

Heriot-Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 08 February 2024

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

Present:	Dr Çakıl Agnew Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi * Dr Nasir Al Lagtah Professor Lehel Banjai Professor Basheer Muhammed Professor Mark Biggs Dr Linda Buchan Professor Malcolm Chrisp Mr Jose Condé * Dr Demitrios Cotsovos Ms Josephine Jo * Ms Anaswara Pradeep Professor Paul Dalgarno Professor Dugald Duncan Dr Neamat El Gayar Dr David Ellis * Dr Erkal Ersoy Professor Anna Fenge Dr Fadi Ghaith * Professor Igor Guz Professor Annie Hill Dr Kirin Hilliar * Professor Helinor Johnston * Dr Britta Kalkreuter Dr Craig Kennedy Dr Helen Lewis * Professor Sara Lombardo Dr Alex MacLaren * Dr Bill MacPherson *	Professor Julian Malins Dr Alistair McConnell Professor Martin McCoustra Dr Richard McCracken Professor Dame Heather McGregor * Dr Ruaraidh Mcintosh Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin Professor Steve McLaughlin Professor Gillian Murray Dr Katriona Myhill * Dr Yasemin Nielsen Mr Larry O'Brien Mr Ryan Koh Dr Rabee Rustum Dr Christian Saemann Ms Devanshi Sharma * Mr Nader Shouly * Ms Andrea Sneddon Dr Kathrin Stark Dr Katerina Strani Mr Scott Anderson Ms Georgia Noble Mr Connel Greenhorn Dr Monica Tamariz Dr Kathryn Waite Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Marion Winters * Dr Humphrey Yiu
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In attendance:	Professor Martha Caddell Mr Zhi Kang Chua Professor Peter Cummings Mr Mark Hamid (Clerk) Professor Michel Kaiser Ms Samantha Kane Professor Maiwenn Kersaudy-Kerhoas Dr Maggie King	Professor Oliver Lemon Ms Ruth Moir Mr Fraser Muir Professor Edward Owens Professor Yvan Petillot Ms Kirsty Scanlan Professor Robert Thomson
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Apologies:	Dr Ross Alexander Dr Yousef Al-Guamei Dr Anne Bernassau Dr Timothy Johnson Professor Angus Laing Mr Andrew Lee Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer Dr Shameel Muhammed	Dr Hendrik Nahler Professor Joanne Porter Dr Lucy Robertson Dr Chris Rutherford Dr Euan Winton Dr Tze Chuen Yap Professor Hind Zantout
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* denotes partial attendance

MINUTE REF	ACTION BY	ACTION DATE
M24/01		
CHAIR'S WELCOME & NOTE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
<p>The Principal and Vice-Chancellor welcomed all participants to the meeting, especially those new members of the Senate who were attending for the first time, or in a new capacity.</p> <p>The apologies for absence were noted.</p>		
M24/02		
MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 30 NOVEMBER 2024		
<p>The Senate received and approved as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2024.</p>		
M24/03		
MATTERS ARISING & ACTION LOG		
<p>There were no matters arising from the minutes or actions outstanding to comprise an action log.</p>		
M24/04		
BUSINESS CONDUCTED BY CORRESPONDENCE (PAPER: SEN-24-01)		
<p>The Senate noted the appointment of Dr Alistair McConnell as Dean of the University (Science & Engineering) which had been approved by the Senate by correspondence in December 2023, and that Dr McConnell's term of office would be from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2026.</p>		
M24/05		
REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR (SEN-24-02)		
<p>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.</p> <p>The Principal particularly highlighted colleagues' recent successes in securing nine doctoral training sessions across the University, which would provide an excellent environment for future PhD students, and the AdvanceHE recognition and grants and awards which had been achieved.</p> <p>The University Secretary noted that the external review of the effectiveness of Court and Senate was reaching its conclusion and would be reported to the Senate at its next meeting; she also encouraged Senators to engage with the joint meeting with the Court which would take place on 08 May 2024.</p> <p>The Senate noted the report.</p>		
M24/06		
GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES		
<p>Prof. Steve McLaughlin (Deputy Principal (Research & Impact)) and Prof. Gill Murray (Deputy Principal (Business & Enterprise)) jointly introduced an information session for Senators on the work of the University's Graduate Research Institutes (GRIs). Senators were offered the opportunity to participate in one of four breakout sessions about different GRIs: the Lyell Centre, Health and Care, INetZ+ and the National Robotarium.</p>		

Following the sessions, the presenters were invited to summarise the key themes from the discussions which had taken place. It was noted that improved understanding across the University was key to realising the potential of the GRIs, which could act as catalysts for research and teaching both within the UK and internationally. The importance of engaging researchers in non-STEM subjects to support their work was highlighted. Engagement of students together with staff was also emphasised as a focus, as well as large pharmaceutical interests within the context of Health and Care. AI, in addition to physical robots, was affirmed to be an element of the work of the National Robotarium which should be highlighted and developed.

Summarising the remarks, Prof. McLaughlin encouraged all Senators to promote engagement with the GRIs to their colleagues and students, which would serve as an important driver to support the communications efforts which would be initiated over the coming months. The Principal underscored their remarks and commended the GRIs to the Senate as excellent global opportunities to build research networks, new academic programmes, and deliver change.

