

### Policy Statement

**Purpose** This document provides the policy framework for supporting student carers and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- The University's [Fair Access Policy](#)
- Personal Tutoring – Supporting Our Students, [SharePoint site](#)

**Scope** The policy applies to all Heriot-Watt University students who have caring responsibilities (definition below): *“anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support”* ([Carers Trust](#))

Ordinarily this does not include parents and carers of children, the exception being where a child has particular care needs resulting from a disability. Other support is available for students who are parents.

The definition above does not apply where a student has a work placement or paid employment as a carer.

### Policy Statement

Heriot-Watt University is committed to offering the opportunity for university study to students from a diverse range of backgrounds who have the potential to succeed. Student carers at Scottish campuses are defined as one of our Widening Participation (WP) student groups.

Support for carers provided by the University will include but is not limited to:

- A single point of contact (named contact) and tailored sessions for Student Carers pre-entry to provide tailored information, advice and guidance throughout the application process (Scottish campuses)
- An adjusted entry offer as outlined in our [Fair Access Policy](#)
- The HWU Expenses Bursary for each year of study
- Eligible to apply for Access Bursaries,
- To participate in [Get Ready for Success at HWU](#) (Edinburgh Campus) and other transition support offered to WP students or other appropriate initiatives designed to enhance access and inclusion.
- Be recipients of the Winter Gift Initiative at Edinburgh and Scottish Borders campuses.
- Dedicated named post-entry points of contact (Edinburgh and SBC).
- The University will liaise with external support agencies in support of student carers.
- Caring responsibilities are recognised as a valid reason in an application for Mitigating Circumstances.
- The University recognises that attendance may at times be an issue for student carers. Should the demands of caring be particularly demanding and acute, the University will advise the students on a Temporary Suspension of studies.
- Opportunities for the student to discuss changes in caring responsibilities, and changes in support required, with their personal tutor and other professional services.

UCAS applicants and all students at enrolment, can declare if they have caring responsibilities, and as a result, the University now holds more reliable information on the extent of students with caring responsibilities.

In order to access support, Student Carers must declare to the University that they have caring responsibilities. This can be at application, enrolment or subsequently.

Student carers may be requested by the University to provide supporting evidence which indicates their caring responsibilities, particularly in relation to financial support or Mitigating Circumstances (see Appendix 1 for acceptable evidence).

It is the responsibility of the student carer to notify the University if their circumstances change.

Mechanisms for implementation at all campuses, including at ALPs and with IDL students, will be developed by each campus/ALP. Responsibilities in relation to the policy should be allocated appropriately at each campus in line with existing models of support delivery for IDL and ALP students.

**Implementation** It is the responsibility of the Prospect Experience and Conversion Teams to:

- Ensure that Student Carers who self-identify at any time during the applications and admissions stage will be considered under the University's Fair Access Policy
- Publicise the University's policy commitment to student carers on the University's web pages and other media and communications as appropriate.
- Provide tailored information, advice and guidance throughout the application and transition process to prospective students through all channels.
- Provide a named contact as a single source of support and advice.

It is the responsibility of Registry and Academic Support Directorate to enable:

- Heriot-Watt University's policy commitment to current student carers to be publicised on the University's web pages and other media as appropriate.
- Students to declare caring responsibilities as part of enrolment and re-enrolment.
- Every student to notify the University should they develop caring responsibilities during their time as an enrolled student;
- Recording students with caring responsibilities on the Student Record System and enable reports to be generated on student carers;
- Student Carers to have guidance and support promoted to them through various different communications channels.
- Work with Schools to ensure that they are aware of students with caring responsibilities.

It is the responsibility of Student Wellbeing Services to:

- Ensure student carers are able to access an enhanced package of support which can include financial support, transition meetings to access advice and guidance prior to entry, check in meetings post enrolment and dedicated resources such as webpages and leaflets
- Provide guidance to personal tutors and other responsible staff to ensure that all student carers receive the support and guidance

which is appropriate to them through training and guidance, including material on [Personal Tutoring: Supporting Our Students](#)

- Report to the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee on the effectiveness of, challenges associated with, and any enhancements required to the policy.
- Undertake any referral to and liaison with external bodies e.g. local authority social work departments, student funding bodies, voluntary agencies, advice and advocacy bodies etc. which may be required to support student carers.
- To seek to maintain external recognition of the quality of our support for student carers such as the [Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition Award](#) gained by the University in 2020.

It is the responsibility of the Schools to:

- Ensure personal tutors provide appropriate advice, guidance and support to student carers including providing opportunities for students to discuss and review any changes in carer status that may take place.
- Take account of students with caring responsibilities in any considerations of student absence, mitigating circumstances and temporary suspension of studies applications.

It is the responsibility of the Quality and Standards Committee to:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the policy and process by reviewing statistics, engaging with relevant colleagues and make recommendations to the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee Experience Committee for any enhancements to the policy and process.

---

## Appendix 1: Supporting Evidence

Carers may choose not to disclose this information at the admissions or enrolment stage, or their caring responsibilities may lead them to identify themselves later, as they make take on new caring responsibilities while at university or existing caring responsibilities may require greater commitment of time and effort. It is the responsibility of the carers to provide appropriate confirmation of their carer status in good time where possible. However, the University recognises the diversity of caring responsibilities and situations and that therefore a variety of supporting documentation may be accepted as confirmation of carer status. The following supporting documentation may normally be regarded as acceptable confirmation of the student's status as a carer:

- Self-declaration in the UCAS application personal statement (Scottish Campuses).
- Confirmation in the UCAS application academic reference (Scottish Campuses).
- An email from a parent or carer to the Prospect Experience and Conversion team during the UCAS application cycle (All Campuses)
- A doctor's letter confirming that they have the responsibility of caring for a close friend, relative or neighbour and any perceived impact on the student. (All Campuses)
- A local authority carers' assessment (Scottish Campuses)
- A voluntary organisation assessment (All Campuses)
- A Young Carers Statement as per the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (Scottish Campuses)
- A Young Carers Authorisation Card/Carers Authorisation Card (Scottish Campuses).
- A letter from a local carers centre or young carers project. (All Campuses)
- Receipt of Carers Allowance (part-time students only) (Scottish Campuses).
- Any other reasonable evidence (All Campuses).