

**WESTERN SYDNEY  
UNIVERSITY**



# **SUPPORTING OUR PARENTS AND CARERS**

## **A TOOLKIT FOR STUDENTS**

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## Introduction

Juggling family, caring and work and/or study commitments can be challenging. Our University policies aim to provide supports to make the study/work/life balance a little easier where possible and are underpinned by legislation and best practice in relation to parents and carers. .

Western Sydney University is nationally recognised as a leader in gender equity and is committed to supporting students and staff who are parents and/or carers or about to become parents or carers.

This toolkit outlines some of the supports and provisions available to assist students who are parents and carers as they navigate their study experience.

Visit the [Family and Carer Support webpage](#) for further information on University policy, practice and for useful fact sheets and resources for parents and carers.

*“Family means people who make me feel loved. When I am with my family, I feel safe and loved and very happy”*

*- aged 5, child of a WSU staff member*



## Wellbeing Supports

If you are facing barriers or issues affecting your study, including those related to your parent or carer role, the Counselling Service, Welfare Service or Disability Service may be able to help. These Wellbeing Services can be contacted on 1300 668 370 (option 4 then 1) or via [WesternNow](#). Find out more about these and other Wellbeing resources at the University [here](#). Support is available via Zoom, phone, face to face, or via online channels and is free and confidential for all students.

### Welfare Service

The Student Welfare team understands that life can get in the way of your studies and wellbeing. They are able to offer guidance and support to assist you through unexpected times in your university journey, including in the following areas: academic progression and disruption, financial hardship, international support, and accommodation. They are able to provide tailored support to student carers and parents.

### Financial Support

If you are in financial hardship and need assistance with essential living or study costs, the Student Welfare Service is here to support you. We can provide support to students in financial hardship due to personal circumstances or an extraordinary event. For more information go to the Welfare Service's [Financial Support](#) webpage.

### Accommodation

Western offers support and advice on a wide range of accommodation options, go to our [accommodation support website](#) to find out more. Whether you are looking to live on-campus, rent off campus or in need of emergency accommodation, the Student Welfare Service offer advice and resources to assist. A dedicated Accommodation Officer can provide you with an overview of the options available.



### Counselling Service

The Counselling Service team members are trained to be good listeners so that they can help you use your strengths to find effective solutions to the problems getting in the way of your studies. Students are encouraged to access free, short term, confidential counselling services as early as possible before their studies are affected.

### Disability Service

The Disability Service can support and assist students with disabilities and chronic health conditions to arrange educational adjustments needed to help access learning, teaching and other Western Sydney University services. Students with a temporary injury such as a broken limb may also be eligible for assistance. We can also work with other University teams on ways to support students with disabilities.

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Mental Health and Wellbeing team (MHWBT) supports the promotion of mental health and wellbeing including prevention, early identification and responding to complex issues and risk. The MHWBT aim to provide early intervention and consultation to staff to assist in recognising and managing complex student behaviours and respond to crises and critical incidents. Find out more about the MHWB team and current initiatives [here](#).

## Equity and Diversity

The Equity and Diversity team aim to support the University in building a culture of respect and inclusion. Equity and Diversity do this by advising the University community, leaders, students and staff on equity and diversity issues, practices, policy and strategy.

The Equity and Diversity team also provides programs, training and resources which promote equal opportunity and inclusion of students and staff from groups traditionally less represented in higher education settings, including:

- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,
- sexuality and gender diverse backgrounds,
- women,
- people with disability, and
- those with carer and/or family responsibilities.

Find out more about Equity and Diversity and current initiatives [here](#).

## Carer Supports



Carers play an essential role supporting members across our community, and often do so while managing demanding study and/or work responsibilities. The University recognises that this can sometimes impact on study and career progression. To help build equal opportunity for those with carer responsibilities, the University encourages student carers to request consideration of their carer role and access the support arrangements available.

### Who is a Carer?

The University offers supports for students who are carers as defined under the [Carers \(Recognition\) Act 2010 \(NSW\)](#). The University considers a carer to be an individual who provides ongoing personal care, support and assistance to a person with;

- a disability within the meaning of the Disability Inclusion Act 2014 (NSW), or
- a medical condition (including a terminal or chronic illness), or
- a mental illness, or
- is frail and aged.

