UHI | INVERNESS

Meeting	Board of Management
Date and time	Tuesday 06 October 2026 at 4.30 p.m.
Location	Hybrid Meeting in room 203/204 and via Microsoft Teams

Governance Officer
17 September 2026

AGENDA

The timings on this agenda are indicative only and may extend beyond times highlighted.

Welcome and Apologies

Declaration of Interests and/or any Statement of Connections or Transparency Statements.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

16:30 – 16:45 **1) TRANSFORMATION UPDATE & DISCUSSION (CONFIDENTIAL)**
Presentation by Director of Transformation and Business Planning, UHI & University Secretary, UHI

16:45 – 16:50 **2) RATIFICATION OF APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERIM PRINCIPAL & STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE**
Report by Governance Officer

16:50 – 16:55 **3) MINUTES**
a.) Meeting of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026
b.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-01-062026) of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026
c.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-02-062026) of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026
d.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-03-062026) of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026
e.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-04-062026) of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026

f.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-05-062026) of the Board of Management held on 23 June 2026

16:55 – 17:00 **4) OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**
Actions List

17:00 – 17:20 **5) POLICY FOR APPROVAL**
Report by VP Curriculum, Operations & External Relations

a.) Flexible Retirement Policy

17:20 – 17:25 **6) ITEMS APPROVED VIA WRITTEN PROCEDURE**
Report by Governance Officer

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

17:25 – 17:55 **7) FINANCIAL BUDGET & MONITORING 2025/26 & 2026/27 UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL)**
Report by the VP Curriculum, Operations & External Relations & the Director of Finance and Estates

a.) Financial Recovery Plan (inc. Financial Forecast Report)
b.) VS Scheme
c.) Risk Register Update (inc. FRP Risk Register)

17:55 – 18:10 **8) KPI MATRIX**
Report by Head of Operations and Business Performance

a.) All Measures and Targets 2026/27
b.) 2025-26 KPI Matrix and Executive Summary – Period 12 YTD
c.) 2026-27 KPI Matrix and Executive Summary – Period 1 YTD

18:10 – 18:20 **BREAK**

18:20 – 18:35 **9) STUDENT RECRUITMENT 2026/27**
Joint Report by Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations & Information Systems Manager

18:35 – 18:45 **10) STUDENT OUTCOMES FOR 2025/26 & TARGETS FOR 2026/27**
Joint Report by Interim Principal & Information Systems Manager

18:45 – 19:05 **11) INTERIM PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (CONFIDENTIAL)**

19:05 – 19:20 **12) GOVERNANCE UPDATE**
Report from Governance Officer

FOR NOTING

19:20 – 19:20 **13) 2025-26 COMPLAINTS REPORT**
Report by Head of Registry and Quality Enhancement

19:20 – 19:20 **14) DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF BOARD COMMITTEES (CONFIDENTIAL)**

a.) LTR Committee held on 09 June 2026
b.) FGP Committee held on 11 June 2026
c.) Chairs Committee held on 18 June 2026
d.) Closed Meeting - Extraordinary Board of Management held on 25 June 2026
e.) Accord – Extraordinary Board of Management held on 25 June 2026
f.) PRR Committee held on 28 July 2026

19:20 – 19:20 **15) UHI UPDATES**

a.) Minutes of University Court held on 25 June 2026

19:20 – 19:30 **16) AOCB**

17) DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING
15 December 2026 at 4.30 p.m.

If any member wishes to add an item of business to the Agenda, please inform the Chair and the Governance Officer as soon as possible. Additional items of business will only be considered for inclusion in the agenda in advance of the start of the meeting.

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Subject/Title:	Ratification of Appointment of the Interim Principal & second Student Representative
Author: [Name and Job title]	Ludka Orlowska-Kowal Governance Officer
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	06 October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	28 September 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	This paper provides the Board with the background to the appointment of the Interim Principal and second Student Representative.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Ratification

Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: □ compliance □ partnership services □ risk management □ strategic plan □ new opportunity/change	New Opportunity/Change, Compliance
Resource implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify**:
Risk implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify:** Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes/No **If yes, please specify:**
Student Experience Impact:	Yes/No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	N/A
Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	Yes

*If a paper should **not** be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (s33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confident actionable in court (s36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (s38)		Other (Please give further details)	

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Recommendation(s)

The Board of Management are asked to ratify the decision made by the Chairs Committee of the Board of Management to appoint Dr Lindsay Snodgrass to the post of the Interim Principal and Chief Executive at UHI Inverness.

The Board of Management are asked to ratify the decision made by HISA to appoint Iain Forsyth for their 1st term as the second Student Board Member at UHI Inverness.

Background

Interim Principal

The Board approved the delegated authority to the Chairs Committee to start and oversee the recruitment process as per legal advice received in August 2026. Dr Lindsay Snodgrass, VP Curriculum, Student Engagement and Quality, had been invited to apply for the role in line with existing internal recruitment processes.

The interview took place on Friday 21st August 2026. The Panel Members, Interim Chair of the Board, Chairs of HR & FGP Committees and the Head of HR, made the decision to offer the position to Dr Lindsay Snodgrass, VP Curriculum, Student Engagement and Quality. The appointment has since received statutory approval from the RSB.

The Extraordinary Chairs Committee meeting on 3rd September 2026 approved and ratified Dr Lindsay Snodgrass as the Interim Principal at UHI Inverness.

Appointment for first term for the Student Representative

Following a call for student volunteers, HISA nominated Iain Forsyth to become second Student Member of the Board of Management at UHI Inverness in September 2026. This nomination was seconded by Chloe Young, Inverness Student President, and re-elected Student Board Member. The Governance Officer was provided detailed information about the recruitment and nomination process and can confirm that it was open, transparent and following agreed governance procedures.

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Subject/Title:	Outstanding Actions
Author: [Name and Job title]	Ludka Orlowska-Kowal Governance Officer
Meeting:	Board of Management Meeting
Meeting Date:	06 October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	28 September 2026
Brief Executive Summary of the paper:	This paper provides the Board of Management with an update on all outstanding actions. The status of the actions has been clearly marked, with updates provided for outstanding actions.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion and Noting.
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:**:** □ compliance □ partnership services □ risk management □ strategic plan □ new opportunity/change	Governance Compliance
Resource implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify**:
Risk implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify:** Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes/No **If yes, please specify:**
Student Experience Impact:	Yes/No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	N/A

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	Yes
*If a paper should **not** be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.	

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Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (s38)		Other (Please give further details)	

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Purpose of the report

To provide the Board of Management with an update on all outstanding action.

Executive Summary

The Board of Management oversees and monitors the progress of all actions and recommendations raised to date. The status of the actions has been clearly marked, with updates and comments provided for outstanding actions. The Governance Officer monitors the action progress and contacts all actions owners for updates on a regular basis.

Progress update:

- Board of Management action list:
  - ✓ 6 ongoing actions
  - ✓ 3 complete actions

Board of Management - Action List

ITEM 04.a

Action	Academic Year	Status	Finding	Recommendation	Recommendation Significance	Implementation Date	Responsible Officer	Comments
3	25/03/2025 2024/25	Ongoing	**Variations of credit-based funding across partnership:** The importance of a consistent approach to the use of credits by all partners and the RBS had been highlighted by the Board.	The variations of credit-based funding across partnership to be raised with UHI.	Medium	31 June 2025	Chair of the Board	**Update 31/06/2025:** The matter has been raised with the Chair of the Court. An update is expected after the next UHI Court meeting. **Update at 07/10/2025:** The Chair of the Board will re-check the status of this action with EO. **Update at 08/12/2025:** This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process. **Update at 03/02/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process. **Update at 31/03/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process. **Update at 28/05/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process and being moved forward as part of Option 3. **Update at 28/09/2026:** Emails sent to University Secretary & Director of Transformation & Business Planning.
4	24/06/2025 2024/25	Ongoing	**Topslice increase for 2025/26:** Discussion about the financial figures presented, concerns regarding duplication of systems and processes and the need for the topslice being reviewed took place.	Reasons for the increase in topslice for 2025/26 to be discussed with EO.	High	31 October 2025	Chair of the Board	**Update at 07/10/2025**: The Chair of the Board will re-check the status of this action with EO. **Update at 08/12/2025:** This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process. **Update at 03/02/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process. **Update at 31/03/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process. **Update at 28/05/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process and being moved forward as part of Option 3. **Update at 28/09/2026:** Emails sent to University Secretary & Director of Transformation & Business Planning.
10	24/06/2025 2024/25	Ongoing	**Principal's Report – QAA process:** The Board raised concerns in regard to the current QAA self-evaluation process, its 6 years cycle and risk associated with the final report being done for the whole of the partnership, not for individual colleges.	Feedback about the new QAA process to be shared with EO and SFC. There is a need for more frequent meetings.	Medium	31 October 2025	Principal	**Update at 07/10/2025:** Feedback to be shared with EO and SFC. **Update at 08/12/2025:** QAA reporting process might change with any new structure emerging from the Transformation process. **Update at 03/02/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process. **Update at 31/03/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process. **Update at 28/05/2026:** This action is being reviewed as part of the Transformation process and being moved forward as part of Option 3. **Update at 09/06/2026:** As reported to the LTR Committee the Partnership Quality and Enhancement Committee suggested that the QAA process and SEAP documents should be reviewed by the Principals in Partnership Council.
23	31/03/2026 2025/26	Ongoing	**Governance Update:** Discussion about the proposed new template for the Skills, Knowledge & Experience Self-Assessment took place with the Board asking for assurance that the new template will be able to reflect Member's skills but also to be reviewed to ensure more user-friendly format.	Format and content of the new Skills, Knowledge & Experience Self-Assessment template to be reviewed to ensure all skills are captured and the form is user-friendly.	Medium	23 June 2026	Gov Off	**Update at 12/06/2026:** In May 2026 the Board agreed for a SLWG to be created to review the template and guidance documents. Meeting took place on 10/06/2026 and work is ongoing with next meeting to take place in July 2026. **Update at 28/09/2026:** Reviewed and updated documents will be presented at Search & Nomination Committee meeting in November 2026 & full Board in December 2026.
24	28/05/2026 2025/26	Ongoing	**Research Update:** The wider partnership will continue to support research but a realignment of UHI Strategy will be implemented to link it closer with the transformation project and to include sector led demand.	An update to be provided regarding new UHI Strategy, wider partnership experience and knowledge exchange in terms of research.	Medium	Dec 2026	Deputy Principal Academic & Research, UHI	
25	23/06/2026 2025/26	Complete	**Financial Budget & Monitoring 2025/26 Update**	The exact date of the requested advances needed in July 2026 to balance the £2 million frozen cash and comply with financial regulations to be confirmed with the RSB's CFO.	High	June '26	VPCOER	**Update at 25/06/2026:** Date confirmed by the VPCOER on 25/06/2026.
26	23/06/2026 2025/26	Ongoing	**Financial Budget & Monitoring 2025/26 Update:** The Interim Chair of the Board asked for further clarification to be sought from the Director of Finance and Estates regarding the transparency around the ongoing liability of the pension strains. Data to be modelled and presented to the Board.	Further clarification to be sought from the Director of Finance and Estates regarding the transparency around the ongoing liability of the pension strains. Data to be modelled and presented to the Board.	Medium	October '26	Director of Finance & Estates	**Update at 28/09/2026:** The Director of Finance & Estates and the Governance Officer will review the VSS timeline and put a potential hold into diaries for the requested session.
27	23/06/2026 2025/26	Complete	**Financial Budget & Monitoring 2025/26 Update**	Meeting to be scheduled with the CFO to discuss the risk that the requested funds were not received in time for the required date, further implications for the college and a potential contingency plan that could be put in place to mitigate the risk.	High	June '26	VPCOER	**Update at 26/06/2026:** Meeting request sent to CFO, UHI, by VPCOER to request the meeting. **Update at 29/07/2026:** Email update to the Board re financial position, VSS & FRP risk register. **Update at 11/08/2026:** Email update to BOM re FRP/VSS.
28	23/06/2026 2025/26	Complete	**Financial Budget & Monitoring 2025/26 Update**	Additional Board/Committee meeting to be scheduled for August 2026 to discuss the FRP, VSS, risk register and student recruitment.	High	August '26	Gov Officer & Interim Chair of the Board	**Update at 16/07/2026:** Additional FGP Committee meeting to be scheduled in September 2026 & January 2027.

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Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Policy Approval – Flexible Retirement Policy - Draft October 2026
Author: [Name and Job title]	Dr Georgina Parker Vice Principal Curriculum, Operations & External Relations
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	6 October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	2 October 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	Board are asked to approve the newly drafted **Flexible Retirement Policy.** Report content: UHI Inverness does not currently have a flexible retirement option for professional services staff. Professional Services staff are enrolled in the Highland Council's Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Teaching staff who are enrolled on the teachers' pension already have the option to apply for phased retirement. Members of our Professional Service Staff have requested this option during the VS Scheme consultation period, and we are keen to address the disparity with our other staff group. Any flexible retirement would need to be at no cost to the College and could provide opportunities for staff cost reduction, whilst increase the flexibility of our workforce to adapt to change. Any employer whose staff are enrolled in LGPS is required to have a flexible retirement policy in place before it can offer flexible retirement. We have engaged with Highland Council in relation to developing a policy and such a policy would need to be accepted by them prior to implementation. The HR Committee was asked to consider the draft policy provided and to recommend its approval to the Board.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Approval
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:**:** • compliance	Compliance

• partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change	
Resource implications:	No **If yes, please specify**:
Risk implications:	Yes **If yes, please specify:** Operational: Organisational: Policies review and development required to ensure compliance with legislation and awarding body regulations.
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes **If yes, please specify:** Policy Equality Impact Assessment completed
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	Extra HR Committee – Monday 5th October 2026
Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	Yes

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Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

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ITEM 05.a

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FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY

Document Reference Number	PL/HR/2026/012
Date Approved	TBC
Review Date	TBC
EIA	Yes
Lead Officer	Head of HR
Review Officer	HR Business Partner

Version Control History

Reviewer	Date of Change	Summary of Revisions made
Head of HR		

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DRAFT

Policy Statement

UHI Inverness recognises the importance of developing a flexible workforce to continue to deliver a high standard of services to its customers. The College values the retention of the skills of staff and is committed to supporting employees into retirement while maintaining service provision.

Flexible retirement is an integral part of the College's approach to retaining employees with the skills, abilities and experience needed to deliver the College's objectives and support organisational transformation and business change.

Flexible retirement allows employees to apply to reduce their work commitments for a specific period leading up to the date on which they chose to retire from the College's employment. This reduction allows the employee to remain in employment and benefit from their pension provision subject to certain restrictions.

The main objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide flexible options for employees seeking to improve their work life balance as they approach retirement
- Support flexibility and assist with workforce planning
- Complement the Colleges existing flexible working policies and its role as a progressive employer.

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1. Guidance/Legislation

Publicly available UHI Inverness policies and procedures can be accessed via our website: About us - Publications. Staff and Board Members can access the full range of internal policies' and procedures through the Quality SharePoint site.

The development and application of this policy is guided by:

- Equalities Act 2010
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (Scotland) Regulation 2014
- UHI Inverness' Flexible Working Policy
- Employment Rights Act 1996
  - Employment Act 2002
  - Employment Relations Act 2004
  - Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023
  - Work and Families Act 2006

  - Equality Act 2010
  - Flexible Working (Procedural Requirements) Regulations 2000
  - Flexible Working (Eligibility, Complaints and Remedies) Regulations 2002
  - ACAS (Flexible Working) Arbitration Scheme (Great Britain) Order 2004
  - ACAS Code of Practice on Requests for Flexible Working
  - Flexible Working Regulations 2014
- UHI Inverness Talent Management Strategy
- UHI Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy

2. Scope

The option to apply for Flexible Retirement applies to all employees who have at least 2 years' service with the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and are aged 55 or over.

3. Conditions

Employees who apply for flexible retirement are required to resign from employment of the College, indicating a leaving date up to 3 years. The period of notice of resignation given will be equal to the period of flexible retirement. The reason for termination at the end of the period of flexible retirement will be the resignation of the employee.

During the period of flexible retirement, the employee can continue to pay pension contributions and accrue further pension service and benefits provided their hours reduce by 20% or there is a reduction in the grade of post.

The employee will be responsible for any costs including the cost of any actuarial reduction, to their pension benefits which will be drawn (ie. amount by which the employee's pension is reduced if taken before an employee's normal pensionable age).

Employees may apply to reduce the hours of their existing post and/or may apply for a vacant post at a lower grade. Where an employee applies for a vacant post, they will do so following the standard recruitment process and in competition with other candidates.

Employees may apply to change their conditions of service again in line with our Flexible Working Policy but their new earnings must not exceed 20% of their original earnings.

The Leadership Forum member will consider each request on its merits, carefully considering the benefits and impact on applicant and colleagues, including cost implications, for the service.

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Applications for flexible retirement will be considered taking into account the following factors and in line with our flexible working policy:

- Will there be any detrimental effect on service delivery
- Benefits which may arise from the implementation of the request
- Any cost implications i.e. will this result in savings or increased costs
- Ensure that any flexible pension arrangement is fair and equitable to all employees in the team
- Any need to recruit to the reduced hours to cover the duties and functions carried out by the employee concerned
- The ability to reorganise or undertake the work which is required to be carried out by other staff or through other means
- The existence of any vacancy on the establishment
- The need or desire to reorganise the way in which the College's services are delivered.

4. Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed annually, and its implementation and effectiveness monitored. Appropriate procedures for reviewing and monitoring are the responsibility of the policy lead officer. These procedures will be subject to audit by the Quality department.

Flexible retirement rates will be reported quarterly to the Executive Management Committee and the HR Committee.

Performance against these indicators will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by both the Executive Management Committee and the HR Committee to support ongoing monitoring and improvement initiatives.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis, to ensure it continues to meet UHI Inverness requirements and any legislative changes to ensure currency of content.

