

## Information for mature students

At Heriot-Watt, we welcome those from all backgrounds to our diverse student community. Each year around 1 in 5 of our new undergraduates are aged 22 or over. Many of the mature students who join us at the University do so from studying a college course such as a SWAP course or an HNC or HND.

There are a few differences in learning and teaching styles between college and university which it might be useful to consider when preparing to transition to university.

### Less directed learning, more independent learning

On average you will spend less time in face-to-face learning environments than you would at college. The emphasis is much more on you independently reading around your subject and taking part in independent study for your topics. The academic staff are there to support you, but the expectation is much more on you to find information for yourself. The expectation is for you to bring things to them to discuss, rather than them 'teaching' you everything you need to know. However, they are always on hand to help if you need it, so remember, you just need to ask!

### Larger classes

Many courses will have lectures, which can be up to 500 people in a room all listening to information and taking notes. There isn't really an opportunity to ask lots of questions, but each lecture will also have a tutorial which is a much smaller group session, where you will discuss the topic in more depth and ask questions. It is important to prepare for your tutorials by reviewing your lecture notes, carrying out any proposed reading and being clear on the things you understand, to the things you would like to discuss further.

We have found that our mature students are amongst the most dedicated and sought after of all our students, as many of them will come to the University with existing skills,

**Not being afraid to ask questions**

**Time management**

**Common sense**

**Interpersonal skills**

**Work experience**

**Multitasking**

However, every student needs to learn new skills, and some you may wish to develop further include,

**Note taking in lectures**

**Independent study**

**Research methods**

**Report writing**

**Referencing**

Here at the university, we aim to make your experience as pleasant as possible and encourage all our students to engage with the study support classes that are offered on a regular basis.

## Study support

Our Global Effective Learning Service offers a range of study skills classes throughout the year to help students achieve their full academic potential. Popular topics covered are:

- Planning and organising**
- Goal setting and maintaining motivation**
- Effective note taking and strategies**
- Critical reading and evaluating information**
- Academic writing skills**
- Revision and exam techniques**
- Reflective learning practices**

There are many more topics covered with the option to book for live classes or just download and use any of the free materials and workbooks created. You can visit the [Skills HUB](#) for more information, to access any materials and to book any workshops.

If your degree programme includes any type of maths, from equations to statistics, we have a dedicated [Maths Gym](#) with staff on hand to support through drop-in sessions, small group appointments and online resources. The [Maths Gym Project](#) is free maths support for all Heriot-watt students, you can learn more about this project by visiting the webpages.

## Academic year

Our academic year is split into two 12-week semesters. During each semester, your programme will consist of 4 modules each with their own lectures, tutorials, and assessments. The 4 modules will run simultaneously.

Timetables are different each semester, more information timetables can be viewed on our [website](#). The timetables for each new academic year will be published and available to all students through their student portal. The UK campus session dates for our current academic year can be found [here](#).

## Student finance

Please make sure you have applied for all the funding you are entitled to from the [Student Award Agency Scotland \(SAAS\)](#). There are some really useful videos from SAAS to help you through your application process, with the addition of a [SAAS Application Workshop](#) which you sign-up to attend.

**Please note: You can apply for your SAAS funding at any time, you do not need to wait until you are holding an offer, or until you have decided on your firm or insurance choices.**

## Childcare support

Students who are parents and carers of children can be supported through the [Childcare Fund or the Hardship Fund](#). We offer funding towards childcare costs for full-time students (*as long as you are in receipt of the maximum SAAS funding available, and you are seeking funding for formally registered childcare in Scotland*).

We consider your household income when we are awarding funds, however, the funding does not just cover timetabled hours, it is based on the fact that you are in full-time education and what you are awarded is intended to support that. You can make a funding application once you are unconditional firm with us and you have started the enrolment process. The application forms are available to download from the Student Portal.

## Additional support

### Parents and carers group

You can also choose to be part of the closed parents and carers Facebook group where you can take part in discussion threads and make contact with other students who have similar experiences to you.

