

Heriot--Watt University

THE SENATE

Minutes: 22 April 2026

In the Chair:	Professor Richard A Williams, Principal and Vice-Chancellor		
Present:	Professor Mushtak Al-Atabi	Professor Michel Kaiser	Dr Hannah Menke
	Dr Yousef Al-Gumaei	Dr Britta Kalkreuter	Dr Thomas Methven
	Dr Dima Alkawadri	Dr Barbara Keating	Dr Shadi Mohamed
	Dr Syed Andrabi	Dr Craig Kennedy	Professor Gillian Murray
	Professor Lehel Banjai	Dr Shereen Nassar	Mr Matt Myers
	Professor Ian Baxter	Mr Adrian Nathai	Dr Katie Myhill
	Dr David Brown	Professor Mehdi	Dr Vahid Razaviarani
	Dr Juan Casanova	Nazarinia	Dr Phil Renforth
	Dr David Renato Cavallaro	Dr Yasemin Nielsen	Dr Lucy Robertson
	Dr Hassam Chaudhry	Professor Tadhg	Dr Marta Romeo
	Dr Florence Chiao Mei	O'Donovan	Dr Rabee Rustum
	Choong*	Dr Stefano Padilla	Professor Christian
	Ms Jenny Coady	Professor Angus Laing	Saemann
	Dr Demitrios Cotsovos	Mr Andrew Hock Cheong	Dr Mohammed Saleh
	Dr Manuel Cresciani	Lee	Dr Yasaman Sarabi
	Dr Ross Curran	Professor Sara Lombardo	Dr Florian Scheuring
	Professor Paul Dalgarno	Ms Jasmine Low	Ms Devanshi Sharma
	Dr Louise Delicato	Dr Alex MacLaren	Professor Mercedes Sheen
	Dr Chris Dodd	Dr Stephen Mansell	Dr Hebatallah Shoukry
	Professor Joanna Drugan*	Ms Holly McAdams	Mr Nader Shouly*
	Dr Taha Elhag	Dr Alistair McConnell*	Mr Matthew Smith
	Dr David Ellis	Professor Martin	Dr Ryad Soobhany
	Dr Carlos FERREIRO-RANGEL	McCoustra	Dr Nazia Talat
	Mr Cameron Fields	Dr Richard McCracken*	Dr Monica Tamariz
	Professor Fiona Grant	Professor Heather	Dr Hai Chen Tan
	Dr Yun Li Go	McGregor*	Ms Pearlyn Tee
	Ms Judith Gorham	Dr Ruaraidh McIntosh	Dr Abrar Ullah
	Dr Noor Zainab Habib	Dr Yvonne	Dr Marta Vallejo*
	Dr April Henning	McLaren-Hankin	Dr George Vasdravellis
	Dr Adnan Illyas	Dr Mubbashar Mehmood	Dr Robin Westacott
	Dr Ramon Inglada Florensa*	Dr Senthil	Dr Euan Winton
	Mr Karamjeet Singh	Muthukumaraswamy	Dr Mesfin Woldetensay
			Dr Tze Chuen Yap

* denotes partial attendance

In attendance:	Ms Fiona Armstrong	Ms Penny McIntyre	Mr Fraser Muir
	Dr Maggie King	Ms Ruth Moir	Ms Megan Morgan (Clerk)
	Professor Martha Caddell		
Member apologies:	Ms Ruzanna Abd Rahman	Professor Reza Kouhy	Dr Farnaz Mohsenpour
	Dr Karen Alexander	Dr Suzanne Lampert	Dr Hendrik Nahler
	Dr Neamat Elgayar	Dr Jia Lu	Professor Beatrice Pelloni
	Dr Erkal Ersoy	Professor Mercedes	Dr Andrea Sneddon
	Professor Anna Fenge	Maroto-Valer	Dr Kathrin Stark
	Professor Igor Guz		Professor Chris Turney

MINUTE REF**ACTION BY ACTION DATE**

M26/18

WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

18.1

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and noted the above apologies. The Chair reminded members of the agreed meeting protocols, including the use of cameras where possible and participation through discussion rather than extended written exchanges.