DRAFT

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Subject/Title:	Items approved via written procedure
Author: [Name and Job title]	Ludka Orlowska-Kowal, Governance Officer
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	06 October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	28 September 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	This paper provides the Board with the list of items that have been approved by the members via email approvals. Following policy was approved by the Audit and recommend for Board's approval: • Records Management Policy The Board approved the Strategic Plan 2027 over summer 2026.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Ratification

Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:**:** □ compliance □ partnership services □ risk management □ strategic plan □ new opportunity/change	New Opportunity/Change, Compliance
Resource implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify**:
Risk implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify:** Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes/No **If yes, please specify:**

Student Experience Impact:	Yes/No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	N/A
Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	Yes

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Recommendation

The Board is being asked to confirm the final approval of following policy that had been approved by Audit Committee on 1sr September 2026 and recommended for Board's approval. Quorum approval was received via written email procedure.

Following item needed approval:

1. **Policy for Approval**
   a.) Records Management Policy
2. Document for approval
   a.) Strategic Plan 2027

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Subject/Title:	2026-27 KPI Matrix – All Measures and Targets
Meeting and date:	BOM – 6 October 2026
Author:	Martin Whyte
Decision, Discussion or Noting:	Noting / Discussion
Link to Strategic Plan:	**Links to all strategic objectives**
Cost implications:	~~Yes~~ / No *(delete as applicable)* **If yes, please specify:**
Risk assessment:	No *(RA by function/dept as applicable)*

Executive Summary

- The author requests that the Board notes the 2026-27 KPI Matrix.
- Request that the board and/or board committee chairs support a review of the key performance indicators that are to be reported to committees.

The report and appendix present the full KPI Matrix for 2026-27 detailing all measures and targets for the year except for most finance measures which shall be entered once draft financial statements are complete. Forecast outturn operational surplus / (deficit) has been entered from the budget provided to BOM in June 2026.

The matrix details fifty-six operational performance measures that are reviewed by EMT across the year. The frequency of monitoring is identified by reporting interval although additional reports can be requested by EMT at any time. Board committees currently receive the full performance matrix accompanied by a narrative on each measure.

We wish to engage with Board chairs to agree the key performance indicators to be reported to committees supporting governance and oversight of strategic objectives, organisational performance and risk.

Measures are monitored in the frequency below:

Annual – 25
Biannual – 1
Quarterly – 8
3-times – 1
Monthly – 19
Biennial - 2

Performance Measures
AY: 2026-27
Performance Measures- EMT & Board of Management

Measures - Linked to Profile and Actual sheets

AY Start	01 Aug 2026
Today	28 Sep 2026
Period Month	August
No.Periods YTD	1

Key:

B = Not yet in scope	
R = Not Achieved	
A = Partially Achieved	
G = Achieved	

Serial	Measure	Measurement Frequency	Prior Year Actual	Current Year Target	YTD TARGET	YTD ACTUAL	YTD ACTUAL v TARGET RAG	Potential Financial Impact of YTD Performance	Prior YTD ACTUAL	Variance - YTD vs Prior YTD
Serial	**Measure 1: CORE FE/HE OUTPUTS**									
1	HE Active applications (next AY - Measure from Dec - Jul)	Monthly	1,358	1,400.0	0	0				
2	FE Active applications (next AY - Measure from Dec - Jul)	Monthly	2223	2,300.0	0	0				
3	FE Credits	Monthly	27231	26,442	16,000	16,044	100.3%	£0	14,688	1,356
4	Apprenticeship starts	Monthly	392	306	140	138	98.6%	-£3,600	162	-24
5	Apprentices in Learning (average in year)	Monthly	720	675	675	739	109.5%	£0	738	1
6	Apprenticeship Income (excluding T&A)	Monthly	£1,515,302	£1,300,000	£141,961	£90,076	63.5%	-£51,885	£141,961	-£51,885
8	Commercial Short Course Income	Monthly	£131,378	£200,000	£3,870	£12,640	326.6%	£8,770	£3,870	£8,770
9	HE enrolments (head count)	Monthly	1,964	2,202	0	0				
10	HE enrolments (year one starts)	Annual	867	750	0	0				
11	HE FTE (APC figures) (from Oct)	Monthly	1,485.0	1,544.0	0.0	0.0				
12	Research - Income less expenditure	Biannual	-£375,249	£0	£0	£0				
13	GA Programmes - New Enrolments	Monthly	115	110	0	121.0				
14	Senior Phase Enrolments	Annual	542	580	0	0.0				
	MEASURE 2: SATISFACTION MEASURES									
17	Employer satisfaction survey (even years)	Biennial	0.0%							
18	Early Satisfaction & Engagement Survey (ESES)	Annual	96.0%	96%	0.0%	0.0%				
19	National Student Survey (NSS)	Annual	80.0%	86%	0.0%	0.0%				
20	Student Satisfaction & Engagement Survey (SSES)	Annual	95.0%	95%	0.0%	0.0%				
21	Post Graduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) (even years)	Biannual	0.0%	80%	0.0%	0.0%				
22	Post Graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (previous AY)	Annual	88.0%	90%	0.0%	0.0%				
23	ESES % Response Rate	Annual	63.0%	60%	0.0%	0.0%				
24	SSES % Response Rate	Annual	53.0%	55%	0.0%	0.0%				
	Measure 3: RETENTION, SUCCESS & PROGRESSION									
25	College Retention Overall for FE	Annual	91.1%	92%	0%	0%				
26	College Retention Overall for HE	Annual	94.6%	91%	0%	0%				
27	FE FT Successful Outcomes	Annual	80.3%	75%	0%	0%				
28	FE PT Successful Outcomes	Annual	87.4%	88%	0%	0%				
29	Partial Success FE	Annual	6.1%	5%	0%	0%				
30	HE FT Successful Outcomes	Annual	80.2%	70%	0%	0%				
31	HE PT Successful Outcomes	Annual	80.8%	75%	0%	0%				
32	Modern Apprenticeship successful outcomes (contract year)	Monthly	71.6%	75%	75.0%	73.3%	97.7%		65.70%	7.60%
33	FE progression to further FE study	Annual	41.5%	42%	0.0%	0.0%				
34	FE progression to HE - actual	Annual	36.8%	37%	0.0%	0.0%				
35	Mental Health Support appt (non-emergency) offered for within 3 - 10 working days	Monthly	99.9%	97.0%	97.0%	100%	103.1%		100.0%	0.00%
36	Learning Support appt offered for within 6 - 20 working days	Monthly	93.1%	97.0%	97.0%	97%	100.0%		90%	7.00%
	Measure 4: HR									
40	Sickness levels	Quarterly	3.48%	3.22%	0.00%					
41	- Short Term	Quarterly	1.33%		0.00%	0.00%				
42	- Long Term	Quarterly	2.16%		0.00%	0.00%				
43	% Staff turnover	Quarterly	2.51%	2.20%	0.00%	0.00%				
44	PRD completion - full or review (current quarter -1)	Annual	46%	97%	0.0%	0%				
45	Student FTE:Academic Staff Ratio	Annual	23.04	24	0.0	0.0				
46	Lecturer utilisation % (% of deployable hours)	Annual	82.8%	80.0%	0.0%	0.0%				
47	Number of workplace injuries	Monthly	122	115	1	1	100.0%		1	0
48	Number of RIDDOR reportable accidents and illness	Monthly	7	4	0	0				
49	% of staff completed mandatory IHASCO (H&S) Trg	Quarterly	86%	80%	0.0%	0.0%				
	Measure 5: FINANCE									
52	Adjusted current ratio	Annual	0		0.0	0.0				
53	Forecast Outturn Operational Surplus/(Deficit)	Quarterly	-£1,434,000	-£1,633,000	£0	£0				
54	Staff costs as % of income (less NDP/capital allowances)	Annual	0		0.0%	0.0%				
55	Cash days in hand	Annual	0		0.0	0.0				
56	Income as a % of Expenditure	Annual	0		0.0%	0.0%				
57	Curriculum contribution (overall % - estimate)	Annual	52%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%				
58	Analysis of aged debtors > 90 days	Quarterly	0		0.0%	0.0%				
	Measure 6: ESTATES & CAMPUS									
59	Room Occupancy - Frequency %	Monthly	36.7%	34.0%	29.0%	14.0%	48.3%		30%	-16.00%
60	CO2 Emissions on Utilities (gross) Tonnes	Monthly	544	532	22	18	82.4%		24	-6
61	CO2 Emissions on Waste - Tonnes	Quarterly	0.582	0.780	0.000	0.000				
62	Estates reactive task completion rate %	Monthly	97%	96%	96%	97.0%	101.0%		95.0%	2.0%
63	GTFM % reactive task completion rate (period month -1)	Monthly	96%	96%	96%	96.0%	100.0%		94.4%	1.6%
64	Total % of Capital expenditure budget committed (Aug - March)	3 times a year	100%	100%	0.0%	0.0%				

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Subject/Title:	2025-26 KPI Matrix and Executive Summary – Period 12 YTD
Meeting and date:	BOM – 6 October 2026
Author:	Martin Whyte
Decision, Discussion or Noting:	Noting / Discussion
Link to Strategic Plan:	**Links to all strategic objectives**
Cost implications:	~~Yes~~ / No *(delete as applicable)* **If yes, please specify:**
Risk assessment:	No *(RA by function/dept as applicable)*

Executive Summary

Thirty-eight measures were in scope as at period 12, July 2026.
Finance measures are not available at the date of writing pending draft financial statements being prepared.

The '2025-26 year-end' KPI report will be distributed once the draft financial statements are complete.

Of the thirty-eight measures:
Twenty are satisfactory / met (Green).
Ten are unsatisfactory / not yet met (Red),
Eight are marginal / not yet met (Amber).

Focus / Close Monitoring

Forecast Outturn Operational Surplus / (Deficit). Serial 53. 181.3%. RED.

Forecast outturn deficit circa. -£1,434,000 against budget deficit of -£791,000 following the Director of Finance and Estates' latest report.
VPCOER and DoFE are providing detailed additional reporting and analysis to F&GP for review.

- FRP actions have been underway for several months. SFC approval has recently been granted to proceed with the most significant phase of the plan.

Research – Income Less Expenditure. Serial 12. 250.2%. RED.

Budget monitoring deficit YTD (period 12) is approximately £375,000, with the KPI objective being a maximum deficit of £150,000. Year-end accruals were provided to Finance week ending 25 September 26 and at the tme of writing are to be processed. Prior to year-end accrual adjustments, research budget monitoring deficit is c.£225k greater than KPI maximum.

HE Active Applications. Serial 1. 97.0% AMBER.

HE active applications 1,358 against 1,400 planned.
60 fewer active applications than the same point last year.
Weekly admissions meetings review HE application data.
Additional recruitment and marketing initiatives have been launched.
994 HE offers have been accepted - 81 fewer than same point last year (1,075).
86% of HE offers have been accepted (90%).
Appearance of larger number of 'insurance' applications.
Potential impacts.

- Fewer applications may lead to fewer HE students/FTE and in turn reduced HE grant and tuition income.
- 81 fewer FTE would equate to approximately £480,000 less HE grant and tuition fees. Actual income would be £480,000 lower as a result.
- Note, 2026-27 budgeted HE FTE recruitment is ~50 FTE greater than 2025-26 actual.

HE FTE (APC figures). Serial 11. 93.9%. RED. (no change)

HE FTE (APC figures) is 1,485 FTE against plan 1,581 FTE. 96 FTE below APC target and 181 FTE below budgeted target.
FTE has increased by 22 FTE since period 9.
HE FTE recruitment is 172 FTE greater than the same point last year but remains below budgeted target.

- Shortfall in funded HE FTE has resulted in circa £800,000 lost HE grant.
- A proportion of the funding shortfall will impact the next 1-3 years (continued HE study).

GA Programmes – New Enrolments. Serial 13. 88.5%. RED. (no change)

There were 115 new enrolments to the GA programmes against planned 130. The previous year saw 200 new GA enrolments. Overall, GA enrolments were 42 fewer than planned across all years (years 1-3) with advanced entry to year 2 of some GAs below expectation.

- Fewer GA FTEs equates to approximately £190,000 reduced HE grant plus tuition fees. This impact features within HE FTE (APC) data above.

MA Successful Outcomes (contract year). Serial 32. 95.5%. AMBER.

Current period performance 71.6% against the SDS KPL of 75%.
8.4 percentage points higher than the same point last year (63.2%).
Highest percentage of MA successful outcomes since inclusion in KPI reporting.
Validity of the measure remains challenging as SDS contract year, and academic / resulting year do not coincide.

Points to Note

FE Credits. Serial 3. 103.0%. GREEN.

FE Credits exceed annual target and SFC funding threshold.
FE Credit funding has been met.
146 credits greater than previous year (subject to FES audit).

Apprenticeship Starts. Serial 4. 121.7%. GREEN.
Apprentices in Learning. Serial 5. 106.7%. GREEN.
Apprenticeship Income. Serial 6. 116.6%. GREEN.

All measures exceeded 2025-26 plan.
Positive indicators for increased number of Apprentices in Learning (serial 5) and Apprenticeship Income (serial 6) over the next 2-3 years.

Student FTE:Academic Staff Ratio. Serial 45. 112.4%. GREEN.

Ratio has increased from 20.2:1 to 23:1. The increase reflects increased HE FTE and consistent / marginal increase in FE Credits from 2024/25, coupled with a slight reduction in teaching FTE (roles from lecturer 1 – promoted 2).
However, the funding climate requires the SSR to increase year-on-year.

The executive summary is accompanied by an appendix containing the complete KPI report with narrative for each in-scope measure.

Performance Measures
AY: 2025-2026
Performance Measures- EMT & Board of Management

Measures - Linked to Profile and Actual sheets

AY Start	01 Aug 2025
Today	01 Aug 2026
Period Month	July
No.Periods YTD	12

Key:

B = Not yet in scope	
R = Not Achieved	
A = Partially Achieved	
G = Achieved	

Serial	Measure	Measurement Frequency	Prior Year Actual	Current Year Target	YTD TARGET	YTD ACTUAL	YTD ACTUAL v TARGET RAG	Prior YTD ACTUAL	Variance - YTD vs Prior YTD
Serial	**Measure 1: CORE FE/HE OUTPUTS**								
1	HE Active applications (next AY - Measure from Dec - Jul)	Monthly	1,418	1,400.0	1,400	1,358	97.0%	1,418	-60
2	FE Active applications (next AY - Measure from Dec - Jul)	Monthly	2194	2,300.0	2300	2,223	96.7%	2,194	29
3	FE Credits	Monthly	27085	26,442	26,442	27,231	**103.0%**	27,085	146
4	Apprenticeship starts	Monthly	409	382	322	392	**121.7%**	409	-17
5	Apprentices in Learning (average in year)	Monthly	705	675	675	720	**106.7%**	705	15
6	Apprenticeship Income (excluding T&A)	Monthly	£1,398,960	£1,300,000	£1,300,000	£1,515,302	**116.6%**	£1,398,960	£116,342
8	Commercial Short Course Income	Monthly	£72,508	£75,000	£75,000	£131,378	**175.2%**	£72,508	£58,870
9	HE enrolments (head count)	Monthly	2,074	2,100	2,100	1,964	**93.5%**	2,074	-110
10	HE enrolments (year one starts)	Annual	637	750	750	867	**115.6%**	637	230
11	HE FTE (APC figures) (from Oct)	Monthly	1,313.0	1,581.0	1,581.0	1,485.0	**93.9%**	1,313.0	172
12	Research - Income less expenditure	Biannual	-£201,852	-£150,000	-£150,000	-£375,249	**-250.2%**	-£201,852	-173,397
13	GA Programmes - New Enrolments	Monthly	191	130	130	115.0	**88.5%**	191	-76
14	Senior Phase Enrolments	Annual	574	564	564	542.0	96.1%	574	-32
	MEASURE 2: SATISFACTION MEASURES								
18	Early Satisfaction & Engagement Survey (ESES)	Annual	95.7%	96%	96.0%	96.0%	**100.0%**	95.70%	0.30%
19	National Student Survey (NSS)	Annual	83.0%	88%	88.0%	80.0%	**90.9%**	83.00%	-3.00%
20	Student Satisfaction & Engagement Survey (SSES)	Annual	94.7%	95%	95.0%	95.0%	**100.0%**	94.70%	0.30%
22	Post Graduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (previous AY)	Annual	88.0%	90%	90.0%	88.0%	97.8%	88.00%	
23	ESES % Response Rate	Annual	61.0%	60%	60.0%	63.0%	**105.0%**	61.0%	2.00%
24	SSES % Response Rate	Annual	53.2%	55%	55.0%	53.0%	96.4%	53.2%	-0.20%
	Measure 3: RETENTION, SUCCESS & PROGRESSION								
32	Modern Apprenticeship successful outcomes (contract year)	Monthly	63.2%	75%	75.0%	71.6%	95.5%	63.2%	8.4%
33	FE progression to further FE study	Annual	39.6%	40%	40.0%	41.5%	**103.8%**	39.6%	1.9%
34	FE progression to HE - actual	Annual	29.7%	35%	35.0%	36.8%	**105.1%**	29.7%	7.1%
35	Mental Health Support appt (non-emergency) offered for within 3 - 10 workin	Monthly	98.0%	97.0%	97.0%	100%	**103.0%**	98.0%	1.9%
36	Learning Support appt offered for within 6 - 20 working days	Monthly	100.0%	97.0%	97.0%	93.1%	96.0%	100.0%	-6.9%
37	PLSP - completed and accepted by student (within 10 days of meeting)	Monthly	-	85.0%	85.0%	90.8%	**106.8%**		
	Measure 4: HR								
45	Student FTE:Academic Staff Ratio	Biannual	20.2	21	20.5	23.0	**112.4%**	20.2	2.8
46	Lecturer utilisation % (% of deployable hours)	Annual	76.9%	80.0%	80.0%	82.8%	**103.5%**	76.9%	5.9%
47	Number of workplace injuries	Monthly	115	115	115	122	106.1%	115	7
48	Number of RIDDOR reportable accidents and illness	Monthly	5		4	7	175.0%	5	2
49	% of staff completed mandatory IHASCO (H&S) Trg	Quarterly	84%	80%	80.0%	85.8%	**107.3%**	84%	1.80%
	Measure 5: FINANCE								
53	Forecast Outturn Operational Surplus/(Deficit)	Quarterly	-£842,992	-£791,000	£791,000	-£1,434,000	**181.3%**	-£842,992	-£591,008
57	Curriculum contribution (overall % - estimate)	Annual		45.0%	45.0%	51.7%	**114.9%**		
	Measure 6: ESTATES & CAMPUS								
59	Room Occupancy - Frequency %	Monthly	40.2%	38.0%	39.8%	36.7%	**92.0%**	40%	-3.55%
60	CO2 Emissions on Utilities (gross) Tonnes	Monthly	561	532	533	544	102.1%	561	-17
61	CO2 Emissions on Waste - Tonnes	Quarterly	0.821	0.780	0.780	0.582	74.7%	0.821	-0.24
62	Estates reactive task completion rate %	Monthly	95%	96%	96%	96.8%	100.9%	95.1%	1.7%
63	GTFM % reactive task completion rate	Monthly	95%	96%	96%	95.7%	99.7%	95.0%	0.7%
64	Total % of Capital expenditure budget committed (Aug - March)	Monthly	100%	100%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100%	

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Subject/Title:	2026-27 KPI Matrix and Executive Summary – Period 1 YTD
Meeting and date:	BOM – 6 October 2026
Author:	Martin Whyte
Decision, Discussion or Noting:	Noting / Discussion
Link to Strategic Plan:	**Links to all strategic objectives**
Cost implications:	~~Yes~~ / No *(delete as applicable)* **If yes, please specify:**
Risk assessment:	No *(RA by function/dept as applicable)*

Executive Summary

Thirteen measures were in scope in period 1, August 2026.