### How can we help?

If you care for someone with a disability or chronic health condition as per definitions outlined in the [Carer Recognition Act 2010](#), you may be eligible for a Carer Verification Statement (CVS).

A CVS can be used throughout the University to support your requests for:

- a change of class through timetable allocation or amendment application (to be completed in WesternNow);
- an Extension for Assessment application on the first occasion. Suggested extension period of 7 days from the date the assessment was originally due; and/or
- placement considerations, including for example to have placements located within 60 kilometres of residential address or within 60 minutes on public transport, not within school holiday periods, and/or shift-based placements to be allocated as either AM or PM shifts depending on your carer responsibilities.

Remember that a CVS does not guarantee special provisions will be provided, but it can help explain the reasons you need extra consideration and how the University might best assist you to balance your studies and carer responsibilities.

To apply for a CVS, complete the [online form](#). For any enquiries, contact the Student Welfare Service via [WesternNow](#) or call 1300 668 370 (option 4 then option 1) to book an appointment.

## Parent Supports

A student parent is someone of any gender who has care responsibilities for a child either by birth, adoption or fostering. Parents play a vital role in our community. The University recognises that studying whilst navigating parenting responsibilities can be challenging, and sometimes this may impact on study and career progression. To support our student parents the University offers a range of supports to assist.

### Soon to be Parents

Students who are pregnant, about to be new parents or have adopted a child can access options to assist them whilst they are navigating the transition to parenthood. These may include:

- Break from study – students can apply to take a break from their study. Once you have completed one or more subjects in your enrolled program, you can apply for a Leave of Absence. A Leave of Absence can be taken as either six or twelve months. The maximum amount of leave you can take during your program is twelve months. Find out more [here](#).
- Reduced study load – students may decide that a reduced study load may suit their current parental responsibilities. Note any change to your study program must be discussed in full with your Academic Program Advisor. You can also contact the [Student Welfare Service](#) for advice and support. International Students will need to seek formal approval to ensure any changes align with visa or legislative requirements, the [International Student Welfare Coordinator](#) may be able to assist you with this process.



## Children on Campus

The University understands that students may occasionally need to bring their children with them onto campus, including asking permission to bring children into class during extenuating circumstances. The University's [Children on University Premises Policy](#) explains student and staff responsibilities in relation to children being on campus, including guidance for determining the circumstances in which it is appropriate for children to be on University premises or involved in University activities.

## School and University Term Dates

NSW school terms do not necessarily coincide with Western Sydney University semester dates. NSW public school term dates can be found at: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/public-schools/going-to-a-public-school/calendars>

Western Sydney University semester dates can be found at:  
[https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current\\_students/dates](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/currentstudents/current_students/dates)

## Breastfeeding on Campus

The University supports students who wish to breastfeed their baby whilst they study. Women are welcome to breastfeed their babies wherever they feel comfortable on campus, including during class. Go to the [Breastfeeding on University Premises](#) for more information.

*“Family is treasure in the middle of the rainbow...also, family means love”*

*- aged 5, child of a WSU staff member*

## WSU Breastfeeding Support Facebook Group

A Facebook support group has been established under a project that received funding under the Vice Chancellor's Gender Equity Fund. The aim of the group is to provide breastfeeding parents with support so that they can successfully combine returning to work and study.

Join the [WSU Breastfeeding Support Facebook Group here](#).

## Breastfeeding Rooms

The following rooms are available for students, staff and visitors and can be used by parents and for breastfeeding.

