

Heriot-Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 31 October 2022

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor	
Members also Present:	Dr Çakıl Agnew Professor Mushtak Al Atabi Dr Nasir Al Lagtah* Professor Scott Arthur Dr Lehel Banjai* Professor Mark Biggs Dr Linda Buchan Dr David Renato Cavallaro Professor Malcolm Chrisp Dr Jose M Conde Dr Demitrios Cotsovos* Dr Paul Dalgarno Mr Ilya Dali Professor Dugald B Duncan Dr Erkal Ersoy Professor Anna Fenge* Dr Fadi Ghaith Ms Cheng Siew Goh Professor Igor Guz Dr Amos P Haniff Professor Theodore Henry Dr Annie E Hill Dr Kirin Hilliar* Mr Saad Javed* Dr Timothy Johnson Professor Helinor J Johnston Dr Britta Kalkreuter Mr Sean Keenan* Dr Craig Kennedy Ms Molly Knight Mr Sanjit Krishnakumar Professor Angus Laing	Dr Helen Lewis Dr Min-Hsiu Liao Professor Sara Lombardo Dr Bill MacPherson* Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer Dr Alistair McConnell Professor Martin McCoustra* Dr Richard McCracken Professor Heather McGregor Dr Ruairaidh McIntosh Professor Steve McLaughlin Dr Lee J Miles Dr Marlene Muller Professor Gillian Murray Dr Mehdi Nazarinia* Dr Yasemin Nielsen Ms Georgia Noble Mr Larry O'Brien Mr Peter Ridges Dr Lucy Robertson Dr Rabee Rustum Dr Christine Rutherford Dr Christian Saemann Professor Mathini Sellathurai Dr Katerina Strani Mr Syed Uzair Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Anke Wiese Dr Marion Winters Dr Tze Chuen Yap Dr Humphrey Yiu Dr Hind Zantout
In Attendance:	Professor Martha Caddell Ms Sue Collier* Mr Mark Hamid Dr Margaret King Ms Ruth Moir	Mr Fraser Muir Mr Dan Potter* Mr Kieran Robson Renner Ms Kirsty Scanlan Mr Paul Travill
Apologies:	Dr Ross Alexander Dr Anne Bernassau Dr Elaine Collinson Dr Ian Grant Professor Julian Malins	Dr Shameel Muhammed Dr Jo Porter Dr Hani Ragab Hassen Dr Kathryn Waite

* denotes partial attendance

MINUTE REF

M22/59

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

ACTION BY

ACTION
DATE

The Principal welcomed the Senators and others participating in the meeting, particularly those doing so for the first time.

The apologies for absence were noted.

M22/60 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Received Approved The Senate **received** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2022 and **approved** them as a correct record of the meeting.

M22/61 ACTION LOG AND MATTERS ARISING

The Senate noted an update on the action arising from Minute M22/52 concerning amendments to the Mitigating Circumstances policy. Professor Waldron (Chair, Ordinances and Regulations Committee) advised the Senate that she had met with the Director of Learning and Teaching, the Director of Academic Quality, and the Deputy Director of Academic Quality in the School of Social Sciences to discuss concerns about the implementation of the policy in that School, and that a mapping exercise would be undertaken for all Schools in consultation with Professional Services staff. Professor Waldron and Professor Chrisp would then meet with Directors of Academic Quality and Learning and Teaching in all Schools before reporting back to the Senate.

FW/TMC Feb 23

**M22/62 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 in the wider Higher Education sector.

In presenting his report, the Principal noted the breadth of events and activities which had been taking place across the University, and congratulated all staff whose awards and recognition had been highlighted in the report. The Principal noted that the National Robotarium had opened in September and that the international attention it had received reflected its importance as a centre for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Building on discussions with colleagues across the University, the Principal noted his focus on getting the basics right and ensuring that the systems and processes were performing to support the University's objectives. He noted the pressures, both internal and external, which were affecting the University, particularly the backlog of discipline cases and the cost of living crisis. The Principal encouraged all Senators to engage in the forthcoming All Staff Executive Briefing to contribute to the shaping of priorities for the University going forward.

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

M22/61.1 RESPONSE TO STUDENT SURVEYS – NSS TASKFORCE UPDATE REPORT

Received The Senate **received** a [presentation](#), introduced by the Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life), focussing on updates and action relating to Student Surveys, Academic Misconduct and External Review. In relation to challenges in delivering strategic change in Learning and Teaching, it was noted that the focus to the end of 2022 was on establishing a framework with a reporting structure and operational plan and addressing crucial learning and teaching operational matters.

The Senate noted that an Early Experience Survey had been conducted across the whole student body (including online students) in weeks 5 of the new semester, with a 21% response rate. This had been aligned to a number of questions in the National Student Survey (NSS) and showed that, overall, students had a 78% level of satisfaction, with higher results for taught postgraduate and online students. The establishment of the NSS Taskforce group, reporting to the UE and GOE was noted. It was

reported that 83% of undergraduate students were aware of their personal tutor and the role a personal tutor plays. However, according to the survey, 50% of students had not had formal online or in-person contact by week 5 of the first semester. A number of Senators made comments about the need to support students through more effective management of the personal tutoring system, and to use that forum as an opportunity to engage students with questions of academic integrity. It was noted that student staff ratios were high, engagement low, and many students only spoke to personal tutors if they had got into difficulty. It was suggested that the benefits of early engagement should be emphasised. Some Senators expressed the view that the personal tutoring arrangements were unnecessarily cumbersome, with many staff not being appropriately equipped to deal with the technical or personal issues affecting students in difficulty.

