

Heriot-Watt University

## THE SENATE

Minutes: 18 October 2023

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

Present:	Dr Nasir Al Lagtah Mr Scott Anderson Professor Lehel Banjai Professor Mark Biggs* Dr Linda Buchan Dr Florence Chiao Mei Choong* Professor Malcolm Chrisp Mr Jose Condé Dr Demitrios Cotsovos* Professor Paul Dalgarno* Professor Dugald Duncan Dr Neamat El Gayar* Dr David Ellis Dr Erkal Ersoy Professor Anna Fenge* Mr Connel Greenhorn Professor Annie Hill Dr Kirin Hilliar Dr Timothy Johnson Professor Helinor Johnston Dr Craig Kennedy Mr Ryan Koh Professor Angus Laing Dr Helen Lewis* Ms Jasmine Low* Dr Alex MacLaren* Dr Bill MacPherson	Professor Julian Malins Professor Martin McCoustra Professor Dame Heather McGregor* Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin Professor Steve McLaughlin Dr Shameel Muhammed Professor Gillian Murray Dr Katriona Myhill Dr Hendrik Nahler Dr Yasemin Nielsen Mr Larry O'Brien Ms Anaswara Pradeep Dr Rabee Rustum Dr Chris Rutherford Dr Christian Saemann Professor Mathini Sellathurai Dr Harpreet Seth Ms Devanshi Sharma* Mr Nader Shouly* Ms Andrea Sneddon Dr Kathrin Stark Dr Monica Tamariz Dr Kathryn Waite Professor Fiona Waldron Dr Euan Winton Dr Humphrey Yiu Professor Hind Zantout
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In attendance:	Professor Martha Caddell Ms Aisling Creedon* Mr Mark Hamid (Clerk)	Ms Samantha Kane Dr Maggie King Ms Ruth Moir
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Apologies:	Dr Çakil Agnew Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi Dr Anne Bernassau Mr Andrew Lee Dr Min-Hsiu Liao Professor Mercedes Maroto-Valer Dr Alistair McConnell	Dr Ruaraidh McIntosh Mr Lee Miles Ms Georgia Noble Professor Joanne Porter Dr Katerina Strani Dr Tze Chuen Yap
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\* denotes partial attendance

MINUTE REF

ACTION BY

ACTION DATE

M23/59

**CHAIR'S WELCOME & NOTE OF APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Principal and Vice-Chancellor welcomed all participants to the meeting. The apologies for absence were noted.

The Chair invited the University Secretary to update the Senate on the forthcoming review of the effectiveness of Court and Senate, to be undertaken by Advance HE. It was noted that Professor Fiona Waldron would serve on the review steering group as a representative of the Senate's members, and that the Senate would continue to receive further updates.

The Chair noted that nominations for the positions of Dean of the University (Science and Engineering) and Dean of the University (pan-University constituency) would be open until Monday 06 November, and that all Senators were asked to encourage suitable staff to nominate for these roles.

In response to a question about the use of the Teams chat function, it was noted that the request that Senators refrain from using it to discuss matters of substance was based on best practice, both to focus the deliberations of the Senate on a single discussion and also to avoid the creation of a disclosable record under freedom of information legislation.

**M23/60 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: 06 SEPTEMBER 2023**

The Senate **received** and **approved** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 06 September 2023.

**M23/61 MATTERS ARISING & ACTION LOG**

There were no matters arising. The Senate reviewed the Action Log and noted that the forward plan of Senate business would be circulated following the meeting.

**M23/62 REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR (SEN-23-35)**

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.

The Principal highlighted the need to focus the University's academic priorities around the stabilisation and transformation of the university as it undertook the second part of Strategy 2025. He noted the pressures of rising costs and the continued fall in the percentage of income which is received from central government, which would necessitate further development of international and rUK markets. He noted the focusses of the Student Partnership on student isolation, cost of living pressures and a desire to increase global connectivity.

In order to address the feedback received the Principal delivered [a presentation](#) which built on the feedback which had been gathered from the launch meeting of the Senate held on 06 September. The report, which identified seven themes and proposed six actions, was discussed by the Senate.

Commenting on the report, Senators highlighted issues with the complexity of systems, the effectiveness of marketing strategies to engage with and recruit prospective students, and the importance of improvement to staff and student experiences taking place in parallel.

The Senate **noted** the report.

**M23/63 UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES 23-24**

The Senate received [a presentation](#) by the Deputy Principal (Education & Student Life) and Professor Paul Dalgarno setting out developments in the University Committee for Learning & Teaching's priorities for the academic year, and from Dr Maggie King relating to developments in the Quality Enhancement and

Standards Review (QESR). Professor Dalgarno particularly focussed on the Transforming Assessment project, which he was leading, and the proposal being made to allow staff and schools to adopt the most effect methods for assessment for their specific courses.

Commenting on the report, Senators affirmed the importance of working with course leads to ensure that new approaches were developed in partnership, and the challenges of working with students who may not be familiar with certain forms of assessment. It was agreed that all staff should work with the Learning & Teaching Academy and relevant Directors of Learning and Teaching to achieve positive outcomes.

Dr King outlines the Phase 1 arrangements for QESR including the key milestones, noting the focus on assurance.

The Senate received [a presentation](#) by Professor Fiona Waldron setting out developments in the University Committee for Quality & Standard's priorities for the academic year. Professor Waldron noted that the committee continued to operate according to its five-year plan for monitoring and review.

**M23/64 UPDATE ON RESEARCH & INNOVATION PRIORITIES INCLUDING THE GRADUATE SCHOOL**

The Senate received [a presentation](#) by the Deputy Principal (Research & Impact) and the Deputy Principal (Business & Enterprise) setting out developments in the University Committee for Research and Innovation's priorities for the academic year and focussing on the development of the Graduate School.

The Deputy Principal (Research & Impact) highlighted the links between his updates and the delivery of Strategy 2025, noting the aspiration to increase research funding to £65m annually, as well is proposals to develop the innovation district and GRIs.

He noted the [proposed timeline](#) for the Graduate School, which would have a soft launch in January 2024 with a skills and development offering, while work was ongoing to develop a suitable location for the school and recruit staff.

Commenting on the update, the Principal praised the transition from an approach focussing on individual disciplines to one which could realise collective potential.

**M23/65 REGULATION B1: SPORTS UNION (SEN-23-37)**

The Senate **received** and **approved** a paper proposing to rescind Regulation B1: Sports Union following the completion of a project to restructure the governance of the Sports Union which had been approved by the Court at its most recent meeting.

**M23/66 SENATE COMMITTEE FOR INTERIM BUSINESS & EFFECTIVENESS: REPORT OF MEETING OF 28 SEPTEMBER 2023 (SEN-23-38)**

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

**M23/67 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR LEARNING & TEACHING:  
REPORT OF MEETINGS HELD ON 07 JUNE 2023 AND 13  
SEPTEMBER 2023 (SEN-23-39)**

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

**M23/68 UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION:  
REPORT OF MEETING HELD ON 29 MAY 2023 (SEN-23-40)**

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

**M23/69 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no further items of business.

**M23/70 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 30 November 2023  
Thursday 08 February 2024  
Wednesday 24 April 2024  
Wednesday 08 May 2024 (Joint Meeting with the Court)  
Thursday 13 June 2024