Campus	Location	Room Type
<b>Bankstown</b>	Building 1.G.07	Parents Room
	Building 2.G.068	Women's Room
<b>Blacktown (Nirimba)</b>	Building U10.1.26	Parents Room
<b>Campbelltown</b>	Building 2.G.35	Women's Room
	Building 21.G.39	Parents Room
	Building 30.1.07	Parents Room
<b>Macarthur Clinical School</b>	Building X7.G.38	Parents Room
<b>Hawkesbury</b>	Building K4.G.20	Parents Room
	Building K4.G.79	Women's Room
<b>Kingswood</b>	Building N.G.11	Parents Room

	Building N.G.13	Women's Room
<b>Liverpool City</b>	Building 3.1.15	Women's Room
	Building 3.1.18	Parents Room
<b>Parramatta City</b>	Building 1.1.33	Women's Room
	Building 1.1.34	Parents Room
<b>Parramatta South</b>	Building EB G.16	Women's Room
	Building EHa.L63	Parents Room

### Community Information – ABA Accreditation/Services

Western Sydney University is accredited by the Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA) as a Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace. The Australian Breastfeeding Association has trained Breastfeeding Counsellors available to assist women with breastfeeding questions and ways to combine breastfeeding and returning to work. The ABA can be contacted on the toll-free number 1800 686 268

### Baby Change Tables

In addition to the change tables available in Parents Rooms, change tables are also available in bathrooms at the following locations:

<b>Bankstown</b>	Building 17 G.21
<b>Blacktown (Nirimba)</b>	Building U11 G.13
<b>Campbelltown</b>	Building 30 G.204
<b>Hawkesbury</b>	Building G1 G.48
<b>Kingswood</b>	Building T 5.12
	Building T 1.13
	Building T 3.13
	Building T G.09
<b>Parramatta City</b>	Building 2 1.14
<b>Parramatta South</b>	Building EA 1.07
	Building EA 1.24
	Building EA 2.07
	Building EA 2.24
	Building EA G.13
	Building EA G.28
	Building EA LG.10
	Building EB 1.17
	Building EB 1.38
	Building EB 2.11
	Building EB 2.36
	Building EB 3.11
	Building EB 3.29
	Building EB G.11
Building EB G.29	
Building EB LG.23	

	Building EE G.39
	Building EN G.33
	Building EN LG.23



## Education and Care

Western Sydney University Early learning provides high quality Education and Care and early learning experiences for children in a stimulating, inclusive and nurturing environment, working in partnership with families, Western Sydney University and our diverse community.

The University's Education and Care Services consist of six Long Day Care Services and are located within the Western Sydney University grounds and conveniently located on six campuses.

- Milperra
- Blacktown
- Campbelltown
- Hawkesbury
- Parramatta South
- Kingswood
- 

Discounts are available for Western Sydney University Students facilitated by the Western Sydney University and the Student Services Amenities Fee (SSAF). In some instances, this may mean that fees are fully subsidised resulting in free education and care for your child.

To find out more or apply for a place at one of the University's Education and Care Services please visit the [Early Learning Services webpage](#).

### Occasional/Casual Education and Care Services

Occasional/casual Education and Care is now available at all Western Sydney University Early Learning Services. This means if something comes up and you need your child to be looked after for a few hours or for the day, you can contact the Education and Care Services and request an occasional/casual care place.

Occasional care is \$13 per hour, minimum two hours. Each Western Sydney University Early Learning Service holds one place every day to cater for occasional care.

If eligible you can claim the government Child Care Subsidy for occasional/casual care Child Care through the Family Assistance Office.

### Non-University Education and Care Services

For information and availability of off-campus and non-University affiliated childcare, please visit <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/> or for short term babysitting <https://www.jugglestreet.com.au/>

## Other On-Campus Facilities

### Parent Rooms and Women's Rooms

A number of women and parent rooms are located across our campuses. Parent rooms provide a private area for feeding and changing babies. Women's Rooms provide a safe location for all women and female identifying students. The Building offers an area to use for quiet study, breastfeeding, meetings and women's events. For a full list of these locations, please refer to pages 6-7 of this toolkit.

### Psychology Clinic

The Western Sydney University Psychology Clinic provides individuals within the community with low-cost psychological support and testing services for children (6 years and above), adolescents and adults. The Psychology Clinic is located on the Penrith (Kingswood) campus and provides online sessions.

