



Mental Health Policy for Students

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the University's position on mental health support to students and the action that the University will take to respond to concerns.

2. Scope of the policy

The policy covers all Heriot-Watt University students on the campuses at Edinburgh, Scottish Borders, and Orkney. The policy does not apply to the Dubai Campus due to the different staff structure and legal context. The policy relates to students and support to staff in dealing with the mental health of students. The University's Human Resources Department is responsible for the policy and procedure for dealing with staff that have mental health problems.

3. Objectives of the Policy

The University is committed to developing support services and structures to achieve the following objectives:

- To provide a co-ordinated approach to the management of students' mental health difficulties and to deliver effective management of cases where there is a serious risk of harm or suicide
- To develop a co-ordinated approach to the promotion of the mental health of all students and ensure that the University's action is consistent with the Scottish Government's initiatives for the prevention of suicide and promotion of mental well being
- To engage with external partners such as NHS Lothian to promote and improve access for students to community resources

4. Strategy to achieve the objectives

On behalf of the University, the Director of Student Support and Accommodation has responsibility for co-ordinating and implementing a strategy to achieve the objectives outlined above.

5. Context of the Policy

5.1 University Context

The policy has been developed in relation to guidance issued to Higher Education Institutions in 2006 by the Committee for the Promotion of Mental Well Being in Higher Education, a joint Universities UK and SCOP (Standing Conference of Principals) group.

The University has a duty to respect and respond to the rights and support needs of students with mental health problems. However, the University also has to balance the rights of students with mental health problems with the overall duty of care it has to all of its students and staff.

5.2 Legal Context

There are two pieces of legislation that are particularly relevant in setting out how the University should respond to the needs of students with mental health problems.

5.2.1 The Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2003

This Act sets out how a person should be treated if they have a mental illness, a learning difficulty or a personality disorder and what their rights are. The Mental Health Tribunal for Scotland was set up by the Act to make decisions about the compulsory care and treatment of people with mental disorders.

5.2.2 The Equality Act 2010

This Act recognises that people with substantial and long term mental health problems will require reasonable adjustments to be made by the Institution they attend. In addition, the Act places a responsibility on the University to develop an 'Anticipatory Duty' and this requires the University to put general support mechanisms in place for all students who may have a mental health problem.

The Act also requires Higher Education Institutions to actively promote disability equality rather than merely reacting in response to individual student requirements.

6. Definition of Mental Health

The University recognises that the term mental health covers a broad spectrum of problems and issues ranging from promoting the mental well being of all students to responding to the needs of students with severe and enduring mental illness. Further information on common mental health problems is contained in Appendix 2.

7. Recognising Mental Health problems

There may be multiple potential signs and symptoms that might indicate that a student has a mental health difficulty. These will vary by individual. Some signs to look out for include:

- changes in behaviour, such as becoming more withdrawn, aggressive or volatile
- physical signs such as cuts to wrists or a lack of energy
- changes in patterns of attendance
- changes in academic performance.

Any member of staff who is concerned, whether in an academic department or support service, should contact either the Director of Student Support and Accommodation, Senior Counsellor, Disability Advisor, or Student Adviser (for students at SBC) for an initial discussion and advice. Advice can also be sought from the University Health Service. Contact details are given in Appendix 1.

8. Management of Mental Health Problems

8.1 Roles and Responsibilities

The Director of Student Support and Accommodation has the lead role in managing and co-ordinating the University's management of student mental health problems. The Director will work closely with the Physician-in-Charge at the University Health Service in this process.

Whilst University staff do have a key role in responding to the needs of students with mental health problems, the University recognises that external agencies have a statutory duty to carry out assessment and treatment of serious mental health problems or emergencies.

The University Data Protection and Disability Disclosure policies apply to the process of managing mental health concerns and sharing information about these concerns. However, it is important that staff are aware that the need to maintain confidentiality is over-riden in the event of a mental health emergency, such as suicidal ideas, or concern about the risk of self-harm or harm to others.

8.2 Mental Health Emergencies

8.2.1 Concerns

Any staff member or student who is seriously concerned about the mental health of a student should contact the Director of Student Support and Accommodation or another staff member in that department to raise their concern. The University Health Service can also be consulted and a decision will be made between Student Support and Accommodation and the University Health Service about future action.