Of the thirteen measures:
Eight are satisfactory / met (Green).
Three are unsatisfactory / not yet met (Red),
Two are marginal / not yet met (Amber).

Focus / Close Monitoring

Apprenticeship starts. Serial 4. 98.6%. AMBER

Apprenticeship starts for the period are marginally below plan, delivering 138 starts against an objective of 140. Staggered MA block starts can impact on timing of recruitment. Noting that a couple of construction craft MA classes are not at capacity and activity is underway to align new starts to gaps.

- Financial impact has been estimated as potential lost SDS funding -£3,600 should recruitment remain 2 below target. This will be remedied by recruitment to plan.
- Business Solutions team continue to recruit to 2026/27 MA programmes and report progress weekly.

Apprenticeship Income (excluding T&A). Serial 6. 63.5%. RED.

£90,076 claims submitted in period 1 against planned £141,961. -£51,885 variance. Variance is temporary and is due to a delay in resulting 25 painting and decorating apprentices. The curriculum manager has resolved the issue with student records, and the Business Solutions team are in the process of claiming final MA certificates.

- Potential financial impact is temporary. Funding has been delayed and is not lost. September claims in FIPS (SDS system) as of 25 September already exceed plan.

Points to Note

FE Credits. Serial 3. 100.3%. GREEN.

Strong start to the year with many more FE unit attachments complete by the end of period 1 than same period last year. Early information enhances monitoring and reporting.

Commercial Short Course Income. Serial 8. 326.6%. GREEN.

£12,640 reported in period 1 against £3,870 target. Later academic calendar start created capacity for a few commercial courses to be scheduled and delivered. £8,770 greater than same period last year.

- Commercial provision that requires lecturing staff has been built into staff allocation and year plans. Course schedules are available for promotion and marketing.

Mental Health Support appointment. Serial 35. 103.1%. GREEN.

The counselling and wellbeing teams have done well to maintain 100% delivery of this important objective in period 1.

Learning Support appointment. Serial 36. 100.0%. GREEN.

Learning support teams have met their objective in period 1, an improvement from 90% in the same period last year. The slight delay in academic calendar will have had a bearing on that to a degree, but the volumes being attended to remain significant.

The executive summary is accompanied by an appendix containing the complete KPI report with narrative for each in-scope measure.

Performance Measures
AY: 2026-27

Performance Measures- EMT & Board of Management

Measures - Linked to Profile and Actual sheets

AY Start	01 Aug 2026
Today	28 Sep 2026
Period Month	August
No.Periods YTD	1

Key:

B = Not yet in scope	
R = Not Achieved	
A = Partially Achieved	
G = Achieved	

Serial	Measure	Measurement Frequency	Prior Year Actual	Current Year Target	YTD TARGET	YTD ACTUAL	YTD ACTUAL v TARGET RAG	Potential Financial Impact of YTD Performance	Prior YTD ACTUAL	Variance - YTD vs Prior YTD
Serial	**Measure 1: CORE FE/HE OUTPUTS**									
3	FE Credits	Monthly	27231	26,442	16,000	16,044	100.3%	£0	14,688	1,356
4	Apprenticeship starts	Monthly	392	306	140	138	98.6%	-£3,600	162	-24
5	Apprentices in Learning (average in year)	Monthly	720	675	675	739	109.5%	£0	738	1
6	Apprenticeship Income (excluding T&A)	Monthly	£1,515,302	£1,300,000	£141,961	£90,076	63.5%	-£51,885	£141,961	-£51,885
8	Commercial Short Course Income	Monthly	£131,378	£200,000	£3,870	£12,640	326.6%	£8,770	£3,870	£8,770
	Measure 3: RETENTION, SUCCESS & PROGRESSION									
32	Modern Apprenticeship successful outcomes (contract year)	Monthly	71.6%	75%	75.0%	73.3%	97.7%		65.70%	7.60%
35	Mental Health Support appt (non-emergency) offered for within 3 - 10 working days	Monthly	99.9%	97.0%	97.0%	100%	103.1%		100.0%	0.00%
36	Learning Support appt offered for within 6 - 20 working days	Monthly	93.1%	97.0%	97.0%	97%	100.0%		90%	7.00%
	Measure 4: HR									
47	Number of workplace injuries	Monthly	122	115	1	1	100.0%		1	0
	Measure 6: ESTATES & CAMPUS									
59	Room Occupancy - Frequency %	Monthly	36.7%	34.0%	29.0%	14.0%	48.3%		30%	-16.00%
60	CO2 Emissions on Utilities (gross) Tonnes	Monthly	544	532	22	18	82.4%		24	-6
62	Estates reactive task completion rate %	Monthly	97%	96%	96%	97.0%	101.0%		95.0%	2.0%
63	GTFM % reactive task completion rate (period month -1)	Monthly	96%	96%	96%	96.0%	100.0%		94.4%	1.6%

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Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Student Activity 2025/26 and Recruitment 2026/27
Author: [Name and Job title]	Jane Maclennan, Information Systems Manager
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	7th October 2025
Date Paper prepared:	25th September 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	To provide the committee with the final student enrolments for 2025/26, and the status of current recruitment for 2026/27.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: a) compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change	This paper links to the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the student experience and the curriculum.
Resource implications:	Yes
Risk implications:	Yes – quality of the student experience
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes – equity of the student experience
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	n/a

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	**Non-confidential**
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	**Yes**

*If a paper should **not** be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Student Activity 2025/26 and Recruitment 2026/27

Executive summary

This report provides a summary of the final student enrolments for 2025/26 and the status of current recruitment for 2026/27.

The 2025/26 FE Credits target for UHI Inverness was 26,442. The credits audit is complete with an outturn of 27,098 which is just over 102% of target.

The UHI Academic Partnership target for HE Scottish or EU undergraduate students of 1,518 FTE was not achieved, our delivery was 1,485 FTE which was 97.8% of the target.

Enrolment for 2026/27 is ongoing for FE and HE students. The majority of full-time students have enrolled, and is ongoing for part-time students, modern apprentices and commercial courses.

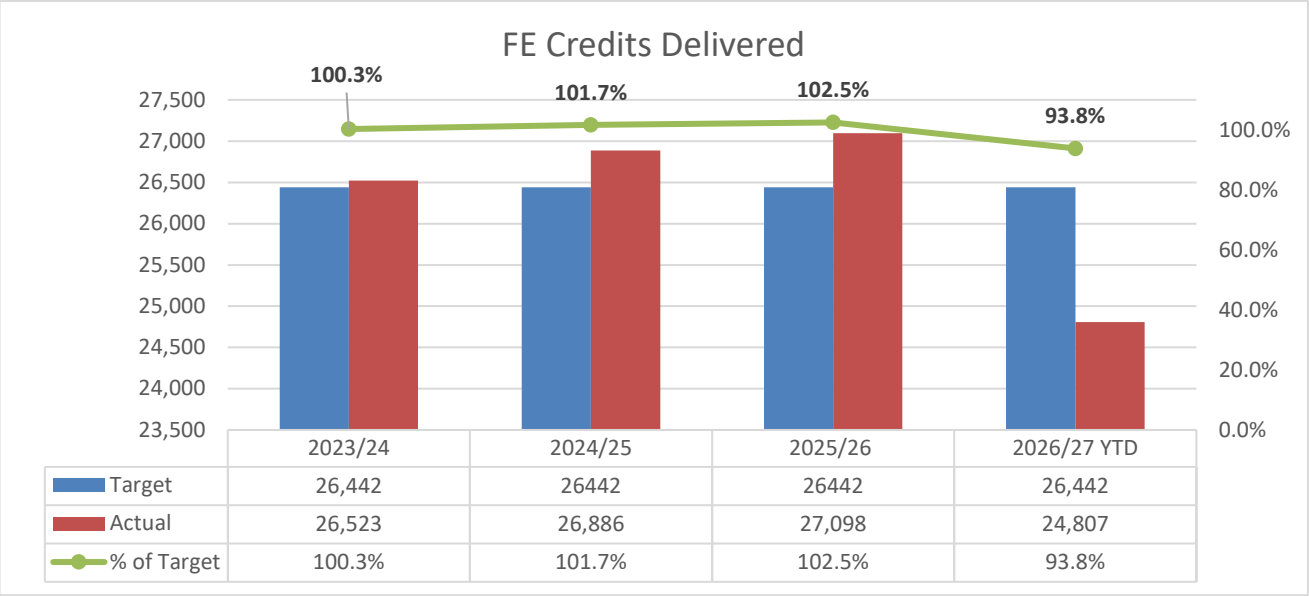
Main body of information

- **FE**

The core credit target for 2025/26 was 26,442, the credits audit is complete, with an outturn of 27,098, which is greater than target.

The target for 2026/27 remains at 26,442, currently we have achieved 93.8% of target and are ahead of our KPI credit target profile, with some modern apprentices yet to commence their block release, commercial course students and January start enrolments yet to start. For comparison as at 1st October 2025, we had generated 22,700 credits which was 85.8% of target.

The chart below shows the number of credits and target against the left axis, and the % of target on the right axis.



	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27 YTD
Target	26,442	26442	26442	26,442
Actual	26,523	26,886	27,098	24,807
% of Target	100.3%	101.7%	102.5%	93.8%

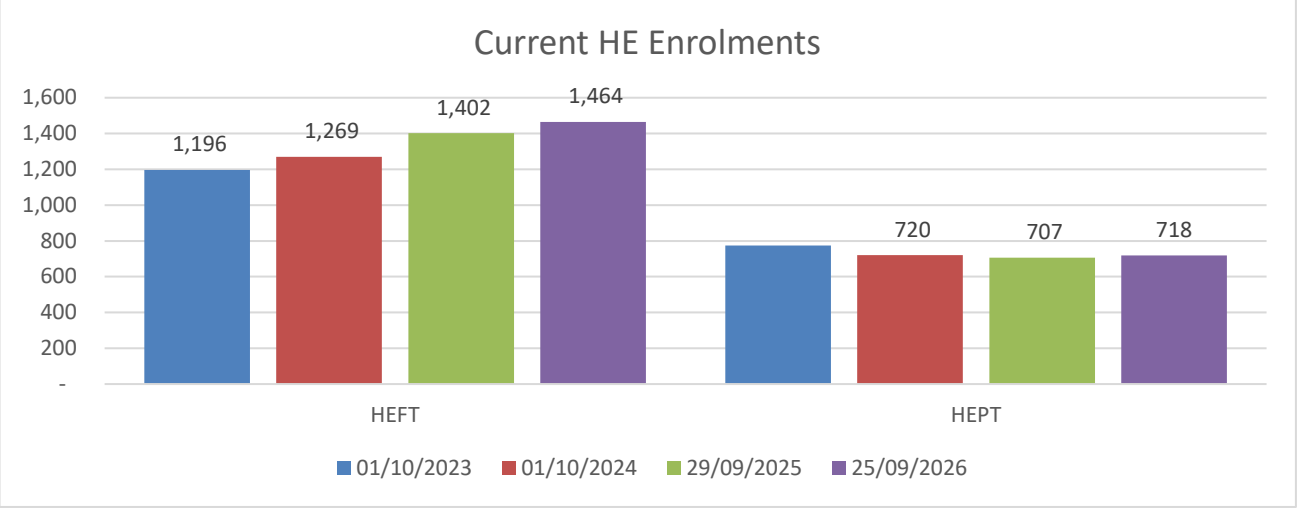
- **HE**

HE unit attachment is underway for Degree and HN students, once this is complete, we will be able to determine the actual HE FTE values against the 2026/27 APC target of 1,544 FTE.

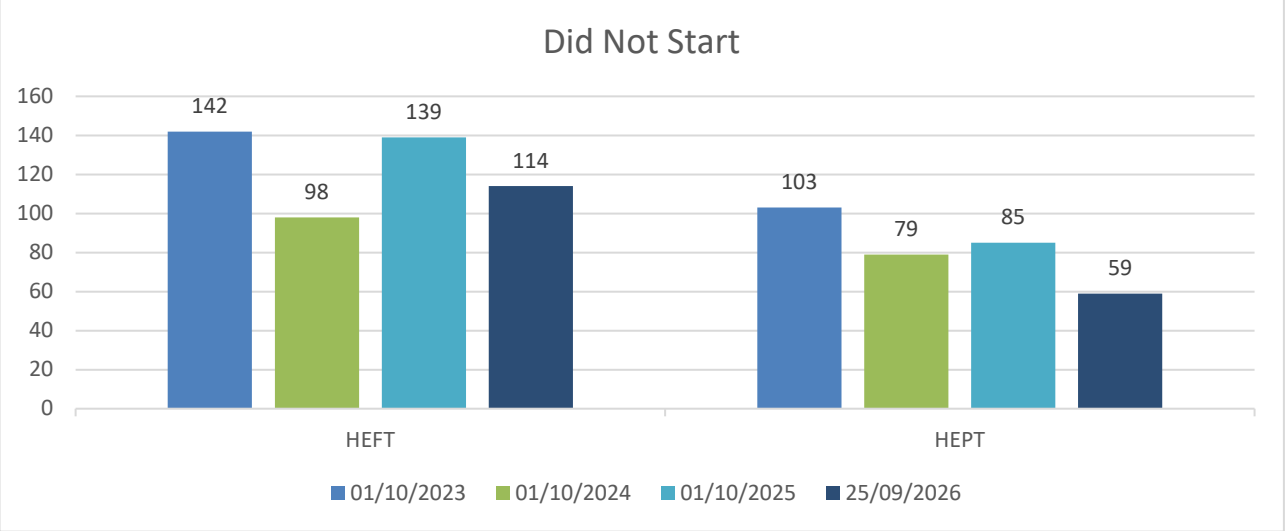
To enable an accurate earlier count of FTE, the HN unit attachment which is undertaken by UHI Inverness administrators has been prioritised and is ahead of schedule. UHI Executive Office undertake the module attachment for degree students and is due to be complete by mid-October.

In previous years there were later enrolments for Graduate Apprentices in Construction and Civil Engineering, this was moved forward to September in line with other HE students to allow for more accurate forecasting of student numbers.

The chart below shows the current enrolments (heads) of all HE as at this point, and over the last three years. This includes postgraduate, international and RUK students, as well as those who are repeating their study and do not count within the APC target.



Welcomingly, we have seen a decline in the number of HE students who have not started or returned to their course.



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Board of Management

Subject/Title:	**Student Outcomes for 2025/26 and Target Setting for 2026/27**
Author: [Name and Job title]	Dr Lindsay Snodgrass, Interim Principal Jane Maclennan, Information Systems Manager
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	6th October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	25th September 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	To provide the committee with an update on student retention, progress against targets for 2025/26, and target setting for 2026/27.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:: a) compliance • partnership services • risk management • strategic plan • new opportunity/change	This paper links to the strategic plan, particularly in relation to the student experience and the curriculum.
Resource implications:	Yes
Risk implications:	Yes – quality of the student experience, organisational reputation and financial impacts
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes – equity of the student experience & outcomes across protected characteristic groups
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	Discussion with HISA and managers through Student Journey and Enhancement committee

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	**Non-confidential**
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	**Yes**

*If a paper should **not** be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the commercial interests of any person or organisation (S33)		Its disclosure would constitute a breach of confidence actionable in court (S36)	
Its disclosure would constitute a breach of the Data Protection Act (S38)		Other (please give further details)	
For how long must the paper be withheld? (express either as the time which needs to pass or a condition which needs to be met.)			

Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

STUDENT RETENTION AND OUTCOMES FORECAST FOR FE & HNs 2025/26

Executive Summary

The report provides an update on student retention and success for 2025/26, and success target setting for 2026/27.

The data included in the report demonstrates the sustained retention, the drop in partial success and that across both FE and HE students all success measures are over 80% in 2025/26.

Progress in achieving our full-time and part-time targets indicates that we are in line with our overall FE success targets, however we have not achieved the stretch success target for full-time HN students.

