

Heriot--Watt University

## THE SENATE

Minutes: 5 February 2026

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor <i>[left the meeting for item M26/8]</i> Professor Steve McLaughlin, Vice-Principal of the University <i>[for item M26/8]</i>		
Present:	Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi Ms Ruzanna Abd Rahman Dr Karen Alexander Dr Dima Alkawadri Mr Kevin Antony Sahayaraj Professor Lehel Banjai Professor Ian Baxter Dr David Brown Dr Juan Casanova Dr David Cavallaro* Dr Hassam Chaudhry Mr Andrew Hock Cheong Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong Lee Ms Jenny Coady Dr Demitrios Cotsovos Dr Manuel Cresciani Dr Ross Curran* Professor Paul Dalgarno Dr Louise Delicato Dr Christopher Dodd Professor Joanna Drugan Dr Neamat Elgayar* Dr Rofayda ElHout Dr Taha Elhag Dr David Ellis* Dr Erkal Ersoy Professor Anna Fenge	Dr Carlos Ferreiro-Rangel Mr Cameron Fields Professor Fiona Grant Dr Yun li Go* Ms Judith Gorham Professor Igor Guz Dr Adnan Ilyas Dr Ramon Inglada Professor Michel Kaiser Dr Britta Kalkreuter Dr Barbara Keating Dr Craig Kennedy Professor Reza Kouhy Professor Angus Laing Ms Jasmine Low Dr Jia Lu* Dr Suzanne Lampert Ms Holly McAdams Dr Alistair McConnell* Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin Professor Martin McCoustra Professor Dame Heather McGregor Dr Richard McCracken Dr Ruaraidh McIntosh Dr Alex MacLaren* Dr Stephen Mansell Dr Mubbashar Mehmood Dr Hannah Menke Dr Senthil Muthukumaraswamy	Professor Mehdi Nazarinia Dr Yasemin Nielsen Dr Hendrik Nahler Mr Adrian Nathai Professor Tadhg O'Donovan Professor Beatrice Pelloni Mr Harrison Porrit Dr Rabee Rustum Professor Christian Saemann Dr Mohammed Saleh Dr Florian Scheuring* Dr M Shadi Mohamed* Ms Devanshi Sharma Dr Hebatallah Shoukry Mr Karamjeet Singh Mr Matthew Smith Ms Andrea Sneddon* Dr Ryad Soobhany Dr Kathrin Stark* Ms Sabrina Syed Dr Hai Chen Tan Dr Monica Tamariz Dr Vahid Razaviarani Dr Marta Romeo Dr Marta Vallejo Dr George Vasdravellis* Professor Chris Turney Dr Abrar Ullah Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Robin Westacott Dr Mesfin Woldetensay Dr Tze Cheun Yap
* denotes partial attendance			
In attendance:	Dr Fiona Armstrong Professor Lynne Jack* Dr Maggie King Ms Ruth Moir Mr Fraser Muir	Mr Kieran Robson-Renner* Mr Marc Quinn* Mr Phil Rowsby* Ms Megan Morgan (Clerk)	
Member apologies:	Dr Yousef Al-Gumaei Dr Syed Andrabi Dr Noor Zainab Habib Dr April Henning Professor Sara Lombardo Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer	Dr Farnaz Mohsenpour Dr Shereen Nassar Dr Stefano Padilla Dr Yasaman Sarabi Professor Mercedes Sheen Mr Nader Shouly Dr Euan Winton	

