

# Supporting Student Carers Policy

## Policy

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**Purpose** This document provides the policy framework for the University's new Supporting Student Carers Policy and should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Policy on Contextual Admissions
- Personal Tutor Handbook.

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**Scope** The policy applies to all Heriot-Watt University students<sup>1</sup> who have caring responsibilities from the start of Academic Year 2017/18 (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"* (Carer's Trust, 2017<sup>2</sup>).

Ordinarily this does not include parents and carers of children, the exception being where a child has particular care needs resulting from a disability.

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

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**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 will be added to our Widening Participation (WP) student groups and are therefore entitled to apply for Access Bursaries, E-Mentoring support, places at Summer School and other transition support offered to WP students.

The University now holds more reliable information on the extent of students with caring responsibilities through changes to enrolment questions and global admissions processes. This policy reflects the University's commitment to providing enhanced support to these students.

Student Carers will be required to provide supporting evidence which indicates their caring responsibilities (see Appendix 1 for acceptable evidence).

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.

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

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**Implementation** It is the responsibility of Registry Services Directorate to deliver a global process which enables:

- Heriot-Watt University's policy commitment to student carers and guidance for prospective students to be publicised on the University's web pages and other media as appropriate.
- Carers who self-identify at the admissions stage can be considered under the Policy on Contextual Admissions.

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<sup>1</sup> From 2016/17, 162 undergraduate students identified themselves as a carer during enrolment.

<sup>2</sup> Carers Trust, 2016 accessed on 24 August 2017 at <https://carers.org/what-carer>

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- Every student to notify the University should they develop caring responsibilities during their time as an enrolled student;
- Record 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 at Edinburgh and Scottish Borders Campuses or a Student Advisor at the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses to:

- Provide guidance to personal tutors and other responsible staff including at Approved Learning Partners, and School staff responsible for Independent Distance Learning and to ensure that all student carers receive the support and guidance which is appropriate to them;
- Provide appropriate general and specific guidance to personal tutors and other support staff.
- Report to the Student Learning Experience 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.

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 University Committee for Learning and Teaching to:

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

- 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)

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- A voluntary organisation assessment (All Campuses)
- A Young Carers Statement as per the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 (after April 2018 only) (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).

At any point the University may request further information or evidence to confirm caring status or any changes to the student carer's responsibility.