

Support for Students with a Specific Learning Difficulty (SpLD)

(Dyslexia, dyspraxia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia and AD(H)D)

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. We have a large number of students who have a SpLD, the effects of which vary widely from person to person both in the degree of severity and in the clusters of difficulties it presents. If a student has a SpLD, support measures may be needed to help them achieve their academic goals. This information sheet details the support that is made available in order to deal with any difficulties and ensure success.

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:

- Disability Advisor - the student's Disability Advisor is the primary point of contact for assessing/arranging support for the student.

- School Disability Contact (SDC) - the SDC liaises with School staff to ensure that the recommended support and adjustments are 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 strategy sessions - to help students build on any academic skills they feel they would benefit from.
- Counselling Service to support emotional wellbeing.
- Social Anxiety Group facilitated by the HWU Counselling Service.
- 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.
- *Get Set for Studying* workshops will be offered to you at the start of your studies. They offer tips for good organisation and time management (vital for successful university study), introduce assistive software and programmes that will help you get off to a great start.
- *Vision* 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 SpLD diagnosis from a professional, such as an Educational Psychologist 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.

Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA)

This is additional funding which 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/edinburgh/disability/disabled-students-allowance.htm>

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
- A scribe, reader or a prompter to help the student stay focussed

Coursework adjustments:

- Lecture notes and slides provided in advance of the lecture
- Ability to record lectures

Study skills:

- help with organisation, time management, avoiding procrastination, pacing and managing the workload

Assistive Software

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>

- Grammarly – is an easy to use spelling & grammar checker.
www.grammarly.com
- 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. It is available as part of a free suite of assistive software programs offered by the EduApps organisation: <https://www.eduapps.org/>
- Apps - Some students find apps such as Evernote (which is free) and Penultimate helpful for capturing, storing and retrieving information easily to revise from.

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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