<u>MINUTE REF</u>		<u>ACTION BY</u>	<u>ACTION DATE</u>
<b>M26/1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>		
1.1	The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the above apologies.		
<b>M26/2</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 27 NOVEMBER 2025 (SE-26-1)</b>		
2.1	The Senate <b>approved</b> the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2026 as a fair and accurate record and reflection of the meeting.		
<b>M26/3</b>	<b>ACTIONS LOG AND MATTERS ARISING (SE-25-65)</b>		
3.1	The Senate <b>noted</b> the Actions Log and agreed that the completed actions would now be removed. The University Secretary reported that nominations for the election of a Dean would commence on 5 February 2026 for a two-week period.		
<b>M26/4</b>	<b>SENATE PRIORITIES AND PRINCIPLES FOR MEETINGS (SE-26-3)</b>		
4.1	The Senate <b>noted</b> the priorities and principles for meetings. Feedback on meeting effectiveness would continue to be gathered at the end of each meeting, via either an anonymous survey or in discussion.		
4.2	Senators commented on the timing of the light touch Portfolio Review and requested that information packs be provided to Studies Committee at the earliest opportunity. The Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) would review the timeline and consider any adjustments.	TOD	March 2026
<b>M26/5</b>	<b>REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL &amp; VICE CHANCELLOR (SE-26-4)</b>		
5.1	The Senate <b>noted</b> the report presented by the Chair, which outlined recent institutional achievements and sector developments.		
5.2	The Chair reported that the University's priorities performance tracker was being redeveloped in Power BI to support clearer visibility of progress. Senate would receive access once the tool was developed, which would mirror the information received by Court.		
5.3	Updates were provided on external regulatory developments. The Chair noted recent engagement with the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) in Dubai, where encouraging indications had been received regarding future approaches to quality assurance. In Scotland, the Chair outlined changes arising from the Tertiary Education and Training Bill which would shape future oversight arrangements for the sector.		
5.4	The Chair confirmed that while the overall national funding position for higher education remained challenging there had been no unexpected changes in the present cycle. Final allocations from the Scottish Funding Council for the coming year were expected in Spring 2026.		
5.5	The Chair reported a positive visit to Aktobe with strong student engagement and constructive partnership discussions. The Chair also highlighted a successful period in philanthropic activity which had secured several major gifts supporting academic initiatives across the University. The Chair noted an improvement in sustainability-related rankings and advised that further work would be undertaken to strengthen performance across subject rankings.		
5.6	In discussion, Senators queried the potential impact of international mobility considerations on potential CAA changes and the Go Global scheme in		

Dubai. It was confirmed that only a very small number of UAE state funded students were affected and that broader student mobility remained unchanged. Senators also requested that future iterations of the performance dashboard provided clearer signposting of areas requiring Senate attention and the Chair agreed that this would be incorporated.

Chair

April 2026

## M26/6 GLOBAL STUDENT UPDATE (SE-26-5)

6.1 The Senate **noted** the update presented by the VP Academic (UK). The data presented covered the Big Six Student Survey results in 2025-2026 for Dubai and Scottish campuses, with analysis for Malaysia to follow.

6.2 The update highlighted sector-wide themes relating to student belonging, wellbeing and engagement. Findings indicated that some students experienced periods of loneliness and that commuter patterns and academic workload could influence participation in activities. The importance of creating opportunities for students to build connections through academic settings was noted. The Senate received an overview of planned initiatives aligned to the Student Partnership Agreement including study groups, quiet spaces and wellbeing-focused activities. These actions were designed to strengthen belonging and enhance the overall student experience across all campuses.

6.3 Senators requested further contextual information to support interpretation of the findings including breakdowns by School and by level of study. Additional insight on commuter students would also be provided through forthcoming reporting to support planning for future interventions. Senators discussed the experience of commuter students and the importance of timetable arrangements that enable meaningful engagement. The role of personal tutoring in supporting new students was noted, along with the value of understanding student preferences for different forms of support including academic guidance and mentoring. Senators also discussed how belonging is shaped at School and programme level and noted that these considerations would inform the next phase of work.