M24/07 STUDENT EXPERIENCE ACTION PLAN AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN ACADEMIC REPRESENTATION

The Senate received an update on the Student Experience Action Plan presented by Professor Malcolm Chrisp, Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life). He noted that the action plan comprised twenty-three actions which had been produced to address four key themes which were intended to address issues around staff and student mood and morale and to enhance the student experience.

The Deputy Principal then introduced an update which was delivered in conjunction with the student members of the Senate and addressed plans to enhance student engagement in academic representation. The Senate noted [a presentation](#) which highlighted the four key challenges which had been identified. It was noted that, while the challenges faced across campuses varied depending on particular circumstances, there was a strong commitment to a global approach.

Commenting on the report, Senators noted the aspiration for further full-time sabbatical officers in Dubai and Malaysia; furthermore it was suggested that the creation of a postgraduate sabbatical officer could resolve issues around recruitment of postgraduate representatives outside of the Student Union's normal May cycle of elections and also foster academic leadership at the early-career stage. Senators also noted that the representation of non-traditional students could be expanded, and that best practice could be examined in other institutions to benchmark the current arrangements at Heriot Watt.

The Senate **noted** the updates.

M24/08 APPOINTMENT OF THE DEAN OF THE UNIVERSITY (PAN-UNIVERSITY CONSTITUENCY) (SEN-24-05)

The University Secretary presented a paper to the Senate proposing a resolution to the appointment of the Dean of the University (pan-University constituency), which had been withdrawn from consideration at the preceding meeting of the Senate.

The University Secretary offered an apology to the Senate for the issues which had been highlighted with the election, and indicated

that, following the endorsement of the SCIBE, it was proposed that the poll of academic staff should be repeated between the two original candidates who had tied in the previous election. She advised Senators that both candidates had agreed to stand again and thanked them for their forbearance as work had been undertaken to agree a resolution.

It was noted that the proposed course of action sought to address the two material issues which had affected the original result, namely that certain staff at global campuses had been disenfranchised due to contractual reasons, and that an electronic drawing of lots had been used to resolve a tie.

It was explained that the Court had amended Ordinance C1 (which stipulates the constituency to be used for the election conducted under Ordinance L1) and that it was proposed that, should a tie occur in the new poll, a digital drawing of lots conducted by the external election provider would be used to break it. The Senate retrospectively endorsed the amendments to Ordinance C1; it was noted that the Ordinances and Regulations Committee would take forward work to consider revisions to the Ordinances in respect of tied votes and these would be presented to the Senate and Court in due course.

The Senate thereafter **approved** the proposal for a new poll to be conducted in February 2024 in the terms set out in the paper.

M24/09 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE (SEN-24-06)

The Senate **received** and **approved** a paper appointing Professor Mehdi Nazarinia as Chair of the University Discipline Committee from 01 January 2024 to 31 December 2026.

M24/10 SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSINESS & EFFECTIVENESS: REPORT OF MEETING ON 24 JANUARY 2024 (SEN-24-07)

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

M24/11 ORDINANCES & REGULATIONS COMMITTEE: REPORT OF MEETING ON 28 NOVEMBER 2023 (SEN-24-08)

The Senate **received** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate and **approved** the proposed amendments to Regulation A6 set out therein.

One Senator sought clarity on the financial implications which would arise from a student being required to repeat a year. It was recognised that the implications would vary from campus to campus.. This would need to be discussed with the individual students concerned and support would be provided to personal tutors to allow them to address this issue in conversations with students.

It was additionally clarified that it was within the discretion of the examination board to award the outcome at either the first or the second diet if deemed to be the appropriate course of action.

**M24/12 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING:
REPORT FOLLOWING MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2024
(SEN-24-09)**

The Senate **received** and **approved** the Annual Complaints Summary Reports for the years 2021-22 and 2022-23.

The Senate **noted** the new Policy for the Use of Recordings for Learning and Teaching Purposes, together with a short presentation about its content and implementation from the Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life). It was noted that the new policy provided clarity for students, academics and course teams and that it had been approved by the Committee following broad consultation with stakeholders across the University.

The Senate **noted** the minutes of the most recent meeting of the Committee.

**M24/13 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY & STANDARDS:
REPORT FOLLOWING MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2024
(SEN-24-10)**

The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate. It was noted that the report comprised a summary of the outputs from the meeting and was being presented to ensure compliance with the QESR process as the minutes could not have been produced in time for the Senate meeting; this was due to the sequencing of the meetings of the Committee and the Senate, with the full minutes expected to be presented to the Senate at its next meeting.

**M24/14 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION:
MINUTES OF MEETINGS ON 24 AUGUST AND 19 OCTOBER 2023
(SEN-24-11)**

The Senate **received** and **noted** the report of business conducted by the Committee since its previous report to Senate, presented by the Deputy Principal (Research & Impact), who encouraged Senators to review the new REF arrangements which were being implemented.

One Senator raised a question around the workload principles and suggested that these should be augmented to more appropriately reflect the volume of admin tasks which staff were required to undertake. The Principal encouraged all Senators to engage with the working group which had produced the principles in order to allow any further proposals to be appropriately considered.

M24/15 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

M24/16 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 24 April 2024
Wednesday 08 May 2024: Joint Meeting of Court & Senate
Thursday 13 June 2024