APPROVED

Heriot--Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 14 September 2026

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor		
Present:	Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi Dr Karen Alexander (EGIS) Dr Dima Alkawadri (BDSS) Ms Asharina Alwi (GC) Dr Syed Andrabi (BDSS) Professor Lehel Banjai (MACS) Professor Ian Baxter (BDSS) Dr Lucy Bolton (BDSS) Dr David Brown (BDSS) Dr Juan Casanova (EPS) Dr David Renato Cavallaro (BDSS) Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong (EPS) Dr Demitrios Cotsovos (EGIS) Professor Paul Dalgarno (EPS) Professor Joanna Drugan (BDSS) Dr Taha Elhag (EGIS) Professor Anna Fenge (GC) Dr Carlos Ferreiro-Rangel (EPS) Professor Fiona Grant (SOTD) Dr Yun Ii Go (EPS) Ms Goh Sze Ching (Rachel) (GC) Ms Judith Gorham (GC) Dr April Henning (BDSS)	Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas Dr Ramon Inglada (BDSS) Ms Funda Karaoglan (GC) Dr Barbara Keating Dr Craig Kennedy (EGIS) Ms Adriana Lipka (GC) Dr Jing Liu (EPS) Professor Sara Lombardo (MACS) Dr Stephen Mansell (EPS) Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer Dr Ruaraidh McIntosh (EPS) Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin Professor Steve McLaughlin Dr Mubbashar Mehmood (EPS) Dr M Shadi Mohamed (EGIS) Dr Farnaz Mohsenpour (EPS) Dr Shereen Nassar (BDSS) Mr Adrian Nathai (MACS) Dr Yasemin Nielsen (EGIS) Professor Tadhg O'Donovan Dr Marta Romeo (MACS) Professor Christian Saemann (MACS)	Dr Mohammed Saleh (EPS) Dr Florian Scheuring (BDSS) Professor Mercedes Sheen (BDSS) Dr Shahenda Shehata (GC) Dr Hebatallah Shoukry (EPS) Dr Kamaljit Singh (EGIS) Mr Matthew Smith (EGIS) Dr Ryad Soobhany (MACS) Dr Nazia Talat (GC) Dr Hai Chen Tan (EGIS) Professor Chris Turney Dr Abrar Ullah (MACS) Dr Marta Vallejo (MACS) Dr Robin Westacott (EPS) Mr Mohammed Khazali Ms Joey Hunter Ms Kirsty McKeating Mr Soo Wu Ken Mr Shreyash Phatak* Dr Tze Chuen Yap (EPS)
* denotes partial attendance			
In attendance:	Professor Fiona Armstrong Dr Maggie King	Ms Ruth Moir Ms Kirsty Scanlan	Ms Megan Morgan (Clerk)
Member apologies:	Ms Ruzanna Abd Rahman (EGIS) Dr Hassam Chaudhry (EGIS) Ms Jenny Coady Dr Manuel Cresciani (EGIS) Dr Ross Curran (BDSS) Dr Louise Delicato (BDSS) Professor Chris Dodd (BDSS) Dr Rofayda El-Hout (BDSS) Dr Erkal Ersoy (BDSS) Professor Igor Guz (EPS) Dr Noor Zainab Habib (EGIS) Dr Adnan Ilyas (EPS) Mr Karamjeet Singh K. Ranthir Singh (MACS) Professor Michel Kaiser (EGIS) Dr Britta Kalkreuter (BDSS)	Professor Angus Laing (BDSS)Dr Suzanne Lampert (BDSS) Dr Alex MacLaren (EGIS) Professor Martin McCoustra (EPS) Dr Richard McCracken (EPS) Professor Dame Heather McGregor Dr Hannah Menke (EGIS) Dr Thomas Methven (MACS) Dr Sahar Mirzaie (EGIS) Dr Senthil Muthukumaraswamy (EPS) Professor Mehdi Nazarinia Dr Matthew Myers (EGIS)	Dr Hendrik Nahler (EPS) Dr Stefano Padilla (MACS) Professor Beatrice Pelloni (MACS) Dr Vahid Razaviarani (EPS) Dr Lucy Robertson (BDSS) Dr Yasaman Sarabi (BDSS) Dr Mesfin Woldetensay

