

Heriot-Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 16 October 2024

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

Present:	<p>Dr Nasir Al Lagtah Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi Mr Mohamed Al Musleh * Dr Hassam Chaudhry * Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong Professor Malcolm Chrisp Dr Demitrios Cotsovos Professor Jo Drugan Dr Neamat El Gayar Dr Taha Elhag Dr David Ellis Dr Erkal Ersoy Mr Joshua Ahurome Eseigbe Professor Anna Fenge Mr Cameron Fields Dr Yun li Go Professor Igor Guz Professor Annie Hill Dr Adnan Ilyas Dr Timothy Johnson Mr Karamjeet Singh Dr Britta Kalkreuter * Dr Barbara Keating Dr Craig Kennedy Professor Reza Kouhy Professor Angus Laing Dr Suzanne Lampert Mr Andrew Lee Ms Jasmine Low * Dr Jia Lu Dr Bill MacPherson * Ms Holly McAdams</p>	<p>Dr Alistair McConnell Professor Martin McCoustra Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin Professor Steve McLaughlin Dr Thomas Methven Mr M Shadi Mohamed Professor Basheer Muhammed Professor Gillian Murray Dr Shereen Nassar * Mr Adrian Nathai Dr Yasemin Nielsen * Dr Stefano Padiila Ms Rachel Poole Dr Marta Romeo Professor Christian Saemann Dr Mohammed Saleh Dr Florian Sheuring Ms Devanshi Sharma Ms Rhidima Shivkumar * Mr Nader Shouly Ms Andrea Sneddon Dr Ryad Soobhany Dr Kathrin Stark Dr Katerina Strani Mr Nazia Talat Dr Monica Tamariz Ms Pearlyn Tee Dr Marta Vallejo Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Tze Chuen Yap Dr Humphrey Yiu *</p>
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In attendance:	<p>Dr Fiona Armstrong Professor Martha Caddell Professor Scott Dalgarno Mr Mark Hamid (Clerk) Professor Duncan Hand</p>	<p>Ms Samantha Kane Ms Megan Morgan Mr Phil Rowsby Ms Kirsty Scanlan</p>
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Apologies:	<p>Dr Yousef Al-Guamei Professor Lehel Banjai Dr Anne Bernassau Ms Sue Collier Dr Ross Curran Professor Paul Dalgarno Dr Louise Delicato Dr Christopher Dodd Dr Ian Grant Dr Daniel Hale Dr April Henning Mr Ramon Inglada Professor Sara Lombardo Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer Dr Richard McCracken</p>	<p>Professor Dame Heather McGregor Dr Ruaraidh McIntosh Mr Lee Miles Ms Ruth Moir Mr Fraser Muir Dr Shameel Muhammed Dr Hendrik Nahler Professor Mehdi Nazarinia Professor Joanne Porter Dr Lucy Robertson Dr Harpreet Seth Mr Hai Tan Dr Robin Westacott Dr Euan Winton</p>
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* denotes partial attendance

MINUTE REF		ACTION BY	ACTION DATE
M24/73	CHAIR'S WELCOME & NOTE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
73.1	The Principal and Vice-Chancellor welcomed all participants to the meeting. The apologies for absence were noted.		
M24/74	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 29 AUGUST 2024		
74.1	The Senate received and approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 29 August 2024.		
74.2	There were no matters arising from the minutes.		
M24/75	REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR (SEN-24-45)		
75.1	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.		
75.2	The Principal noted that he had recently returned from China, where he had participated in a number of commencement ceremonies for students studying with the University here. He invited the Global Director of Student Experience and Academic Registrar to update the Senate about work to begin the academic year with a focus on community-building and student experience. She highlighted that several new systems had been introduced, including for personal timetabling and enrolment, and that efforts would continue to build on these successes throughout the year.		
75.3	The Principal noted that forty-two Senators had attended the induction session at the beginning of October. He highlighted that among the key themes which emerged was the provision of support for neurodiverse staff and students and agreed that this should be added to the Forward Agenda Plan as a future item.	Clerk	Immediate
75.4	It was noted that Campaign launch events were taking place across the University's campuses to attract investment through continued engagement with the alumni.		
75.5	The Senate received a report from Professor Fiona Waldron about the outputs from the Senate Planning meeting held on 29 August. It was noted that seventy-seven topics had been collated and analysed into priority areas, focussing on <i>Our People and Culture</i> , <i>Delivering Growth and Excellent</i> , and <i>Agility and Effectiveness</i> .		
75.6	The Senate noted the report, the Chair adding the thanks of the Senate for the analysis work which had been undertaken. He directed that the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness should keep a tracker of work to deliver on the themes identified.	FW/Clerk	Ongoing
M24/76	GLOBAL STUDENT UPDATE		
76.1	The Senate received a report from the Presidents of the Student Representative Bodies providing a summary of the student updates and perspectives for the awareness of Senators, focussing on the implementation of their four global priorities across the University's five campuses.		

