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Guidelines for External Support Workers

Introduction

This guide has been developed as a resource for external support workers and unpaid carers who will attend campus or on-line classes with Curtin students who may live with medical conditions and/or disabilities. To help ensure that this is a positive experience for each student, this guide outlines:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Student and campus life
- Support in practice
- Curtin's support services

External support workers are employed externally to Curtin through a disability support organization, private arrangement or unpaid in the case of a friend, family member, or volunteer. They are most likely to provide personal care, behavioural or social support in a tertiary education setting. Support may include:

- Attending classes on-campus or on-line to support a student
- Attending orientation days, careers fairs and other campus activities
- Travel to and from campus
- Personal care assistance on campus
- Attending field trips and excursions

Unpaid carers (friends, family members, volunteers) who support a student in an education setting are expected to adhere to and comply with policies and responsibilities that apply to paid support workers.

Internal Support Workers are employed by Curtin to provide educational support, and may be note-takers, scribes, mentors, Auslan interpreters and other supports as relevant. A student with disability may have internal as well as external support workers working with them at the same time.

Process for External Support Workers

1. Contact AccessAbility Services

The External Support Worker must contact AccessAbility Services as soon as they are aware that they will be supporting a student on a Curtin campus, or in on-line classes.

2. Complete Curtin Campus Induction

All External Support Workers (including carers and family members) must complete the Campus Induction and provide a signed copy to the relevant AccessAbility Advisor prior to

supporting students on campus. This document is available here: https://healthandsafety.curtin.edu.au/local/docs/Curtin_Campus_Induction.pdf

3. Understand limits of insurance coverage

It is important to be aware that Curtin can't provide insurance coverage for any External Support Worker or carer unless they're employed directly by the University.

In the instance where a carer is provided by an external body, the external organisation should indemnify and provide insurance coverage for their carers.

However, this wouldn't apply if a relative or friend is acting in a voluntary capacity and offering their services free of charge. In these circumstances, it is important that both the student and their carer understand any exposures that may exist, in respect of their liability and/or injuries/illnesses sustained while performing these caring duties.

4. Meet with AccessAbility Services

An AccessAbility Advisor will need to meet with the External Support Worker to ensure that necessary induction, boundaries and guidelines are understood. Where possible the student should be involved in this meeting.

A student who will be accompanied by an External Support Worker on campus will need to register with AccessAbility Services prior to the commencement of semester, preferably several weeks before semester commences.

If an External Support Worker is attending classes in person or on-line, AccessAbility Services will need to liaise with Unit Coordinators to give consideration to matters such as venue capacity, safety equipment, any training requirements, access to certain restricted areas of campus, on-line participation and other special approval that they may require.

Roles and responsibilities

e-Learning Module

This [e-Learning module](#) developed by the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program and the Australian Disability Clearinghouse on Education and Training (ADCET) focuses on the roles and responsibilities of external support workers providing support to students with disability in tertiary settings.

Health and Safety

The Health Safety and Emergency Management website has comprehensive information related to Health and Safety at Curtin, including links to COVID-19 procedures: [Health & Safety \(curtin.edu.au\)](https://healthandsafety.curtin.edu.au)

There may be additional health and safety considerations for External Support Workers for certain environments such as laboratory classes and field trips. The Unit Coordinator should advise on any necessary training, precautions or equipment required by External Support Workers for these activities.

Carers/external support persons should ensure that they dress appropriately at all times and that their clothing and footwear meet the occupational health and safety requirements. If unsure about dress codes, please ask the Unit Coordinator.

Codes of Conduct

External support workers need to be aware that Curtin has Codes in Conduct in place for staff and students.

[Conduct at Curtin: A guide for students](#)

[Code of conduct \(curtin.edu.au\)](#) (for Curtin staff)

Privacy and confidentiality

Privacy is about the student having control over their personal information, and confidentiality is the duty to keep people's information private.

It is important that External Support workers respect the privacy of students who they may be supporting on campus and be as unobtrusive as possible. It is important to be guided by the student to determine what role they want you to play in a class setting.

During your work, you are likely to become aware of private and sensitive information about an individual student. It is your responsibility to manage that information by upholding privacy and confidentiality guidelines and principles. Be mindful of how you share information.