M26/19

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (SE-26-20)

- 19.1 The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2026 as a fair and accurate record and reflection of the meeting.
- M26/20** **REPORT FROM THE JOINT MEETING OF COURT AND SENATE (SE-26-21)**
- 20.1 The Senate **approved** the report of the Joint Meeting of the Court and the Senate, noting the value of the joint discussion in setting direction, testing priorities and agreeing actions aligned to Strategy 2035.
- 20.2 The Senate **noted** an update presented by the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) on themes emerging from the Joint Meeting of the Court and the Senate. Discussion had focused on employability and the student life-cycle, along with flexible approaches to programme design and delivery. The update outlined that feedback from the meeting was being considered as part of the ongoing development of the *Shaping Futures of Education and Student Life* framework.
- 20.3 It was reported that the outcomes from the Joint Meeting would inform further work through appropriate governance and planning routes, including discussions at Senate Committees and future development sessions.
- 20.4 In discussion, Senators raised points regarding the use of feedback from the Joint Meeting. The Chair noted these comments and reiterated that the session had been intended to inform ongoing strategic thinking. It was noted that the report presented to Senate drew on feedback from the session, and that a selection of material arising from the session was available on [AdminControl](#) for information. The Chair further noted that such feedback would inform future planning activity, where appropriate.
- M26/21** **ACTIONS LOG AND MATTERS ARISING (SE-26-22)**
- 21.1 The Senate **noted** the Actions Log. It was confirmed that completed actions would be removed from the Log.
- 21.2 The University Secretary provided an update on interim committee chairing arrangements following the departure of Professor Fiona Waldron and confirming that Vice Chairs were acting as Chairs of the University Committee for Quality and Standards and the Ordinances and Regulations Committee for the remainder of the academic year. An update was also provided on School to Senate elections, noting that nominations had closed on 15 April 2026, with elections required in most Schools and voting scheduled to open on 29 April 2026 in line with established processes.
- M26/22** **REPORT FROM THE PRINCIPAL & VICE-CHANCELLOR AND SENATE PRIORITIES TRACKER (SE-26-23)**
- 22.1 The Senate **noted** the Principal and Vice-Chancellor's Report. The Chair highlighted recent activity across the University, including external recognition of colleagues, engagement with external stakeholders, developments relating to rankings performance and a range of achievements in learning and teaching, research, enterprise and sustainability. Attention was drawn to the continued delivery of Strategy 2025 priorities and the tracking of business as usual and project activity in the final year of the strategy. The Chair also reflected on recent staff and student engagement, including institutional events and initiatives that support student experience, employability and community impact.
- 22.2 The Chair reported on the Civil Engineering Degree Show and forthcoming degree shows at Galashiels and highlighted the importance of celebrating student achievement and external engagement. In discussion, Senators commented on opportunities to showcase highlights from degree shows

across disciplines at institutional level, including in connection with graduation events.

- 22.3 The Vice-Principal and Provost (Dubai) provided an update on the Dubai campus following recent disruption in the region. It was reported that teaching had transitioned online in line with local requirements and that academic continuity arrangements had been put in place to support student progression under exceptional circumstances.
- 22.4 The Senate recorded its thanks to staff and students at the Dubai campus for their adaptability, professionalism and collective actions in maintaining teaching, learning, student and staff support during this period.
- 22.5 The Chair also drew attention to increased cyber security threats affecting the higher education sector, noting that these had been heightened in the context of the current situation in the Middle East, and highlighted the importance of institutional vigilance and adherence to established controls.

M26/23 **GLOBAL STUDENT UPDATE (SE-26-24)**

- 23.1 The Senate **noted** an update from the Student Union Vice-President Academic (UK) on student experience across campuses, with a particular focus on financial pressures and cost-of-living impacts. The update drew on recent student survey data and highlighted the relationship between financial stress, wellbeing and engagement.
- 23.2 It was reported that a significant proportion of students were undertaking paid employment alongside their studies and that financial pressure was a key factor affecting student wellbeing across campuses. The Senate noted the consistency of themes across locations, alongside campus specific challenges.
- 23.3 In discussion, Senators reflected on the balance between flexibility and engagement in learning and teaching, the role of employability and work-based experience, and the importance of accessible wellbeing and advice services. Attention was also drawn to the need for clear communication and appropriate language in relation to consent education and reporting mechanisms.

M26/24 **APPOINTMENT OF AN ACADEMIC DEAN (SE-26-25)**

- 24.1 The Senate **approved** the appointment of Dr Yvonne McLaren-Hankin as Academic Dean for Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, in line with the arrangements set out in the paper.
- 24.2 It was reported that an election had been held in accordance with the relevant Ordinances and procedures, with strong engagement demonstrated through the number of nominations received. Following the conclusion of the election, the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) had endorsed the outcome.
- 24.3 The Senate noted that a review of the relevant Ordinance was underway, including consideration of the distribution of Academic Dean responsibilities, and that any proposed changes would return to Senate in due course.

M26/25 **PROPOSED WORKLOAD ALLOCATIONS (SE-26-34)**

- 25.1 The Senate **approved** the proposed principles for workload allocation in respect of Senate and Committee roles.
- 25.2 The Vice-Principal of the University and Provost (UK) presented the proposal which had been developed in response to feedback from Senators and were intended to support greater transparency and consistency in the

recognition of time commitment associated with committee membership It was noted that the indicative allocations were intended to support discussion and local application, rather than operate as prescriptive requirements.