- 76.2** It was noted that the Student President was now sending global weekly Advice Hub emails and that all Senators were encouraged to contact him if they wished to receive them. The Chair noted that the regular Advice Hub statistics could be shared with Senators periodically and that a Student Partnership Agreement item should be added to the Forward Agenda Plan to ensure good staff awareness of its terms. It was suggested that more comprehensive statistics could be obtained through engagement with programme directors.
- ALL Immediately
Clerk/SRBs Immediately
- 76.3** The President of Dubai Student Council brought up the desirability of needing a deputy full-time post. The Principal noted this request had been raised by the Dubai President in a number of different forums and would need to be resolved. He noted that the Dubai Council, whilst not having a CEO behind them, were actually well-supported by staff there (Ms Mitchell). The Provost (Malaysia) also noted that there was no CEO or continuous source of leadership for the student representative bodies in Malaysia but there were different forms of staff support for Student Associations and there was not necessarily a one-size fits all solution to the different campus settings.
- 76.4** The Senate **noted** the update.
- M24/77** **OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES: LEARNING & TEACHING; QESR ACTION PLAN (SEN-24-46) and ENHANCING STUDENT EXPERIENCE: STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS, ACTIONS & TRACKING (SEN-24-47)**
- 77.1** The Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life), Prof. Malcolm Chrisp, introduced two presentations, together with the Global Director of Student Experience & Academic Registrar, Samantha Kane, providing updates on key developments in Learning & Teaching and Student Experience.
- 77.2** The outcomes of the QESR were highlighted, together with the two principal outputs: a need to promote better awareness by students of the external examiner reports and improved staff awareness of risk in partnerships. It was noted that the NSS remains a priority, with the aspiration to move into quartile one of the league table, and that plans were in place to simplify and align learning and teaching operations.
- 77.3** Commenting on the presentations, Senators noted that the experience of graduate apprentices was often recorded to be less satisfactory than their peers; it was important to continue to look to address their needs given that the sector in Scotland appears to be moving to increase graduate apprenticeships.
- 77.4** The importance of a broad approach to enhancing experience was highlighted. The challenges of building community with larger student groups and classes was also noted, as well as the impact of using casual and adjunct staff for teaching and other contact time. It was suggested that allocating time in workloads to work on community-building would support improvement. Other Senators noted the importance of community meeting spaces for students and staff to interact, and the success which had been evidence from arranging meetups within courses and departments. It was agreed that all staff should look to positive developments in other disciplines to develop their strategies.
- 77.5** Mandatory attendance was discussed. It was noted that many students are required to attend lectures to comply with visa

conditions. Following an exchange of views, it was noted that there were several other avenues which could be exhausted before looking to mandatory attendance to improve engagement.

77.6 Summarising, the Deputy Principal noted the importance of scrutinising best practice and maintaining an agile approach to provide multiple approaches to improvement. The Principal noted the successful efforts in many Schools, including the recent Ada Lovelace Day in MACS, and reiterated his commitment to 80% satisfaction across all Schools and programmes, recognising the support which would need to be targeted into certain areas to achieve this.

