



Support for students who disclose a mental health condition

All applications to study at Heriot-Watt University are judged on academic and personal merit. Heriot-Watt University is committed to equal opportunities for all students.

When you apply for a place at University, you are invited to disclose whether you have a mental health condition. This does not tell us what the condition is or whether you will need any support. It is helpful if you tell us what the condition is and whether you feel that you will or will not need support. You can also speak to us if you are unsure whether you need support. It would be good to hear from you in advance of beginning your studies but you can, of course, ask for advice or make an appointment at any time to discuss any issues you have, or to find out more about the support we offer.

Mental health conditions are varied. Many students study effectively when diagnosed with a mental health condition, others will need, and are entitled to, support. This information sheet details the support that is available.

HWU Staff and Resources

HWU offer a range of resources designed to make students feel as supported as possible during their studies. These include, but are not limited to:

Wellbeing Team:

- Disability Advisor - the student's Disability Advisor is the primary point of contact when you disclose a mental health condition in your application to study. We offer advice, including arranging an appointment to discuss support and/or a referral to a colleague (see below) if appropriate, and deciding with you whether an application for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) is appropriate. Information on DSA can be found on your funding authority website.
- **Counsellors:** offer advice and support and an opportunity to think and talk about concerns. Our Counsellors are fully accredited with the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy. There is no set time limit for sessions and the service is free.
- **Wellbeing Groups** facilitated by the HWU Counselling Service.
- **Mental Health Advisor** – assessment and co-ordination of support for students with complex mental health difficulties and can act as a point of contact for the duration of their studies.
- **Mental Health Mentor** - offers co-ordination of support for students with complex mental health difficulties and can act as a point of contact for the duration of their studies.
- **Study Support Tutor** – offers strategies for studying effectively
- **Technology Advisor** – offers assistive software and IT aids to studying

Academic School and the wider University

- **Personal Tutor** - each student is assigned a personal tutor who is their first point of contact for any academic or personal issues they may experience throughout their time at university. Students should ensure that they know who their personal tutor is and meet with them if possible
- **School Disability Contact (SDC)** - liaises with School staff to ensure that the recommended support is put in place. The SDC can advocate on behalf of the student if they are experiencing any problems.
- **Academic Skills Workshops** – Power Hours are a range of workshops which are free to attend and are available throughout the academic year. These include practical strategies appropriate

for a range of topics including referencing, academic writing and critical thinking

- **Vision (our virtual learning environment) Support** - includes short interactive courses made available to students via an online resource
- **Training** and access to assistive software which offers support with the organisation of notes and ideas, proof reading and concentration issues.

It is important that prospective students contact the Disability Service at HWU as early as possible after accepting the offer of a place to study here.

We need time to assess your needs and arrange any relevant support. Support doesn't happen automatically; students have to speak to a Disability Advisor to implement support. You can bring someone with you to meetings if you choose.

Usually we will arrange an initial meeting with you. We will ask you to send or bring a copy of evidence of your diagnosis from a professional, such as a GP or Psychiatrist. We will discuss your experience of learning so far and any support that has been useful.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

This is additional funding that may be available to meet any additional study related costs that a student may incur as a consequence of their disability. If you require any funded support, we will arrange another appointment to have your needs assessed for funding through DSA. Further information on DSA can be found on our website:

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/disability.htm>

Coursework and exam support

We will discuss with you what (if any) support you need at University. We have a system whereby we let your teaching staff know what adjustment they make for you in classwork (such as providing notes in advance of lectures) and in exams (such as extra time).

In cases where complex support is required, we may prepare a 'learning profile' (LP) which is sent to named members of staff in your School then shared with your teaching staff.

The LP provides teaching and other relevant University staff with a bit of background information about you and details of more complex adjustments that need to be made for you in classwork and exams. This could be something like specific instructions about delivering a presentation. We will compose the learning profile with you. The wording is agreed and approved by you.

Any coursework/exam adjustment recommended is based on the needs of the individual.

Assistive Software

Assistive software can help if you are affected by fatigue, poor concentration or memory problems. Our Technology Advisor has made short videos that demonstrate the software and can provide advice and training. Here is a sample of the software available:

On the University network:

There are over 650 networked PCs on campus each installed with:

- Texthelp Read & Write Gold – this is an easy to use toolbar containing support tools to make reading, writing and research easier for you.
- Inspiration – this is a mind mapping software, sometimes referred to as spider diagrams. Its visual thinking and mind mapping tools are specifically designed to help facilitate the learning process and tap into each student's natural creativity.
- Audio Notetaker - this offers a visual and interactive form of note taking, one where audio, text and images/PowerPoint slides can be combined to create comprehensive notes, with all your information in one place.

Free to download:

You can download and install freeware assistive software on your own computer:

- Balabolka –produces text to speech or text to audio files.
<http://www.cross-plus-a.com/balabolka.htm>.

It can be linked with free high quality Scottish voices “Stuart” and “Heather”. <http://www.thescottishvoice.org.uk>

- WordTalk – is a text-to-speech plugin for Microsoft Word (Windows only). <http://www.wordtalk.org.uk>
- ssOverlay – places a coloured overlay onto computer screen to help reduce eye strain, words being blurry and glare when reading.
<http://ssoverlay.software.informer.com/download/>
- Apps - Some students find apps such as Evernote (which is free) and Penultimate helpful for capturing, storing and retrieving information easily to revise from.

Online support: The Big White Wall

The service provides **24/7 online peer and professional support**. Big White Wall provides a safe space online to get things off your chest, explore your feelings and learn how to improve and self-manage your mental health and wellbeing.

More than three quarters of members feel better as a result of using the service and nearly 90% use Big White Wall outside of 9-5pm. You can get support on the service at any time of the day or night, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

To join Big White Wall's supportive online community, simply go to www.bigwhitewall.com and sign up with your university email address. You then choose an anonymous username for your time on Big White Wall.

There is additional information regarding support available and assistive software on our website, including links to videos, guides and downloadable demos, as well as self-training material that you may wish

to look at: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/edinburgh/disability/assistive-technology.htm>

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