Key Priorities and Guiding Messages for Teaching Teams AY2025-26

Creating a vibrant and supportive learning community is key to student success. Teaching teams are asked to ensure teaching is a rich and rewarding experience for students and for staff and to make effective use of campus spaces, digital resources and virtual learning spaces to support student learning and connect our community.

The guidance below was approved by the University Committee for Learning and Teaching (June 2025).
o Additional School-specific guidance and support will be available from your School Leadership Team.
o Guidance to support teaching team preparation is provided on the Get Set Sharepoint site.

Core Objectives for Academic Year 2025-26

- To enable students to effectively engage with their studies and participate in the University community, making full use of the opportunities available on our campuses and virtual learning environment.
- To provide inspiring learning opportunities that enable students to develop the Heriot Watt *Global Changemaker* Graduate Attributes: Purpose-driven | Creative | Globally Connected | Professional, enhancing their employability and supporting the achievement of their career aspirations.
- To ensure identical academic standards and appropriate diversity of learning experiences across our global learning community.
- To embed a programme-focused approach to enhancing the student learning experience.
- To ensure student partnership is embedded in all aspects of university life.
- To ensure our campuses are vibrant spaces for collaboration and learning for staff and students.
- To support students and staff to connect as a global learning community.

Key Messages for Teaching Teams

Learning and Teaching Delivery
- The University will follow the published calendar for academic year 2025-26.
- Teaching teams are encouraged to adopt a programme-focused approach to developing and enhancing teaching and assessment.
    o Programme Boards of Studies should be used for collective review and refresh of approach and to ensure clarity and consistency for students.
- The teaching model will continue to be Globally Connected Learning. This includes a focus on teaching teams making effective use of on-campus, online and / or work-based provision, as appropriate to context.
    o Campus-based programmes will all offer a suite of engaging on-campus learning events. These should promote active learning and student-led discovery.
    o A dedicated suite of wholly online provision is offered through HW Online.
    o Work-based provision, including Graduate Apprenticeships, is tailored as appropriate to cohort.
- Discipline sites on the VLE will support programme / discipline community building and host key information such as programme handbooks and induction resources and student voice tools.
- All courses have a strong digital base on the virtual learning environment. This will make use of the appropriate University template, providing at least core information such as course handbooks, syllabi, live session times and assessment information via the VLE.
- Students must be supported to understand the concepts of academic integrity and academic good practice.
    o The University's Academic Integrity module will be embedded in each discipline site and the Declaration of Authorship should be completed for every assessment.
- Teaching teams must communicate clearly to students what use of artificial intelligence is permitted on their

courses and assessments, in line with University guidance.
- Teaching teams must communicate to students how recording of teaching and learning events will be used in the course of study, in line with University policy.
  - Teaching teams should ensure live teaching sessions are recorded where it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

Assessment and Feedback Design
- Teaching teams are encouraged to continue to review and enhance assessment and feedback design to support student learning, following the University's Assessment for Learning principles and making use of the Heriot-Watt Action Feedback Protocol.
- Assessments may take place in a range of formats, as appropriate to programme and course learning outcomes, making use of the University approved platforms for assessment.
- Assessment and feedback details for the semester must be clearly communicated to students via the virtual learning environment by Week 0 of the semester.

Student Support, Induction and Consolidation Activity
- Students will have an identified key contact for support throughout their studies, in line with the Student Support Model 2025-26.
- Induction, community-building, study skills and employability support will be offered for all years to ensure that learners can fully and effectively engage with Heriot-Watt study.
  - Teaching teams should plan tailored School / discipline activities to support this, including making effective use of key touchpoints such as Induction / Welcome Week and Consolidation Week.
  - The University 'Climate Advocacy' module should be appropriately incorporated into activity by programme teams.

Inclusive and Accessible Practice
- Teaching teams should actively promote equity and inclusion and ensure resources meet legal requirements.
- Reasonable adjustments (including alternative assessments) and enhanced support for students with specific needs must be put in place, following established University processes.