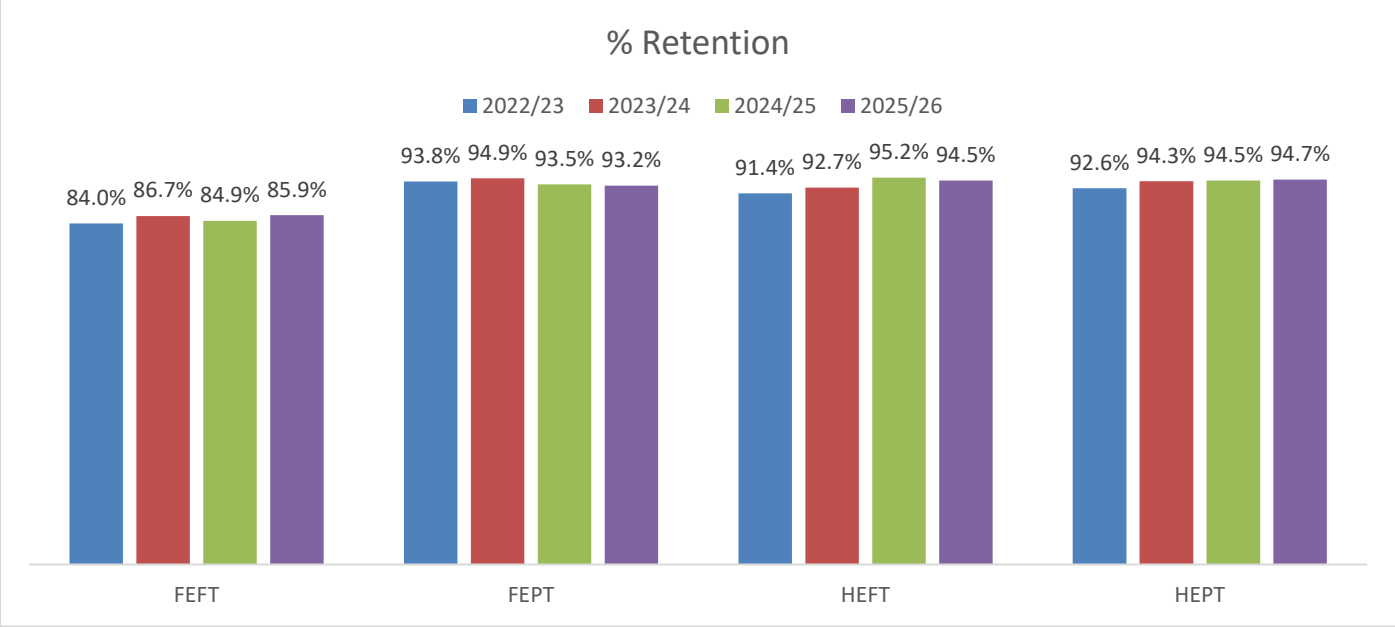
Success targets for 2026/27 have been discussed with HISA and relevant managers through our Student Journey & Enhancement committee and Learning, Teaching and Research Committee. Robust discussion took place about whether we should introduce a 'target range' for some measures.

Main body of report

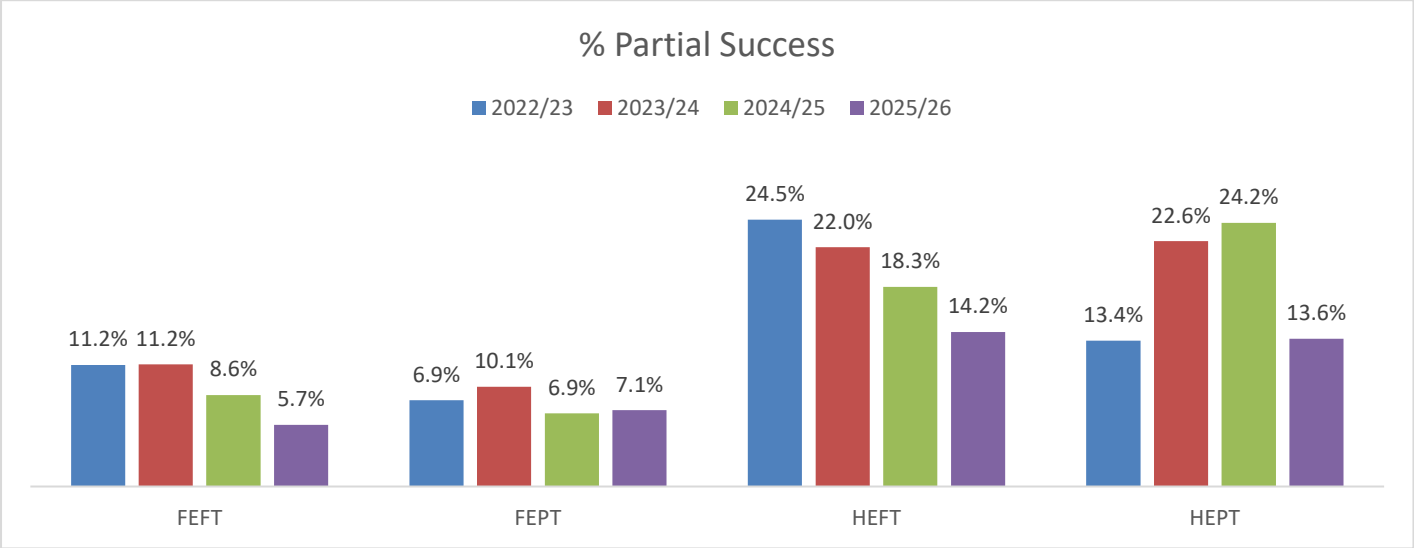
The Charts below show the % Retention, Partial Success and Success over the past 4 years.

Please note the sustained retention, the drop in partial success and that across both FE and HE students all success measures are over 80% in 2025/26

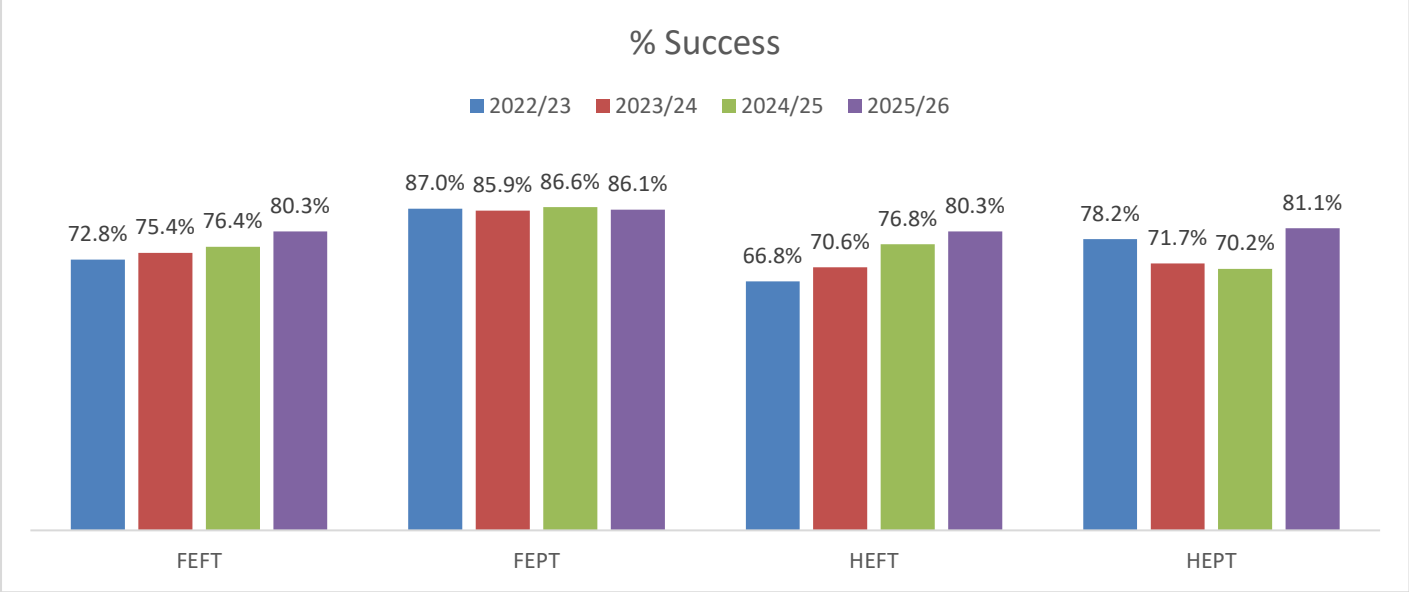
Retention



Partial Success



Success



FT FE & HN Successful Outcomes AY 25/26

FE Full Time



Current position 80.3%
+ 3.9% on previous year
2024/25 SBM 70.5%

FE Part Time



Current position 86.1%
- 0.5% on previous year
2024/25 SBM 81.7%

HN Full Time

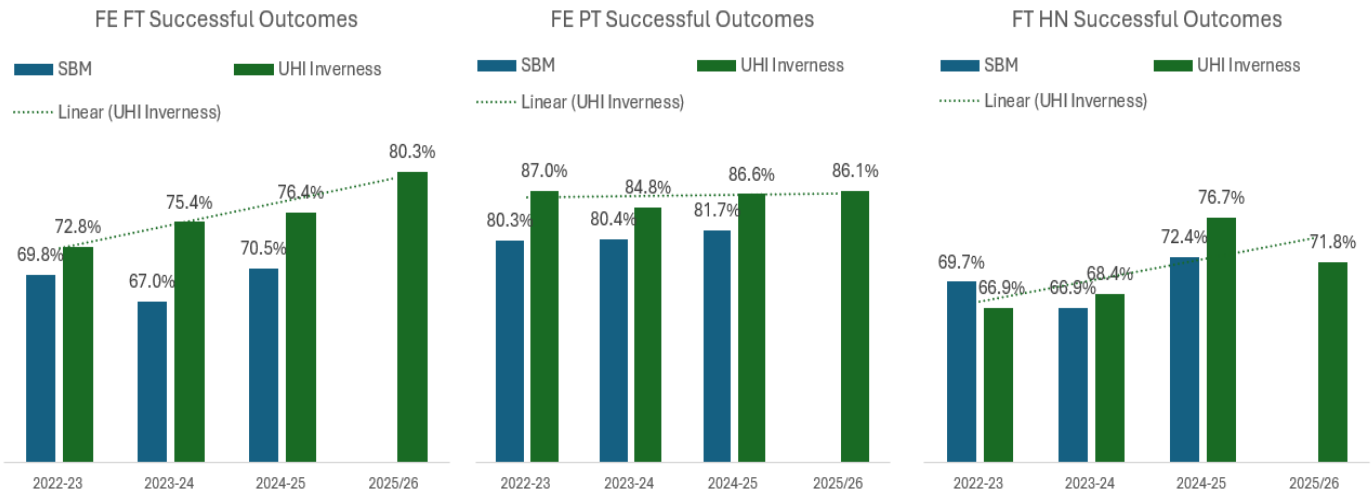


Current Position 71.8%
- 4.9% on previous year
2024/25 SBM 72.4%

- FE full-time success **ahead of target at just over 80%** and +9.5pp above latest sector benchmark
- FE Part time success marginally below target, **but +4.4 % above** latest sector benchmark
- HN full-time target will **not be achieved** – we set a stretch target based on a significant increase in our 2024/25 out-turn. Whilst we have an overall downward trend in partial success and withdrawals, these increased in 2025/26 from the previous year impacting on our successful outcomes.

Successful Outcomes Target Setting AY 26/27

The chart below shows the Sector Benchmark (SBM) and the UHI Inverness % success rates.

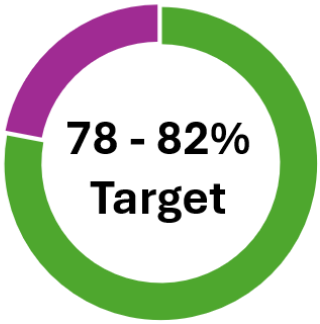


Based on the trend data for successful outcomes, the targets for 2026/27 have been discussed with HISA and relevant managers through our Student Journey & Enhancement committee and Learning, Teaching and Research Committee. Robust discussion took place about whether we should introduce a 'target range' for some measures given the consistent and significant performance above sector benchmark and our forthcoming organisational changes linked to the Financial Recovery Plan.

FT HN's didn't achieve target in 2025/26 therefore the latest Sector Benchmark and our 2025/26 stretch target of 77% has been applied, which is a 5.1% stretch on 2025/26 performance.

- Range target for FE full-time target, with a base of the 2025/26 target and a stretch target of 2% above 2025/26 performance.
- FE part-time target maintained at current, well above latest Sector Benchmark.
- Range target for Full-time HN students, with a base target based on the latest Sector Benchmark and a stretch target of 5.1% above 2025/26 performance.

FE Full Time



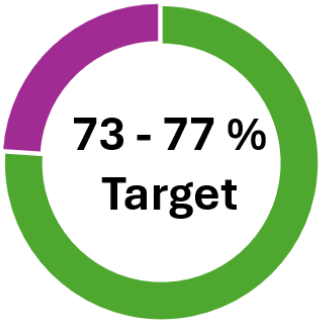
Range of 78 – 82%
Base: 2025/26 target
Stretch: 2025/26 Target +2%

FE Part Time



Maintain 2025/26 Target

HN Full Time



Range of 73% - 77%
Base: Latest SBM
Stretch: 2025/26 Target

UHI | INVERNESS

Subject/Title:	Governance Update
Author: [Name and Job title]	Ludka Orlowska-Kowal Governance Officer
Meeting:	Board of Management
Meeting Date:	06 October 2026
Date Paper prepared:	28 September 2026
Brief Summary of the paper:	This paper provides the Board of Management with an update on all governance matters.
Action requested: [Approval, recommendation, discussion, noting]	Discussion and Noting.
Link to Strategy: Please highlight how the paper links to, or assists with:**:** □ compliance □ partnership services □ risk management □ strategic plan □ new opportunity/change	Governance Compliance
Resource implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify**:
Risk implications:	Yes / No **If yes, please specify:** Operational: Organisational:
Equality and Diversity implications:	Yes/No **If yes, please specify:**
Student Experience Impact:	Yes/No If yes, please specify:
Consultation: [staff, students, UHI & Partners, External] and provide detail	N/A

Status – [Confidential/Non confidential]	Non-Confidential
Freedom of Information Can this paper be included in "open" business* [Yes/No]	Yes
*If a paper should **not** be included within "open" business, please highlight below the reason.	

Its disclosure would substantially prejudice a programme of research (S27)		Its disclosure would substantially prejudice the effective conduct of public affairs (S30)	
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Further guidance on application of the exclusions from Freedom of Information legislation is available via

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp and

http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/web/FILES/Public_Interest_Test.pdf

Chair Appointment

Derel Lewis has been appointed as the new Chair of the Board with the start date of 1st October 2026. A series of 121 meetings with individual Board Members had taken place over the last couple of weeks. Members, who have missed or have not booked their session as yet are being asked to inform the Governance Officer with their availability.

Proposed second position for the Vice Chair of the Board

To ensure that all governance matters are met within deadlines and complying with the Code of Good Governance, the new Chair of the Board has suggested that an additional position for a second Vice Chair of the Board could be created. UHI NWH do have two Vice Chairs, and the proposal will be reviewed in light of sharing best practice across the UHI partnership. The Governance Officer will update Board's governance documents and bring a proposal to the next Search & Nomination Committee meeting in November 2026. Once approved, the documents will be presented to the Board seeking final approval.

Interim Principal Appointment

Dr Lindsay Snodgrass has been appointed as the Interim Principal of UHI Inverness until 1st August 2027. The preparation for the recruitment and appointment process of the new Principal of UHI Inverness have started already and the Board will be informed of the process as part of the Governance Update reports.

Interim Chair of the Board

As off 1st October 2026 Janette Campbell had been reinstated in her dual roles as Vice Chair of the Board and Chair of the Audit Committee.

Interim Vice Chair of the Board & Interim Chair of the Audit Committee

As off 1st October 2026 David Stewart had been reinstated in his role as Member of the Audit Committee.

The Board would like to extend their thanks to Janette and David for their excellent additional interim work in the last 6 months.

New Chair of the LTR Committee

Annie Nelson has been appointed as the new Chair of the LTR Committee with Arvinder Kainth reinstated to his previous role of the Vice Chair of the LTR Committee. The Board would like to extend their thanks to Arvinder for his excellent work as the LTR Chair during the AY 2025/26.

Board & Committee Evaluations

The self-evaluation cycle for AY 2025/26 was closed on 30th September 2026. All replies and comments will be reviewed by the Governance Officer and individual Committee, Chair and Board reports will be drafted over the next month. They will be discussed with the Committee/Board Chair(s), and a summary report will be presented to the Board at the December meeting.

ICT Update – New Laptops

Due to security and compliance risk all Members are being asked to exchange their existing laptops for new devices by the end of the calendar year 2026.

Code of Good Governance 2026/27

The Code of Good Governance for 2026/27 has been updated and shared by the CDN. Copy of the Code has been attached to this report as item 12.1. To ensure compliance all Members will be sent copy of the document to confirm via email that they have read it.

Board Share Point

The Governance Officer will be offering Share Point drop in sessions in October/November to provide guidance and advice about the use of Board Share Point site. The plan for AY 2026/27 is to move to Committee/Board paper distribution via link to Share Point folder and not by email attachment.

Standards Commission for Scotland – Advice Note for Members for College Sector Boards

The Standards Commission has reviewed and revised its Advice Note for Members for College Sector Boards. In particular, it has provided more explanation, under Section 4, about acting in the best interests of the college and what this means, and

about the distinction between a member gathering views to inform their perspective and independent judgment (which is appropriate) and seeking instructions from an outside constituency or body about how to vote (which is not allowed). In addition, they have expanded the section on distinguishing between strategic and operational matters. Copy of the document attached as item 12.2.

Use of Private Communication Channels for Board Business

This is a general reminder that Board members should not use WhatsApp or other private channels to discuss Board matters. Doing so can create significant governance, information security, reputational, and record-keeping risks. It may also undermine the principles of openness, transparency and collective decision-making.

Existing WhatsApp groups created for Board and Committees should only be used to inform Members about urgent emails, polls for meetings and as reminders of upcoming meetings.

Briefing note prepared by HEFESTIS has been attached as item 12.03.

CODE of GOOD GOVERNANCE for SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

THE CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

2026-2027



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1. BACKGROUND

The original *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges* was published in December 2014. The Code is reviewed and updated annually by the Good Governance Steering Group. This is the edition for the 2026-27 session.

Colleges Scotland will act as custodian for any future reviews in liaison with the Good Governance Steering Group and in keeping with the way that the Code was created, the broad range of stakeholders who developed the Code will be engaged fully with any revisions. CDN will take responsibility for the production and dissemination of the Code document.

This Code refers to regional colleges, assigned colleges and regional strategic bodies.



2. FOREWORD

Colleges in Scotland thrive in the heart of their communities, serving the interests of those communities, students, employers, governments and their agencies and other stakeholders. They have an essential and valuable role in Scottish society. Colleges deliver 68 million hours of learning each year, and 95% of these learning hours lead to a recognised qualification. Across Scotland colleges employ 14,000 staff and deliver education, skills and training to 248,900 students and 14,830 apprentices. .