If a staff member feels unsafe or threatened by a student at Edinburgh campus, Security should be informed by contacting the Control Room. Contact details are given in Appendix 1. Security staff will then liaise with Student Support and Accommodation and the University Health Service. For emergencies at SBC Campus, the Student Adviser should be contacted who will then liaise with the relevant services.

When an incident occurs Out of Hours at Edinburgh Campus, Security should be informed as should the Senior Warden. They will then seek advice from the Emergency Services. For emergencies at SBC, Security staff should contact the emergency services and the Student Adviser can also be contacted. All staff should ensure that the Director of Student Support and Accommodation is informed of the incident the next working day.

8.2.2 Hospital Admissions

For students at Edinburgh Campus, the University Health Service will liaise with the relevant hospital staff and involve Student Support and Accommodation in the discharge arrangements as required.

For students at SBC, the Student Adviser will make contact with hospital staff and discuss discharge arrangements, where possible.

8.3 Non-Emergencies

8.3.1 Case Conferences

The Director of Student Support and Accommodation is responsible for organising case conferences to discuss the management of the support needs of students whose mental health is giving cause for concern. The case conference will involve relevant staff including those from the University Health Service, other staff from Student Support Services and relevant academic staff. The student will be expected to give their consent for this. If a student refuses, the Mental Health Advisory Group as described below may be convened to make a decision about future action.

Any member of staff who is concerned about the mental health of any student should contact the Director of Student Support and Accommodation for a discussion and a decision will then

be made about whether a case conference is required. The Director of Student Support and Accommodation will also monitor closely the Incident Report Forms, completed in respect of student behaviour on campus, to identify cases where a case conference may be necessary.

8.3.2 Mental Health Advisory Group

The University recognises that it will at times be presented with dilemmas arising from the rights and needs of students with mental health problems and the responsibility of the University to protect and support the student community as a whole. The University is committed to carrying out a thorough consideration of the circumstances of each case, in line with other relevant University policies.

The Director of Student Support and Accommodation will convene a Mental Health Advisory Group which will meet whenever there is significant concern about a student's mental health and the level of risk presented to the student him/herself, other students and/or staff.

The group will consist of a University Physician, the Senior Counsellor, a member of the Student Association's Advice team, a relevant member of academic staff and input from other specialists or involved parties, as deemed necessary by the Director of Student Support and Accommodation. The Group will make recommendations to the Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary who will decide on the course of action to be followed.

The group will consider issues raised such as:

- The impact of the course of study on a student's mental health
- The impact of a student's mental health on their academic work and the work of others
- Whether a student should: remain in University Accommodation; remain enrolled at the University with no conditions; remain enrolled at the University subject to conditions; remain enrolled at the University subject to conditions but with eligibility for University managed residential accommodation reviewed; suspend their period of study
- Re-admission following suspension of study or leave of absence

8.3.4 Disciplinary procedures

Where a student's behaviour poses a threat to the safety of other person's or University property, action may be taken under Regulation 50, made in pursuance of Ordinance 9 (Student Discipline) which sets out the offences and the penalties that can be applied.

9. Admissions Procedures

Where an applicant declares on the relevant admissions form that he/she has a mental health problem, the Recruitment and Admissions Department or admissions staff in the Schools or Institutes should inform the Disability Advisor as soon as possible.

The Disability Advisor has the lead role in arranging for an assessment of the student's study support and examination requirements and will advise on any special arrangements through the student record system. The Disability Advisor will involve Academic Staff, the University Health Centre and/or the Student Counsellor as appropriate.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Director of Student Support and Accommodation is responsible for reviewing and monitoring action taken under this policy.