Student Partnership, Voice and Communications
- Student partnership ethos should guide action and decision-making across teaching team practice.
- Teaching teams will invite and respond to student feedback on courses and programmes to inform continuous enhancement of learning experience and foster a culture of partnership.
- Student representatives will be supported by teaching teams in gathering and responding to feedback from their peers through, for example, active collaboration with Class Reps, running Student-Staff Liaison Committees in partnership, townhalls, and effective use of Discipline sites on the VLE.
- Information about relevant University policies and practice, course and programme expectations will be clearly and consistently communicated to students.

Timetabling
- Timetabling will encompass on-campus, online, and dual-mode sessions, ensuring appropriate allocation of time and learning spaces as appropriate to programme context.
- Teaching teams wishing to timetable sessions for specific groups within courses must identify this during the timetabling process.

Student Attendance and Engagement
- Students are expected to engage with the full suite of learning opportunities offered by their programme of study, both on campus and in the virtual learning environment.
- Students enrolled in on-campus programmes are expected to attend on campus teaching, learning, and assessment sessions.
- Student visa holders are expected to comply with all requirements, including any attendance rules.

Curriculum Management
- It is vital that GCM is updated and accurate for all courses and programmes, as this information is used to inform the following key University processes: student course registration, exam timetabling and organisation, marks & grades administration, and award processes.
  - **By Week 0 each semester**: Course assessment details and course team details must be up-to-date in GCM

- o **Note**: Course syllabus, learning outcomes and programme structures/course sequences for all modes and locations should have been approved and updated in GCM by April 2025.
- Teaching teams should ensure that information disseminated to students (e.g. in handbooks, on the VLE, etc.) is consistent with what has been approved on GCM.
- Programme and course teams should continue to update information on GCM throughout the academic year.

What is New for AY25-26?

Teaching teams should be aware of the following policy, systems and process changes that are new for AY25-26 and the key developments to be piloted or rolled out through the academic year.

- A refreshed **Student Support Model** has been developed to clarify who will support students through their learning journey.
- An updated **Student Engagement and Attendance Policy** has been introduced for AY25-26 to support student learning and well-being.
  - o Pilot activity to explore approaches to attendance monitoring will be undertaken through AY25-26.
- Updated guidance is available on the use of **Generative AI in learning, teaching and assessment**.
  - o Teaching teams must communicate to students which level of AI use is permitted in their course / programme.
- A new **'Climate Advocacy' module** has been developed and is linked from discipline sites as a key resource for teaching teams to promote to students through induction, Consolidation Week and appropriate courses..
- Compulsory **research ethics and integrity** training programme for all academic staff and students undertaking research projects (UG and PG).
- Minor additions to assessment policies have been made. These relate to ensuring security of off-campus and off-line marking and to scheduling of coursework.
- A revised Policy on Recognition of Prior Learning, featuring new criteria on awards.
- The policy and procedures on Programme Titles, Courses and Learning Outcomes have been revised, clarifying areas where provision must be identical across all locations and modes and areas where local contextualisation and variation are permitted.
- The **Revised Student Academic Misconduct Policy** includes ethics-related provisions for UG and PGT students (pending Senate approval June 2025).
- Minor updates have been made to a range of other policies, including: Block Teaching, Business Approval of Programmes, English Language Requirements, Exams and Other Assessments in Different Timezones.

Enhanced Communication

- A *Learning & Teaching Weekly* briefing is available to support teaching teams in their work.
  - o Colleagues are invited to sign up to receive weekly news and prompts to key action to be undertaken.

And Coming Up Later in 2025-26:

- In line with the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), programme teams will be required to complete a Programme-Level Annual Monitoring & Review (AMR) report from academic year 2026/27. The process will apply to all University programmes, including both taught and research programmes. Development of the approach and **pilot activity will be carried out in 2025/26 involving a sample of HW programmes.**
- During 25/26, **revisions will be required to UG degree classification criteria for Year 1 new entrants in 2026/27**, following Senate approval of updated requirements. This will require engagement across teaching teams, approval by the University Studies Committee, and the updating of GCMS entries.
- The **Digital Student Experience Programme** which delivered the new Course Registration System, personalised student timetables and Marks & Grades, will build on its work through continuous improvement and the Banner Transformation project, in partnership with academics and Professional Services staff.