M22/61.2 The Senate received a summary and analysis of the Academic Misconduct 2021/22. The report included how the fivefold increase in academic misconduct cases since 2019 was being managed, and set out the actions required to significantly reduce future cases. Anecdotal evidence for the increase in cases included, in the context of take home exams: an increase in “cutting and pasting” from the internet; issues of assessment design; common problems to do with English as a second language; poor preparation or ignoring advice and guidance given. It was noted that the number of meetings of the University Discipline Committee had been increased and a number of process changes made in order to expedite handling of the cases. It was recognised that assessment processes needed to change to reduce the incidence of academic misconduct, and that students also needed more support to make them aware of what constituted an offence; an academic integrity resource was being developed and rolled out across Schools.

Commenting on this element of the update, a number of Senators offered comments on School level experiences which had informed better practice, such as an academic integrity quiz tool in the School of Mathematics and Computer Sciences, and the support which the University Library had been able to offer to students in courses with particularly high incidences of academic misconduct cases. One Senator expressed concern about the risks of choosing assessment questions from question banks. There was a broad consensus in favour of moving towards compulsory training to raise student awareness of academic misconduct issues, and it was agreed that the University Committee for Learning and Teaching should consider this issue and report back to the Senate. It was noted that some adjustments would need to be made in Semester Two for implementation in the new academic year as it was not possible to change Regulations in-year while courses were under way.

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Noted The Senate **noted** its thanks to all staff who were working to resolve the issues which had been discussed, and particularly to the members and secretariat of the University Discipline Committee for their work in the face of an unprecedented case load.

M22/61.3 The Senate received a report, presented by the Head of Academic Quality, setting out changes to the Scottish Quality Framework which would be used to review all credit bearing provision across the University with an increased focus on data to drive enhancement and strategic decision making. It was highlighted that the Senate had an important role in providing assurance on academic quality to the Court.

M22/62 2022/23 STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Received The Senate **received** an [update](#) on the Student Partnership Agreement from the presidents of the Student Union in Scotland and the Student Associations in Dubai and Malaysia, as well as the President of the Sports Union. It was noted that the agreement presented would be the fifth annual iteration of the document and that it continued to make progress in presenting a truly global vision for staff-student collaboration. The Senate noted the four key strands of the agreement: Academic, Community, Wellbeing, and Sport. It was noted that the agreement would be ratified over the academic session and that ongoing staff engagement would be welcome.

The Principal noted his thanks, with that of the Senate, and encouraged Senators to promote engagement with staff at School and Professional Services level. It was noted that success in this area, as well as delivering on the University's commitment to Global outreach, would support excellence in the National Student Survey.

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

M22/63 UPDATE ON GRADUATE SCHOOL

Received The Senate **noted** an update from the Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) on the development of the Graduate School. He reported that the working group had begun to examine the project's various strands with a report in train for consideration by the Senate at its meeting on 26 January 2023. Senators were encouraged to contact the working group members to engage with its work.

Noted The Senate **noted** the report.

M22/64 SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSINESS AND EFFECTIVENESS: REPORT OF BUSINESS [PAPER: SEN-22-41]

Received The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the
Noted Committee since its previous report to Senate.

The Principal highlighted the vacancies for Senators to join the Committees of Senate, including the Research Degrees Committee and the Studies Committee, emphasising the importance of these Committees which hold responsibility delegated from the Senate and make key decisions on its behalf. He encouraged Senators to respond to a forthcoming communication from the Clerk seeking expressions of interest, either personally or by encouraging colleagues.

ALL Nov 23

M22/65 ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE: REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2022 [PAPER: SEN-22-42]

Received The Senate **received** and **noted** a report from the Ordinances and The Senate received and noted the report of business conducted at the Committee's most recent meeting proposing amendments to Regulation A1: *Definitions and Interpretation* in order to clarify certain terminology at the request of the Research Degrees Committee. The Senate **approved**
Approved these amendments.

Endorsed The Senate noted the proposed amendments to Ordinance E3 *Graduates' Association* which had been considered by the Committee and endorsed for amendment by the University Court.

- M22/66 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION:
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 AUGUST AND 13 OCTOBER
2022 [PAPER: SEN-22-43]**
Received The Senate **received** and **noted** the minutes of the Committee's most
Noted recent meetings.
- M22/67 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS:
REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2022 [PAPER:
SEN-22-44]**
Received The Senate **received** and **noted** the minutes of the Committee's most
Noted recent meeting. All business reported was presented for information.
- M22/68 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING:
REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 27 JULY 2022 [PAPER: SEN-22-33]**
Received The Senate **received** and **noted** the minutes of the final meeting of the
Noted Committee in the 2021-22 academic year.
- M22/69 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
The Principal intimated his intention, as a Chair's Action, to invite six members of academic staff from the Heriot-Watt Global College (HWGC) to attend meetings of the Senate in Semester Two, as part of the arrangements to establish HWGC within the University's academic community. This action was proposed to reflect that HWGC had become a Primary Academic Unit, with an entitlement (based on the size of its academic staff) to six Senators, subsequent to the most recent election of Senators from the Schools, and that there was no mechanism in the Ordinances to fill casual vacancies. He advised that the University Secretary and the Clerk would seek notes of interest for these positions (and arrange a selection process, if necessary) before the invitations would be issued. He invited any Senator wishing to comment on this process to do so in writing to the Clerk.
- M22/70 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**
Thursday 26 January 2023
Wednesday 26 April 2023
Thursday 15 June 2023