You should only request information that is relevant to doing your job. You should only share information where you have consent to do so.

As a support worker you also have a right to privacy. You should only share information relevant to your job role.

Professionalism and personal boundaries

A professional approach is required regardless of whether you are engaged in a paid role or as a family supporter.

As an external support worker, you are employed (paid or unpaid) in a professional capacity to provide support to the student. Approaching this as a professional role helps to protect yourself, the student you support, the tertiary provider and the individual/organisation for whom you work.

As a paid external support worker, you are a representative of the agency that employs you, and you need to be aware of the importance of being diplomatic to build and maintain positive and professional relationships.

As an external support worker, you are expected to:

- professionally and consistently fulfil the duties of your job description
- be punctual
- provide timely notification of cancellations if you are unwell and unable to attend
- minimise the use and impact of your mobile phone
- dress appropriately for the course you are attending

As a family member or personal supporter, you are also expected to exercise this level of professionalism in your role.

Student choice, control, and independence

Students have the right to have the most agency/control to make their own decisions wherever possible.

It is critical in your role that you maximise every opportunity for the students to exercise independence and demonstrate their own capabilities in all aspects of tertiary life.

Given your role as a support worker is to help the student to become skilled and independent, you need to make good decisions about when to provide assistance and when to allow the student freedom to participate without your aid.

It is important to provide the student with space and time to exercise their own independence. The key is to offer support when it is needed and do so in a way that minimises attention being drawn to the student.

Duty of care

In your role you have a duty of care to the student and anyone who might reasonably be affected by your actions. You are expected to act in a way that does not expose the student or others to foreseeable risk of harm or injury—physical, psychological or financial.

This means you are required to act with a knowledge of the individual (particularly about their strengths, capabilities and support needs) as well as your own abilities, knowledge and limitations.

You also have a duty or responsibility to yourself. You need to ensure that you actively manage the boundaries to reduce any potential stressors or negative impacts to yourself.

In this situation speak to the student you support, your employer, or Curtin's AccessAbility Services and about your concerns.

Emergency contacts

Please download the Safezone [App](#) while on campus and ensure that you have the Safer Community [Team's](#) contact number saved in your phone (92664444)

Support in practice

In-class support

When students are accompanied by External Support Worker in class. Curtin asks that the External Support Worker introduces themselves to lecturers, tutors, exam invigilators and others in authority, as appropriate, to ensure that they are aware of their role. When introducing yourselves, you do not need to disclose personal information about the student nor provide a detailed rationale for being in class. A sample phrase you could use is, "Hello, I am Pat. I am supporting Alex today".

External support workers are not students and should not participate in class or group discussions or activities unless this is specific to their role, unless requested by a lecturer or tutor. A carer/external support person should not attend classes in place of a student if they are unable to attend.

Communication between a student and academic staff members should not involve a carer/external support worker unless the student provides their express permission. For example, a student who has selective mutism may choose to have their carer/external support person regularly included in communication.

Examinations and tests

All students who require the support of a carer or external support person during a test or exam need to be registered with AccessAbility Services.

If you provide support to a student who is sitting tests or exams:

- Please attend the test/exam venue prior to the start of the test/exam and make yourself known to the test/exam supervisor. The test/exam venue door may be locked so please knock to gain entry.
- During the test/exam, all communication must be in your role as carer and directly related to the student's care needs. Other direct communication between yourself and the student will not be permitted.
- Please ensure that all electronic devices are turned off while you are inside the test/exam venue.
- During the test/exam, should the student have a query or issue, the student should attract the attention of the supervisor.
- Please be aware that in an exam, the unit coordinators for the units being examined may visit the venue at the beginning of, or early in the exam, to provide students with the opportunity to ask questions. If your role includes supporting the student with communication, then you may wish to be present in the exam/test venue when the unit coordinator is there.

Academic Integrity and plagiarism

Academic integrity is about ensuring that students authentically meet course requirements.

Authenticity means ensuring that the learning and assessment outcomes are genuinely those of the person being assessed.

Authenticity is an important aspect of learning, because it reflects the student's own capabilities, skills, knowledge and attributes and can be witnessed over time, repeatedly, as the student demonstrates their current skills and knowledge.

