

## Support for Deaf students and students with hearing impairments at Heriot-Watt University

Heriot-Watt University (HWU) is committed to equal opportunities for all students. Applications to study at Heriot-Watt University are judged on academic and personal merit. If you are deaf or you have a hearing impairment you may want to discuss what support measures can be arranged to support, you to achieve your academic goals. This information sheet details the support that is available.

Studying at University is less structured than school or college. It involves an emphasis on the ability to study independently. This makes demands on a student's planning, organisation and time management skills. Other skills that are developed at university include working in partnership with other people in groups, laboratories or on projects; working on major pieces of work such as a dissertation; giving presentations, individually or as part of a group, and working to deadlines.

### 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:

- **British Sign Language Interpreters** HWU has a BSL support Coordinator and a team of BSL Interpreters
- **Disability Advisor** - the student's Disability Advisor is the primary point of contact for assessing/arranging support for the student
- **Assistive Technology Advisor** - Training and access to assistive software which offers support with the organisation of notes and ideas, researching and referencing for written work, proofreading and concentration issues.
- **School Disability Contact (SDC)** - the SDC distributes the student's Learning Profile (see below) and liaises with Academic 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.

- **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.
- **One to One study skills sessions** - to help students build on any academic skills they feel they would benefit from.
- **Counselling Service** to support emotional wellbeing.
- **Wellbeing events** – weekly events staffed by the Student Wellbeing Team.
- **Academic Skills Workshops** – Skills Hub webinars 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.
- **[Canvas](#) (our virtual learning environment) Support** – support is available online to help you to navigate and personalise Canvas.

## **Accessing Support**

Students' needs are assessed on a case-by-case basis and adjustments are never made for you automatically. Support can sometimes take a while to arrange so it is very important to contact the University's Disability Service as early as possible. If you are still deciding whether Heriot Watt is the right University for you, a Disability Advisor will be happy to meet you and introduce you to our service and everything we have to offer to help you decide. The Disability Advisor can assess your needs and arrange any relevant support well in advance of you enrolling so that it is in place for you when you start your studies. You can bring someone with you to meetings if you choose. **If you are a BSL user, we will need as much advance notice of this as possible so that we can ensure that an interpreter can be present when we meet.**

We will ask you to send confirmation of your hearing condition provided by a professional, such as an Educational Audiologist's report, a GP's letter or a copy of a study support plan from school or college. We will discuss your experience of learning so far and any support that has been useful in the past so that we can develop a new support plan for you.

## **Assessment of need**

We can arrange an assessment of need for you as well as organise personal support such as note-takers or interpreters via our Disability Advisors. Some support costs can be claimed back through the government funded Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) if you are eligible and a Disability Advisor will guide you through the application process. For students who are not eligible for this other options for funding are sometimes available so it is important to meet a Disability Advisor to discuss these. Support available, depending on your assessed needs, can include:

- Note-taker for lectures
- BSL Interpreters
- Assistive Software & training
- Specialised equipment
- Exam arrangements.

Hearing Dogs are welcome on campus.

## **Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)**

This is additional funding which may be available from the Government (SAAS/SFE) to meet any additional study related costs that a student may incur as a consequence of their disability. DSA funding covers three areas;

- Equipment and Software
- Consumables (printer cartridges, paper and copying) and Non-medical
- Personal Help (e.g. BSL communication support, mental health mentoring or specialist one-to-one study skills tuition).

If you require any funded support, we will arrange another appointment to have your needs to be assessed for funding through [Disabled Students Allowance \(DSA\)](#).

## **Examination and Coursework Adjustment Details**

Your coursework and exam adjustments will be discussed in full at your appointment with an Advisor. Any adjustment recommended is based on the needs of the individual. Examples follow but the list is not exhaustive:

Exam adjustments:

- Extra time in exams and timed class tests
- Use of a PC
- An allowance for disregarding of poor spelling, writing and grammar in handwritten exams
- Invigilator's instructions also to be available in writing
- Invigilators to be made aware of use of hearing aid (s)

Coursework adjustments:

- Lecture notes and slides provided in advance of the lecture
- Lecturers to be provided with a mic by student

Study skills:

- help with organisation, time management, pacing and managing the workload. Developing strategies for writing, note-taking, as required

Where your needs are complex, we will agree a Learning Profile with you that will be available to teaching staff.

## **Specialist Assistive Software**

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

- Texthelp Read & Write – this is an easy-to-use toolbar containing support tools for reading, writing and research tasks

Training is offered by the University's Assistive Technology Advisor to any student with a need to use assistive software and can be arranged through the Disability Office.

## **Loop systems**

The lecture theatres at our Edinburgh Campus are equipped with an infra-red induction loop system, and individual earphones or personal loops are available on request.

## **Alerting systems**

Arrangements are made to meet the individual concerned at a mutually suitable time/date to discuss their relevant needs and attention is given to the following key items:

1. An information leaflet is provided for reference and further support is offered if required.
2. A 'Personal Care Plan' (PCP) is agreed, and arrangements are made at a mutually suitable time/date to meet with the University's Fire Safety Officer discuss individual needs. The Deaf person is given a full briefing on fire safety awareness and emergency evacuation in relevant occupation areas.
3. For students in halls of residence, if not already in place, an arrangement is made to provide an integrated beacon/sounder/smoke detector in the person's bedroom and common lounge area within the student residence. This is linked to the fire alarm system and will detect the sound and flash in an emergency.
4. Students are expected to use the SafeZone app on their phones. This means that when the fire alarm is activated in a particular building on campus, their phone will vibrate, flash and a notification will be sent to their phone or tablet (it can be configured for a laptop or desktop PC too).
5. It is expected that students who are unable to hear a fire alarm will activate the SafeZone app on their phone to vibrate and place it so that they will feel the vibrations if the alarm goes off. It will be particularly important that they take responsibility for doing this before they go to sleep in any student halls on campus.
6. As an additional precaution when an alarm is activated, a trained security officer will check in on students who have a PCP disclosing they are unable to hear an alarm - providing it is safe to do so.

## **Other sources of support**

There is additional information regarding general 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.

## **Contact Information**

### **Edinburgh Campus**

+44 (0) 131 451 3386

[disability@hw.ac.uk](mailto:disability@hw.ac.uk)

### **Scottish Borders Campus**

#### **Gillian McLaughlin**

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### **Orkney Campus**

PJ Dewar

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### **Dubai Campus**

Sudha Sripada

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### **Malaysia Campus**

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