watt a difference

Donor Impact Report 2020
In the best of times, we wish our alumni and supporters good health and happiness. During these extraordinary times, this sentiment takes on new meaning.

Kerryn Kirkpatrick
Head of Development and Alumni

#OneWatt appeal for our Student Emergency Support Fund

“This year the support of our donors has been even more vital. The impact of COVID-19 on our students has been profound; many were plunged into immediate financial difficulties.

“We quickly launched a Student Emergency Support Appeal and received a terrific response. Thank you for your support which enabled us to create a fund to help students facing unexpected financial hardship, particularly those without family or friends to rely on. Your generosity means we can ensure no student is left behind due to the impact of the pandemic.

“I'd like to share some words of gratitude from recipients of this support:

“I lost my part time job due to the lock down and can’t give up the tenancy on my flat and go home, because my mum is having treatment for cancer. Under these circumstances, I can’t add to their problems and ask them for financial help. I am very grateful for this support. Thank you so much.”

2nd year Languages student (Edinburgh campus)

“I cannot imagine how I would have weathered those trying times without it and I pray that someday, I will be able to repay the kindness shown to me.”

1st year Degree Entry Programme in Engineering student (Dubai campus)
In 2012, Dr Robert M Buchan – the mining entrepreneur, philanthropist and Heriot-Watt graduate – made a transformational donation to the University. He gifted £1.3 million to create a prestigious Chair in Sustainable Energy Engineering, and Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer was to become the Chair’s first appointee.

At the time of the appointment, Dr Buchan commented: “I have always believed in giving forward and focussing on meeting future needs. My hope is that the Chair will keep Scotland at the forefront of this rapidly evolving discipline, and I am certain that Professor Maroto-Valer will be key to its success.”

The establishment of the Robert M Buchan Chair in Sustainable Energy Engineering has been hugely important, supporting the University’s strategy to appoint pioneering researchers working to address key global challenges. Over the past eight years the impact of the Chair has been considerable, with Professor Maroto-Valer and her team addressing critical problems in energy, and developing new technologies to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.

Since taking up the Chair, Professor Maroto-Valer has grown her team from 15 to over 50 researchers, and the earlier Centre for Innovation in Carbon Capture and Storage she established, has transitioned into the world-leading Research Centre for Carbon Solutions (RCCS) – an interdisciplinary engineering centre delivering innovation across the whole Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) chain and clean energy solutions to meet net-zero targets.

“I have always believed in giving forward and focussing on meeting future needs.”

Dr Robert M Buchan

Since developing novel materials like clay-based sponges that capture CO₂, to creating aviation fuels made from agricultural waste and captured CO₂, we are exploring many angles. We are approaching this challenge quite holistically to develop low-carbon systems that will allow decarbonisation across electricity, transport and heat.” Professor Maroto-Valer

Most recently, Professor Maroto-Valer has been selected by funders UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) as the UK’s Decarbonisation Champion, a role that aims to place the UK at the forefront of the global shift to Clean Growth. She will also lead an ambitious project to develop a unique £20 million Industrial Decarbonisation Research and Innovation Centre (IDRIC), thought to be the world’s first, at the University’s campus in Edinburgh.
Each year, an outstanding final year Heriot-Watt student receives the Fiona Watson Memorial Award which facilitates a fully funded, three month internship with the UN, or a similar international organisation. The award honours the memory of Fiona Watson – a languages graduate of Heriot-Watt and a Political Adviser to the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the UN, and one of 22 peacekeepers killed in a terrorist attack in Iraq in 2003.

The most recent beneficiary was Jack Holmes, whose very successful three month internship was extended by a further three months and led to a consultancy role with the UN.

“My time as a Fiona Watson Memorial Award recipient has been the most rewarding experience of my life so far: it enriched my understanding of international affairs in a way no other experience would have permitted and I have developed a much richer and deeper understanding of UN work around the world.

“I joined the UN’s Policy and Best Practices Service (PBPS) and the Integrated Training Service, spending most of my time working for the Light Coordination Mechanism and Civil Affairs teams. But I also had the chance to support the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence team in the development of their upcoming handbook; the Strategic Force Generation and Capability Planning Cell with translations and presentations, as well as various other teams on different projects…… there was never a shortage of opportunities to use the translation and interpretation skills I had learned at Heriot-Watt. The experience has honed my skills and will stand me in good stead for my future career.

“I must express my most heartfelt thanks to the Watson family for having selected me for this award. It has been a privilege to do my part in perpetuating Fiona’s memory, as those before me have done, and I hope that this means of honouring her legacy can continue for many years to come.”
Many of you support the University’s Annual Fund, through gifts of all sizes, all of which help our students to achieve their academic, personal and professional potential. In 2019/20 we received around 1,420 donations to this fund.

Through the Annual Fund we provide a diverse range of support which helps students to develop and progress and enjoy an enriching experience while studying with us. Your generosity means students can become the best they can be.

Each year the Annual Fund provides Access Bursaries to those from under-represented and diverse backgrounds and scholarships to offset course fees and support student living costs. This support can make it possible for a student to embark on an education and successfully complete their studies, so they can go on to have a flourishing career. It also supports a variety of skills development activity which encourages personal growth, allows students to learn new life skills and promotes health and wellbeing e.g. sports scholarships and our music residency programme which make non-core activities more accessible to students, – all essential components of a positive and beneficial university experience.

In addition, the Annual Fund disperses grants to students to undertake projects that assist their academic learning, developing their real-world experience, such as opportunities to attend industry events, take part in competitions, or present their work to potential employers.

1,420 donations received in 2019/20

Delivering greater impact

During 2019/20 your support of the Annual Fund allowed us to provide bursaries, scholarships and student grants totalling £116,000.

