

# **Sport Scholarship Programmes- Academic Flexibility Policy**

**March 2023**

**This document outlines the policy agreement between Heriot-Watt University and the host of Sport Scholarship Programmes at each campus location, regarding the academic flexibility concessions for student athletes.**

## **Background**

Heriot-Watt University is one of the lead institutions in the UK in its provision for academic flexibility (AF) for athletes. Introduced in 2014 and revised in line with the launch of the Sport Scholarship Programmes (SSP) in 2022, this policy recognises the contribution that sport makes to a student's journey. This policy supports the ambition of Heriot-Watt University, to attract and assist the very best student athletes from across the world, at all campus locations.

## Policy Statement

The University policy on AF for Sport Scholars is as follows:

1. Heriot-Watt University has a policy of supporting sport scholars, who are either part of the Sport Scholarship Programmes (SSP) or who represent Heriot-Watt University in sporting competition, to combine their academic studies with their commitment to their sport.
2. The University recognises that the primary purpose of a sport scholar at the University is to pursue an academic programme to the best of their intellectual ability and that a pro-active approach, wherever practicable, should be adopted towards supporting talented sport scholars to manage these academic commitments alongside significant training, coaching or competition obligations.
3. The University is committed to providing flexibility to students so that they may excel in both their chosen sport and their academic studies.
4. There will be no compromise on the academic standards required for the attainment of a credit in any university course.
5. The quality of the learning experience must always be sufficient to enable students to achieve all the programme's specified learning outcomes.
6. Responsibilities- (SSP)
  - a. It is the responsibility of the Athlete Lifestyle & Advocacy Coordinator (ALAC), or equivalent, at each campus location to write to each School at the beginning of each academic year to notify Directors of Learning and Teaching (DLT) on which of their students are part of the programme and as such fall under this policy.
  - b. It is the responsibility of each DLT to inform the Personal Tutor of the AF Policy and of each Sport Scholar who then informs the Course Leader on a Semester basis.
  - c. It is the responsibility of the Sport Scholar to communicate promptly, any sporting commitment that might affect their attendance or assessment, by emailing the Course Leader and copying in their Personal Tutor and ALAC, to validate the request.
  - d. It is the responsibility of the Course Leader and Personal Tutor to provide appropriate guidance and support to the Sport Scholar, in line with the AF

Policy.

7. Responsibilities – (Non-Sport Scholar) Student Athlete:

- a. It is the responsibility of the Student Athlete to communicate promptly, any sporting commitment that might affect their attendance or assessment, by emailing the Course Leader, and copying in their Personal Tutor, to validate the request.
- b. It is the responsibility of the Personal Tutor and Course Leader to provide appropriate guidance and support to the student.
- c. Should the Personal Tutor and Course Leader require confirmation from the relevant student body regarding the legitimacy of any absence then they should contact the appropriate student elected representative.

## **Guidance Notes (Sport Scholarship Programmes)**

### **- Scope**

The SSP encompass the Sport Scholarship Programme and Coaching Scholarships each designed to improve the sport performance experience for students at Heriot-Watt University.

The Sport Scholarship Programme is an application-based programme designed to embed a high-performance training environment into a sports scholar's weekly schedule. Our scholarships operate on a top up basis, acting as a fully inclusive method to ensure each individual can reach their full potential in their chosen sport while simultaneously reaching their full academic potential studying at Heriot-Watt University. Sport scholarships are available to HWU students studying at any of our campus locations. There are two categories of SSP, Individual Sport Scholarship and Club Performance Scholarships.

The Coaching Scholarships are for postgraduate students who will be responsible for leading, or supporting, the coaching of the Sports Union club. They will also drive recruitment of the club and work closely with the Marketing and Communications teams to produce marketing and social media materials to promote the club and recruit new students to join and study at Heriot-Watt University.

### **- Sport Scholar Requirements**

Through this policy the University is demonstrating a commitment to supporting sport scholars. There is however a requirement from the student to ensure that the relevant school is aware, in an amount of time that is deemed reasonable to both the student and the school, of when AF is required.

### **- School Support**

The ALAC, or equivalent, will write to each School at the beginning of each academic year to notify the DLT on which of their students are part of the programme and as such fall under this policy. It is the responsibility of each DLT to inform the Personal Tutor of each Sport Scholar and the SSP Academic Flexibility Policy, who then informs the Course Leader on a Semester basis. It is the responsibility of the student to communicate promptly, any sporting commitment that might affect their attendance or assessment, by emailing the Course Leader, and copying in their Personal Tutor and ALAC, to validate the request. It is

the responsibility of the Course Leader and Personal Tutor to provide appropriate guidance and support to the student.

In some circumstances due to the nature of some sports training and competition calendars, typically in sports such as Football, Squash, Judo, Rugby and Swimming, an individual learning plan would be advisable.

## - Examples

The following examples are of situations where AF can be applied within a particular school:

### All student athletes

|                                                                  |            |                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>An athlete has an away match, representing the University</b> | Issue      | A student is playing for a university team versus Aberdeen on a Wednesday afternoon and must leave at 9am, therefore missing all lectures. |
|                                                                  | Conclusion | The athlete notifies their lecturer(s) and collects the notes from the relevant learning platform.                                         |
| <b>An athlete cannot attend a lecture</b>                        | Issue      | An athlete needs to travel to a competition on a Friday morning during semester and misses their lectures that day.                        |
|                                                                  | Conclusion | The athlete notifies their lecturer(s) and collects the notes from the relevant learning platform.                                         |

### SSP Only

|                                                              |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>A sport scholar will miss a lecture on a weekly basis</b> | Issue      | A Football player is required to train full time through the semester and as such misses all their lectures on a Tuesday and Thursday morning.                                                                                                                                                     |
|                                                              | Conclusion | The sport scholar chooses a course that does not clash with their training and/or notifies their Personal Tutor at the beginning of the semester and collects the notes on a weekly basis.                                                                                                         |
| <b>A sport scholar requests an extension for coursework</b>  | Issue      | A Squash athlete qualifies for the World Junior Championships in February so requires two weeks off University.                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                              | Conclusion | The sport scholar contacts their Personal Tutor to notify them of their absence. The athlete discusses a possible extension based on the length of time required to complete the coursework that does not impact on sports performance and is equal to the length of time given to other students. |
| <b>A sport scholar</b>                                       | Issue      | A coaching scholar is coaching a SU Club who are attending a BUCS competition that is the same day as one                                                                                                                                                                                          |



|                                                         |            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <b>cannot sit an examination due to competition</b>     |            | of their exams.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|                                                         | Conclusion | The coaching scholar contacts their Personal Tutor and agrees to take the exam in the next exam diet as a first sitting. In certain circumstances an alternative means of assessment can be applied.                                                                                                               |
| <b>A sport scholar wishes to study part time</b>        | Issue      | A Swimming athlete is training full time and unable to cope with full time study                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                         | Conclusion | The sport scholar discusses an appropriate part time route with their Personal Tutor. The number of courses per semester will depend on the importance of the year. For example, if it is a Commonwealth games year then the athlete may choose to do two courses over the year and do six courses the year after. |
| <b>A sport scholar wishes to postpone their studies</b> | Issue      | A karate athlete qualifies for the Olympics and wishes to postpone their studies.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|                                                         | Conclusion | The sport scholar is encouraged to complete the remainder of the semester and then postpone their studies until such time (likely one calendar year) as they can return to study at the point to which they postponed.                                                                                             |