The Psychology Clinic is staffed by provisionally registered psychologists currently undertaking post graduate training to become clinical psychologists. All provisionally registered psychologists are supervised by fully accredited and experienced clinical psychology supervisors. For more information and bookings, please visit the [Psychology Clinic webpage](#)

### Podiatry Clinic/Uniclinic

Uniclinic offers a range of therapeutic health practices at reduced rates to the general public. Treatments are provided by students who are under the supervision of qualified clinicians. You do not need a referral to attend the Uniclinic. The Uniclinic is located on the Campbelltown campus. To make an appointment or for more information, please call 02 4620 3700 or [Uniclinic webpage](#).

## Mentoring Programs and Networks

### MATES Program

The MATES program provides first year students with the opportunity to be connected with students further along in their study journey. MATES is about helping students to make social networks, share experiences and acquire knowledge and skills to help them settle into life at university and thrive. Mentors can be selected based on shared understandings and lived experiences, including those who are also parents and carers.

If you are interested in being involved visit the [MATES webpage](#) or email [mates@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:mates@westernsydney.edu.au) from your student account.



## Student Parent Union

The Student Parent Union (SPU) is a network of students to provide support and advocacy for their fellow students who are parents or carers at Western. The aim of the group is to facilitate connection and community while navigating the unique experience that is studying with carer responsibilities. To join the network search Student Parent Union on [WESTERNLife](#) or visit the group Facebook page at [WSU Student Parent Union](#).

## University Workshops

The University offers a number of workshops before classes begin, during session time as well as online sessions to help you build your academic, employability and life skills. Workshops include sessions on learning and teaching/academic support, using University resources, applying for work and many more. For a full list of workshops offered and information on how to register visit [Workshops, Programs and Online Resources](#).

## Information for Mature Age Students

A mature age student is any student that is not a current school leaver. If you were not completing Year 12 when you applied to study at Western Sydney University you are considered a mature age student.

Returning to learning can be quite overwhelming, especially if you have had a significant break from education and have additional parenting or caring responsibilities to navigate. To help you prepare, the University has a range of free workshops available. Visit the [Study skills workshop](#) page to find one that suits you.

More resources, including a Return to Learning Booklet and Top Tips for Mature Age Students are available on the [Mature Age Students](#) page.

### Return to Learning Workshops (Mature Age Students)

The Returning to Learning and Introduction to E-Learning are both available as online resources all year round so you can complete them at your own pace. In these workshops students explore issues relevant to success as a mature age student, including:

- manage your responsibilities as a student
- understand the university environment
- enhance your time management
- develop your support networks
- understand the online learning environment

The on-demand version of this workshop is available through [vUWS](#) (open [vUWS](#) and click 'go to site'). If you have any questions regarding returning to learning workshops contact counselling ([counselling@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:counselling@westernsydney.edu.au)) or call 1300370 668 (option 4 then 1) to book an appointment with one of the Counselling team.

## Study Supports

### Disruption to Studies Policy/Process Information

Disruption to studies is any serious and unavoidable disruption that prevents a student undertaking study or completing an assessment during the teaching term. The University provides students who have experienced a serious and unavoidable disruption to their studies a Disruption to Studies provision, which is an opportunity to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes for the subject. To be eligible for a Disruption to Studies Provision, **the disruption must impact your studies for at least three consecutive days.**

Students can submit an application as to how one or more of the following circumstances has impacted or may adversely impact their academic performance:

- health reasons, either physical or psychological;
- compassionate reasons, for example death of a close family member;
- hardship, for example sudden loss of employment, family breakdown;
- trauma, for example impact of a crime, domestic violence or accident; or
- unavoidable adverse circumstances, for example increased caring responsibilities.

A Disruption to Studies provision does not cover the following situations:

- Missing a Final Exam – refer to the [Deferred Exams web page](#)
- Minor illnesses or misadventure preventing a student meeting an assessment deadline – refer to [Request for Extension or missing a compulsory teaching activity form in Western Now](#)
- Missing a compulsory component of a subject, except where a serious and unavoidable disruption is the cause – refer to the [Assessment Policy Guidelines](#).
- Missing placement or a compulsory class (less than three-days impact) - refer to [Request for Extension or missing a compulsory teaching activity form in Western Now](#)

For further information on eligibility and applying for Disruption to Studies provisions, visit the [Disruption to Studies](#) page on the Counselling website.