Colleges receive substantial public funding and also operate in an increasingly commercial and enterprising way. We value the significant contribution college board members make to governing our colleges and regional strategic bodies, and to their stewardship of taxpayer's money, ensuring its efficient and effective use.

Boards are expected to innovate, pursue new opportunities and take measured risks in delivering what is best for their stakeholders.

Against this background, it is right and proper that the highest standards of governance and propriety are expected of our boards and those individuals who serve them. This Code of Good Governance codifies the principles of good governance for learners and learning that already exist in our colleges and promotes accountability and continuous improvement in how colleges and regional strategic bodies are governed.

The Code is based on key principles and has been written in a way that is mandatory and anticipates compliance. All colleges that receive funding from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) or from a regional strategic body must comply with the Code as a term and condition of grant. Exceptions should be rare and must be explained publicly.

In addition to demonstrating good governance, colleges and regional strategic bodies must also ensure compliance with their statutory and other obligations. The governance professional role is vital in providing guidance to the board on its legal and other obligations.

Colleges have an important individual and collective role to play in promoting economic, social, and cultural well-being. We expect this Code to provide the essential underpinning to help discharge that role to the highest standards possible.

Dr David C. Watt OBE
Chair of the Good Governance Steering Group

3. CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE FOR SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

Governance and the Code

Corporate governance:

- is the way in which organisations are directed and controlled within a legislative and regulatory framework
- defines the distribution of rights and responsibilities among the different stakeholders and participants in the organisation
- determines the rules and procedures for making decisions on corporate affairs including the process through which the organisation's objectives are set
- provides the means of achieving those objectives and monitoring performance.

Scotland's colleges refer to colleges either funded by SFC or by a regional strategic body for the provision of education. Such colleges can be incorporated or non-incorporated. The overarching purpose of good governance for Scotland's colleges is to:

- lead the college, region or regional strategic body and set its strategic direction and values
- ensure effective management and financial controls to support the student experience within a framework of public accountability and transparency
- deliver high quality learning and outcomes.

The *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges* has been developed and is owned by the college sector. Colleges are required to comply with it as a condition of grant from either SFC or their regional strategic body. It establishes standards of good governance practice for all boards and provides the essential foundations for compliance within the legislative framework.

Boards must not only follow the letter but also the spirit of the Code to ensure good governance. Boards must think deeply, thoroughly and on a continuing basis about their overall tasks and the implications of these for the roles of their individual members. Key to this is the leadership of the chair, the support given to and by the principal, and the frankness and openness of mind with which issues are discussed and tackled by all board members.

Statement of Compliance with Good Governance

Each board must state its adoption of the Code in the corporate governance statement contained in its annual financial statement. The chair, on behalf of the board, is expected to report as to how the principles have been applied by the board. Where, for whatever reason, a board's practice is not consistent with any principle of the Code, it should make this known to SFC or, if it is an assigned college, the regional strategic body. This should be done immediately they become aware of an inconsistency and, without exception, in advance of publishing the information. An explanation for that inconsistency must be clearly stated in its corporate governance statement. Boards will be expected to offer a clear rationale for exceptions in the context of their college's operational model and to identify mitigations.

Individual board members have a duty to act on serious concerns about the governance of their body. Information on who board members can approach is included in *The Guide for Board Members in the College Sector* available from the College Development Network.

4. PRINCIPLES

Section A: Leadership and Strategy

Conduct in Public Life

A.1 Every college and regional strategic body must be governed by an effective board that is collectively responsible for setting, demonstrating, and upholding the values and ethos of the organisation.

A.2 Every board member must ensure that they are familiar with, and their actions comply with the provisions of their board's Code of Conduct.

A.3 The *Nine Principles of Public Life in Scotland*, which incorporate the seven Nolan principles, must be the basis for board decisions and behaviour. These key principles, which apply individually and collectively, are:

- Duty/Public Service
- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability and Stewardship
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership
- Respect

Vision and Strategy

A.4 The board is responsible for determining their institution's values, vision, strategic direction, educational character, , and ethos. Regional strategic bodies must also determine the regional strategy for colleges assigned to them. The board of an assigned college must have regard to the strategy determined by the regional strategic body. Board members have a collective leadership role in fostering an environment that enables the body to fulfil its mission and meet Scottish Government priorities, for the benefit of students and the community it serves.

A.5 The board must develop and articulate a clear vision for the region or college. This should be a formally agreed statement of its aims and desired outcomes which should be used as the basis for its overall strategy and planning processes.

A.6 The board provides overall strategic leadership of the region or college. The board is responsible for formulating and agreeing strategy by identifying strategic priorities and providing direction within a structured planning framework.

A.7 The board (except in the case of assigned college boards) is responsible for overseeing the negotiation of its funding agreement with SFC, to meet the needs of the college or region and make best use of available funding, consistent with national strategy.

A.8 The roles and responsibilities of the boards of assigned colleges should be undertaken in the context of the roles and responsibilities of their regional strategic body.

Performance

A.9 The board must ensure that a comprehensive performance measurement system is in place which is clearly linked to the regional strategic framework and identifies key performance indicators. It must ensure that it scrutinises performance measures and reports these on their website in a manner that is both timely and accessible to stakeholders. This will allow the board to determine whether or not the vision and mission of the region or the college are being fulfilled and that the interests of stakeholders are being met.

Corporate Social Responsibility

A.10 The board must demonstrate high levels of corporate social responsibility by ensuring it behaves ethically and contributes to economic development while seeking to improve the quality of life of the local community, society at large and its workforce.

A.11 The board must exercise its functions with a view to improving economic, cultural and social wellbeing in the locality of the college or region. It must have regard to social and economic needs and social inclusion.

A.12 The board must provide leadership in equality and diversity.

A.13 The board must seek to reflect in its membership, the make-up of the community through offering maximum opportunity of membership to a range of potential members and removing potential barriers to membership, in partnership with its regional strategic body, as appropriate.



Section B: Quality of the Student Experience

Student Engagement

B.1 The board must have close regard to the voice of its students and the quality of the student experience should be central to all board decisions.

B.2 The board must lead by example in relation to openness, by ensuring that there is meaningful on-going engagement and dialogue with students, the students' association and as appropriate staff and trade unions in relation to the quality of the student experience. Consultation is essential where significant changes are being proposed.

B.3 The board must consider the outcome of student surveys and other student engagements and monitor action plans that could impact on the quality of the student experience.

B.4 The college board must have regard to the Framework for the Development of Strong and Effective College Students' Association in Scotland. It must put in place robust partnership procedures (e.g. partnership agreement) to work together to achieve change and which are supported by regular and open communications.

B.5 The college board must encourage a strong and autonomous students' association and ensure that the students' association is adequately resourced.

B.6 The college board must ensure that the students' association operates in a fair and democratic manner and fulfils its responsibilities.

B.7 The college board should review the written constitution of its students' association at least every five years.

Relevant and High-Quality Learning

B.8 The board must seek to secure coherent provision for students, having regard to other provision in the region or college's locality. The board must be aware of external local, national and international bodies and their impact on the quality of the student experience, including community planning partners, employers, skills development and enterprise agencies and employer bodies. The board must seek to foster good relationships and ensure that the body works in partnership with external bodies to enhance the student experience, including employability and the relevance of learning to industry needs.

Quality Monitoring and Oversight

B.9 The board must ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place for the effective oversight of the quality and inclusivity of the learning experience in the college or region. The board must ensure that the college works in partnership with sector quality agencies and other appropriate bodies to support and promote quality enhancement and high-quality services for students.

Section C: Accountability

Accountability and Delegation

C.1 The board is primarily accountable to its main funder, either SFC or its regional strategic body. Through the chain of funding, the body is ultimately responsible to the Scottish Ministers who are accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

C.2 The board must ensure delivery of its agreed outcomes or in the case of an assigned college, its agreed contribution to the region's agreed outcomes.

C.3 The board must ensure it fulfils its statutory duties and other obligations on it, and that the terms and conditions of its grant are being met.

C.4 Scottish Ministers have powers to suspend or remove by order any or all board members of an incorporated college (except the principal) or a regional board for serious or repeated breaches of a term and condition of grant.

C.5 The board also has a wider accountability to a range of stakeholders including students (both current and prospective), its staff, the wider public, employers and the community it serves, for the provision high quality education that improves people's life chances and social and economic well-being.

C.6 Incorporated colleges and regional boards must maintain and publicly disclose a current register of interests for all board members. Board members have a personal responsibility to ensure any changes to their register of interests are notified timeously to the governance professional and to declare any specific conflicts of interest in the business of the meeting prior to the commencement of each meeting of the board and its committees and withdraw from meetings as appropriate.

See section D.6 for the 'objective test' for judging if there is a conflict of interest.

C.7 The board must ensure that its decision-making processes are transparent, properly informed, rigorous and timely, and that appropriate and effective systems of financial and operational control, quality, management of staff, risk assessment and management are established, monitored, continuously improved and appropriately impact assessed. This includes:

a) the prompt production, dissemination and online publication of board/committee agendas, minutes and papers to the public
b) every board meeting and every committee meeting having a well-structured agenda circulated timeously in advance
c) the retention of all key documentation which help justify the decisions made by the board and its committees
d) setting quorum for board and committee meetings in line with good practice and preferably at 50% or higher are non-executive members. A board should satisfy itself that adequate arrangements are in place to ensure that decisions it has delegated to a committee are taken with a non-executive majority. When determining a quorum, the chair of the board may be considered to be a non-executive member. (see Annex 1 for the definition of non-executive)

C.8 The board may delegate responsibilities to committees for the effective conduct of board business. As a minimum the committees required are Audit, Remuneration, Finance and Nominations/Appointments. Delegation of responsibilities from and matters reserved to the board and its committees must be set out in a scheme of delegation including the functions delegated by the board to the chair, committees, the principal and the governance professional (and any other members of staff).

Incorporated college boards and regional boards have no powers to delegate functions to an individual board member (except the chair who has no authority to act out with their delegated powers).

C.9 The board must ensure every board committee has a specified member of the management team to provide objective, specialist advice to support it to discharge its remit, including by explaining in an accessible way the matters under discussion and the possible implications of different options.

C.10 The board must consider and have in place procedures to ensure effective working relationships and constructive dialogue amongst the board as a whole and ensure there are effective reporting and two-way communications between committees and the board. The board must ensure that discussions and decisions of every committee are accurately recorded and reported to the board, no later than the next meeting of the board.

Risk Management

C.11 The board of a college or a regional body is responsible for the overall management of risk and opportunity. It must set the risk appetite of the body and ensure there is an appropriate balance between risk and opportunity and that this is communicated via the principal to the body's management team.

C.12 The board must ensure that sound risk management and internal control systems are in place and maintained. It must ensure there is a formal on-going process for identifying, reporting, evaluating and managing the body's significant risks and review the effectiveness of risk management, business continuity planning and internal control systems.

Audit Committee

C.13 The Audit Committee must support the board and the principal by reviewing the comprehensiveness, reliability and integrity of assurances including the body's governance, risk management and internal control framework. The Scottish Government Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook promotes the development of an assurance framework to aid the Committee in fulfilling this role. See Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook

C.14 The scope of the Audit Committee's work must be defined in its terms of reference and encompass all the assurance needs of the board and the principal. The Audit Committee must have particular engagement with internal and external audit, and must work with management and auditors to resolve any issues in relation to financial reporting.

C.15 The Audit Committee must promptly pursue recommendations arising from audit reports and must monitor their implementation.

C.16 The membership of the Audit Committee cannot include the board chair or the principal and, in line with the Audit and Assurance Committee Handbook, 'executive members of the organisation should not be appointed to the Audit and Assurance Committee', and the majority of members must be non-executive. The role of the college executive is to attend meetings at the invitation of the committee chair and to provide information for particular agenda items.

C.17 The Audit Committee terms of reference must provide for the committee to sit privately without any non-members present for all or part of a meeting if they so decide. The Audit Committee members should meet with the internal and external auditors without the executive team present at least annually.

C.18 At least one member of the Audit Committee should have recent relevant financial or audit experience.

Remuneration Committee

C.19 It essential that members of the Remuneration Committee understand their role and responsibilities. Members must undertake the online training module for Remuneration Committees provided by College Development Network within one month of appointment.

C.20 The board must have a formal procedure in place for setting the remuneration of the principal by a designated committee of non-executive members. The board may wish to supplement this by taking evidence from a range of sources. In particular, staff and students should have a role in gathering and submitting evidence in relation to the college principal to the relevant committee.

C.21 The board chair cannot be the chair of the Remuneration Committee (but they can be a member of it).

Financial and Institutional Sustainability

C.22 The board is responsible for ensuring the financial and institutional sustainability of the body. The board must ensure compliance with its Financial Memorandum (either with SFC or the regional strategic body, depending on which is funding it), including in relation to incorporated colleges and regional boards, relevant aspects of the Scottish Public Finance Manual.

C.23 The board must ensure that:

- funds are used as economically, efficiently and effectively as possible
- effective monitoring arrangements are in place
- college staff report relevant financial matters to it.

C.24 For colleges that are charitable organisations, board members are also charity trustees. The board of a college that is a charity must ensure its members are aware of their responsibilities under charity legislation and for complying with relevant provisions as set out by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. See OSCR Guidance and Good Practice for Charity Trustees (02.04.25)

Staff Governance

C.25 The college board as the employer, is responsible for promoting positive employee relations and for ensuring effective partnership between recognised trade unions and management.

C.26 The board must have a system of corporate accountability in place for the fair and effective management of all staff, to ensure all legal obligations are met and all policies and agreements are implemented and identify areas that require improvement and to develop action plans to address them.

C.27 The college board must comply with collective agreements placed on it through national collective bargaining for colleges.

Section D: Effectiveness

The Board Chair

D.1 The chair is responsible for leadership of the board and ensuring its effectiveness in all aspects of its role. The chair is responsible for setting the board's agenda and ensuring that adequate time is available for discussion of all agenda items, particularly strategic issues. The chair must promote a culture of openness and debate by:

- encouraging the effective contribution of all board members
- fostering constructive challenge and support to the principal, executive team and fellow board members
- effective team-working
- positive relations between board members.

The chair must engage with the principal and the governance professional in a manner which is both constructive and effective.

D.2 The board and its committees must have the appropriate balance of skills, experience, independence and knowledge of the body to enable them to discharge their respective duties and responsibilities effectively.

Senior Independent Member

D.3 The board must appoint one of the non-executive members to be the senior independent member to provide a sounding board for the chair and to serve as an intermediary for the principal, other board members and the governance professional when necessary (see Annex 1 for the definition of 'non-executive'). The senior independent member should also be available where contact through the normal channels of chair, principal or governance professional has failed to resolve an issue or for which such contact is inappropriate. The senior independent member is also responsible for holding annual meetings with Board members, without the Chair, to appraise the Chair's performance and provide the Chair with relevant feedback

Further information on the role of the senior independent member can be found in The Guide for Board Members in the College Sector.



Board Members

D.4 Each board member is collectively responsible and accountable for all board decisions. Board members must make decisions in the best interests of the college and/or region as a whole rather than selectively or in the interests of a particular group.

D.5 Staff, student and trade union board members are full board members and bring essential and unique, skills, knowledge and experience to the board. Staff, student and trade union board members must not be excluded from board business unless there is a clear conflict of interest, in common with all board members.

D.6 Where the college is a charity, all board members, as charity trustees, including staff, student and trade union board members, have legal duties and responsibilities under the Charities Act 2005. This includes registering any personal interests that could be seen as conflicting with the interests of the body. The 'objective test' for judging if there is a conflict of interest is:

"… whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard the interest as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your decision making in your role as a member of a public body".

Principal and Chief Executive

D.7 The college board must appoint the principal as chief executive of the college, securing approval for the appointment and terms and conditions of the appointment from the regional strategic body if necessary.

D.8 The college board must ensure there is an open and transparent recruitment process for the appointment. Students and staff must have an opportunity to contribute to the recruitment process.

D.9 The college board must delegate to the principal, as chief executive, authority for the academic, corporate, financial, estate and human resource management of the college, and must ensure the establishment of such management functions are undertaken by and under the authority of the principal.

D.10 The college board must ensure a clear process is in place to set and agree personal performance measures for the principal. This process should seek the views of students and staff. The chair, on behalf of the board, should monitor, review and record the principal's performance, at least annually, against the agreed performance measures.

D.11 The principal, as a board member, shares responsibility for good governance with the chair and all other members of the board, supported by the governance professional. The principal also enables good governance through supporting effective communication and interaction between the body and the rest of the college including staff and students.

D.12 The board provides strategic direction for the region and/or college, and the chair provides leadership to the board. The principal provides leadership to the staff of the body.

D.13 The board must provide a constructive challenge to the principal and executive team and hold them to account.

Governance Professional

D.14 The board must appoint a governance professional who is responsible to it and reports directly to the chair in their governance professional capacity. The governance professional may be a member of the senior management team in their governance professional capacity, but they cannot hold any other senior management team position at the same time. The appointment and removal of the governance professional is a decision of the board.

D.15 All board members must have access to the governance professional who has an important governance role in advising the board, the committees and individual board members and supporting good governance. The distinctive governance professional role includes:

- facilitating good governance and advising board members on:
  - the proper exercise of their powers, including in relation to relevant legislation
  - the board's compliance with its Financial Memorandum, the Code for Good Governance, its Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation
  - their behaviour and conduct in relation to the board's Code of Conduct.
- providing clear advice to the chair and the board/committees on any concerns the governance professional may have that board members have not been given:
  - sufficient information
  - information in an appropriate form
  - sufficient time to monitor, scrutinise or make informed and rigorous decisions in an open and transparent way.
- attending and providing support to every board meeting and every meeting of every board committee. Where the governance professional is unable to attend, while the governance professional retains overall responsibility, proper arrangements must be made to cover the role with a person who is fully able to discharge the role effectively.
- having an unambiguous right to speak at board and committee meetings to convey any concerns they may have about governance. This extends to someone substituting for the governance professional.
- reporting any unresolved concerns about the governance of the body to the relevant funding body (i.e., SFC or the regional strategic body).

D.16 The board must ensure the governance professional:

- has suitable skills, knowledge and behaviours to carry out their role effectively
- receives appropriate induction, and if new to the role, is mentored by a more experienced governance professional for at least their first year
- has adequate time and resources available to undertake their role effectively.