SRB

April 2026

## M26/7 REPORT FROM THE ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE: MODIFICATIONS TO ORDINANCES (SE-26-6)

7.1 The Senate **endorsed** the following modifications to Ordinances, presented by the Chair of Ordinances and Regulations Committee (ORC):

- 7.2
- a) *Ordinance E2 (Student Union)*: modernising terminology related to student bodies and aligning governance wording across campuses. Senators queried the use of the term Primary Academic Units as opposed to Schools, and the Chair of ORC advised this aligned with existing Ordinances;
  - b) *Ordinance F1 (Staff Congress)*: removed the requirement for an annual Congress, enabled meetings to be convened when required and increased the threshold for calling a meeting. Senators noted differing views on the practicality of the revised threshold across campuses, but were assured that ORC had considered this at length;
  - c) *Ordinance F2 (Appointment of Academic Staff)*: updated role titles, representation arrangements and terminology;
  - d) *Ordinance F3 (Duties of Academic Staff)*: removed duplication, updated terminology and modernised references;
  - e) *Ordinance F8 (Head of Primary Academic Unit)*: clarified distinctions between titles and confirmed the option of reappointment for one further five-year term;
  - f) *Ordinances J2 and J2 (Vice-Principal Dubai and Malaysia)*: updated role titles to "Provost and Vice-Principal" for consistency and to avoid confusion with the Vice-Principal of the University role, defined in the Charter;

FW

Immediate

g) *Ordinance L1 (Deans of the University and Associate Deans)*; introduced revised titles, updated eligibility requirements and responsibilities and moved to updated constituencies allocated by the Senate. Senators noted the importance of clear communication of role titles.

7.3 Due to timing constraints, the Regulations proposed for approval were deferred and the Chair apologised for any inconvenience.

**M26/8 APPOINTMENT OF A NEW PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (SE-26-7)**

8.1 The Chair left the meeting for this item, in accordance with governance requirements. The Vice-Principal of the University chaired this item.

8.2 The Senate **considered** the report on the appointment of a new Principal and Vice-Chancellor. It was noted that the recruitment process had been conducted in line with Ordinance H1 and that the paper remained confidential while the appointment progressed through the final stages. The Acting Chair outlined the next steps in the approval pathway and confirmed that comments from Senators would be collated and shared with the Court as part of its consideration of the recommendation.

Clerk

Immediate

8.3 Senators welcomed the robustness of the selection process and commended the high level of engagement across staff and students during the process. Senators expressed confidence in the recommended candidate and commented positively on the alignment between the candidate's experience and the University's strategic direction. Senators also noted the significance of the appointment for the University and the importance of ensuring a well-managed transition. Clarification on transitional arrangements between the outgoing and incoming Principal would follow through the established governance process.

RJM

April 2026

**M26/9 REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE: STUDENT MISCONDUCT REPORT 2024-2025 (SE-26-8)**

9.1 Senate **noted** the annual report presented by the Chair of the University Discipline Committee (UDC). The report highlighted an increase in cases compared with the previous year, with 1194 cases recorded across the University. The rise was driven primarily by academic integrity concerns, including inappropriate use of generative AI and falsified references. It was noted that the number of cases escalated to UDC had increased significantly and that the highest volumes were recorded were from the School of Social Sciences and from the Dubai campus. The overall average time to complete cases was 32 working days.

9.2 Senators welcomed enhanced approaches to academic integrity and noted improvements in invigilated coding assessments supported by learning technologies. Senators discussed the impact of case investigation duration on students and noted the importance of timely decision making and clear communication to support student wellbeing during the process. There was discussion about whether the current structure could be adapted to improve case response times including the potential for additional committee capacity, noting that any changes would need to reflect the distribution of case types and the role of School Discipline Committees in managing first-level cases.

9.3 Senators observed that a high proportion of academic integrity cases from the Global College reflected the transition of students into university study and was not unexpected. Senators also discussed the importance of maintaining clarity in reporting and outcome letters and noted that delegated decision making within Schools remained an important mechanism for ensuring timely resolution where appropriate.

9.4 The Senate noted that wellbeing support continued to be considered within case processes and that further work to streamline procedures would consider both compliance requirements and student experience.

