Heriot--Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 23 April 2025

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Present:		
	Dr Nasir Al Lagtah	Dr Richard McCracken
	Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi	Professor Martin McCoustra
	Dr Yousef Al-Guamei	Dr Ruaraidh Mcintosh
	Professor Lehel Banjai	Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin
	Dr David Cavallaro	Professor Steve McLaughlin
	Dr Hassam Chaudhry	Dr Thomas Methven
	Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong	Mr Lee Miles *
	Professor Malcolm Chrisp	Dr M Shadi Mohamed
	Dr Demitrios Cotsovos	Professor P. A. Muhammed Basheer
	Professor Paul Dalgarno	Dr Shameel Muhammed
	Dr Louise Delicato	Professor Gillian Murray
	Dr Christopher Dodd	Dr Katie Myhill
	Dr Neamat El Gayar	Dr Shereen Nassar
	Dr Taha Elhag	Mr Adrian Nathai
	Dr David Ellis	Professor Mehdi Nazarinia
	Dr Erkal Ersoy	Dr Yasemin Nielsen
	Mr Cameron Fields	Dr Stefano Padiila
	Dr Yun Ii Go	Ms Rachel Poole
	Professor Igor Guz	Professor Joanne Porter *
	Dr Noor Zainab Habib	Dr Marta Romeo
	Dr Daniel Hale	Dr Rabee Rustum
	Dr April Henning	Professor Christian Saemann
	Professor Annie Hill	Dr Mohammed Saleh
	Dr Adnan Ilyas	Dr Florian Scheuring
	Dr Ramon Inglada	Dr Harpreet Seth *
	Dr Timothy Johnson	Ms Devanshi Sharma
	Ms Angela Justin	Mr Nader Shouly
	Dr Britta Kalkreuter	Mr Karamjeet Singh
	Dr Barbara Keating	Ms Andrea Sneddon
	Dr Craig Kennedy	Dr Ryad Soobhany
	Professor Reza Kouhy	Dr Katerina Strani
	Dr Suzanne Lampert	Dr Monica Tamariz *
	Mr Andrew Lee	Dr Hai Chen Tan
	Professor Sara Lombardo	Ms Pearlyn Tee *
	Ms Jasmine Low	Professor Fiona Waldron
	Dr Alex MacLaren	Dr Robin Westacott
	Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer *	Dr Euan Winton *
	Ms Holly McAdams	Dr Tze Chuen Yap
	Dr Alistair McConnell	

* denotes partial attendance

In attendance:		
	Mr Mike Bruce	Professor Julian Malins
	Professor Martha Caddell	Professor Dame Heather McGregor
	Ms Sue Collier	Ms Ruth Moir
	Ms Samantha Kane	Mr Fraser Muir
	Dr Maggie King	Mr Kieran Robson-Renner *[M25/26]*
	Ms Fiona Kyle	Ms Kirsty Scanlan
	Professor Angus Laing	Dr Stephen Yarwood *[M25/20]*
	Mr Mark Fowler *[M25/25]*	Ms Megan Morgan (Clerk)

Apologies:		
	Dr Anne Bernassau	Dr Nazia Talat
	Dr Ross Curran	Dr Marta Vallejo
	Dr Jia Lu	Dr George Vasdravellis
	Dr Bill MacPherson	Ms Ridhima Shivkumar
	Dr Kathrin Stark	

Unnotified absence:	
	Professor Jo Drugan
	Ms Jun Fujiwara
	Dr Hendrik Nahler
	Dr Humphrey Yiu

MINUTE REF		ACTION BY	ACTION DATE

M25/15   **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

15.1   The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the apologies as above.

M25/16   **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 6 FEBRUARY 2025 AND REPORT OF THE JOINT COURT-SENATE MEETING ON 12 MARCH 2025 (SE-25-13)**

16.1   The Senate received and **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2025, subject to a minor correction under M25/4.2.

16.2   The Senate received and **approved** the report of the Joint Court-Senate meeting held on 12 March 2025. The University Secretary reported that feedback from the Joint Meeting had highlighted the value of in-person interactions and presentations. Members suggested more time for discussion and networking, pre-meeting presentation recordings and clear objectives. This feedback would inform the planning of future meetings.

      ACTION BY: RJM/Clerk — ACTION DATE: March 2026

M25/17   **MATTERS ARISING AND ACTION LOG (SE-25-14)**

3.1   The Senate received and **noted** the Action Log. It was agreed that completed actions would now be removed from the Log.

3.2   The University Secretary reported that School to Senate Elections were underway, with nominations closing on 24 April 2025. Members were invited to cascade nomination information, with EGIS and colleagues particularly encouraged to nominate.