D.17 The board must ensure arrangements are in place to deal with a governance professional's potential or real conflicts of interest.

Board Member Appointment, Induction and Training

D.18 For boards with responsibility for board appointments, the board must ensure a formal and open procedure is in place for recruiting and selecting new non-executive board members. Boards must have regard to current Ministerial Guidance on board appointments.

D.19 The board is responsible for ensuring appropriate arrangements are in place for the conduct of student elections and nominations, and elections and nominations of staff and trade union members to the board.

D.20 The chair must ensure that new board members receive a formal induction on joining the board, tailored in accordance with their individual and collective needs. The governance professional should support the chair in the provision of relevant induction for new board members.

D.21 The board must ensure all board members undertake appropriate training and development in respect of their governance role. The governance professional should support the chair in the provision of relevant training and development opportunities for board members, which should be tailored to meet board members skills and needs. The governance professional must keep records of the development activity of board members, including the chair.

D.22 The board must ensure that new committee members receive a committee induction and have their specific training needs assessed and met.

Board Evaluation

D.23 Extension of the term of office of board appointments requires evidence and the board must ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to support this.

D 24 The board must keep its effectiveness under annual review and have in place a robust self-evaluation process. There should also be an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness every three to five years. The board should determine the timing for this externally facilitated review as part of the annual effectiveness review. The board is not required to conduct a self-evaluation of its effectiveness in the same year as an externally facilitated evaluation. The board must send its self-evaluation (including an externally facilitated evaluation) and board development plan (including progress on previous year's plan) to its funding body and publish them online.

D.25 The board must agree a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the board chair and the committee chairs. The evaluation of the board chair should normally be led by the senior independent member.

D.26 The board must ensure all board members are subject to appraisal of their performance, conducted at least annually, normally by the chair of the board.

D.27 The performance of regional college chairs will also be evaluated by the Scottish Government, as regional college chairs are appointed by the Scottish Ministers and are personally accountable to them.

D.28 The performance of assigned, incorporated college chairs will also be evaluated by the regional strategic body, as they are appointed by the regional strategic body and are personally accountable to them.

Section E: Relationships and Collaboration

Partnership Working

E.1 The board must work in partnership to secure the coherent provision of high quality fundable further and higher education in their localities.

E.2 The board must ensure effective consultation, local and regional planning and must follow the principles of effective collaborative working: mutual respect, trust and working towards commonly agreed outcomes.

E.3 The board must ensure effective partnership working with local and national bodies including businesses, public and third sector organisations to develop commonly agreed priorities following the principles of effective collaborative working.

E.4 The board must encourage and support effective partnership working and collaboration within and across regions to address local needs and meet national priorities and specialisms.



ANNEX 1

References and Definitions

- "**college**" means a college funded by either SFC or a regional strategic body.
- "**incorporated college**" means a college with a board of management under part 1 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992.
- "**assigned** college" means a college assigned to a regional strategic body.
- "**board**" means the governing body of the college or to the regional strategic body.
- "**body**" means the organisation in question, i.e., a college or regional strategic body.
- "**principal**" includes where appropriate in the context, the chief officer or equivalent person of a regional strategic body.
- '**non-executive**' means a member who is not the chair of the board and who does not otherwise hold a specific position on the board i.e., is not a student member or a staff or trade union member; and in the case of a college board, is not the principal; and in the case of a regional board is not the chair of an assigned college.
- The reference to a non-executive majority under C.7(d) reflects the underlying governance principle of ensuring an appropriate degree of independence and objectivity in all board decision-making. A board quorum should always require a non-executive majority. When determining a quorum, the chair of the board may be considered to be a non-executive member.
- The Court of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) is the Regional Strategic Body (RSB) for the region and is the only RSB in Scotland.



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INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

ADVICE FOR MEMBERS OF COLLEGE SECTOR BOARDS

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Advice Note, issued by the Standards Commission, aims to provide members of college sector boards with an overview of their responsibilities under the ethical standards framework. It seeks, in particular, to assist such members in recognising and dealing with potential conflicts of interest. This is to help minimise the risk of the impact of any such a conflict on effective governance and to help members ensure they comply with their board's Code of Conduct.

1.2 Members have a personal responsibility to observe the rules in their college sector board's Code of Conduct, which is based on a Model Code of Conduct issued by the Scottish Ministers, with the approval of the Scottish Parliament. This Advice Note is intended to assist board members in interpreting and complying with the provisions in their Code of Conduct. The Advice Note should, therefore, be read in conjunction with that Code. The Standards Commission's Guidance on the Model Code of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies and its Advice Notes also provide advice on how provisions in the Code should be interpreted.

1.3 The purpose of the Code is to ensure that all board members use their knowledge and experience to act in their public body's best interests, while adhering to the same, high standards of behaviour. This includes in respect of the matters outlined below.

1.4 The Code applies whenever you are acting, or could reasonably be seen as acting, as a member of a college board. This is explained in more detail under Section 3 of this Advice Note.

1.5 This Advice Note concentrates on the provisions of the Code that may be the most relevant to members of college sector boards and can cause the most issues in terms of interpretation and

compliance. Some examples have been included, to assist members in relating the provisions to scenarios they may face or situations in which they may find themselves.

2. Standards Commission

2.1 The role of the Standards Commission is to:

- encourage high ethical standards in public life. This includes promoting and enforcing the Codes of Conduct and issuing guidance to councils and devolved public bodies; and by providing training and answering queries on how their provisions should be interpreted. The Standards Commission's Guidance on the Model Code can be found at: https://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/guidance/guidance-notes
  The Standards Commission's Advice Notes and other training material (including videos, presentations and e-Learning modules on the Code) can be found at: https://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/education-and-resources
- adjudicate on alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct, and where a breach is found, to determine the sanction to be applied.

2.2 Complaints about potential breaches of the Codes of Conduct by councillors and members of devolved public bodies are investigated by the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC). Following the completion of an investigation, the ESC will submit a report to the Standards Commission.

2.3 The Standards Commission will review the ESC's report and determine whether to:

- direct the ESC to carry out further investigations;
- hold a Hearing; or
- do neither.

2.4 The Standards Commission holds Hearings to determine whether there has been a breach of their respective Codes of Conduct by the councillor or member. If, having considered the evidence led and submissions made at the Hearing, the Standards Commission's Hearing Panel concludes, on the balance of probabilities, that a breach of the Code occurred, it will then determine the sanction to be applied. The sanctions available to the Standards Commission are censure, suspension and disqualification.

2.5 In the case of a member of a college sector board (a) who is also an employee; or (b) who is an *ex officio* member (such as the college principal), on receipt of a report from the ESC, the Standards Commission shall send the report to the public body in terms of Section 24 of the 2000 Act.

3. Compliance with the Code

3.1 All public bodies (including college sector public bodies) listed at Schedule 3 of the 2000 Act should ensure that appropriate training on the ethical standards framework, the Model Code of Conduct, and the guidance issued by the Standards Commission is provided to its board members. This includes ensuring training is provided as part of a member's induction and on a regular basis thereafter.

3.2 It is, however, a member's personal responsibility to ensure that they comply with the provisions in the Code. Members are also expected to contribute to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct by ensuring they lead by example. Members should adhere to the key principles of public life (which are outlined in Section 2 of the Code) and should encourage their colleagues to do so. Members should note that a breach of the Code can have an impact not just on them as individuals but also on the reputation of, and public confidence in, their public body.

3.3 Members can seek advice on the Code, or any other aspect of the ethical standards framework, from the Standards Commission at any time. The public body's Chair and its Standards Officer can also to provide advice and support to members on the interpretation and application of their Code. The Standards Commission's Advice Note on the Role of a Standards Officer provides information on a Standards Officer's role and responsibilities, within the ethical standards framework, and the duties they may be expected to discharge. These can include ensuring that appropriate training is given to board members on the ethical standards framework, the public body's Code of Conduct and the Standards Commission's Guidance.

3.4 It should be noted that the Code of Conduct applies in all situations, and at all times, where members are acting as a board member of the college sector public body, have referred to themselves as a member or could objectively be considered to be acting as a member. This can include when they are using social media. In determining whether the Code applies, the Standards Commission will consider whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably consider that the individual was acting as a member of the board at the time of the events in question.

An example of where the Code might apply could be where a member has posted disrespectful comments about the Minister responsible for further education. Even if the member's social media account was marked as personal and they had not referred to their board role in the biography section, they still could be objectively considered to be acting in their capacity as a member if, for example, the account contained posts relating to the college or board business, or even general further education related issues.

A further example of where the Code might apply could be where a member, when presenting at an external event, made reference to their role on the board and publicly criticised the college principal's performance.

4. Understanding Role & Responsibilities

4.1 College sector boards comprise of individuals who are appointed, elected or nominated to the board in different ways, including members who are elected or nominated to the board by virtue of them being a member of staff, a student or a member of a trade union. In addition, college principals are *ex officio* members of their boards (i.e. members by virtue of their position as principal).

4.2 Members should recognise that the reason that college sector boards are comprised of individuals with different backgrounds, knowledge and experiences is to ensure diversity of thought and to ensure that input from, and the perspectives of, all key stakeholders are considered in any decision-making.

4.3 Members should ensure that they understand, respect and take account of differences in each other's backgrounds, knowledge and experiences, so these do not become a barrier to progress and to the effectiveness of the board itself. Doing so also helps make sure matters are discussed in a respectful and constructive manner that, in turn, helps the public body to work effectively.

4.4 Members should be clear, nevertheless, that as members of college sector boards, they are required to act in the best interests of the public body, as opposed to the interests of any individual constituency from which they have been appointed, nominated or elected. Such members need to be aware of their obligations to the board and reconcile these with their obligations to their constituency. While such members can raise matters from the perspective of their constituency, they should not promote the interests of, or lobby on behalf of, the constituency when sitting as a member of a college sector board. They are not expected to report back to their constituencies the work and discussions of the board, unless specifically authorised to do so by the public body.

4.5 Members are responsible for overseeing their public body and scrutinising performance to ensure that they are being properly run, with all funds being used appropriately and in accordance with 'best value' principles. Staff, student and trade union board members can inform the board about their constituency's view, policies and priorities and can highlight the potential impact of any decisions. However, their role on the board is not to act as a delegate or to be an advocate for any particular group or constituency. Instead, they are required to act in the best interests of the public body overall when contributing to discussions and when making decisions.

4.6 It is important to note that the duty to act in the best interests of the public body does not prevent a member from bringing forward relevant experiences or perspectives from any constituency from which they have been appointed, nominated or elected. Such input is appropriate, provided that decisions are ultimately made independently and on the basis of all relevant information and evidence.

4.7 In order to maintain public confidence, it is essential that members not only make decisions, but are seen to be making decisions, both in the best interests of the public body and based on the information provided by employees and matters discussed during any discussion at the board meeting in question. Members should not make or be seen to be making decisions based solely on the interests of any constituency (including any organisation, body or group of which they might be or reasonably be considered as representing).

4.8 There is an important distinction between a member gathering views to inform their perspective and independent judgment (which is appropriate) and seeking instructions from an outside constituency or body about how to vote (which is not allowed).

4.9 This does not mean members are required to support every proposal or should avoid challenging recommendations made. Challenging decisions with evidence, asking questions for purpose of scrutiny, and highlighting the potential impact on constituents and service users is an important part of acting in the best interests of the public body, because they help the board make better and informed decisions. It should also be noted that it may be that members reach different conclusions about what constitutes the best interests of the public body and best value, while still exercising independent judgement.

4.10 The requirement to act in the interests of the public body and to maintain their independence as a board member means members could be required to make decisions that could potentially be inconsistent with, or diverge from, the priorities or potential aims of any constituency from which they have been appointed. This requirement applies both within the boardroom and outside it. No outside body, organisation, or group is entitled to direct how members vote or to hold them accountable for their voting decisions. If members experience pressure of this kind, they should seek support from the Standards Officer or the Chair.

4.11 It is important for boards to ensure good governance and accountability in respect of both finance and performance. It is essential, therefore, that members have clear understanding of the strategic aims, roles and responsibilities of the public body of which they are a member, and the requirement to act in its best interests when serving as a member of its board at any given time.

4.12 As some members are on the board by virtue of their nomination, election or appointment in another role, the potential for conflicts of interest and associated risks to effective governance and scrutiny can arise. Members may also have personal interests which can cause conflicts. More information on how to identify and manage such conflicts is outlined in the section below.

5. Identifying Potential Conflicts of Interest and Making Declarations of Interest

5.1 **What conflicts of interest are**: Conflicts of interest are not about wrongdoing. They arise when a member, or any person or body with whom they are associated, has a connection to a matter the public body is considering and that connection could reasonably be seen as having the potential to affect their judgement. The key is to identify any potential conflict of interest as early as possible and to manage them openly and appropriately. Following the **three-stage test** outlined in the Code, as described below, helps members do so.

5.2 The public must have confidence that members are taking decisions in the public interest and not for any other reason. It is essential, therefore, that members are transparent about any interests which could influence, or could be considered as being likely to influence, their discussion and decision-making as a member of the college sector board. A failure to identify and manage appropriately any conflict of interest that arises will be a breach of the Code. It can also have a detrimental impact on the public body's governance and scrutiny arrangements, as well as its reputation.

5.3 In most cases the duty under the Code to act in the public interest will align with a member's duty to act in the best interests of the public body. Where there is a conflict, however, members should assess whether they are required to declare an interest and whether they should withdraw from the discussion and decision-making.

5.4 Members must ensure that they can identify potential conflicts of interest. These will include not just the potential for competing interests between the public body and any constituency from which the member has been appointed, but also between them and any other individual, body, group, organisation to which they have a connection.

5.5 Members should ensure they are familiar with the three-stage test for identifying and declaring interests under the Code.



5.6 **Stage 1 – CONNECTION**: For each particular matter members are being asked to consider as a board member, the member must first decide whether they have a connection to that matter. A connection is any link between the matter being considered and the member, or a person or body with whom they are associated. A connection also includes anything that has been recorded on the member's register of interests.

5.7 It should be noted that a subject that may apply to a large proportion of the general public would not generally be considered to give rise to a connection for the purposes of the Code. Examples would be being a taxpayer or being in receipt of a state pension or universal credit.

5.8 The Code also does not restrict the ability of a public body to benefit from the knowledge and experience of its members. Having knowledge or experience of a matter that is to be considered by a public body is not necessarily a connection.

For example, a board member's knowledge and experience as an IT specialist would not be considered a connection, if an item to be considered by the board was the introduction of a new college wide IT system.

5.9 If a member has identified that they have a connection to a matter to be considered by their board, they must move on to stage two**.**

5.10 **Stage 2 – INTEREST**: In considering whether to declare an interest in any item to be considered by the board, members must consider the objective test at paragraph 5.5 of the Code. The objective test is whether a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts (being the matter to be discussed and the nature of the connection) would reasonably regard the connection to the particular matter as being so significant as to be likely to influence the member's discussion or decision-making.

5.11 It should be noted that having a view in advance on a matter to be considered at a meeting (and discussing such a view with colleagues, employees or service users) would not in itself create a personal conflict. Members are entitled to express views and opinions and doing so before a meeting would not in itself create a declarable interest.

5.12 If the objective test is met and they have a declarable interest, the member must move on to stage three.

5.13 **Stage 3 – PARTICIPATION**: Members must declare any relevant interest and withdraw from the room while the item is being considered, discussed, and voted upon. It is not sufficient for the member to retire to the back of the room or any public gallery. If the meeting is being held online, members should retire to a separate breakout room or leave and re-join after the discussion on the matter has concluded. It is not sufficient for the member to turn off their camera and / or microphone for the duration of the matter. The requirement to leave the room (whether in-person or online) is to avoid giving rise to any perception that the member remains in a position to influence the outcome of the deliberations on the item.

5.14 Members should consider making a transparency statement if they have a connection to a particular matter to be discussed but, having applied the objective test, they do not consider it would amount to a declarable interest. This can be helpful if they are concerned that members of the public may not be aware of the relevant facts. In such cases, the member should use the following wording: "I have a connection to this item by reason of… However, having applied the objective test I do not consider that I have an interest to declare. This is because…".

5.15 Members appointed, nominated or elected from a particular constituency must be mindful that the requirement for them to act in the interests of the board while carrying out their duties as a member of it may require them to make decisions that could potentially be inconsistent with, or diverge from, the priorities or stated aims of their constituency.

An example of a connection could be where the board is being asked to approve the overall annual budget. A staff board member is likely to have a connection, given their salary will be paid from the overall budget. It is unlikely, however, someone with knowledge of the relevant facts (being the overall scope of matter being discussed) would reasonably regard the connection to the particular matter as being so significant as to be likely to influence the member's discussion or decision-making. That is because a specific individual's salary would be so insignificant in terms of the overall budget and, therefore, would be unlikely to have any influence on how the member considered the matter.

It is likely that staff and trade union board members could also have a connection if the board was being asked to agree a voluntary severance proposal as, again, any such decision could affect them personally. Any such members would be required, therefore, to apply the objective

test to decide whether their connection could amount to a declarable interest. In doing so, a 'relevant fact' may be the specific matter the board is being asked to determine. If, for example, it was simply being asked to agree that a voluntary severance scheme should be introduced, then the members concerned may consider that their connection would not be reasonably considered to be so significant as to be likely to influence their discussion or decision-making. If, however, the board was to consider the terms for voluntary severance, such as who would be eligible and how many weeks' salary would be offered, and a member was potentially eligible to apply, then they may consider that their connection would reasonably be considered as sufficiently significant as to be likely to influence their discussion or decision-making. This could be the case even if the scheme was to apply to large proportion of the college's staff.

Another example of a connection could be if the board was being asked to consider a restructuring proposal being presented by the Executive Team. Staff, student and trade union members would be likely to have a connection, as any decision may have implications for them personally (for example, it may involve changes to the department in which they work or study). The members would be required, therefore, to apply the objective test to decide whether their connection to the particular matter being considered by the board could amount to a declarable interest. It should be noted that the test is not whether the member feels they can make any decision objectively and on its merits; the test is one of how others may perceive their ability to do so. If the objective test is met, the member concerned would have to declare the interest and leave the room. They would not be allowed to take part in the discussions or any voting on the matter.

