

THE SENATE

Minutes: 26 August 2025

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

Present:

Ms Ruzanna Abd Rahman	Mr Andrew Hock	Ms Lilja Piuli
Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi	Dr Yun li Go	Dr Vahid Razaviarani
Dr Karen Alexander	Dr Adnan Ilyas	Dr Phil Renforth
Dr Dima Alkawadri	Dr Ramon Inglada	Dr Marta Romeo
Dr Syed Andrabi	Professor Michel Kaiser	Dr Rabee Rustum
Mr Kevin Antony Sahayaraj	Dr Britta Kalkreuter	Professor Christian Saemann
Professor Lehel Banjai	Dr Craig Kennedy	Dr Mohammed Saleh
Professor P. A. Muhammed Basheer	Professor Reza Kouhy	Dr Yasaman Sarabi
Dr David Brown	Professor Angus Laing	Ms Kirsty Scanlan
Professor Ian Baxter	Dr Suzanne Lampert	Dr M Shadi Mohamed
Dr Juan Casanova	Professor Sara Lombardo	Ms Devanshi Sharma
Dr David Cavallaro	Ms Jasmine Low *	Professor Mercedes Sheen
Dr Hassam Chaudhry	Dr Alex MacLaren	Dr Hebatallah Shoukry
Dr Hai Chen	Dr Stephen Mansell	Mr Nader Shouly
Dr Tze Cheun	Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer	Mr Karamjeet Singh
Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong	Dr Alistair McConnell	Ms Andrea Sneddon
Ms Jenny Coady	Professor Martin McCoustra	Dr Ryad Soobhany
Dr Demitrios Cotsovos	Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin	Dr Kathrin Stark
Dr Manuel Cresciani	Professor Steve McLaughlin	Ms Sabrina Syed
Dr Ross Curran	Dr Ruairaidh McIntosh	Dr Monica Tamariz *
Professor Paul Dalgarno	Dr Mubbashar Mehmood	Ms Pearlyn Tee
Dr Louise Delicato	Dr Hannah Menke	Professor Chris Turney
Dr Christopher Dodd	Dr Thomas Methven	Dr Abrar Ullah
Professor Joanna Drugan	Dr Farnaz Mohsenpour	Dr Marta Vallejo
Dr Neamat El	Professor Gillian Murray	Dr George Vasdravellis
Dr Rofayda ElHout	Dr Senthil Muthukumaraswamy	Professor Fiona Waldron
Dr Taha Elhag	Mr Matthew Myers	Dr Robin Westacott
Dr David Ellis *	Dr Katriona Myhill	Dr Euan Winton
Dr Erkal Ersoy	Dr Hendrik Nahler	Dr Mesfin Woldetensay
Dr Carlos Ferreira-Rangel	Dr Shereen Nassar	Dr Noor Zainab
Ms Judith Gorham	Mr Adrian Nathai	
Professor Igor Guz	Professor Mehdi Nazarinia	
Professor Dame Heather McGregor	Dr Stefano Padilla	

* denotes partial attendance

In attendance:

Ms Ashley Beaton (Observer)	Ms Samantha Kane	Dr Yasemin Nielsen
Mr Russell Brooks	Dr Maggie King	Ms Kirsty Scanlan
Professor Martha Caddell	Dr Richard McCracken	Ms Megan Morgan (Clerk)
Mr Zhi Kang Chua * (Observer)	Ms Ruth Moir	
Ms Lisa Herlihy * (Observer)	Mr Fraser Muir	

Apologies:

Dr Ruzanna Abd Rahman	Dr Barbara Keating
Dr Yousef Al-Gumaei	Professor Beatrice Pelloni
Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong	Dr Lucy Robertson
Mr Cameron Fields	Dr Florian Scheuring
Dr April Henning	Dr Nazia Talat

MINUTE
REF

ACTION BY ACTION DATE

M25/51 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 51.1** The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting, including the new representatives from the Student Representative Bodies (SRB), Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) and Deputy Principal (Research and Impact). Edinburgh-based Senators were thanked for attending in person, and Dubai and Malaysia Senators for joining remotely. The Chair outlined

the focus of the meeting, to shape Senate's work for the coming year with a focus on Strategy 2035.