### Ask a Student Success Advisor (SSA)

[Ask a Student Success Advisor \(SSA\)](#) is a one-to-one email-based support service available to students who have either an Unconditional Firm (UF) or Conditional Firm (CF) offer of a place at Heriot-Watt. Our SSAs are all recent graduates of Heriot-Watt University from a range of different subject areas, including our Scottish Borders campus, and they work within our Student Wellbeing team.

### Unibuddy

If you would like the opportunity to chat to some of our current students or staff about their experiences or anything more subject specific, check out our [Unibuddy pages](#) to see who is available to take your questions. If you have something subject-specific, you can go to the course page and a current Unibuddy student live chat box will appear.

### Get Ready for Success (GRfS)

An exciting opportunity for you to get a head start at university. Our GRfS programme will help ease your transition and welcome you to the Heriot-Watt community. [Get Ready for Success](#) is a three-day event just prior to Welcome Week. We will be in touch via email to invite all eligible students, which includes mature students, to take part. You can read more about GRfS by clicking on the live link.

## Student Wellbeing

The Student Wellbeing Service aims to provide a range of support, guidance, activities, and advice to help students to be their best and get the most from their university experience.

### Counselling

Being a student can be a very positive experience but there are also many challenges to deal with such as being away from home, being in a new country, exam pressures and building new relationships with friends. If you are worried about any issue or are thinking about dropping out of University, we can offer you [counselling](#), support, and information to help you deal with the difficulties you may face. It may be that you only need one appointment but can attend more if you wish. There is also a counselling service out of the [Student union](#), giving you have a range of opportunities of support

### Mental Health

If you experience a mental health difficulty while at the University, or have a pre-existing mental health condition, you can discuss any issues and concerns with a professional counsellor or Student Advisor. We have more information on our [webpages](#), you may also want to read our [Mental Health Support Guide](#)

### Disability Support

[The Disability Service](#) can provide support and advice for students with a range of disabilities. It is important that you inform us if you have a disability so the appropriate support can be arranged, and you may be eligible for additional funding from the Disabled Students Allowance. If you have any queries around this topic, you can email either [wp@hw.ac.uk](mailto:wp@hw.ac.uk) or [disability@hw.ac.uk](mailto:disability@hw.ac.uk) for more information or to clarify your eligibility.

## Discretionary hardship fund

The University receives money every year from the Scottish Government to assist students who are experiencing financial difficulty. Money is awarded for help with living costs (not tuition fees) and is paid as a grant. The fund is discretionary and does not need to be repaid. More information on eligibility criteria and how to apply can be found on our [webpages](#).

## Effective Learning Service (ELS)

Our team of Learning Advisors and Librarians have created a study skills space called [Getting ready to study](#). The aim of the space is to provide useful advice, resources, contacts, guides and 'how to' videos to help you get prepared and develop the skills you will need to be successful at university and beyond.

## Personal Tutors

Every student has a member of academic staff allocated to them as a [personal tutor](#). Your personal tutor is your first point of contact if you need advice on any issue, both academic and non-academic. Personal tutors can also advise you of other support sources available to you as appropriate. You will be introduced to your personal tutor during welcome week.

## COVID-19

The global response to the pandemic means we are now adapting the way in which we deliver our teaching in the UK, Dubai, and Malaysia, we are calling this approach Responsive Blended Learning. This flexible approach will allow students to begin the academic year on schedule, wherever they are in the world.

Further information for offer holders relating to Coronavirus is available here;

<https://www.hw.ac.uk/coronavirus/offer-holders.htm>.

Heriot-Watt University provides lots of additional support to our students. If you have any questions or individual requirements, please do not hesitate to contact us [wp@hw.ac.uk](mailto:wp@hw.ac.uk). Please quote your UCAS ID or Heriot-Watt number in any correspondence, so we are able to give you the best advice possible in regard to your enquiry.

**Remember, whatever you are feeling about university, we are [Ready to support you](#)**