HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

UK | DUBAI | MALAYSIA

Disbursements Group

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Constitution and Purpose

1.1 The Disbursements Group has been established by the Donations and Investments Committee to oversee appropriate expenditure against all available philanthropic funds held or controlled by Heriot-Watt University, including those raised through the annual calling campaign and other fundraising activity in support of access bursaries, scholarships and small project grants disbursed.

1.2 Disbursements decisions must align with the overall objectives of these philanthropic funds and the philanthropic/charitable intentions of the original donors. A proportion of any monies raised will be committed to access bursaries and scholarships as well as small project grants. Guidance will be provided by the Assistant Principal (Advancement) with the support of the Global Chief Financial Officer (or delegates).

2. Remit

2.1 The Disbursements Group, which reports to the Donations and Investments Committee, will have delegated authority of up to £600k in total in each financial year, which will be reviewed annually, in order to:

- Commit expenditure from the Alumni Fund and the Scholarships and Bursaries Fund. In the case of scholarship support and other initiatives, which may have multi-annual funding conditions/implications, the Group must consider the total value of support for the duration of the activities.

- Disburse up to £50k (of the above £600k total) from the Annual Fund to support Access Bursaries, Music Scholarships and Sports Scholarships and additional disbursal through grants.

In the case of the first two items above, and subject to the stated conditions, the Disbursements Group will decide what allocations are to be made from the funds.

- Oversee disbursal of all other available philanthropic funds held or controlled by Heriot-Watt University in line with agreed strategies and budgets, the value of funds available to spend and their individual restrictions.

In the case of the last item above, the Disbursements Group, on a quarterly basis, will review Schools and Departments' philanthropic fund expenditure to ensure that it is compliant and take action accordingly. The Disbursements Group will also work with Schools and Directorates to bring unused or underutilised funds into full use and provide guidance on aligning funds with University strategy.

2.2 The Disbursements Group will consider how best to spend historic unspent reserves (backlog funds) in support of University strategic priorities that support and advance the wider student experience i.e. those activities that cannot normally be funded through core University funding.

2.3 A published set of criteria (currently under development) will be used to inform decision making concerning disbursal of funds. The Group will take account of any existing and ongoing commitments and consider the following areas in relation to potential funding:

- personal funding efforts;
- benefit to student population;
- benefit to wider population;
- travel/accommodation limitations;
- previous application amounts vs. current amount applied for (justification);
- repeat applications/relationships; and
- receipt of required reports on outcomes and impacts of any previous funding granted.

2.4 The Disbursements Group will review reports on the impact of funds using the five dimensions of impact: what, who, how much, reach, contribution and risk. To this end, the Advancement Office will ensure that all successful recipients of monies submit relevant impact reports.

2.5 The Disbursements Group will bring oversight to the development and delivery by the Advancement Office of a communications and publicity plan to highlight the impact of the funds.

2.6 The Disbursements Group will ensure that financial records are kept by the Finance Directorate and note is made of any exceptional items and that all applications for funding will be retained by the Advancement Office along with appropriate scorecards for marking applications.

3. Composition and Membership

3.1 The Group shall comprise:

a) The Global Chief Financial Officer (Chair)

b) The Associate Principal for Access and Inclusion (Vice-Chair)

c) The General Counsel

d) The Associate Director for UK Recruitment and Global Prospect Experience

e) The Chief Operating Officer for the Dubai Campus

f) The Assistant Principal (Advancement)

g) The Student Union President

h) The Head of Student Life and Deputy Registrar

i) The Watt Club President

4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

4.1 The Group will exercise its responsibility, as far as possible, to promote diversity of representation within its membership and the membership of any working group or committee established by the Group. The Group will also act to promote equality of opportunity for all colleagues who are involved in carrying out the business of the Group.

5. Quorum

5.1 The quorum necessary to transact business is three members, including either the Chair or Vice-Chair.

5.2 A member who presents a case for funding will not be involved in the decision making concerning that case.

5.3 Members who are participating in a meeting by means of audio-visual conferencing or other means enabling them to communicate with all members present at the meeting simultaneously shall be deemed to be present at the meeting and to count towards the quorum.