**M26/10 REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS: QUALITY FRAMEWORK FOR PROPOSED KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA (KSA) CAMPUS (SE-26-9)**

10.1 The Senate **noted** the update, presented by the Chair of University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS), on the proposed adoption of the University's single, integrated global quality assurance and enhancement framework for the prospective KSA campus. The framework had been endorsed by UCQS and was subject to Court approval of the business case. UCQS had highlighted areas requiring continued attention, including the need for further clarity on local accreditation requirements, the implications of a staffing model for staff employed by the partner rather than the University and the potential impact on existing campus resources. UCQS had also advised that programme approvals would require strengthened involvement from School Studies Committees and appropriate student representation within academic working groups.

10.1 The Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) confirmed that the framework aligned with the University's global approach to academic standards and integrated requirements of the KSA regulator. An academic working group had been established to support the development of the student lifecycle and academic operating model.

10.2 In discussion, Senators requested greater visibility of the detailed documentation which underpinned the proposals, which included material referenced during UCQS discussions. It was noted that certain documents were currently subject to contractual confidentiality and nondisclosure agreements and could not yet be released, further details would be shared when circumstances permitted. Senators expressed the importance of ensuring the University had full confidence in the deliverability of the model, particularly in relation to accreditation processes, programme approval pathways and oversight of quality. It was noted that the University would not proceed with arrangements that did not align with its established academic requirements or quality frameworks. and that feasibility reviews had been undertaken in line with practices used for professional accreditation.

TOD

March 2026

10.3 Senators discussed the staffing model for the prospective campus and the implications of staff being employed by the partner organisation; the need for clear academic governance arrangements to ensure academic control, including oversight of key academic appointments; and the consistency of the student lifecycle operating model was noted as a significant development that would support consistency across all campus locations.

10.4 Senators sought assurance that Senate would have sufficient information to discharge its responsibilities at appropriate stages. Senate also discussed the importance of transparency throughout the process and noted that as contractual constraints reduce, further detail would be shared. It was confirmed that Senate retained oversight of all academic matters, including the approval of programmes through UCQS, while Court holds responsibility for approval of the business case. Senate was reminded that a governance presentation outlining the approval pathways would be recirculated.

Clerk

Immediate

**M26/11 REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING: STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (SE-26-10)**

11.1 The Senate **noted** the update on the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) presented by the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) and the Academic Quality Officer. The Senate noted the SPA cycle had been realigned to follow the academic year. The new structure had been mapped

directly to the Global Student Representative Bodies' priorities of belonging and community, future readiness and financial and living pressures. The revised framework placed stronger emphasis on campus-specific actions, clearer accountability and strengthened the student-staff partnership.

- 11.2 Senators highlighted the importance of transparency in communicating SPA activity and ensuring that the Agreement was visible within Schools and embedded within School-level discussions on the student experience. It was noted that the SPA had become a valuable tool for supporting collaboration between student representatives and senior leaders. Senators commented on the need to ensure that the SPA was grounded across all locations, including the Borders and Orkney, and that its priorities were clearly connected to wider institutional initiatives.
- 11.3 Senators discussed the link between SPA priorities and broader university governance, including alignment with Court and Senate priorities. It was noted that ensuring these connections were clearly articulated would support understanding and wider engagement.

**M26/12 MEETING REFLECTIONS (Verbal)**

- 12.1 The Senate reflected on the meeting and noted the value of continuing the recent introduction of formal voting within Senate's wider governance arrangements, where appropriate. Senators agreed that items involving significant regulatory change would benefit from additional time on future agendas.

Clerk

Immediate

**M26/13 REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (SE-26-12)**

- 13.1 The Senate **noted** the report.

**M26/14 ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS AND PROMOTION (SE-26-16)**

- 14.1 The Senate **noted** the report.

**M26/15 REPORT FROM SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSINESS AND EFFECTIVENESS (SE-26-16)**

- 15.1 The Senate **noted** the report.

**M26/16 SENATE FORWARD AGENDA PLAN (SE-26-17)**

- 16.1 The Senate **noted** the forward agenda plan.

**M26/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- 17.1  
Thursday 12 March 2026  
Wednesday 22 April 2026  
Thursday 11 June 2026