

Heriot-Watt University

THE COURT

Minutes: 6 November 2025

In the Chair: Mr Bruce Pritchard, Chair of Court

Present:

Professor Paul Dalgarno, Senate Member	Mr Rodney Miller, Lay Member
Dr Louise Delicato, Senate Member	Mr Jürgen Munz, Trade Union Member
Mr Graeme Dickson, Lay Member	Ms Marta Phillips, Lay Member
Mr Cameron Fields, Student Union (SU) President	Mr Bruce Roberts, Staff Member
Ms Hilary Hansen, Lay Member	Mr Alan Robertson, Lay Member
Dr Brian Henderson, Alumni Member	Mr Ian Stevenson, Lay Member
Professor David Jenkins, Trade Union Member	Ms Denise Thomas, Lay Member
Mr Gary Kildare, Lay Member	Mr Mike Tumilty, Deputy Chair of Court
Mr Paul Lewis, Lay Member	Dr Laura Wicks, Staff Member
Ms Holly McAdams, SU Vice-President (Academic)	Professor Richard Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor
Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin, Dean of the University	Ms Dorothy Wright, Lay Member
Professor Steve McLaughlin, Vice-Principal	

Member apologies: Mr Steve Heathcote, Lay Member

In attendance: Ms Ruth Moir, University Secretary and Vice-Principal (Governance and Operations)

Ms Lisa Herlihy, Clerk to the Court

MINUTE
REF**M25/64 WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the apologies.

M25/65 SCHOOL OF TEXTILES AND DESIGN PROPOSAL (Ct5/25/41)

The Court **approved** the proposals as below, presented by the Vice-Principal.

The Vice-Principal reported that the University proposed to:

- i. disestablish the School of Textiles and Design as a Primary Academic Unit.
- ii. integrate of all its academic activities within another existing Primary Academic Unit, the School of Social Sciences.
- iii. retain the School's distinct identity within the School of Social Sciences.

Next steps included a series of themed workshops designed to explore key issues emerging from the consultation such as identity, operational systems, collaboration, and campus-specific priorities. These workshops would support inclusive co-creation of the proposed future academic structure, ensuring that staff and student voices continued to shape the process. The timeline would culminate in a report to Senate in April 2026.

M25/66 BRIEFING PAPER – RIGHTSIZING (Ct/25/42)

The Court **considered** an update on rightsizing, noting that a related briefing paper had been circulated by correspondence on 5 November 2025. The briefing was presented by the Vice-Principal.

The Court noted that the development of the Portfolio Review outcomes had been a collaborative process with Executive Deans and Associate Executive Deans and had been applied consistently and communicated across the whole institution.

XXX Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.33b.

Teach out would be undertaken for all programme closures; the majority of these were one-year postgraduate programmes and so the teach out was relatively short. In terms of courses, these would no longer be options for future years, which would prevent very small class sizes and excess choice that impacted on the student experience.

The Court queried whether the University was also considering its structure and layers of accountability to determine whether decision-making could be quicker. The Vice-Principal confirmed that this was being considered and would be reviewed in more detail once the Portfolio Review had been implemented and a clear Portfolio Strategy developed.

M25/68 KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA PROPOSAL (VERBAL)

The Court **noted** a briefing on the proposal regarding Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Court noted that non-binding Heads of Terms had been signed with the potential partner in October 2025 and a briefing paper on these Heads of Terms had been issued to the Court. In the week commencing 27 October 2025, the proposal had been discussed by the Senate; the University Executive; the Audit and Risk Committee; the Combined Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee; and at the All-Staff Executive Briefing.

A number of questions had been raised by the Senate, and a detailed response had been circulated immediately after the meeting. Next steps would include consideration by the Finance Committee on 13 November and by the Court on 11 December to determine whether the proposal should be progressed. An implementation plan was currently being developed, led by the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life), to ensure readiness if the proposal was approved by the Court. Planning would include discussions with the relevant Studies Committees in the new year, with a further Senate discussion planned for 27 November 2025.

XXX Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.30b and s.30c.

M25/69 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 11 December 2025 via Microsoft Teams from 8:30 – 12:30 (UK time); 12:30 – 16:30 (Dubai time); and 16:30 – 20:30 (Malaysia time).