When supporting students, it is important to recognise when you may be over-assisting and contributing to the academic/educational outcome of the student. This may impact on authenticity. Remember, all course work is to be genuinely completed by the student, so be mindful of the type and level of support you are providing.

Read about academic integrity at Curtin: [Academic integrity, rules, support - About | Curtin University](#)

Reasonable adjustment in the tertiary context

Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Disability Standards for Education 2005, students with disability may be entitled to have reasonable adjustments made if their disability impacts on their learning.

A reasonable adjustment is a modification to the learning environment, teaching practices or assessments to allow a person with disability to participate on the same basis as other students.

Reasonable adjustments must not fundamentally change the nature of the inherent or core requirements of a course or unit. The student must still be able to demonstrate the capabilities, knowledge and skills necessary to achieve the learning outcomes.

Reasonable adjustments are usually detailed in a Curtin Access Plan developed by AccessAbility Services in consultation with the student based on:

- health professional documentation
- the impact of the disability on learning
- the identified needs and preferences of the student
- staff knowledge of specific course components or inherent requirements.

Curtin Access Plan

A Curtin Access Plan is a document developed by AccessAbility Services in conjunction with a student outlining the 'reasonable adjustments' required by a student to equitably access their studies.

The plan may include the information that an External Support Worker is attending a class to provide them with non-academic support if the student has informed AccessAbility Services.

It is the student's responsibility to email their Curtin Access Plan to Unit Coordinators in week 1 of each study period.

More about Curtin Access Plans is available at this link: [Curtin Access Plan - Current Students](#)

Challenges and conflicts

When supporting a student to participate in their studies and tertiary life, you may encounter some challenges that you feel need to be addressed.

For example, educators may not always be aware of your role or requirements and may perceive that you are there to provide general support to the wider class or feel that you have a greater role in supporting the student beyond the tasks you have been employed for. Always try to communicate directly with the educator about the purpose and limits of your involvement.

If a problem arises (or persists) in relation to your role, communicate your concerns to the student, AccessAbility Services and/or your employer about the best approach to address the issue.

If a student says or does anything that causes you to worry, ensure you firstly discuss this with the student and notify AccessAbility Services and/or your employer if unable to resolve.

Complaints

The University has a documented process for handling student grievances and complaints. Please see the [Integrity and Standards Unit website](#) for more information about lodging complaints.

The External Support Worker can also raise issues with AccessAbility Services.

Curtin University's support services

AccessAbility Services

Provides a range of services and supports to Curtin students who have a medical condition and/or a disability to assist the students with their studies. Once a student has provided AccessAbility Services with documentation of their condition, the student can receive assistance without having to disclose their condition to others in the university.

AccessAbility Services can also assist students who are recognised carers of a person with a disability or medical condition.

AccessAbility Services can be contacted on access.ability@curtin.edu.au or by phoning reception on 08 9266 7850.

Psychological and Counselling Services

Available for students with academic or personal concerns. Psychologists with the service understand issues faced by university students and offer confidential, free counselling.

Student Wellbeing Advisory Service

Student Wellbeing Advisors can assist with a range of study related and personal issues. Advisors are accessible by phone, email or on-line and appointments are not required.

Curtin Health Services

The University also has a health service located in Building 109, Level1. Students who have a Medicare card can be bulk billed. Find out more at:

Link to the full range of support services [Personal support | Current Students \(curtin.edu.au\)](#)

Student Guild – Student assist

Curtin Student Guild's Student Assist area can provide independent, impartial support and advocacy on a range of academic, financial and welfare matters. The Student Assist services are free for all Curtin students. The Student Guild is independent from the University and all advice is confidential.

Glossary of commonly used terms

This website explains common university jargon and is a useful guide for students and support workers.

study.curtin.edu.au/undergraduate/uni-words/

Guidelines Confirmation:

I can confirm the following:

- I have read and understood Curtin University's Guidelines for External Support Workers
- I have completed the Curtin Campus Induction
- I confirm that I have relevant Certificates of Currency for Work Cover Insurance and/or Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance from the agency with whom I am engaged (where applicable) and can provide them to AccessAbility Services upon request
- I have provided the necessary documents to AccessAbility Services:
 - Certificate of Completion of the Curtin Campus Induction
 - a copy of my Working with Children's Check

I agree to work within the guidelines in my role as an External Support Worker.

Name: _____

Agency: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____