## Additional Resources

### External Links

#### Parents

- [Raising Children](#) has information and tips for parents and carers.
- [Emerging Minds](#) provides online resources for parents and carers to help support the mental health and wellbeing of children in your family.
- [E-Safety Commissioner](#) provides useful information for parents and carers about online safety for children.
- [Department of Human Services](#) can assist with possible financial support if eligible and links to other services.
- [NSW Department of Education Parent and Carer Toolkit](#) - features self-care tips, handy lists, wellbeing articles and leading Australian and international parenting resources
- [Pregnancy Help Australia](#) (1300 139 313) – a 24 hour helpline for advice and support.

#### Carers

- [Young Carers Network](#) is a nationally coordinated resource to raise young carer awareness, provide information, and direct young carers to appropriate pathways for support. The Network assists children and young people, 25 years or under who help to support a family member or friend who has a disability, mental illness, drug or alcohol dependency, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is frail.
- [Carer Gateway](#) provides a range of information that can help carers in their role, from practical advice and resources, to help finding support services.



- [Carers NSW](#) works with all carers regardless of their age, location, life-stage or circumstances. This includes those caring for individuals with support needs relating to ageing, disability, health and mental illness.
- [Carers Australia](#) has valuable resources for carers in the workplace including a [Carers Fact Sheet](#).
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(NDIS\)](#) has up to date information FAQs for parents and carers supporting NDIS participants during COVID-19.

## Tips for Student Parents and Carers

Trying to balance your parenting and/or caring responsibilities as well as your studies and even possibly work can be challenging. There is no one fix for any situation, but below we have outlined some suggestions that might help you find some balance:

### Plan out your study time

- Define your home and study priorities at the start of each week and develop a schedule for your study around your key parent or care responsibilities;
- When you plan your schedule, consider if there are other tasks which can be set aside temporarily while you accommodate your study. For example, can you be more flexible with routine activities such as household chores; and
- Consider using study techniques such as the [pomodoro technique](#) to help limit and compartmentalise your study into more manageable sections.

### Take time for self-care.

- It's not selfish to take time. Everyone needs a moment every now and then. Whilst it might be challenging, try to find some time each day to do something for you. Whether it's going for a run, having a coffee with friends or sitting down to read. Even a 10-minute retreat can help you relax and recentre.
- The Counselling Service has a range of online [relaxation and mindfulness recordings](#) available to students designed to give brief moments to de-stress and reflect.

### Be flexible and adaptable in your approach to your study

- Whilst not an option for some students, where possible consider adjusting your study pattern or reducing your study load to make your load more manageable or investigate online or flexible learning options available within your program. This can assist you in managing your parental or caring responsibilities. But don't underestimate the value of coming on campus and the social link that can provide. Ideally it is good to find a balance that can work for you.

### Don't shy away from asking for help

- Managing your study, work, family and carer responsibilities takes a village! Having a support network of family and friends that can support you is important. You never know who is willing and able to help until you ask;
- The University community is also here to support you. Don't shy away from asking for advice from your fellow students, lecturers, tutors or Academic Program Advisors;
- You can also reach out to the Counselling Service if you are struggling and need advice or support;
- The Student Welfare Service may also be able to assist you with financial support in certain circumstances and can assist carers with attaining a Carer Verification Statement which will make it easier for you to access special consideration as your study progresses; and

- Look into engaging with a peer mentoring or similar program at the University. These programs are invaluable in connecting with other students and for accessing tailored support and advice as you navigate your study.

### Manage your expectations

- Studying while navigating parenting or caring responsibilities isn't easy. Don't set yourself unreasonable expectations about how you may manage the balance. Understand that you will need to compromise, and even your best laid plans may not turn out quite as you imagine.
- Be kind to yourself and celebrate the small wins along the way – both in study, work and personal areas. Your lived experience can be your advantage!

*\*We would like to thank the entrants of our Families Week Drawing Competition for allowing us to use their wonderful artwork and quotes about family throughout this toolkit.\**

### Acknowledgments:

On behalf of Equity and Diversity we would like to thank the contributions made by Counselling Service, Disability Service and the Mental Health and Wellbeing Team and the Student Parent Union in developing this toolkit.