

Heriot-Watt University

## THE SENATE

Minutes: 21 September 2022

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor	
Members also Present:	Mr Benedict Aduomahor* Dr Cakil Agnew Professor Mushtak Al Atabi Dr Nasir Al Lagtah Dr Ross Alexander Professor Scott Arthur* Professor Lynne Baillie* Dr Lehel Banjai Dr Anne Bernassau Professor Mark Biggs Dr Linda Buchan Dr David Cavallaro Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong Professor Malcolm Chrisp Dr Jose M Conde* Dr Demitrios Cotsovos Dr Paul Dalgarno Mr Ilya Dali* Professor Dugald Duncan* Dr Erkal Ersoy Dr Thomas Farrington Professor Anna Fenge Dr Fadi Ghaith Ms Cheng Siew Goh Dr Ian Grant Professor Igor Guz Dr Amos Haniff Professor Ted Henry Dr Annie Hill* Dr Kirin Hilliar Dr David Jenkins Dr Timothy Johnson Professor Helinor Johnston* Dr Britta Kalkreuter* Dr Craig Kennedy	Ms Molly Knight Mr Sanjit Jagganath Krishnakumar Dr Helen Lewis* Dr Bill MacPherson* Professor Julian Malins Dr Alistair McConnell Professor Martin McCoustra* Dr Richard McCracken Dr Heather McGregor Dr Ruairaidh McIntosh Dr Airil Yasreen Mohd Yassin Dr Shameel Muhammed* Dr Marlene Muller Dr Gillian Murray* Dr Hendrik Nahler Dr Mehdi Nazarinia Dr Yasemin Nielsen Ms Georgia Noble Dr Joanne Porter Dr Hani Ragab Hassen Mr Peter Ridges Dr Lucy Robertson Dr Rabee Rustum* Dr Christine Rutherford Dr Harpreet Seth* Dr Katerina Strani Professor Gill Thomson Mr Syed Uzair Dr Kathryn Waite Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Anke Wiese Dr Tze Chuen Yap Dr Humphrey Yiu* Dr Hind Zantout
In Attendance:	Professor Martha Caddell* Mr Richard Claughton Mr Mark Hamid (Clerk) Dr Maggie King	Ms Ruth Moir Mr Paul Travill Mr Iain Young
Apologies:	Dr Annie Hill Professor Sara Lombardo Mr Larry O'Brien	Mr Fraser Muir Dr Christian Saemann Dr Marion Winters

\* denotes partial attendance

MINUTE REF

**M22/45**

### **WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

ACTION BY

ACTION  
DATE

The Principal welcomed the Senators and others participating in the meeting, particularly the newly elected and appointed Senators, and those taking up membership on an interim basis.

The apologies for absence were noted.

**M22/46 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

**Received Approved** The Senate **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2022 and **approved** them as a correct record of the meeting.

**M22/47 ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING**

There were no outstanding actions or matters arising.

**M22/48 REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR**

**[Paper: SEN-22-29]**

**Received** The Senate **received** a report from the Principal, providing a summary of the University's progress and achievements, according to key strategic themes, as well as details of other developments made in the wider Higher Education sector.

Introducing the report, the Principal highlighted the start of the new academic year and the return of students to the University's campuses, thanking all staff and students involved in the excellent welcome events. He congratulated colleagues on recent successes and accolades, and noted that it was an uncertain time, both for the Higher Education sector and for wider society. The Principal referred to the NSS/PTES Task Force which had been set up to coordinate the University's response to recent unsatisfactory survey outcomes, particularly in the NSS. Responses are being coordinated under the leadership of the Deputy Principal Education and Student Life across four themes: Assessment and Feedback on Assessment; Student Voice; Learning Community and Wider Student Experience; Organisation and Management.

The Principal invited Richard Claughton, Global Director of Human Resources, to provide an update on the Staff Survey results setting out the five priorities for action: communications; management of change; reward and workload; senior leadership; and performance and development, and the next steps proposed to address these. It was noted that the staff survey results were being cascaded across the University.

The Principal also addressed the challenges being experienced by research colleagues due to challenges with the ERP implementation, as well as other factors to do with pre and post-award systems. The Principal reported that achieving a fully functioning finance system by the end of July 2023 was a top priority for the University Executive.

Senators, staff and students were welcomed to attend the forthcoming Vice Chancellor's lecture on Planetary Health by the Pro-Chancellor Malaysia, Professor Tan Sri Dr Jemilah Mahmood.

The report was **noted** by the Senate.

**M22/49 OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2022/23**

**Received and Noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** an overview of the new academic year from Professor Malcolm Chrisp, Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life). He highlighted the continuing challenges of the global pandemic, changes to the University's assessment processes, the backlog of discipline cases, and the results of the recent National Student Survey (NSS). The Deputy Principal invited the Head of Academic Quality to

deliver a presentation which provided updates on the start of academic year 2022/23 including: the NSS 2022 - Results and Actions; an Academic Operations Update; Student Experience; and Launch of Sports and Exercise. Senate noted the very disappointing results from the NSS survey, the deterioration in the University's position, and consequent impact on institutional rankings. In response to this, a taskforce had been set up, meeting on a weekly basis and working closely with the Global Operations Executive in order to coordinate responses through action and implementation plans at institutional and local levels. It was noted that this was a concern for the whole institution and staff were encouraged to reflect on and participate in changes which needed to be made.

The Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life), with the Head of Academic Quality, also reported on the very significant increase in discipline cases. It was noted that additional resources had been allocated and that the staff team, in conjunction with the University Discipline Committee, were working hard to process the backlog. It was noted that the Academic Integrity Group was working in parallel on the underlying reasons for this increase in cases, focussing on development and delivery of an Academic Integrity Module on Canvas Commons; transforming assessment; and provisional progression decisions. The L+T Academic Year Group, with input from Directors of Academic Quality and relevant professional services had approved plans for assessment in 2022/23 with timed, online coursework for all HW Online and most of the partnership students, with in-person examinations for the three Joint Education Programmes. Senate noted its thanks for the work and dedication of colleagues to resolving these matters.

The Deputy Principal invited the Global Academic Registrar to update the Senate on the student experience; it was noted that enrolment was ongoing and that the team was working to familiarise many students with an exam room environment following the adjustments made during the global pandemic.

The Senate also received a presentation on strategic changes in learning and teaching from the Head of Academic Quality and the Director of the Learning & Teaching Academy; this set out the Academic Architecture: structure of the academic year, and work on Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation, with a timeline to September 2025.

A number of Senators expressed concern about the resourcing and impact of restructuring of professional services within the University, highlighting a number of adverse impacts on staff and student experience, with a significant increase in the number of support enquiries, including to the Student Union Advice Hub. These concerns extended across the issues experienced by the research community, as well as in learning, teaching and student experience. It was agreed that these were very important matters and the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) with other members of the Executive would work together with Executive Deans and DLT's, and Directors of Professional Service to understand and work through the challenges currently being faced.

**Received** The Senate **received** an update on the Heriot-Watt Global College (HWGC), which the Court had recently established as a new Primary Academic Unit, from its Executive Dean, Professor Anna Fenge. It was noted that the work of the Degree Entry Programme and the Malaysia Foundation Programme had now been incorporated into the structure of the new Primary Academic Unit and that work was ongoing to develop the infrastructure of the PAU, including the appointment of a Director of Learning & Teaching. This was being delivered in parallel with an inaugural intake in Edinburgh and strong recruitment to programmes in Dubai and Malaysia and the Senate noted the structures of the programmes which the Global College would offer, including the new Masters Foundation Programme.

**Noted** The Senate **noted** the report with its thanks expressed by the Chair.

**M22/51** **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS:  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE AND 03 AUGUST 2022  
[PAPER: SEN-22-30]**

**Received  
Noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted at its most recent meeting. All items in the report were presented for information.

**M22/52** **ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE: PROPOSED  
CHANGES TO REGULATIONS A4, A5, A6 AND A7 [PAPER: SEN-22-  
31]**

**Received  
and Noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** a report from the Ordinances and Regulations Committee, setting out amendments to Regulation A4: *Courses, Programmes and Assessment*, Regulation A5: *Academic Decision-Making Boards*, Regulation A6: *Progression* and Regulation A7: *Awards*.

The amendments proposed sought to effect adjustments which had been to the Mitigating Circumstances policy. Some Senators expressed concern that decisions would be made at progression boards rather than assessment boards, creating potential delays for students; it was suggested that this would particularly be the case in the School of Social Sciences. Following a discussion and explanatory remarks in support of the proposals from the Chair of the Ordinances and Regulations Committee (Professor Waldron), the Senate **approved** the changes to Regulations and Professor Waldron agreed to discuss the concerns raised with Directors of Learning and Teaching and other staff before reporting back to the Senate with recommendations about how best to proceed across the Schools.

**Approved**

**M22/53** **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:  
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 05 APRIL AND 10 JUNE 2022  
[PAPER: SEN-22-32]**

**Received  
Noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted at its most recent meeting. All items in the report were presented for information.

**M22/54** **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING:  
REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2022 [PAPER: SEN-22-33]**

**Received  
Noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted at an additional meeting of the Committee held during the summer vacation.

**M22/55** **RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES PAPER [PAPER: SEN-  
22-34]**

**Received and noted** The Senate **received** and **noted** a Research Publications and Outcomes paper, presented on behalf of the Global Head of Information Services, which had been approved by the University Executive.

**M22/56 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL ON INSTITUTION-LED QUALITY REVIEW [PAPER: SEN-22-25]**

**Received and Endorsed** The Senate **received** and endorsed the Annual Report to the Scottish Funding Council on Institution-Led Quality Review presented by the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) and noted the accompanying assurance statement which was to be signed by the Chair of Court in due course.

**M22/57 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no further items of competent business.

**M22/58 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Monday 31 October 2022  
Thursday 26 January 2023  
Wednesday 26 April 2023  
Thursday 15 June 2023

Signed by the Chair ..... Date .....