



PARENTS AND CARERS

Information for students and staff during COVID-19

Western is committed to supporting students and staff through the COVID-19 crisis. Students and staff who are parents and carers are currently facing many challenges as a result of COVID-19 and relevant restraints. Studying and working remotely has become essential, and with significantly less external care and support services. Those caring for children, an elderly person and/or person with a disability or medical condition are often finding it difficult to balance their work and personal commitments at this time.

The University understands parents and carers are performing a very important role in our community and need support to keep doing so through COVID-19. To support parents and carers, Western is committed to being innovative and highly flexible in our study and work arrangements. This will help ensure parents and carers have the opportunity to successfully participate and progress when studying and/or working with us.

UNIVERSITY SUPPORTS

Counselling and Wellbeing support

For students who are parents or carers, the [Student Wellbeing Service](#) can provide counselling support and advice for those struggling to manage their increased caring responsibilities. Students should contact **1300 668 370** (option 4 then option 1) for advice and support.

The [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) offers staff confidential professional counselling for personal or work related issues. This service is available to all staff, including related family members at no cost and can be accessed via [AccessEAP](#) or by phoning **1800 818 728**. Access EAP is available as a phone counselling service.

The [Work Health, Safety and Wellbeing team](#) have a range of resources available to staff on their webpages which support [physical and mental wellbeing](#). Contact [WHS&W](#) for further advice and support.

Parent and Carer Support Information and Networks During Coronavirus (COVID-19)

- The University has established [Information on Coronavirus](#) website for students and staff, which includes a series of FAQs. Students and staff should review this site for current information on available supports and resources. A dedicated information line has also been established for student and staff enquiries. Call +61 02 9852 5399, from 8am to 5pm AEDT Monday to Friday, or email coronavirusadvice@westernsydney.edu.au with any questions or concerns relating to the coronavirus.
- The [Student Welfare Service](#) can provide support for students caring for someone with a disability or chronic medical condition. Professionally trained staff are available to provide support and advice in managing caring responsibilities alongside studies. Further information and resources can also be found on the University's [Student Carers](#) web page.
- The [Disability Collective](#) is a student network which aims to support people with disability and carers of people with disability in removing barriers and discrimination.
- The Engaged Parents Network (EPN) is a network for university students and staff with a focus on supporting a positive, inclusive and family friendly culture at Western. The EPN has an active Yammer group for parents to share information and seek advice. A Student Parents Group (SPG) is also currently being established. To join the EPN or find out more about the SPG email b.laws@westernsydney.edu.au.
- The [Office of Equity and Diversity \(OED\)](#) provides a range of resources for parents and carers. Parenting support fact sheets and information for staff can be found on the [Parenting Support webpage](#). There is also information for student and staff carers on the [Disabilities webpage](#). Contact [OED](#) for further information or advice.

Adjustments to Work and Study Arrangements

For Students

Special provisions relating to a student's study progression may be provided if they have increased caring responsibilities as a result of COVID-19 such as study break options or extensions on assessments. [Student Wellbeing](#) can be contacted for advice and to assist in coordinating any arrangements, or you can speak to your Course Advisor or Lecturer directly.

For Staff

Leave options

During COVID-19 additional leave entitlements may be available for staff with increased parental or carer responsibilities. Special leave of up to **10 days** may be available for staff with increased child minding or caring responsibilities as a direct result of COVID-19, once you have exhausted your personal leave entitlements. More information is available at [COVID-19 special leave](#), or contact your [Senior HR Partner](#) or [HR Advisor](#) for more information.

Flexible work options

As a large number of staff are now working remotely and navigating increased caring responsibilities due to the current COVID-19 health crisis, it is understood that there is an increased need for the University to be flexible in its approach to managing work practices. Flexibility will be a critical tool for many staff and managers over the coming period to ensure our staff are able to maintain their productivity and achieve results in the most efficient way possible.

Staff are encouraged to talk to their supervisor if they are feeling overwhelmed or finding it difficult to balance their personal and work priorities with the current additional demands to see what flexible work options may be available. Staff can also seek advice from their [Senior HR Partner](#) or [HR Advisor](#). Staff can find out more about flexible work via the [flexible work options](#) or [flexible work arrangements](#) webpages.

INFORMATION ON SUPPORTING STUDENTS FOR LECTURERS & TEACHING SUPPORT STAFF

Lecturers and teaching support staff have an important role to play in ensuring our students feel supported during COVID-19. Students who are parents or carers may be **finding it difficult to maintain their study focus due to their additional caring responsibilities**. An understanding and flexible approach should be adopted with the aim of supporting every student's continued engagement in study. When approached by a student with parental or other caring responsibilities you should:

- actively listen to their concerns and be open to accommodating special considerations that may relate to their circumstances, particularly in relation to assessments
- where the student is distressed or overwhelmed by their current circumstances, you should encourage them to seek counselling support via the [Student Counselling Service](#)
- understand students are likely to come with a problem and a solution, so ensure you take time to consider whether their solution can be accommodated, or suggest an alternative
- provide the student with this resource, and direct them to [Student Wellbeing Services](#) for further advice and support.

Lecturers and teaching support staff can seek advice from the University's [Student Wellbeing Service](#).

Remember to look after yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed or concerned about your own wellbeing, speak to your colleagues, talk to your supervisor, or contact [AccessEAP](#) for support and advice.

INFORMATION ON SUPPORTING STAFF FOR MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS

The unique working environment brought about by COVID-19 sees many staff now working remotely with increased caring responsibilities. As a result of this new working and living situation parents and carers may require adjustments to their standard work practices including increased flexibility. If a staff member is experiencing increased caring responsibilities as a result of COVID-19, a manager or supervisor should:

- be open to accommodating adjustments to the staff member's hours of work, where possible. Flexibility in when work hours are undertaken is likely to be an important factor in ensuring a staff member can maintain their work productivity.
- encourage them to seek counselling support via [AccessEAP](#) where the staff member is distressed or overwhelmed by their current circumstances.
- encourage any affected staff member/s to access the parent and carer support information and networks outlined in this resource.
- advise the staff member of available leave options, including those outlined in [COVID-19 Special Leave Scheme](#).

For further information managers and supervisors can contact their [Senior HR Partner](#) or [OED](#), or review the [Supporting Parents and Carers – Information for Managers and Supervisors during COVID-19](#) resource.

Remember to look after yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed or concerned about your own wellbeing, speak to your colleagues, talk to your manager, or contact [AccessEAP](#) for support and advice.

OTHER SUPPORTS

[Department of Human Services](#) can assist with possible financial support if eligible and links to other services.

[Carer Gateway](#) (1800 422 737) provides a range of information that can help carers in their role, from practical advice and resources, to help finding support services.

[Carers NSW \(1800 242 636\)](#) 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.

[Young Carers Australia \(1800 242 636\)](#) is supported by Carers NSW and 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.

Resources to help parents support their children during COVID-19

[NSW Government Education Website](#) has advice for parents to assist children learning from home.

[Raising Children](#) has information and tips for parents and carers during COVID-19.

[Emerging Minds](#) provides online resources for parents and carers about communicating with and supporting children throughout COVID-19.

[E-Safety Commissioner](#) provides useful information for parents and carers about online safety.