      ACTION BY: All/Clerk — ACTION DATE: 24 April 2025

M25/18   **REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR (SE-25-15)**

18.1   The Senate received the report which outlined recent institutional achievements and developments in the Higher Education Sector.

18.2   The Chair provided an update on key areas and highlighted:

a) The new student officers for 2025-2026 had been elected, with congratulations extended to those re-elected.

b) Professor Chris Turney had been appointed Deputy Principal for Research and Impact, with responsibility for leading the Global Research Institutes, the Research Futures Hub and preparations for REF2029. Professor Duncan Hand was thanked, who had served as Assistant Vice-Principal in an interim capacity and will continue to assist in the transition of roles through to the end of this year.

c) Professor O'Donovan had been appointed as Deputy Principal Education and Student Life and would continue to serve as Chief Scientist until December 2025. He would lead the Global Learning and Teaching Strategy. Professor Jack would serve as Interim Deputy Vice-Principal Dubai.

d) A new academic partnership had been established with Kyiv Aviation Institute in Ukraine, with a focus on joint research, teaching initiatives, and future exchange programmes**.**

e) Prof Malik (EPS) and Prof Kim (MACS) had been elected Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

f) The Chair had reviewed progress against priorities for Senate in 2024-25 and alignment with strategic themes.

g) Sector-wide financial and governance challenges were noted. The Chair confirmed that the University remained stable and well-governed, with strategic changes progressing in a managed way. It was noted that the University's governance framework remained robust, supported by a strong governance team that ensured high standards.

h) The proposed Tertiary Education and Training Bill was noted as a potential opportunity for the University.

i) Members were encouraged to participate in Celebrations Week from 9th to 13th June 2025.

18.3   The Senate **noted** the report without comment.

M25/19   GLOBAL STUDENT UPDATE (SE-25-16)

19.1   The Senate received and **noted** the update from the Student Union President (UK).

19.2   The Student Union President (UK) reported on findings from the Big Six Student Survey. Barriers to student engagement included time constraints, lack of belonging, lack of quiet study spaces, external commitments and financial pressures. External commitments impacted student attendance, with 15% of those surveyed had reported to have missed lectures on a weekly basis. Improved communications and student engagement events were highlighted to address barriers.

19.3   In discussion, the Senate noted that survey data from Malaysia was not statistically significant. Current data was broken down by campus and year group only and the Senate requested further analysis by student group and location for future surveys. A meeting would be arranged to address comments on quiet study spaces. The positive correlation between community engagement and academic performance was highlighted, with reference to the benefits of student sports club participation.

Cameron Fields	May 2026
Fraser Muir/Cameron Fields	May 2025

M25/20   RESEARCH ETHICS TRAINING (SE-25-17)

20.1   The Senate received the proposal on compulsory research ethics training, presented by the Chair of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and the Chair of the University Discipline Committee (UDC).

20.2   The Chair of UDC reported that the proposed implementation of compulsory research ethics training was in response to recent cases of research misconduct, the influx of new academic staff and inconsistent practices across Schools. It was agreed training for all academic staff would support alignment and improve supervisory engagement.

20.3   Members discussed the need to align ethics approval timelines with project progression, to avoid delays in data collection, particularly for dissertations at undergraduate level where early ethics approval was essential for data collection. Variability in the efficiency of ethics processes across Schools was noted, with a need for clearer guidance and timely decisions. It was confirmed that student training would be managed at School level, with supporting materials such as short videos to be developed. Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee (LTAOC) and Global Operations Executive (GOE) would be consulted on plans for operational delivery.

20.4   Following discussion, the Senate **approved** in principle the introduction of compulsory research ethics training for all academic staff. A subsequent proposal would be provided that detailed guidance on the practical implementation of the proposed training.

Stephen Yarwood/Me	June 2025

M25/21   **UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE REPORT (SE-25-21)**

21.1   The Senate received the report, presented by the Chair of UDC.

21.2   The Senate **approved** the formal recognition of School Discipline Committee (SDC) as formal sub-committees of the UDC; the updated UDC terms of reference, and the new SDC terms of reference. The Senate **noted** the summary report.

M25/22   **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY & STANDARDS: REPORT OF PREVIOUS MEETING INCLUDING PROPOSAL ON UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE CLASSIFICATION METHODS (SE-25-18)**

22.1   The Committee received the report presented by the Chair of the University Committee for Quality & Standards (UCQS).

22.2   The Chair of UCQS outlined the proposal to standardise the methodology for calculating undergraduate degree classifications. The proposal aimed to address longstanding variability in classification methods across programmes, streamline current practice and improve consistency in approach. Following consultation and analysis, the proposal set out three standardised methodologies for honours and integrated master's degrees, with allowances for exceptions where evidence was provided.