6. Chair

6.1 The Chair of the Group shall be the Global Chief Financial Officer.

6.2 The Vice-Chair of the Group shall be the Associate Principal for Access and Inclusion.

6.3 In the absence of the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Group, members shall elect from among the members of the Group who are present at the meeting a person to act as Chair for the meeting or until such time that the Chair of the Group arrives.

7. Frequency of Meetings

7.1 The Group usually meets at least three times a year, ensuring that one meeting is always held within semester one.

7.2 Additional meetings may be held in order to meet business requirements at the request of the Chair of the Group.

8. Attendance at Meetings

8.1 The following officers are expected to be in attendance at meetings:

a) the Projects and Policies Co-ordinator for the Advancement Office
b) a Financial Accountant from the Finance Directorate

The University Secretary may also attend.

8.2 Other officers and members of the University community may be asked to attend when appropriate, with the agreement of the Chair.

9. Reserved Business

9.1 There may be occasions when the Group's business is designated reserved and/or commercially sensitive. On such occasions, with the approval of the Chair, any persons in attendance may be asked to withdraw from the meeting during consideration of a particular reserved item of business.

9.2 The record of matters which the Chair and the Group are satisfied should be dealt with on a reserved basis will be identified within the minutes.

10. Conflict of Interest

10.1 Where it is identified that a member of the Group has a conflict of interest with respect to a matter, the Chair may, request that the member in question withdraw from participation in relevant business. Depending on the nature of the business, this may allow for participation in discussions without taking part in decision making or may require complete non-participation and/or withdrawal from that part of the meeting.

10.2 All instances of identified conflicts of interest shall be recorded in the minutes.

11. Reporting Procedures

11.1 The Group will submit regular reports to the Donations and Investments Committee and the University Executive based on the Group's minutes. The Chair will approve the content of reports before release.

11.2 The Chair will report to the Donations and Investments Committee and the University Executive on any matters which the Group considers ought to be brought to the attention of the Donations and Investments Committee and/or the University Executive and on any matters requiring the approval of the Donations and Investments Committee and/or the University Executive. These matters will be highlighted in the Committee's report.

11.3 The Group's records (agenda, papers, minutes) are included in the University's Freedom of Information Publication Scheme. Information will be readily accessible on request to members of the public under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act (FOI(S)A) with the exception of information which is deemed to be covered by a specific exemption under the Act. Minutes and reports of the Committee will denote those areas of reported business which are deemed to fall within the designation of information which is 'exempt' under the FOI(S)A.

12. Forward Planning

12.1 The Group will maintain a forward agenda plan of its business.

12.2 The Group will review its Terms of Reference and submit recommendations on them to the Donations and Investments Committee and the University Executive annually for approval.

12.3 The Group will set its meeting dates two years in advance, aligned to the schedule of meetings of the Donations and Investments Committee.

13. Supporting Information

Groups feeding into the Group

13.1
- None

Effectiveness and lifespan

13.2 Lifespan ongoing.

Actions that may be taken by the Group

13.3
- Note
- Receive
- Consider
- Endorse
- Approve
- Recommend
- Reject

Minuting style

13.4 Traditional/formal minutes in accordance with internal University guidance.

Resources

13.5	**Clerk**	Ashley Beaton, Senior Governance Assistant, Secretariat
	Financial Accountant	Kish Parmar, Senior Financial Accountant, Finance Directorate

Version	Amendments	Approved by
V1	Terms of Reference revised and made less repetitive. Its remit also extended to allow for necessary improvements to the operational oversight and management of philanthropic funds held and controlled by the University.	Finance Committee, 8 June 2021
V2	Significant amendments made to the Constitution and Purpose, Remit, Composition and Membership, and Attendance at Meetings sections. Changes also made to other sections.	Donations and Investments Committee, 24 February 2025
V3	Updated to reflect Development and Alumni Office name change (Advancement Office, Assistant Principal (Advancement) etc)	Donations and Investments Committee, 3 June 2026