Thanks to your continued and increased support we have also managed to double the level of Access Bursaries made available each year, so that many more deserving students can access a degree regardless of background.

Developing talent and skills

Here are just a few examples of the support you as donors have provided:

A Mechanical Engineering student and his team are using an Annual Fund grant to enter their device in the 2021 global Unmanned Aircraft Systems Challenge.

A group of Fashion and Textile students are using Annual Fund support to develop their entrepreneurship through the “Why Not!” pop-up shop space, which they have created to display their work and connect with the local community.

The University’s Robotics Society is using an Annual Fund grant to run skills development workshops and a competition each semester where students can apply the skills they’ve learned.
In January 2019, Heriot-Watt University alumnus and Managing Director of YTL Corporation Berhad, Dato’ Victor Yeoh Seok Kian, gifted £1 million to Heriot-Watt University Malaysia (HWUM) to widen access to a UK higher education for Malaysian students.

Through this legacy fund, the Tan Sri Yeoh Tiong Lay Global Scholarship Programme (TSYTL) was established offering 50% and 100% scholarships to Malaysian students to help them study at Heriot-Watt.

Dato’ Victor Yeoh commented:
“Education is one of my greatest passions. The scholarships will support deserving individuals who would otherwise be denied opportunities to pursue higher education, and each recipient will in turn contribute to the future of Malaysia.”

The TSYTL has already delivered considerable impact; in 2019 53 students received a Global Scholarship award, and another 21 scholarships were presented to students in Heriot-Watt University Malaysia’s January 2020 intake.

Professor Mustafik Al-Atasi, Provost and CEO, Heriot-Watt University Malaysia and Dato’ Victor Yeoh with scholarship recipients

“This scholarship will help me to pursue my studies and my dreams.”
Isaac Ch’ng Phang Chorh
(MA Business and Finance)

“Now I am able to obtain an education that will help me move up in life.”
Kishen Manirajan
(BSc Actuarial Science)

The most recent Tabriz Award winner was Shing Cheng Chan Chang who obtained his PhD in Petroleum Engineering. Shing’s exceptional multi-disciplinary work was considered extremely novel, applying machine learning algorithms to a variety of key problems in reservoir engineering – a fast-evolving field of research with the potential to revolutionise many areas of the geosciences. His research has already been published in a number of international peer-reviewed journals and cited over 20 times since publication.

The Tabriz Award is conferred on an Institute of GeoEnergy Engineering PhD student and provides each recipient with a prize of £1200 and £300 to their supporting academic.

Exceptional PhD student supported by THE TABRIZ AWARD
PROMOTING INCLUSION: how Baillie Gifford is lighting the way through Brightest Watts

Our Brightest Watts Wider Access programme, supported by Baillie Gifford, is helping to break down the barriers that can prevent bright and talented young people accessing higher education. A key part of the programme is the Brightest Watts Summer Week and over the last ten years nearly 600 pupils have participated in this. Helping young people from some of the most deprived communities in the central belt to consider a university education, the Summer Week provides information, guidance and opportunities to learn about university life, sparking aspiration and lighting the way to higher education.

Baillie Gifford also supports our Access Bursaries, helping students for whom a lack of funds is a barrier to university study, by providing £1,000 per year per student. Recent beneficiaries include Jamie Gallagher, Lena Mainland, Oliver Tate and Saakshi Thakur – all of whom were previous Brightest Watts Summer Week participants.

WATT’S NEW

Boosting diversity in brewing and distilling – the Brewgooder bursary

An exciting partnership between Heriot-Watt and Brewgooder – the Scottish social enterprise brewery – has created a new bursary scheme to encourage more black, Asian and minority ethnic students to carve out a career in brewing and distilling. Successful bursary students will receive £2000 each year from Brewgooder for a total of four years whilst studying the BSc (Hons) Brewing and Distilling programme at the Edinburgh campus. In addition, Brewgooder has pledged to offer hands-on work experience with its award-winning team in Glasgow which will provide invaluable industry experience.

PhD Research Studentship Gift

The Gowenlock-Lindsell Doctoral Research Studentship has been generously created by Dr Balbir Singh and his wife Gisele Singh. It supports a PhD Chemistry student who will receive a tuition fee waiver of up to £12,500 per academic year for a total of three years. Stephen Wark has been selected as the first recipient; his PhD project aims to discover new ways of generating renewable energy from waste heat.

Access Bursary support from The Murray Foundation

Four deserving students from low-income backgrounds will be able to study an undergraduate degree through new support from The Murray Foundation. Each student will receive £2000 per year for each year of study.

ClimateWorks Foundation support Geochemical knowledge exchange

Dr. Phil Renforth is an engineer and geochemist working to understand how reacting carbon dioxide with rocks and minerals may be able to help prevent climate change. The ClimateWorks Foundation is generously supporting a knowledge exchange workshop, ‘Geochemical NET Research in Progress’, with a $20,000 donation. Dr. Renforth will lead the event which is expected to take place in Edinburgh in 2021.

GROWING ENTERPRISE: Santander and Heriot-Watt

We have launched a new enterprise programme, Entrepreneurial Communities, to help business growth in Orkney and Galashiels, made possible through Santander Universities support as part of its Enterprise & Entrepreneurship Fund. Heriot-Watt was one of 15 UK universities to receive support from a £1 million prize fund, and the only Scottish university to receive the top award of £100,000.

Entrepreneurial Communities looks to support local economies and connect start-up businesses and entrepreneurs across Orkney and Galashiels and was launched in partnership with local community organisations in these areas. It aims to help any entrepreneur through training and business support, and includes a £50,000 funding pot.
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