



# The Church of Scotland

## Faith Nurture Forum – Initial Ministerial Education (IME) Student Policy

### Students as Carers

#### 1. Introduction

The Faith Nurture Forum of The Church of Scotland (Faith Nurture Forum) is committed to helping students where possible to balance the demands of studying, placements and home life. This policy provides advice and guidance to students, whom during their studies with Faith Nurture Forum are caring, unpaid, for a relative or friend who could not cope without their support.

#### 2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to Faith Nurture Forum students who have an unpaid caring responsibility for someone who is ill, disabled, are experiencing mental distress or affected by substance abuse. The carer may or may not live with the person that they are supporting.

It is recognised that the support provided by the student as a carer may happen at any time during their studies and there may be unpredictability in terms of commitment, consistency and time scales.

Faith Nurture Forum appreciates that caring responsibilities can fluctuate over time and care can often be either 'short' or 'long' term. With this in mind, Faith Nurture Forum recognises that each carer's needs are unique.

Faith Nurture Forum will work with universities where students on the IME Programme are studying to ensure a co-ordinated approach where all parties, including the student, are involved in discussions where carer arrangements require to be made.

#### 3. Policy Statement

Faith Nurture Forum is committed to providing all students with equality of opportunity in their studies. Caring responsibilities should not prevent students from succeeding; therefore, we are committed to being as flexible as feasibly possible to assist students.

#### 4. Definition of carers

When defining carers, Faith Nurture Forum aims to strike a balance between recognising the special circumstances of caring, and not classifying carers as a rigid or separate group.

Faith Nurture Forum defines carers as students with significant caring responsibilities that have a substantial impact on their studies. The activities that carers undertake are wide ranging, including:

- help with personal care;
- help with mobility;
- managing medication;
- practical household tasks;

- emotional support; and
- help with financial matters or administration.

## **5. Carers' circumstances**

Carers' needs are different from the needs of students with mainstream childcare responsibilities, and the circumstances and milestones of caring are different from those of mainstream childcare.

Caring can be unpredictable and emotionally upsetting. A student may acquire caring responsibilities overnight or caring responsibilities may develop over time.

## **6. Identification and disclosure**

Students are not required to disclose to Faith Nurture Forum that they are caring for someone but are encouraged to do so. This will help Faith Nurture Forum provide appropriate support to the student.

## **7. Appropriate Arrangements**

Some examples of the types of arrangements that could be made to support students with caring responsibilities are listed below. Please note that due to the nature of the caring role, it is not possible to provide a definitive list of special arrangements.

- Recognising the need to arrive late or leave early in order to place their cared for person(s) in appropriate daytime care.
- Agreeing periods of authorised absence and making arrangements for the student to catch-up missed work for reasons relating to caring responsibilities to ensure that they are not at a disadvantage.
- Providing details of placements, student conferences and Faith Nurture Forum arranged learning provision, wherever possible, at least one month in advance to allow the student to make necessary alternative care arrangements.
- Priority will be given where-ever possible to ensure that placements for students with caring responsibilities are within reasonable travelling distance to accommodate arrangements.

## **8. Academic Standards**

Whilst every attempt should be made to support the student, precaution should be taken to ensure that this flexibility does not impact on the student's ability to meet the required learning and programme outcomes. Any requests for arrangements to be made must be carefully considered before they are approved or rejected. If a request is refused, then the reasoning should be put to the student in writing with sufficient detail and advice regarding what arrangements can be made should be detailed.

## **9. Withdrawal from or Suspension of Studies**

In some situations, and where the above appropriate arrangements do not apply, the student may need to withdraw or suspend their studies. Faith Nurture Forum will work alongside the student to decide whether a break is required and how long this should be.

Before this timescale is agreed, consideration should be taken in regards to the requirements of the IME Programme. At any point, if there are changes which relate to impact of caring responsibilities, the student should inform Faith Nurture Forum.

### **10. Monitoring and Review**

The impact of this policy will be monitored and the policy is subject to amendments as necessary. This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum.

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