22.3   Members questioned the definition and application of qualifying courses, the treatment of Level 8 courses, and the handling of professional pathway programmes. It was noted that further work would be undertaken to define qualifying courses and update relevant Academic Regulations. Programme teams would be responsible for identifying qualifying courses within structures to ensure transparency at the point of award. It was noted that the proposed changes would apply from academic year 2026-2027 for new entrants only.

22.4   The Senate **approved** the proposed new approach for the calculation of undergraduate degree classifications and **noted** the report.

M25/23   **ORDINANCES & REGULATIONS COMMITTEE: REPORT OF PREVIOUS MEETING (SE-25-19)**

23.1   The Senate received the report presented by the Chair of the Ordinances & Regulations Committee (ORC).

23.2   The Senate **approved** modifications to Regulation A3, which included an updated reference to the Admission of a Child Procedure. It was noted that further revisions related to China admissions for accelerated pathways had been deferred for further ORC review.

23.3   The following items were **endorsed** by the Senate:

   a) Modifications to Ordinance E4 (Student Discipline), to incorporate reference to the Student Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure, for onwards Court approval.
   b) Modifications to Ordinance A3 (Academic Year), which involved re-numbering to align with Senate business, for onwards Court approval.

c) Minor revisions to the Committee's terms of reference concerning committee composition. It was noted that this was previously approved by the Court and endorsed by the Governance and Nominations Committee.

23.4 The Senate **noted** the report.

M24/24 **SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSIENSS & EFFECTIVENESS (SCIBE): REPORT OF PREVIOUS MEETING (SE-25-20)**

24.1 The Senate received the report presented by the Global Director of Governance and Legal Service and **approved** the following:

a) Revised Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) Terms of Reference, which included minor amendments to meeting frequency and terminology.
b) The appointment of Dr Yun Li Go to the SCIBE until 31 July 2027.

24.2 The Senate **noted** the report.

M25/25 **DIGITAL STUDENT EXPERIENCE (SE-25-22)**

25.1 The Senate received and **noted** the paper presented by the Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life) and Global Director of Information Services (IS).

25.2 The Global Director of IS provided an update on the Digital Student Experience Programme, a major initiative aligned with Strategy 2035 and the University's Digital Strategy. The programme included the reconfiguration of the Banner Student Information System and a range of continuous improvement projects to enhance the student journey and support staff through improved digital services and data systems.

25.3 In discussion, the following points were raised:

a) Developments were primarily student facing; student involvement in testing was noted.
b) Discipline code changes were noted to impact staff identity; clear and sensitive communication was needed.
c) The programme re-coding timeline should be considered by the relevant committee due to staff input required.
d) Reliable digital access for on-campus students, including laboratories and software like Coderunner and STACK, remained essential.
e) The updated Banner system was scheduled for Summer 2026 to support online student integration.

M25/26 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND STUDENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT (SE-25-23)**

26.1 The Senate received and **noted** the paper presented by the Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life) and Quality Enhancement Officer. The paper outlined approaches to strengthen partnership working, enhance community and improve responsiveness to student feedback.

26.2 Members discussed ways to strengthen staff-student communities, particularly at course and programme level. Suggestions included the use of cohort coordinators, improved training for student representatives, and non-timetabled extra-curricular activity. Smarter

timetabling, improved campus experience, and social incentives were identified as key enablers to encourage students to travel to campus. Members supported facilitating academic events to support student engagement, noting there should be consistent equitable funding across Schools.

26.3   The Senate noted the need for clear staff communications on institutional change. Delegation to discipline level for engagement was supported, with members noting that this should be balanced with promoting institutional identity. Dashboards were seen as useful Members agreed that visibility of actions taken in response to student feedback was essential. More effective use of Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC) in partnership working was recommended.

M25/27   **RE-APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL OF THE UNIVERSITY (SE-25-24)**

27.1   The Senate received and recommended the proposals outlined within the report, presented by University Secretary. The proposal for re-appointment was outlined and members were invited to provide any comment directly to the University Secretary or Clerk.

M25/28   **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION: REPORT OF PREVIOUS MEETING INCLUDING SPINOUT ANNUAL REPORT (SE-25-25)**

28.1   The Senate received and noted the report.

M25/29   **UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING: REPORT OF PREVIOUS MEETING INCLUDING SPINOUT ANNUAL REPORT (SE-25-25)**

29.1   The Senate received and noted the report.

M25/30   **SENATE FORWARD AGENDA (SE-25-12)**

30.1   The Senate noted the forward agenda without comment.

M25/31   **DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

31.1   Thursday 12 June 2025