Appendix 1

Heriot-Watt University Contacts

Student Support and Accommodation

Director:	Christine Johnston 0131 451 4505 C.Johnston@hw.ac.uk
Senior Counsellor	Carol Murray 0131 451 3387 C.J.Murray@hw.ac.uk
Student Adviser (SBC)	Eleanor Drummond 01896 892178 E.Drummond@hw.ac.uk
Disability Adviser	Lorraine Vallance 0131 451 3509 L.Vallance@hw.ac.uk
Senior Warden	Contact via Control on 3500 or Reception on 3501

University Health Service

Physician-in-Charge	Dr. Victor De Lima 0131 451 3010 V.R.F.De_Lima@hw.ac.uk
Practice Manager	Carol Pearson 0131 451 3010 C.Pearson@hw.ac.uk

Security

Riccarton:	
Control Room	3500
Security Manager	Bill Taylor 0131 451 3404 W.J.Taylor@hw.ac.uk

SBC:

Porter	2138
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Other University Staff who can be contacted

Kathy Patterson, Academic Registrar and Deputy Secretary	0131 451 3368 K.Patterson@hw.ac.uk
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Appendix 2

Further information on Mental Health Problems and Support Services

Depression and Anxiety

Depression and anxiety are the most common form of mental health problems. Depression most commonly presents as a lowering of mood with poor concentration, failing grades, loss of outside interests and withdrawal from academic and social activity. It is sometimes accompanied by a risk of suicide and self harm. People who have become depressed may not recognise what is happening and only seek help when prompted by others. Depression can be treated by psychological therapies and/ or medication

Anxiety is a feeling of unease. Everybody experiences it when faced with a stressful situation, for example before an exam or an interview, or during a worrying time such as illness.

However, for one in ten people in the UK, anxiety interferes with normal life. Excessive anxiety is often associated with other psychiatric conditions, such as depression. Anxiety is considered abnormal when:

- it is very prolonged or severe
- it happens in the absence of a stressful event
- it is interfering with everyday activities such as going to lectures or socialising

Anxiety is usually best treated by psychological therapies such as anxiety management, graded exposure and education. Occasionally medication may be required.

Severe and Enduring Mental Health problems

Most severe and enduring mental health problems such as bipolar affective disorder (also known as manic depressive illness), and schizophrenic illnesses are treatable and would not in themselves mean that a student could not engage in academic studies.

Alcohol and drugs

Excessive alcohol use is likely to have an impact on students' mental health whether alcohol is being used as a way to cope with underlying mental health problems or whether it is having an adverse affect on the mood of the student. Recent research has shown that excessive use of cannabis can also cause mental health problems.

Eating Disorders

Eating Disorders such as anorexia or bulimia are often first noticed by family, flatmates or colleagues. There are many potential cause of eating disorders but they can be linked to low self-esteem and fears about poor academic performance.

Psychological treatment can often help and if weight loss is severe a medical referral is essential.

Self-Harming Behaviour

Self-harm can include cutting, burning, bruising and hitting. The reasons for self-harm are complex and can seem difficult to understand. For many it is a way of managing difficult feelings and experiences.

Autistic Spectrum

Autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the way a person communicates and relates to people around them. Adults with autism have difficulties with everyday social interaction. Their ability to develop friendships is generally limited as is their capacity to understand other people's emotional expression.

Asperger syndrome, is a form of autism used to describe people who are usually at the higher functioning end of the autistic spectrum.

Personality Disorder

The term 'Personality disorder' is used to refer to an individual who displays enduring patterns of behavioural and emotional responses to events that are maladaptive and cause suffering either to themselves or others.

Other Sources of Information

Mental Health Foundation

The Mental Health Foundation website www.mentalhealth.org is an excellent source of information about resources in Scotland as well as further information on mental health issues in general. It can be accessed by clicking below:

[www.mentalhealth.org.uk/profilesites.cfm?areacode=mh_sites_scotland&pagecode=LISCAdvice and support](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/profilesites.cfm?areacode=mh_sites_scotland&pagecode=LISCAdvice%20and%20support)

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland

The Mental Welfare Commission runs a freephone advice line for service users, independent advocates and carers (call **0800 389 6809** during office hours). People who are concerned about their rights, or the rights of others who are receiving care and treatment, can contact the Commission using the freephone number.

People who provide services can contact the Commission for advice and information relating to their responsibilities (call **0131 222 6111** during office hours). The Commission also provides information leaflets for service users and carers that can be requested over the phone or accessed from their website www.mwscot.org.uk