An example of where a member might have a personal connection that could, in turn, amount to a declarable interest could be where their partner was due to enrol as a student and, as a member of the college's Finance and Resources Committee, they were being asked to consider the annual Tuition Fee Schedule.

A further example of a declarable interest could be where a board was being asked to appoint a new non-executive member, and a member was friends with the nominated candidate. If, however, the member was not friends with the candidate, but merely knew them from working for the same organisation several years ago, it may be that the objective test would not be met. In that scenario, the member could choose to make a transparency statement explaining why they did not consider the objective test was met. Such a statement could be helpful for reasons of transparency and also to prevent a potential complaint being made if the member was concerned that others present or members of the public might not have knowledge of the relevant facts (being that they had only known the nominated candidate on a professional basis and had not had contact with them for some time).

5.16 In terms of being a member of an outside body, the Code states that members may also have a connection where they have a personal conflict, by reason of either their actions or their legal obligations.

An example of where a member may have a personal conflict, and therefore a declarable interest, by reason of their actions could be if the member, having previously made critical comments in the press about the Scottish Funding Council's evaluation framework, was due to take part in a decision to seek additional funding for a capital project.

An example of where a member may have a personal conflict as a result of legal obligations would include where they are a charity trustee, and the board is being asked to make a decision on whether the college should partner with the charity. Even if it appears, on the face of it, that such a partnership may benefit both organisations, the member's obligation, under the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005, to act in the best interests of the charity may conflict with their role as a member and the requirement for them to act in the best interests of the college.

5.17 Members should not rely on or expect employees or colleagues to remind them to make declarations even if they think (or know) that others present are aware of their interests, including that they are an elected or nominated member from a particular constituency. It is solely a member's own personal responsibility to make declarations of interest as required. If a member is in any doubt at a meeting, or when reviewing the agenda and papers before a meeting, they should ask for help from the Chair, Standards Officer or governance professional. It should be noted that the Code requires members to disclose or declare their personal interests both in formal and informal dealings with employees and other members and not just in formal board or committee meetings.

5.18 If the Chair or other board members consider that a fellow member has a declarable interest that has not been declared, they should consider raising the matter with the fellow member and advise them that they are concerned the member may be in breach of the Code. If the individual then refuses to declare the interest and leave the room, and the Chair is concerned about the potential impact of them participating, in terms of the propriety of the decision or the potential risk to the reputation of the board or college, they may wish to seek advice from the Standards Officer about whether the matter should be continued and / or for their advice to be recorded. It should be noted that a failure to listen and adhere to advice could be an aggravating factor, should a formal complaint be made, and a breach of the Code subsequently be found by the Standards Commission.

5.19 Members should consider whether agendas for meetings raise any issues of declaration of interest and, if so, they should make their declaration of interest as early as possible at a meeting where that interest arises. If a member only identifies the need for a declaration of interest to be made when the discussion on a particular matter is underway, they should declare the interest as soon as they realise it is necessary.

5.20 Members should begin their statement with the words "I declare an interest" and identify the item or items of business to which it relates. Members do not need to give a detailed description of the interest, but their statement must contain sufficient information to enable those present to understand the nature of it.

6. Culture of Respect

Respect, Bullying and Harassment

6.1 The Code makes it clear that the requirement for members to treat everyone with courtesy and respect includes in person, in writing, at meetings and when they are online. The conduct expected of members online is no different to the conduct they should employ in other methods of communication, such as face-to-face meetings and letters.

6.2 In dealing with colleagues, employees and members of the public, members should always consider both what they are expressing and the way they are expressing it. Members should also consider how their conduct could be perceived. Members should be able to undertake a scrutiny role and make contributions to discussions and debates in a constructive, respectful, courteous, and appropriate manner without resorting to personal attacks, being offensive, abusive or unduly disruptive.

6.3 Before commenting or posting on social media, members should consider very carefully whether the Code would apply and, if so, they should understand the immediate and permanent nature of any comment or post they are about to make. Members should bear in mind the potential impact on the reputation of the public body and principle of collective responsibility. Members should also be careful that they are not disclosing any confidential information.

6.4 Members should note that 'liking', 'reacting', 'tagging', re-posting and sharing comments or posts, or publishing links to other sites could be seen as supporting the original opinion, comment or information, including information on other accounts or sites. The Standards Commission has produced an Advice Note for Members of Devolved Public Bodies on the Use of Social Media that provides more guidance on factors members should consider when using social media.

6.5 Members must treat all individuals with courtesy and respect when carrying out their duties as a board member. Members must not participate in, or condone, acts of harassment, discrimination, victimisation or bullying. This can include, but is not limited to:

- unwelcome physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct;
- intimidatory behaviour including verbal abuse or the making of threats;
- making someone's working life difficult;
- disparaging, ridiculing or mocking comments and remarks;
- deliberately excluding an individual from conversations, work or social activities, in which they have a right or legitimate expectation to participate; and
- ignoring a fellow member's contribution to a debate, talking over them or being dismissive of their views.

Further information can be found in the Standards Commission's Advice Note for Members on Bullying and Harassment.

6.6 As members are in a position of trust and power, others may bring inappropriate behaviour to their attention. Members can assist by becoming familiar with what is meant by harassment, discrimination, victimisation and bullying and the impact these can have on individuals or groups.

6.7 If a member is a witness to any acts of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation, they should encourage the victim to seek support and assistance, referring, where appropriate, to their organisation's applicable policies (such as any on safeguarding or wellbeing), and make it clear that they will offer them assistance and provide evidence if they decide to make an informal or formal complaint. Members should challenge inappropriate behaviour as it happens and consider raising the issue with the Chair or submitting a formal complaint to the ESC.

6.8 As noted above, the composition of college sector boards allows for different voices and stakeholder input to be considered in decision-making. Members can demonstrate they understand the value of the different perspectives by ensuring that they listen to, and take account of, the views of other members. Members are perfectly entitled to disagree with their colleagues; they are simply required to express any opposing views in a respectful manner. If a member wants to say why they disagree, they should focus on the issue and not the individual.

Relations with employees and distinguishing between strategic and operational matters

6.9 Members should be aware of the inherent influence their role brings and ensure that they are demonstrating respect for employees and are encouraging their colleagues to do the same.

6.10 Members should also be aware of the role that employees play and ensure they are not compromising this by behaving in a manner that could result in employees feeling threatened or intimidated, which in turn could prevent them from undertaking their duties properly and appropriately. Members must not bring any undue influence to bear on an employee to take a certain action, particularly if it is contrary to the law or the applicable college's policies and procedures.

6.11 Members have a right to high quality information and are entitled to seek further information to enable them to undertake their scrutiny and strategic objective setting roles effectively. Members are entitled to challenge employees and colleagues but must not do so in a personal

or offensive manner. Members should note that the Code states that any issues relating to behaviour, performance or conduct of an employee should be raised in private with the appropriate senior manager. If a member has concerns about the behaviour, performance or conduct of an employee, they may wish to consider discussing these with the Chair in the first instance, with a view to trying to establish if these concerns are shared by any other members and / or if the matter has already been raised with the appropriate senior manager.

6.12 As a general rule, the role of members is to scrutinise and hold senior employees to account for the delivery of the public body's services and in meeting its strategic objectives. In doing so, members are required to provide strategic leadership and oversight. This involves setting strategy and policy, scrutinising overall performance against strategic aims, and making major decisions that concern their public body as a whole.

6.13 By comparison, operational management is the planning, organising and execution involved in day-to-day activities and service delivery. This is normally the role and responsibility of employees. Members risk losing sight of their strategic role if they become too focused or inappropriately involved, either individually or as a board, on matters that are operational in nature.

6.14 As noted above, members have a right to receive good quality information from employees on which to base their decisions and undertake their scrutiny role. This information should be proportionate, balanced, comprehensive and understandable. Members are entitled to ask questions about operational matters at board meetings and to seek assurances from employees that actions have or are to be taken. Members should be careful, however, about the level of detail they are seeking. Members should always question whether the amount and nature of the information they are seeking is necessary and proportionate.

6.15 If members do not consider they are receiving the information they require to assure themselves that they are in a position to make informed decisions, they should raise the issue with the Chair.

6.16 Members should also be aware that if they are repeatedly raising the same issue or asking repetitive questions about operational matters, it is likely they are being, or will be perceived as being, directive and becoming inappropriately involved. It may be helpful in such a situation for the member in question to ask for a separate discussion with the Chair to see if they can help resolve the matter.

6.17 Members may well be approached by service users for assistance (this could be someone they do not have a relationship with but could also potentially be a friend or family member). Members can direct the service user to the appropriate employee or team. They can also raise the enquiry with the relevant employee or team and can seek information on progress or ask questions about how a service has been delivered on behalf of a service user. Members must be careful, however, to avoid straying into operational management by, for example, directing employees to take a certain course of action or prioritise the needs of a specific service user. Members should be mindful that they are in a position of influence and that employees may feel pressured into responding to them as a matter of priority, even if the enquiry is not urgent.

6.18 Members should also be aware of the distinction between a request for help and a complaint; and, in the latter case, should recommend that the service user makes use of the public body's formal complaints procedure. Members should be careful if they are approached by employees of the college for help and should decline to get involved in anything which relates to their status as an employee (such as performance or attendance management).

Examples of inappropriate involvement are where a member:

- seeks to become involved in the drafting of an internal process document being put in place to support a wider policy;

- becomes involved in an individual staffing matter;
- tries to direct employees to take a certain action in respect of an individual student (this could be someone who has approached them for assistance or someone with whom they already have a relationship); and / or
- insists on attending an operational meeting with an outside body, or an internal employee working group where members are not normally present.

Further examples of where a member can become inappropriately involved in operational matters include when they try to seek additional information from employees on a particular area of college activity in which they have an interest or where, as an elected or nominated member, they seek information about something that is being planned by management. It should be noted that members do not necessarily have a right to request executive information over and above that which the board, as a collective, requires to see in order to be able to undertake its strategic objective and scrutiny roles, and make informed decisions. Members should ensure that any additional information is sought through the appropriate channel, which will usually be when a matter is being discussed at a board or committee meeting.

6.19 Further information and examples of areas where members may inappropriately seek to get involved in operational matters can be found in the Standards Commission's Advice Note for Members on Strategic and Operational Matters.

7. Collective Responsibility

7.1 The Code requires members to respect the principle of collective responsibility for decisions taken by the board as a whole, once made. This provision is not intended to inhibit discussions or constructive challenge by members in matters of decision-making and corporate responsibility. Members may be required to take decisions on difficult issues and, when doing so, will often have genuine, and strongly held, differences of opinion. Once issues are thoroughly debated, however, decisions should be taken and the majority vote should prevail. Members should note that continuing with a conflict, when it has become apparent that other members will not change their minds, can waste time and be demotivating and futile.

7.2 Members should bear in mind that while issues can and should be debated robustly, stakeholder confidence in the college can be lost, if they then express division outside the boardroom by, for example, talking to the media or officers or posting on social media. This is because confidence and trust can be eroded if a board is perceived as being divided, with its members criticising each other.

7.3 If a member fundamentally disagrees with the decision taken by the board, then they have the option of asking for their concerns or dissent to be recorded in the minutes of the board meeting. If a member remains discontented, they may wish to ask the Chair of the board for a meeting to discuss their concerns. Ultimately, though, if a member's concerns are not resolved to their satisfaction and they cannot accept and support the collective decision of the board, they will need to consider whether it is appropriate to resign.

7.4 It should be noted that even if a board member has their dissent from a decision recorded in the minutes of the meeting at which the decision in question was made, they are still bound by the principle of collective responsibility and any confidentiality requirements. This means that when the decision was made public, the member could confirm publicly that they had dissented, since this would be in the minutes and a matter of public record. The member should not, however, say anything that would bring the college or board into disrepute.

Examples of potential breaches of the collective responsibility provision in the Code could include a member making disparaging remarks about or denouncing a decision made by their college in the media.

Another example of where a potential breach could arise could be a situation where a trade union member of a board, who was also the spokesperson for their trade union, was commenting on a decision that the board had been involved in or had made. If the member was, for example, announcing a vote of no confidence in the college board and its management in respect of the decision or was criticising its impact, the member could potentially be in breach of the Code. That may not be the case, however, if the member was merely commenting on the potential impact of the decision on trade union members and made it clear that they were doing so in their capacity as the trade union spokesperson (and that they were speaking on behalf of it, as an entity, and not as an individual).

A further example could be a situation where a staff member of a board was supporting a colleague at an employment tribunal. While the staff member might question a management decision or procedure taken, on behalf of their colleague, they would still be bound by the principle of collective responsibility and should not, therefore, criticise a decision taken by the board (even if they had dissented from the decision when it was made).

8. Confidentiality

8.1 The Code states that members must not disclose confidential information or information that should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential or private nature. The Code further states that members are only entitled to use confidential information to undertake their duties as a board member. They must not use such information in any way for personal advantage or to discredit their public body (even if they are of the view that the information should be publicly available).

8.2 It should be noted that information can become confidential in a number of ways and, while sometimes the confidential nature of the material will be explicit (for example, if a document is marked 'confidential'), in other cases, it will be clear, from the nature of the information or from the circumstances in which it was provided, that it is confidential.

8.3 If a member is also a member of an outside organisation, or is an elected or nominated member, they may have access to information that should not be disclosed to the outside organisation or their constituency. This means that if a member is provided with confidential information, such as information disclosed in a closed or private section of a board meeting, or legal advice obtained by the public body (either from employees or external legal advisers), they should not disclose or release it to any other outside organisation or individual without consent. That remains the case even if the information or decision directly concerns, or could impact upon, that outside organisation or individual. If a member is in any doubt about whether information is confidential, they should seek advice from the Standards Officer or Chair before disclosing it.

Examples of confidential information can include, but are not limited to:

- the content of documents marked as confidential or non-disclosable;
- commercial information such as information relating to a contract or a contractor's business;
- personal or sensitive information, such as information relating to an individual's employment or health;
- information which is confidential as a result of a statutory provision;
- information discussed in closed or private sections of meetings;
- legal advice obtained by the public body (either provided by employees or external legal advisers); and
- information received as a result of a relationship where there is an expectation of confidence, such as between a member and a service user.

An example of where a board member might breach the confidentiality requirements of the Code could be where the board has considered a report containing information in respect of a

tendering exercise and subsequent award of a contract, and information about the award of the contract is then disclosed by the member to a third party after the meeting (and before any public announcement about the contract is made).

A further example could be where a staff, student or trade union member of a board discloses confidential information the board has been discussing about a potential restructuring exercise to their staff colleagues before the senior management team and board have agreed the information should be disclosed to employees. The member could be in breach of the Code even if it is their personal view that the information should be made public, or even if the member knows that their staff colleagues have heard rumours about the potential restructure and are expecting feedback.

8.4 It is acknowledged, nevertheless, that the fact that there are staff, student and trade union members on boards means there is an expectation of partnership working with those members' constituencies. It is accepted, for example, that a trade union member may be put under pressure by senior trade union colleagues to disclose any knowledge they may have about a decision made by the board that could have major implications for the trade union. Boards are, therefore, encouraged to be as transparent as possible and to only classify information as confidential in cases where there is a very good reason for it not to be disclosed at that time. Boards should, where possible, determine and make clear how long members will be expected to maintain confidentiality in respect of a particular decision or matter, and should be transparent about their reasoning in this regard.

9. Sources of Information

9.1 The Standards Commission can provide further advice and support on the Code and how it should be interpreted. The Standards Commission's contact details are:
Email: enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk
Telephone: 0131 346 6666

9.2 The Standards Commission has produced Advice Notes for Members on the various topics, including:

- The Use of Social Media
- How to Declare Interests
- The Role of the Standards Officer
- Conduct at Online Meetings
- Bullying and Harassment
- Distinguishing between Strategic and Operational Matters
- Relations Between Members and Employees

The Advice Notes can be found on the Standards Commission's website at:
https://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/education-and-resources/professional-briefings

9.3 Further sources of information that members may find to be of assistance include:

- Scottish Government's "On Board" Guidance: https://www.gov.scot/publications/board-guide-members-statutory-boards-2/pages/5/
- The Scottish Government's Governance Hub: https://governancehub.scot/
- The College Development Network's Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges and its Guidance for Board Members in the Public Sector: https://www.cdn.ac.uk/governance-key-documents/
- Ministerial Guidance for College Sector Board Appointments: https://www.gov.scot/publications/college-board-appointments-guidance/

- The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator's Guidance and Good Practice for Charity Trustees: https://www.oscr.org.uk/media/3621/v10_guidance-and-good-practice-for-charity-trustees.pdf



2023

HEFESTIS

WhatsApp and FOI

ARE WHATSAPP MESSAGES AND OTHER MESSAGE SENT VIA 'NON-CORPORATE COMMUNCIATION CHANNELS' FOI-ABLE? AND OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT 'PRIVATE' CHANNELS AT WORK

ARE WHATSAPP MESSAGES FOIABLE? AND OTHER QUESTIONS ABOUT 'PRIVATE' CHANNELS AT WORK

JOANNA PATERSON; JAMES NOCK

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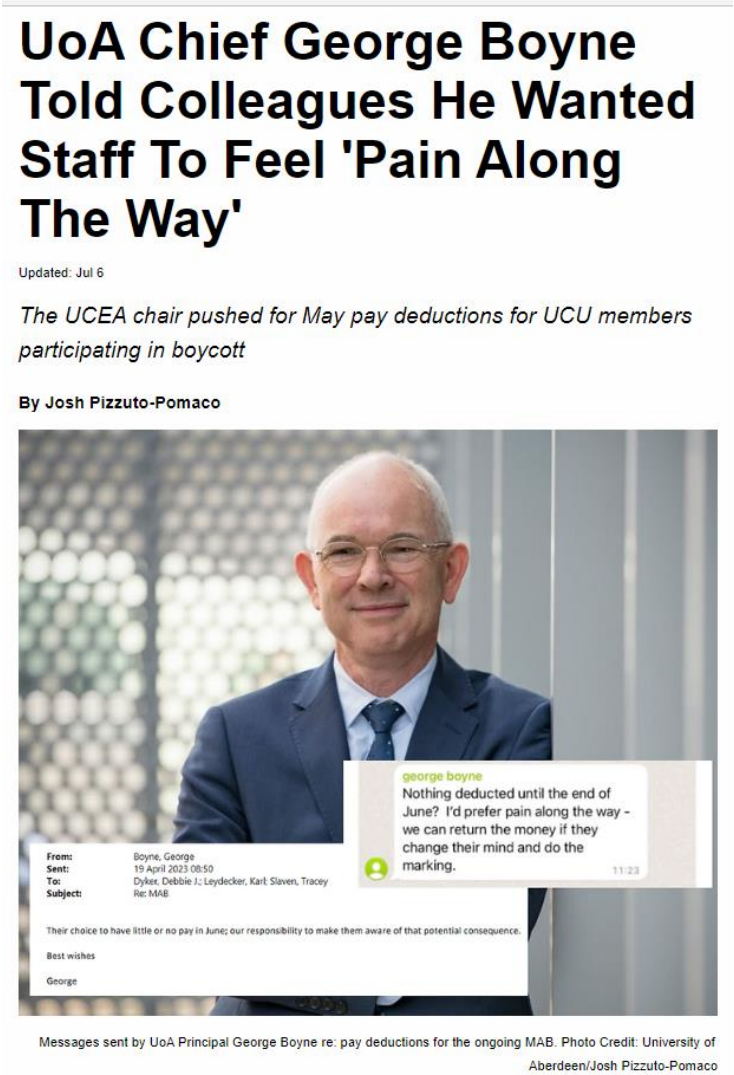
What's the story?