77.7 The Senate **noted** the updates.

M24/78 UPDATE ON GRADUATE SCHOOL PROJECT (SEN-24-48)

78.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** an update on the Graduate School Project, presented by the Global Director of Research Engagement, Dr Fiona Armstrong. She noted the key activity which had taken place, highlighting the reshaping of the L&D offering, which would launch in January 2025. She encouraged Senators to feed back on how compliance targets could be met with the code of practice and emphasised the need to update the University's supervisory programme. This would support a key action to demonstrate a good research culture when applying for future iterations of REF.

78.2 The Chair **noted** the thanks of the Senate and encouraged all members to continue to contribute to advocating for the development of the Graduate School.

M24/79 FEEDBACK FROM THE POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES) (SEN-24-49)

79.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** a summary of feedback on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) from Professor Scott Dalgarno, Chair of the Research Degrees Committee. He noted that that the University had performed poorly in previous years and that the rate of responses remained low, with Heriot-Watt placing 42nd out of 53 institutions. It was noted that survey responses had been grouped into seven themes in the paper, and that various actions had been highlighted; these included reminders being issued for mandatory training, the provision of maternity and sick pay for postgraduate researchers, development of a university-wide postgraduate conference, and a guaranteed minimum level of funding for postgraduate societies to support the work they do to promote community and experience.

79.2 Commenting on the report, the Vice-Principal welcomed the responses but noted his disappointment at the low completion rates; he suggested this could be improved through better supervisor training.

M24/80 PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION (SEN-24-50)

80.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** revised Terms of Reference for the University Committee for Research and Innovation, which sought to implement the revised remit of the Committee which had been presented to the Senate at its previous meeting and had been informing the Committee's operations for some time.

- 80.2 Professor Waldron requested that amendments be made to clarify the reporting arrangements for the Committee and the appointment of the Chair of the Committee.
- 80.3 In view of the lack of written amendments to effect these changes being available to be disposed of at the meeting, the Chair sought the agreement of the Senate to allow the Senate Committee for Interim Business & Effectiveness to consider and approve a revised version of the Terms of Reference incorporating suitable amendments, provided that the principles of the document and other elements of it remained unaltered; the Senate **agreed** to this course of action. Chair/Clerk/ GM/FW Immediately
- 80.4 *Professor Al-Atabi recused himself from consideration of the following item.*
- M24/81 PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO ORDINANCE J3 APPOINTMENT OF THE VICE-PRINCIPAL (MALAYSIA) (SEN-24-51)**
- 81.1 The Senate **received** a paper proposing amendments to the University Ordinances to permit the extension of the term of office of the Vice-Principal (Malaysia) for a second additional term. The Chair of the Ordinances & Regulations Committee, Professor Waldron, advised that that Committee had endorsed the changes and that they would bring the arrangements in Malaysia into line with those which already existed in Dubai.
- 81.2 The Senate **endorsed** the proposed amendments to the Court.
- M24/82 ANNUAL INSTITUTIONAL QUALITY REPORT (SEN-24-52)**
- 82.1 The Senate **received** a presentation from the Global Academic Registrar on the Annual Institutional Quality Report, which had been prepared for the first time using the required format of a self evaluation and action plan. It was noted that the report had already been endorsed by the University Committee for Quality & Standards and the University Committee for Learning & Teaching.
- 82.2 The Senate **endorsed** the report and **confirmed** its assurance on institutional quality to the Audit and Risk Committee.
- M24/83 SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSINESS & EFFECTIVENESS: REPORT OF MEETING OF 26 SEPTEMBER 2024 (SEN-24-53)**
- 83.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate.
- M24/84 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING: REPORT OF MEETINGS ON 05 JUNE AND 12 SEPTEMBER 2024 (SEN-24-54)**
- 84.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate.
- M24/85 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION: MINUTES OF MEETINGS ON 21 MAY & 19 SEPTEMBER 2024 (SEN-24-55)**
- 85.1 The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate.

**M24/86 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY & STANDARDS:
REPORT FOLLOWING MEETING HELD ON 09 JUNE AND 02
SEPTEMBER 2024 (SEN-24-56)**

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

M24/87 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

87.1 There were no items of other business.

M24/88 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

88.1 Thursday 28 November 2024
Thursday 06 February 2025
Wednesday 23 April 2025
Wednesday 12 March 2025 (Joint Meeting with the Court)
Thursday 12 June 2025