

## THE COURT

Minutes: 12 February 2026

In the Chair: Mr Bruce Pritchard, Chair of Court

Present: Professor Paul Dalgarno, Senate Member  
Dr Louise Delicato, Senate Member  
Mr Graeme Dickson, Lay Member  
Mr Cameron Fields, Student Union (SU) President  
Ms Hilary Hansen, Lay Member  
Mr Steve Heathcote, Lay Member  
Dr Brian Henderson, Alumni Member  
Professor David Jenkins, Trade Union Member  
Mr Paul Lewis, Lay Member  
Ms Holly McAdams, SU Vice-President (Academic)  
Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin, Dean of the University

Professor Steve McLaughlin, Vice-Principal of the University  
Mr Rodney Miller, Lay Member  
Mr Jürgen Munz, Trade Union Member  
Ms Marta Phillips, Lay Member  
Mr Alan Robertson, Lay Member  
Mr Ian Stevenson, Lay Member  
Ms Denise Thomas, Lay Member  
Mr Mike Tumilty, Deputy Chair of Court  
Dr Laura Wicks, Staff Member  
Ms Dorothy Wright, Lay Member

Member apologies: Mr Gary Kildare, Lay Member  
Mr Bruce Roberts, Staff Member

In attendance: Ms Ruth Moir, University Secretary and Vice-Principal (Governance and Operations)  
Ms Lisa Herlihy, Clerk to the Court

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### M26/01 WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the apologies. There were no interests declared.

### M26/02 APPOINTMENT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (Ct/26/02)

The Court **approved** the appointment of Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University and as a Professor of the University. The proposal was presented by the Chair of Court, in his role as Chair of the Joint Committee of the Court and the Senate that had overseen the appointment process.

The Chair reported that the Joint Committee had been appointed in accordance with Ordinance H1, including the appointment of Professor Anton Muscatelli as the independent member. Professor Muscatelli had confirmed that, based on his experience of similar processes, the process completed by Heriot-Watt had been robust and thorough. The Joint Committee had unanimously agreed to recommend the appointment of Professor Hewitt-Dundas following a robust set of discussions based on all aspects of the process, noting that she had a strong academic track record and had also demonstrated a sound grasp of the CEO elements of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor (Principal) role. The Senate had been provided with the recommendation for comment and a summary of the very positive feedback received had been included within the paper. The Joint Committee had felt that a broader review of the balance of the executive team would be helpful, and the Chair would request that Professor Hewitt-Dundas lead on this review once she was in post.

The Court had a detailed discussion of the process and the Joint Committee's recommendation and, in response to questions, received confirmation that:

- All candidates had been aware of the University's potential partnership in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Professor Hewitt-Dundas, who had

particular expertise in Transnational Education (TNE), had raised no concerns.

- The longlist and shortlist had both been diverse, with a good balance between male and female candidates as well as representation from other protected characteristic groups.
- Of the three interviewed candidates, one had not been considered appointable. The second appointable candidate, who was also female, had a strong Provost background and academic understanding. Professor Hewitt-Dundas had also demonstrated this strength, along with a broader set of analytical skills, the ability to interpret data and to develop clear, concise action plans. The recommendation had been made on the basis of that wide skillset, as well as her strong sense of values, experience of change management and ability to engage with staff. Professor Hewitt-Dundas had demonstrated a strong commitment to, and alignment with, Heriot-Watt and had undertaken in-depth research on the University that was clear throughout the process.
- The process had included a focus on the University's need to achieve ongoing financial sustainability and Professor Hewitt-Dundas had spoken articulately about her work in developing real-time data, systems and processes to support better decision-making at Queen's University Belfast. She had also acknowledged that data was the first part of this process and that it needed to be translated into team-led activity to achieve the required results.

The Court confirmed that it was delighted to approve Professor Hewitt-Dundas's appointment as Principal and Vice-Chancellor. The Chair noted that the start date would be 1 September 2026, with the current Principal remaining in post until 30 September 2026. During this period, Professor Hewitt-Dundas would be Principal Designate. In the coming months, the University would work with Professor Hewitt-Dundas on a comprehensive integration plan and would ensure that she was fully informed on current governance items. Appropriate support would be put in place to address development areas identified by the Joint Committee and Professor Hewitt-Dundas.

The Chair thanked all involved in the process, noting that there had been broad engagement, alongside compliance with Ordinance H1, and that this had been reflected in the quality of the final decision. The Court offered particular thanks to the Chair for contributing considerable time and expertise to ensure what was considered to be an excellent outcome for the University.

### **M26/03 REMUNERATION OF THE PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR (Ct/26/03)**

The Court **approved** the proposed remuneration package for the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, presented by Mr Mike Tumilty, Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

The Court noted that the Remuneration Committee had met on 5 February 2026 to consider the proposed remuneration package. Following a number of robust challenges on how the remuneration package had been determined, the Committee had indicated that it was supportive of the proposal, but sought additional reassurances, clarifications and information. A paper had been circulated on 6 February 2026 to provide this additional information, and the Committee had endorsed the proposal to the Court on 9 February 2026.

#### **XXX Reserved Section – Ref. FOI(S)A, s.30c.**

The Court welcomed the transparency of both the paper provided and the Court discussion. The Court approved the proposed remuneration package, noting its

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support for changes that had been made to the existing benefits in order to modernise arrangements and ensure an appropriate balance within the package.

**M26/04      DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 26 March 2026 via Microsoft Teams from 8:30 – 12:30 (UK time); 12:30 – 16:30 (Dubai time); and 16:30 – 20:30 (Malaysia time).