25.3 In discussion, Senators welcomed the clearer articulation of expectations and noted the importance of flexibility to reflect variation in roles and workload across Schools and committees. The Senate noted that the principles would be kept under review and applied through existing workload planning and review processes.

M26/26 INTEGRATION OF THE SCHOOL OF TEXTILES AND DESIGN WITHIN THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES: PROGRESS UPDATE, NAMING AND NEXT STEPS (SE-26-26)

26.1 The Senate considered the progress update on the integration of the School of Textiles and Design with the School of Social Sciences, presented by the Executive Dean, School of Social Sciences (SOSS) and the Interim Executive Dean, School of Textiles and Design (SOTD).

26.2 The presenters outlined progress against the commitments made to Senate in October 2025, reporting on the structured programme of engagement and co-creation undertaken between December 2025 and April 2026. This included themed workshops focused on purpose, identity, operational approaches and opportunities for collaboration across learning and teaching, research and knowledge exchange. The Senate noted the development of a defined purpose and strategic direction for Textiles and Design as a distinct department within the integrated structure, alongside initial alignment of operational approaches and the identification of interdisciplinary opportunities.

26.3 The Senate discussed the proposed naming of the integrated School and the proposal to position Textiles and Design as a distinct department within the integrated structure. Senators recognised the extensive consultation undertaken with staff and acknowledged the importance of identity, clarity and external positioning. In discussion, Senators raised a range of considerations, including the breadth of the term *design* across the University, its established role within engineering and professionally accredited disciplines, and the potential for confusion arising from the use of the term *school* for a secondary academic unit. Questions were also raised regarding engagement beyond the immediate Schools involved and the clarity of the proposed role of the Design School in relation to other design intensive disciplines.

26.4 The Senate **recommended** to the Court of the proposed name School of Business, Design and Social Sciences for the integrated School.

26.5 The Senate **recommended** to the Court the proposed next steps, implementation approach and integration timeline, including the planned integration date of 1 September 2026, and noted that implementation would proceed through a phased and managed transition.

26.6 The Senate **did not recommend** to the Court the proposed naming of the School of Textiles and Design as *The Design School* as a secondary academic unit. The Senate **agreed** that the Executive Dean (SOSS) and Interim Executive Dean (SOTD) would bring back the naming proposal after further consultation across the University, to better frame the scope of the renamed School and its *modus operandi*.

AL/FG

11 June 2026

M26/27 MITIGATING THE ACADEMIC IMPACT OF THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION (SE-26-27)

- 27.1 The Senate **noted** the update on the impact of recent disruption on academic delivery and student experience, including the effects of regional disruption in the Middle East and industrial action.
- 27.2 The Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) outlined the approach taken to ensure academic continuity and to avoid detriment to students, including the use of existing regulatory flexibilities and approval provided by Senate earlier in the academic year. It was reported that a coordinated institutional response had enabled progression, assessment and continuation of studies for affected students. The Senate noted that arrangements had been implemented consistently across relevant programmes, with oversight through established quality assurance and governance processes. It was reported that the University's approach to mitigating the impact of the Middle East conflict and recent industrial action had been endorsed as robust by QAA Scotland at the Institutional Liaison Meeting held on 22 April 2026.
- 27.3 In discussion, Senators reflected on the importance of clear communication with students, proportional application of mitigation, and the need to balance flexibility with the maintenance of academic standards. The Senate noted that lessons learned from the period of disruption would inform future contingency planning.
- M26/28 REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION (SE-26-28)**
- 28.1 The Senate **noted** the report.
- M26/29 REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE (SE-26-30)**
- 29.1 The Senate **noted** the report.
- M26/30 REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE FOR QUALITY AND STANDARDS (SE-26-31)**
- 30.1 The Senate **noted** the report.
- M26/31 SENATE FORWARD AGENDA PLAN (SE-26-32)**
- 31.1 The Senate **noted** the plan.
- M26/32 SENATE PAPER PROTOCOL (SE-26-33)**
- 32.1 The Senate **noted** the protocol.
- M26/33 MEETING REFLECTIONS (Verbal)**
- 33.1 In concluding the meeting, Senators reflected on the breadth and depth of discussion and the constructive engagement across strategic, academic and governance matters. Reflections included a strong preference for the continued use of *Microsoft Polls* for conducting matters for decision, including for in-person meetings. The Senate expressed its appreciation for the Clerk's agility and responsiveness in implementing the polling functionality, which supported effective and well-managed decision-making during the meeting.
- M26/34 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
 Wednesday 11 June 2026
 In person
 09:30-12:00 UK