MINUTE REF		ACTION BY	ACTION DATE
M26/47	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**		
47.1	The Chair welcomed Senators to the Senate Planning Meeting and noted the apologies received. A particular welcome was extended to new Senators, newly elected Academic Dean Dr Barbara Keating, Dr Yvonne McLaren as Chair of ORC and UCQS, and Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas as incoming Principal and Vice-Chancellor.		
47.2	The Chair noted the purpose of the meeting was to agree Senate Priorities for 2026-27 and provide strategic direction for the year ahead. The Chair reflected on the challenging environment facing the higher education sector, including ongoing financial pressures, international student recruitment		

uncertainty, geopolitical instability and changes with research funding. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Chair highlighted the University's strong strategic position, distinctive global model and clear direction set out in Strategy 2035. Senate's priorities would continue to align with Court priorities and support the delivery of the University's academic mission.

M26/48 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2026 (SE-26-48)**

48.1 The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2026 as a fair and accurate record and reflection of the meeting.

M26/49 **INTRODUCTION FROM THE INCOMING PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (Verbal)**

49.1 The Senate received introductory remarks from the incoming Principal. Professor Hewitt-Dundas reflected on her initial engagement across the University and highlighted the strong commitment of staff and students to Heriot-Watt's success. The incoming Principal highlighted the University's distinctive heritage of innovation, global reach and real-world impact and noted these strengths positioned Heriot-Watt well to respond to significant technological, economic and societal change.

49.2 The Senate noted the incoming Principal's commitment to partnership working, constructive challenge and academic excellence. The importance of Senate's role in shaping academic direction, safeguarding standards and supporting delivery of Strategy 2035 was noted. Focus was placed on the opportunities presented by the University's global model, research strengths, employability agenda and commitment to delivering real world impact through education and research.

49.3 The Senate welcomed the incoming Principal's vision for the University and **noted** the update.

M26/50 **SENATE EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY FEEDBACK (SE-26-49)**

50.1 The Senate **noted** the findings of the 2026 Senate Effectiveness Survey, presented by the University Secretary and Vice-Principal (Governance and Operations). The Senate welcomed the improved response rate and noted positive feedback regarding the operation of Senate during 2025-26. Reference was made to meeting culture, participation, voting arrangements, in-person engagement, organisation and the introduction of annual Senate priorities. Senators noted that the changes introduced following the previous Planning Meeting had been well received and had contributed to a more effective and strategically focused Senate.

50.2 In discussion, Senators noted the importance of improving the visibility of Senate activity and discussions across the wider University community. Senators observed that colleagues were not always aware of items considered by Senate and suggested that further consideration be given to how Senate decisions could be communicated throughout the institution. The University Secretary agreed to consider this further.

RJM October 2026

50.3 The Senate also discussed the importance of continuing to provide sufficient time for strategic debate, maintaining timely circulation of papers and supporting active participation from Senators across all campuses. It was noted that the agreed Senate Principles for Meetings had contributed positively to the culture and effectiveness of Senate and should continue to inform future practice.

M26/51 **SENATE PRIORITIES AND PRINCIPLES FOR MEETINGS 2026-2027 (SE-26-50)**

51.1 The Senate considered the proposed Senate Priorities and Principles for Meetings for 2026-27. It was noted that the priorities had been developed by the University Secretary and Senate Committee Chairs and aligned with both Court Priorities and Strategy 2035. The priorities focused on delivering the academic foundations of Strategy 2035, enhancing student success, the signature Heriot-Watt experience and the ethos of employability along with strengthening performance in research, innovation and impact.

