



Disability Policy

Heriot-Watt University is committed to equal opportunities for all, irrespective of disability, as stated in the Equal Opportunities Policy, and is committed to the principles of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001. This policy statement and associated procedures are a statement of intent by the University.

It is unlawful to discriminate against disabled persons in connection with employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services or the disposal or management of premises, and in the employment and education of disabled persons. Heriot-Watt University is a major public institution involved in the provision of tertiary education and it therefore has responsibilities not to discriminate against disabled people or students and to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs.

Within the legislation, disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The University's aims in respect of access and employment are stated in this document. The provisions in respect of disabled students are contained in the publication, *Information for Students with Disabilities*.

Responsibility

The purpose of this statement is to provide guidance and information to members of the University community on how best to integrate the principles and practice of equality in respect of disability into all aspects of University life. All members of the University community are responsible for playing their part in achieving the aims of this policy.

The Planning and Management Executive and senior managers in the University fully support the policy and the Equal Opportunities Committee, acting for the University Court, has ultimate responsibility for its implementation and development.

Policy Commitments

Access

The University will endeavour to undertake all reasonable steps to:

- to improve access for all persons: employees, students and visitors, in the built environment, and to services.
- ensure that whenever possible the best standards are incorporated into all new, reconstructed or altered buildings.
- provide efficient information to people with disabilities regarding matters which affect them, including equal access to information, decision-making and means of communications.
- develop minimum standards for all printed publicity.

Employment

The legislation makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate unjustifiably/unreasonably against a disabled person in the field of employment. It also places a duty on employers to make reasonable

adjustments to prevent any substantial disadvantage which a job applicant or disabled employee may experience in comparison with non-disabled people. Such adjustments may include where economic alterations to premises, equipment, selection procedures, training, work procedures, etc. The employer is under an obligation to make such adjustments if he or she has knowledge of an employee's disability, or could reasonably be expected to know of it.

It is the University's intention to appoint the best person for the job, and to do so legally. Equally it is committed to ensuring that disabled people receive full and proper consideration throughout the whole recruitment process.

The University will: -

- Consider areas of under-representation within the workforce, and any positive measures, which can be adopted to redress this.
- Welcome applications from disabled people.
- Monitor all aspects of the recruitment process and workforce statistics in order to identify action required to implement this policy successfully.
- Ensure that disabled employees have equality of opportunity with regard to career development.
- Retain, wherever possible, employees who become disabled in post. Appropriate retraining and rehabilitation will be considered.
- Work closely with the individual and, if required specialist agencies in implementing the policy.
- Send copies of the relevant job vacancy (in the preferred medium where possible) to all people with disabilities who request these.

Educational Services

The legislation aims to ensure that disabled people have equal opportunities to benefit from, and contribute to, the learning and services available in higher education institutions. It is unlawful to discriminate against disabled people or students by treating them less favourably than others. In addition, the University is required to provide certain reasonable adjustments to provision where students or other disabled people might otherwise be disadvantaged.

At Heriot-Watt University, provision for disabled students is detailed in the publication, *Information for Students with Disabilities*. This stipulates that the University will:

- Select all applicants on the basis of their ability to pursue successfully a course of academic study.
- Provide alternative teaching and learning approaches for specific requirements.
- Organise individual packages of learning, technical, financial or personal support in conjunction with internal departments and external agencies.
- Strive to exploit advances in technology to the full advantage of the student.
- Offer students with disabilities and special needs appropriate advice and support throughout their University career through the:

- Disability Adviser
 - Dyslexia Study Skills Adviser
 - Technology Adviser
 - Other staff as appropriate
- Make special provision for examination arrangements as required.
 - Provide advice and training to staff on specific areas of disability, best practice and current legislation

In addition, the University will strive, where practical and economic, to create a teaching and learning environment, which is accessible to all its students. This will be achieved through compliance with, and reference to

- Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice, Section 3 – Students with Disabilities
- Teachability – Creating an Accessible Curriculum for Students with Disabilities

Implementation

In translating the above principles into practice, Heriot-Watt University will make use of a variety of sources of advice and information, as appropriate. The University has considerable in-house expertise, both in academic schools such as the School of Management and Languages, as well as in service departments such as the

- University Health Service
- Human Resources
- Estates Office
- Disability Adviser (Student Welfare Services).

In addition, a number of outside agencies may be drawn on for advice and resources. These will include the

- Disability Service Team Employment Service
- Disability Rights Commission

specific disability organisations e.g.

- Royal National Institute for the Blind
- Royal National Institute for the Deaf
- Dyslexia Association

organisations relevant to disability in the education sector such as

- LEAD (Linking Education and Disability)
- SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities)
- Scottish Disability Team

The University will therefore, over a period of time, develop procedures which will implement the Act in practice. Members of staff requiring information or advice may approach the University Human Resources Office either directly or via line management. Students requiring help may approach the Disability Adviser (Student Welfare Services), either directly or through their Schools.

Disability awareness training is provided through the University's Staff Development Programme and as part of Induction training.

Disability Advisory Group

A Disability Advisory Group exists to monitor and develop the policy and its implementation. It is a Sub-Committee of the Equal Opportunities Committee. Recommendations for action will be submitted to the Planning and Management Executive.

Membership

Chair: Mr Michael Breaks, University Librarian

Representatives

from: Schools and Postgraduate Institutes
University Health Service
Human Resources
Library
Computing Services
Estates Office
Students Association (VP - Welfare)
Academic Registry
Catering and Residences
Disability Adviser (*ex-officio*)

Remit

- To keep under review the University's policy in this area and legislation relevant to it.
- To monitor the implementation of the policy within the University.
- To ensure that all Heads of School/Sections have a copy of the Policy and are aware of their responsibilities in relation to implementation of the Policy.
- To meet once a term to agree any recommendations for action to go to the Principal's Management Group.
- To liaise actively with the Staff Development Unit to ensure that appropriate staff training in disability awareness and current legislation in this area can be offered.
- To conduct an annual review to identify areas of best practice and potential gaps in provision for compliance with legislation, and to report to the Equal Opportunities Committee.