M25/52 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 12 JUNE 2025 (SE-25-42)

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| 52.1 | The Senate received and approved the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2025, subject to a minor amendment in M25/37.2a. | Clerk | Immediate |
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M25/53 UPDATE ON SCHOOL OF TEXTILES AND DESIGN (SE-25-43)

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| 53.1 | The Senate received and noted the paper presented by the Vice- Principal and Provost and Assistant Principal (Borders). | | |
| 53.2 | The Vice-Principal and Provost provided a summary of the proposal, with Senators advised that a formal proposal, for recommendation to the Court, would be presented to the Senate at the October 2025 meeting. | | |
| 53.3 | Senators discussed the importance of establishing clear mechanisms for staff input, recognising that informal meetings and channels through Deans could also be used to capture contributions effectively. A number of Senators raised the question of how members of staff from other Schools and Campuses could input and it was agreed that consultation would be opened up widely to invite advice and comments from across the University. | John Sawkins/
Ruth Moir | October 2025 |
| 53.4 | A suite of consolidated briefing materials was requested, with information from across the University brought together and fed into the project board, to ensure all perspectives were considered. It was acknowledged that without this, staff may only have partial understanding of the proposal. Discussion highlighted the administrative and management pressures currently borne by the SOTD as a small Primary Academic Unit, which still required all the leadership functions of a larger School. As set out in earlier papers, the strong heritage in textiles and growing presence in design were recognised and it was agreed that if managed inclusively and transparently, the proposed changes had the potential to enhance outcomes and experience for both staff and students. | John Sawkins | October 2025 |

M25/54 STRATEGY 2035 AND THE ROLE OF THE SENATE

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| 54.1 | The Chair provided an overview of Strategy 2035 and outlined the University's ambition to strengthen impact, remain financially sustainable and deliver a distinctive student experience. The Senate noted that the strategy overview was a working operational document, which would be refined within academic year 2025-2026 to provide a concise communication material suited to both internal and external audiences |
| 54.2 | The University Secretary outlined Senate's role in advancing Strategy 2035, noting the importance of effective governance and continuous improvement of Senate Committees. Strategy 2035 would serve as a guiding framework for committee planning, with agenda setting aligned to the strategy's objectives. The value of the Senate induction programme was highlighted, with emphasis placed on the role of Senators in taking discussion back to Schools and fostering strong connections across the wider University community. |
- The Senate **noted** the update.

M25/55 STRATEGY 2035 PANEL DISCUSSION

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| 55.1 | The Vice-Principal and Provost convened a panel with the sprint leads of Strategy 2035, who each provide a short update on their area of responsibility: partnerships, learning and teaching, research and innovation, virtual campus and student experience. |
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- 55.2** The panel discussed opportunities to reshape the University's portfolio, expand delivery at scale and develop new models of innovation. The ambition to reach 100K virtual learners by 2035 was presented as achievable, if supported by appropriate infrastructure. Whilst the full details were not yet defined, Senators discussed the potential implications this could have on staffing, resourcing and student satisfaction. Discussion focused on the balance between ambition and capacity. There was discussion of how staffing models would need to adapt to increased demand, how the student experience would be maintained at scale and how risks to quality in partnership working would be managed. Turning to the important topic of employability, it was agreed this would be a subject of a more detailed Senate discussion within the context of Strategy 2035.
- Chair January 2026
- 55.3** The Senate noted that the operationalisation of the strategy would be delivered in phases, with early emphasis on strengthening the student experience. It was noted that implementation would require prioritisation, simplification of processes and a willingness to stop less effective activity. Examples were given of partnership frameworks and quality assurance mechanisms that had been commended in external reviews, which would provide a strong basis for managing potential future risk.
- 55.4** Senate concluded that Strategy 2035 set the right direction but obviously required detailed planning, phased implementation and ongoing consultation to ensure that its ambitions were realised in a sustainable and student-focused manner.
- M25/56 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (SE-25-45)**
- 56.1** The Deputy Principal (Research and Impact) and Deputy Principal (Business and Enterprise) presented the year's priorities for the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI). The committee would focus on advancing research excellence, strengthening innovation capacity and aligning projects with the ambitions of Strategy 2035.
- M25/57 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING (SE-25-46)**
- 57.1** The Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) presented the year's priorities for the University Committee for Learning and Teaching. Following a full portfolio review, a strategy would be developed to ensure programmes aligned with institutional goals and delivered greater impact. Priorities included the need to improve the student experience, with a targeted, data-driven approach to NSS outcomes. Senators noted that setting clear expectations and providing appropriate support would be critical in achieving sustained improvements.
- M25/58 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS (SE-25-47)**
- 58.1** The Chair of the University Committee for Quality and Standards (UCQS) presented the year's priorities for the committee. The focus would be realignment of internal processes with external frameworks and streamlined approvals between committees.
- M25/59 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR THE ORDINANCES AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE (SE-25-47)**
- 59.1** The Chair of the Ordinances and Regulations Committee presented the year's priorities for the committee. The Senate noted progress on the review of ordinances, with 21 outstanding. The review aimed to ensure

compliance whilst introducing flexibility to support strategic developments. Working groups would be established to examine areas where regulatory change could enable future growth.