51.2 In discussion, Senators welcomed the proposed priorities and their alignment to Strategy 2035 and the Court Priorities. Senators recognised that the priorities provided an appropriate strategic framework for Senate's work but highlighted the importance of ensuring that measures of success and delivery through Senate Committee workplans were clearly articulated. It was noted that the priorities should be considered collectively rather than as a ranked order of importance and that progress would be demonstrated through the work of the Senate Committees.

CT/TOD/YM /MN — Ongoing

51.3 Senators discussed the wording of Priority 2 and noted a potential inconsistency between the title and the supporting narrative. It was suggested that the priority should place clearer emphasis on student success and outcomes and align more closely with the wording of the other priorities. The Senate supported revision of the wording of the title accordingly.

RJM/TOD — Immediate

51.4 The Senate considered the proposed Principles for Meetings and welcomed their continued application during 2026-27. Senators discussed the enduring nature of both the principles and priorities, noting that many reflected core functions and responsibilities of Senate which would remain relevant beyond a single academic year. It was agreed that the principles for meetings continued to support effective governance, constructive challenge, open debate, active participation and remained aligned with the University's values.

51.5 Following discussion, the Senate **approved** the Senate Priorities for 2026-27, subject to a minor amendment, and approved the continued adoption of the Senate Principles for Meetings for 2026-27.

M26/52 **SENATE COMMITTEE PRIORITIES 2026-2027 (SE-26-51)**

52.1 The Senate considered the proposed Senate Committee Priorities for 2026-27. It was noted that the priorities had been developed by the respective Committee Chairs and aligned with the agreed Senate Priorities and Strategy 2035. The Senate noted areas of focus across the committee structure, including strategic change and growth, student success and experience, employability, academic integrity, research and innovation performance, quality assurance, and the review of academic regulations.

52.2 The Senate welcomed the Global Student Priorities, which focused on campus accessibility, combating loneliness and supporting future career development. Senators noted the strong alignment between the student priorities and Senate's priorities The importance of continuing to embed the student voice throughout the work of Senate Committees was highlighted.

52.3 In discussion, Senators highlighted the importance of ensuring strong alignment between Senate priorities, committee priorities and measures of success. It was suggested that greater visibility could be provided regarding how individual committee priorities contributed to the delivery of Senate priorities and Strategy 2035. Senators recognised that committee priorities represented areas of strategic focus and should be differentiated from the broader routine business of the committees.

52.4 The Senate discussed several cross-cutting themes, including the importance of collaboration between committees, strengthening research and innovation performance, enhancing the student experience, improving graduate outcomes and responding effectively to the opportunities and challenges presented by artificial intelligence. Senators discussed that successful delivery of the priorities would require collaboration across academic and professional services teams, campuses and committees. Importance was attached to improving NSS performance, QS world rankings, embedding employability throughout the student journey and creating stronger links between research, teaching and impact.

52.5 The Senate also reflected on the importance of maintaining a positive approach to academic integrity, ensuring timely and proportionate student conduct processes, and supporting students to navigate increasing financial, personal and academic pressures. Senators noted the value of preventative approaches and partnership working in promoting student success and wellbeing.

52.6 Following discussion, the Senate **approved** the Senate Committee Priorities for 2026-27 and **noted** the Global Student Priorities for 2026-27.

M26/53 **REFLECTIONS ON THEMES AND THANKS TO THE OUTGOING CHAIR (Verbal)**

53.1 The Senate noted reflections from the Vice-Principal of the University on behalf of Senate in recognition of Professor Richard A Williams' final Senate meeting as Principal and Chair. The Senate noted his significant contribution to the University over eleven years of leadership

53.2 The Chair reflected on the key themes arising from the meeting, including the continued development of Senate, the importance of effective communication of Senate activity across the University, student success, research and impact, and the role of Senate Committees in delivering the agreed priorities. The Senate noted the importance of collaboration, trust and effective academic governance in supporting delivery of Strategy 2035.

M26/54 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

54.1 Wednesday 14 October 2026 (Online)