers at the University
- To support all our student carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good mental health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible
- To report on the progress student carers are making at the University so that we can deliver appropriate support and showcase student carer’s achievements.

The University is committed to supporting carers throughout each stage of their learning journey. The remainder of this section and the plan in section 3 details the actions the University will undertake in order to fulfil these commitments.

2.2 Confirming Status

Student Carers, who self-identify either via UCAS or directly to the institution, during the application stage will be considered under the University’s contextualised admissions policy.

The University recognises that carers may choose not to disclose this information during the admissions process. The institution recognises that students may choose to identify themselves at a later stage, as they may take on new caring responsibilities whilst at University or existing caring responsibilities may require greater commitment of time and effort.

It is the responsibility of students to provide appropriate confirmation of their carer status. The University recognises the diversity of caring responsibilities and situations. Therefore a variety of supporting documentation may be accepted as confirmation of a student’s carer status.

The following supporting documentation may be regarded as acceptable confirmation of the student’s status as a Carer:

- Self-certification regarding the nature of the caring duties and how this may affect their study including how long they anticipate this will last;
- A doctor’s letter confirming that they have the responsibility of caring for a friend, relative or neighbour and any perceived impact on the student;
- A local authority carers’ assessment / support plan / young carers statement;
- A Young Carers Authorisation Card;
- Any other reasonable evidence.
Please note that at any point the University may request further information or evidence to confirm caring status or any changes to the students caring responsibility.

(Adapted from the University of Glasgow’s and Queen Margaret University’s Student Carers Policies)

2.3 Contextualised Admissions

An applicant’s caring responsibilities will be recognised under the University’s contextualised admissions policy. As such applicants with caring roles may be made a contextualised offer of admissions. Applicants can identify themselves as a Carer in either their personal statement and / or the reference statement in their UCAS form. Applicants can also self-identify as a Carer with a supporting document such as an email or letter.

Please note that the University’s admissions department may request evidence of carer status through one of the documents mentioned in 2.2 before applying the Contextual Admissions Policy, if appropriate, and confirming any offer to the applicant.

2.4 Enrolment / Registration

The University will ask students – both undergraduate and postgraduate – about any caring responsibilities as part of the enrolment and registration process. This opportunity will take place during the e-registration process. (Please see section 3.1 in the action plan below)

The collection of this information will help the University to gauge the number of student carers in its population.

2.5 Absences

The University recognises that a student’s caring responsibilities may cause them to be absent from their course. Absences related to caring responsibilities will need to be managed. Penalties for absences related to caring responsibilities may be inappropriate.

All staff will need to take a student’s caring responsibilities into account when managing absences. Evidence (as detailed in section 2.2) can be requested from a student.

2.6 Extenuating Circumstances & Course Work

The University recognises that on-going caring responsibilities can have an impact on a student’s course work. As such a student’s caring role can constitute extenuating or mitigating circumstances in relation to issues with course work. (E.g. course work that is handed in late.)
Please note that students should not be asked to explain or provide proof of these circumstances repeatedly once it has been established that they have a caring role.

2.7 Review of Status

The University recognises that caring responsibilities may change over time. The demands of a caring role can increase, diminish or end whilst a student is still at University. Students will have an opportunity to review their support with an appropriate member of staff on a regular basis.
3: Action Plan

3.1: To identify the number of carers at the University: The following sub-section describes the actions the University will undertake to fulfil its commitment to identify the number of unpaid carers at the institution.

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<tr>
<th>Action:</th>
<th>Output:</th>
<th>Who:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The University will add a question on caring status into its registration forms and systems for all students – both undergraduate and postgraduate.</td>
<td>The University will be better able to identify students who are unpaid carers.</td>
<td>Registry, Student Recruitment and Admissions (Widening Participation Section).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University will work with partners (i.e. UCAS) to help identify unpaid carers during the application process.</td>
<td>The University will be better able to identify unpaid carers during the application process. This will enable the University to offer these students information, support and adjusted offers (i.e. Summer School for Access).</td>
<td>Registry, Planning, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service (Widening Participation Section).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The University will produce annual reports on the number of unpaid carers within the University student population.</td>
<td>The University will have a better understanding of the number of unpaid carers in its student population. This will enable the institution to report on this issue and help to inform support efforts (i.e. retention programmes).</td>
<td>Registry, Student Recruitment and Admissions Service (Widening Participation Section), Student Support and Advice Office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.2: To support all our carers throughout their education to ensure they maintain good mental health, complete their course and achieve the best grades possible: The following sub-section describes the actions the University will undertake to fulfil its commitment to support student carers throughout their time at the institution.

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<td>Ensure that students who register as unpaid carers are offered information on the support that is on offer to them.</td>
<td>Students will be better informed about the support that is on offer to them. The number of student carers who access the range of support mechanisms on offer will increase.</td>
<td>Student Recruitment and Admissions Service (Widening Participation Section), Student Support and Advice Office, Aberdeen University Students Association.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-ordinate the support that is on offer to unpaid student carers.</td>
<td>The support that is on offer to student carers will be better organised.</td>
<td>Student Recruitment and Admissions Service (Widening Participation Section), Working Group on Widening Participation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Publicise the support that is on offer to unpaid student carers at University.

- The number unpaid carers applying to and registering with the University will increase.
- Unpaid carers and the general public will be better informed about the support that is on offer.

Student Recruitment and Admissions (Widening Participation Section), External Relations, Aberdeen University Students Association.

### 3.3: To report on the progress student carers are making in their university careers so that we can deliver appropriate support and showcase student carer’s achievements:

The following sub-section describes the actions the University will undertake to fulfil its commitment to report on the progress of students carers within the institution.

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<tr>
<td>Write an annual report regarding the numbers and experiences of student carers at the University.</td>
<td>The University will be able to report on the number of student carers at the institution and their progress.</td>
<td>Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, Aberdeen University Students Association, Student Support and Advice Office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publicise case studies and other materials showcasing the achievements of student carers.</td>
<td>The University will be able raise the profile of student carers and their successes – which will hopefully lead to an increase in the number of unpaid carers applying to University.</td>
<td>Student Recruitment and Admissions (Widening Participation Section), External Relations, Aberdeen University Students Association.</td>
</tr>
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Section 4: Review and Evaluation;

4.1 Review of the policy and action plan:

This policy document, and the action plan contained within it, will be reviewed by the University’s Working Group on Widening Participation. Changes and additions will be approved by the group, the management of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service and the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning. The relevant departments and individuals (i.e. the Student Support and Advice Office, Head of School) will be kept informed about any changes and asked for their input.

The next updated version of the plan will be published in December 2018.

4.2 Evaluation

The implementation of the student carers’ action plan will be evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The information gathered as part of this evaluation process will inform an annual report. Please see a further description below:

Quantitative:

One section of the report will detail the following key statistics:

- The number of student carers that apply to the University.
- The number of the student carers who register at the University.
- The number of student carers who accessed a support mechanism.*

*For the purposes of this document support mechanisms include bursaries, scholarships, access programmes, the careers service and other student support services.

Qualitative:

The Widening Participation team, within the Student Recruitment and Admissions Service, will work with the Aberdeen University Student Association to evaluate the experience of unpaid carer applicants and students.

The following methods will be used:

- Student carers will be asked to complete an anonymous survey about the application process and their experiences at university.
- Student carers will be asked to take part in an annual focus group exercise – which will give them a chance to talk about their experiences and directly feed into improving services.
- The Widening Participation section will publish case studies – telling the stories of student carers who are currently at and who have been to the University.