M25/60 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR THE UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE (SE-25-48)

- 60.1** The Chair of the University Discipline Committee (UDC) presented the year's priorities for the committee. The committee would focus on academic misconduct linked to generative AI and falsified references. It was noted that School Discipline Committees had been formally integrated as subcommittees of UDC, with additional support to ensure consistency across Schools.

M25/61 PLANNING AND PRIORITIES FOR GLOBAL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE BODIES (SE-25-49)

- 61.1** The Senate noted the priorities from the Global SRBs, which highlighted the role of collaborative learning, inclusive teaching and flexible provision in fostering engagement. Senators were invited to consider how they could actively champion student priorities within their respective areas.

M25/62 PANEL DISCUSSION WITH SENATE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

- 62.1** The Vice Principal and Provost convened a panel discussion with Senate Committee Chairs. Senators discussed the student experience and agreed that continuous improvements were required to foster community. Student belonging activities should be given further consideration and delivered consistently across all campuses and Schools. Senators underlined the importance of celebrating student achievements more visibly, noting potential opportunities to recognise success beyond academic transcripts. Potential variability in the student experience was highlighted, with Senators highlighting the need to share and embed good practice.

- 62.3** Senators noted the ongoing financial pressures that some students face, with many balancing employment alongside study. Senators agreed that greater flexibility, clearer communication and an empathetic approach to policy and practice were required to support students in these circumstances. Examples of good practice were shared, which included induction activities at the Malaysia campus that helped students reflect positively on their transition to university.

- 62.4** Following discussion, it was proposed that Senate adopt a set of priorities, cascaded through its committees, to ensure coherence and focus. Suggested priorities included building student community, compassionate communications and embedding employability within programmes. The University Secretary would draft a proposal on Senate priorities, which would be agreed at the October 2025 meeting.

RJM/Chair/C lerk Immediate

M25/63 CHAIRS CLOSING REMARKS

- 63.1** The Chair concluded the meeting by reaffirming the University's commitment to placing students and staff at the core of its mission, with a focus on serving the Heriot-Watt community. Senators noted that the academic outlook would be centred not on individual roles, but on how each individual contributes to enhancing the student experience and journey. The importance of valuing and measuring staff impact was highlighted.
- 63.2** The Chair highlighted the diverse composition of the student body, which included a balance of Foundation and Undergraduate, Postgraduate

Taught, and Postgraduate Research students, alongside a significant proportion studying part-time or off-campus. This diversity underscored the need to support the whole learning community and ensure inclusive engagement across all modes of study. Senators were encouraged to reflect on their shared purpose, with all staff expected to demonstrate proficiency and alignment with standards in both teaching and research.

63.3 Student success was identified as a strategic priority, with employability outcomes serving as a key measure. It was noted that many students were self-funding, reinforcing the importance of supporting pathways to successful employment across corporate, government, and self-employed sectors. The use of data to understand employer destinations, including top employers, was encouraged.

63.4 The Chair cited examples of deliberate partnerships, such as those with institutions in Glasgow and Birmingham, which deliver both student experience and financial margin, while enhancing institutional reputation. Enhancement metrics, including NSS and QS rankings, were recognised as critical to the University's future. The Chair called for intentional focus on these areas, alongside efforts to build pride and community at every level. Staff presence and visibility were noted as essential to fostering a strong sense of belonging. Attention was drawn to the need for clarity in staff roles, prioritisation of activities, and a willingness to simplify and humanise processes. The Chair encouraged consideration of what activities may need to be discontinued to better focus resources.

63.5 The Chair invited Senate to identify specific priorities in relation to the student experience, reaffirming that excellence in both teaching and research remained a key issue for Senate's ongoing consideration.

63.6 The Senate **noted** the update.

M25/64 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

64.1 Monday 27 October 2025
Thursday 27 November 2025
Thursday 05 February 2026
Wednesday 22 April 2026
Thursday 11 June 2026