Recent coverage of comments made by the Principal of the University of Aberdeen (released under FOI) included comments made on a so-called 'private' channel, a WhatsApp group apparently used by senior managers of the university.

Although much of the news coverage[1] was about the content of the remarks (in the context of an ongoing industrial relations dispute), the inclusion of messages from a senior management WhatsApp group[2] is the focus for this briefing.

The news story is a reminder that official information held in 'private' channels is considered to be 'held' by the authority, and is covered by the provisions of Freedom of Information legislation.



UoA Chief George Boyne Told Colleagues He Wanted Staff To Feel 'Pain Along The Way'

Updated: Jul 6

The UCEA chair pushed for May pay deductions for UCU members participating in boycott

By Josh Pizzuto-Pomaco

Messages sent by UoA Principal George Boyne re: pay deductions for the ongoing MAB. Photo Credit: University of Aberdeen/Josh Pizzuto-Pomaco

Figure 1: News article about WhatsApp message released via FOI. You can see one of the messages is from WhatsApp (see footnote 2)

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[1] Private messages show Scottish university chief wanted to inflict 'pain' on staff taking part in industrial action – The Scotsman 5 July 2023

[2] FOI release coverage in 'The Gaudie' – The Gaudie July 4 2023

Does it apply to FE and HE Institutions?

Yes – as 'public authorities' for the purposes of FOI.

Is that a problem for us?

Potentially, if staff in your organisation are using 'private' channels for work purposes without any safeguards in place. There are risks in terms of reputational damage if staff are discussing work matters in a space that they feel is more 'private' and less 'official' – people often use a different style in channels that they perceive to be 'private', and express ideas or opinions that they might not express in official or approved work channels. For clarity, if a staff member undertakes work or communications in respect of their work role then it can be considered 'held' for the purposes of FOI, regardless of medium. 'Private' channels are often called 'non-corporate communications channels' and the ICO says they can include "private email accounts, private message accounts and other similar media[3]".

Such messages might be damaging or embarrassing to the organisation when released, especially if a staff member thought they were posting in a 'private' area not subject to FOI.

The organisation also risks failing in its legal requirements to be able to:

- search, retrieve and as required delete any personal data processed on these channels – an obligation under data protection law;
- undertake effective searches to fulfil FOI obligations;
- maintain proper records of its decision-making processes.

What can we do?

Review what your policy says – what is the organisation's stated position on the use of non-official channels? Does the policy need to be updated? Does it match what you think is current practice – if so, what do you need to do about the gap? Read the ICO guidance on official information held in non-corporate communications channels[4] – it will help you understand the kind of channels that people might be using, and how to determine if discussions taking place on them are 'official' or not.

If your policy allows staff to use non-official channels, you will also need to:

- Ensure your FOI team is sighted on the channels that are in use, and what the arrangements are for searching and retrieving information from them – noting that this can cause direct disruption to users of such channels as they may need to individually search their phones;
- Talk to your data protection officer about how the organisation will fulfil subject rights requests (you need to be able to search, retrieve and delete);
- Talk to your records management colleagues about how the organisation will meet records management requirements, and ways to bring discussions from non-official channels into the official record;
- Talk to IT colleagues about the potential risks of particular channels (any concerns about security; known issues around retention, deletion, searchability).
- Make sure staff understand what they can and cannot do within these other/non-official channels, including guidance and training materials – including reminding staff to communicate in a way that won't cause a problem if made public.

HEFESTIS can provide advice and assistance on reviewing and updating your policy, procedures and guidance if required.

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[3] Official information held in non-corporate communications channels | ICO

[4] Official information held in non-corporate communications channels | ICO

UHI | INVERNESS

Board of Management

Subject/Title:	Complaints End of year and Quarter 4 (May – July) 2025–26
Meeting and date:	Board of Management on Tuesday 6th October 2026
Author:	Sarah Caddick, Quality Officer
Decision, Discussion or Noting:	Noting
Link to Strategic Plan:	Paper assists with compliance as the College is required to monitor complaints as per SPSO requirements.
Cost implications:	Yes / No (delete as applicable) If yes, please specify:
Risk assessment:	Yes / No (delete as applicable) If yes, please specify: Financial: Operational: Organisational:

Recommendation(s)

The committee are asked to note the End of Year and Quarter 4 Complaints Report.

Purpose of report

Analysis of complaints received in Quarter 3 of 2025-26.

Background

Reports are required to ensure compliance with SPSO requirements and identify areas of service that require improvement. Summary outcomes are published on the UHI Inverness website and UHI website (HE)

Main body of information

See attached.

Executive Summary

A total of 73 complaints were received during academic year 2025-26, representing a 62% increase from 45 complaints in 2024-25. Customer Care complaints (C1) accounted for the largest proportion of complaints (25), followed closely by Course Related complaints (22). The most significant increase was seen within the Customer Care category, particularly complaints relating to staff conduct, which accounted for 72% of all Customer Care complaints. Complaints covered a range of themes including staff conduct and professionalism, communication, teaching and learning, course management, admissions and progression processes, student support, and customer service.

Most complaints were submitted by students, with HE students representing the largest group at 48% of all complaints received. Complaints were distributed across a range of curriculum areas and departments, with Care, Arts, Sports and Humanities (CASH) receiving the highest number (20 complaints), followed by Construction and Engineering (13 complaints) and Computing, Land Science and Education (12 complaints).

In terms of outcomes, 42 complaints were either resolved through frontline resolution, upheld, or partially upheld, with partially upheld outcomes accounting for the highest proportion (19 complaints). A total of 10 complaints were not upheld, while two complaints were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2. No complaints remained under investigation at year end. In Q4 specifically, six complaints were resolved through frontline resolution, four were upheld, one was partially upheld, and one did not progress to investigation.

Performance against timescales was generally positive. During 2025-26, 84% of Stage 1 complaints were completed within the required five working days, with an average resolution time of 4.5 days. For Stage 2 complaints, 71% were completed within the 20-working-day target, excluding cases affected by concurrent HR investigations. Delays were primarily attributed to complaint complexity, staff availability, and college holiday periods.

Feedback from the complaints follow-up survey was limited, with six responses received. Overall, respondents reported positive experiences of the complaints process. Most felt their complaint was taken seriously, investigated thoroughly, acknowledged promptly, and handled courteously. However, awareness of the complaints procedure remained low, and some respondents expressed dissatisfaction regarding the fairness of outcomes and communication during investigations.

Key themes emerging from complaints during 2025-26 include staff conduct and professionalism, communication, customer service, learning and teaching, course management, admissions and progression processes, and student support. Actions taken in response include enhanced staff training in customer care and communication, reviews of Support to Study and INSIGHT processes, improvements to admissions communications, strengthened guidance on the use of AI-generated teaching materials, revisions to CCTV and incident reporting procedures, and measures to improve consistency in student support and complaint handling.

Overall, complaints continue to provide valuable insight into areas for improvement and have informed a range of actions aimed at enhancing service quality, consistency of practice, and the overall student experience across UHI Inverness

Annual Report 2025-26

Introduction

Complaints are received all year round from several different sources although the primary source tends to be from students. Complaints are received through a variety of mechanisms including direct emails, complaints forms and the Red Button. UHI Inverness uses the SPSO categories and sub-categories to classify complaints. The outcomes from complaint resolution are reported to UHI (HE) and published on the UHI Inverness website (FE).

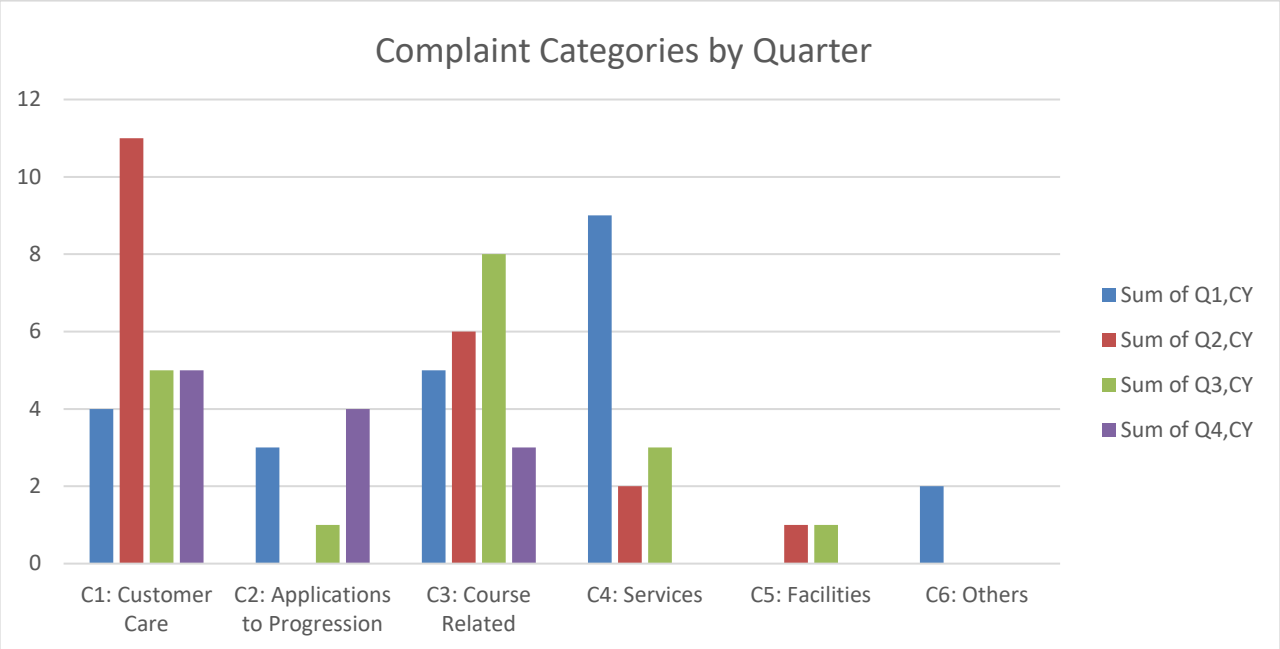
Complaints are grouped into quarters depending on the time of year in which they are received. The quarter dates are detailed below:

- Quarter 1 (Q1): August – end of October,
- Quarter 2 (Q2): November – end of January,
- Quarter 3 (Q3): February – end of April,
- Quarter 4 (Q4): May – end of July.

This report provides an overview of the complaint categories and outcomes across academic year 2025-26 (Q1 – Q4) including Q4 statistics.

Complaints by Category

The graphs below display the sum of quarterly complaints received for each category.



The tables below detail the sum of quarterly complaints received for each category in the current and previous academic year.

Customer Category: Current Year 2025/26 (Quarter)	YTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
C1: Customer Care	25	4	11	5	5
C2: Applications to Progression	8	3	-	1	4
C3: Course Related	22	5	6	8	3
C4: Services	14	9	2	3	-
C5: Facilities	2	-	1	1	-
C6: Others	2	2	-	-	-
Total	73	23	20	18	12

Customer Category: Previous Year 2024/2025 (Quarter)	YTD	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
C1: Customer Care	11	5	6	-	-
C2: Applications to Progression	3	1	-	1	1
C3: Course Related	24	6	3	14	1
C4: Services	5	2	2	1	-
C5: Facilities	2	1	-	-	1
C6: Others	-	-	-	-	-
Total	45	15	11	16	3

Summary:

A total of 12 complaints were received in Q4, compared to 3 in the same quarter last year.

- C1: Customer Care complaints accounted for the highest number this quarter, compared to nil in the same quarter last year. Overall complaints for this category this quarter related to:
  - Staff conduct
  - Student conduct
  - Communications

- C2: Applications to Progression and C3: Course Related accounted for 4 and 3 complaints respectively this quarter, compared to 1 each for the same quarter last year. The remaining three categories received nil complaints. Overall complaints for these categories related to:
  - Application, admission, interview, enrolment, induction
  - Progression, articulation, withdrawal

- Facilitated learning and support
- Assessment, exams and certification

In 2025-26 there was a 38% increase in the total number of complaints compared to 2024-2025.

The category of 'Customer Care' received the most complaints this year, of which 72% were within the 'Staff conduct' subcategory. These related mainly to poor customer service, inappropriate staff conduct, and a lack of respect from staff.

The category 'Course Related' received the second most complaints in 2025-26 of which 24% were within the 'Learning and Teaching subcategory. These related to lecturer use of AI, communication between staff and students, staff behaviour, student support and resource issues.

The table below shows the full breakdown of complaint categories and sub-categories, including the year-to-year shift.

Customer Category CY YTD vs PY YTD	2025-26	2024-25	Change
C1: Customer Care	25	11	14
C1S01: Health &Safety	1	0	1
C1S02: Security	0	0	0
C1S03: Diversity &Equality	0	0	0
C1S04: Data Protection	1	1	0
C1S05: Environmental	0	0	0
C1S06: Staff Conduct	18	6	12
C1S07: Student Conduct	3	1	2
C1S99: Other	2	3	-1
C2: Applications to Progression	8	3	5
C2S01: Marketing	0	0	0
C2S02: Application, Admission, Interview, Enrolment, Induction	3	3	0
C2S03: Progression, Articulation, Withdrawal	5	0	5
C2S99:Other	0	0	0
C3: Course Related	22	24	-2
C3S01: Learning & Teaching	6	3	3
C3S02: Environment/Resources	1	3	-2
C3S03: Course Management	6	10	-4
C3S04: Facilitated Learning & Support	1	3	-2
C3S05: Assessment, Exams & Certification	4	3	1
C3S99: Other	4	2	2
C4: Services	14	5	9
C4S01: Finance	3	1	2
C4S02: Funding / Bursary	6	3	3
C4S03: Student Records	1	0	1

C4S04: Providing Learning Support	0	0	0
C4S05: Library / Learning Technology	0	0	0
C4S06: Quality etc.	0	0	0
C4S99: Other	4	1	3
C5: Facilities	2	2	0
C5S01: Catering	0	0	0
C5S02: Student Accommodation	1	1	0
C5S03: Maintenance, Lifts, Car Parking	1	1	0
C5S99: Other	0	0	0
C6: Others	2	0	2
C6S01: Others	1	0	1
C6S99:	1	0	1
TOTAL	73	45	28

Complaints by Stakeholders

The table below provides a summary of the total number of complaints received from stakeholders across each quarter of the current academic year. HE students, FE students and members of the public represented equal numbers of complaints received in Q4. For the year 2025-26, HE students accounted for the highest number of complaints at 48% of the total complaints received.

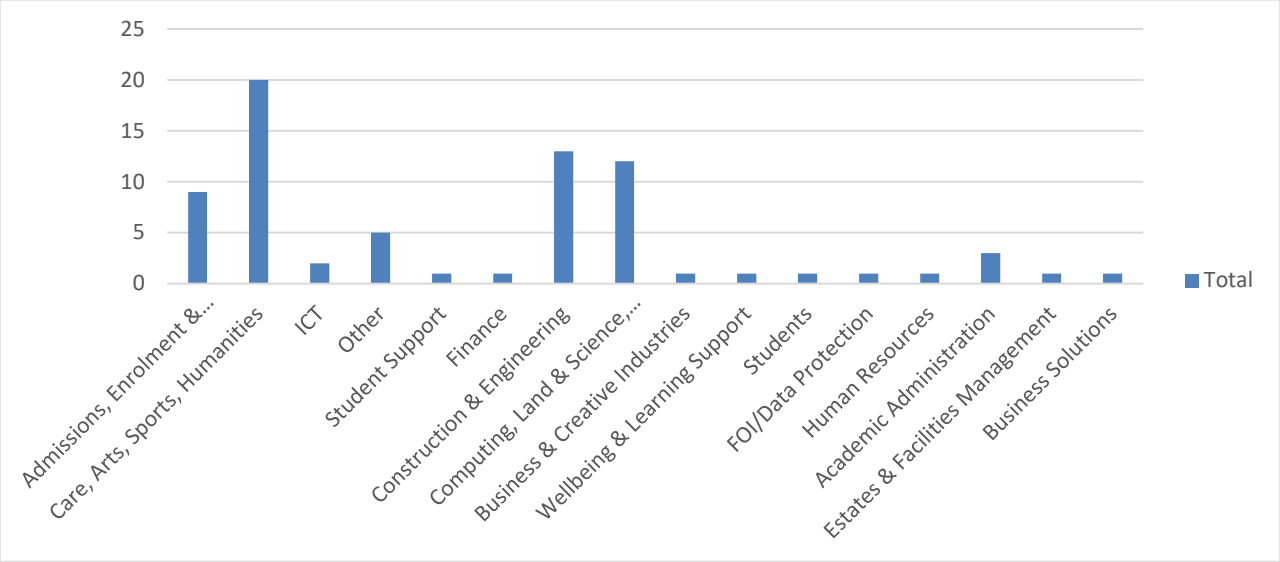
Stakeholder	YTD CY	Q1, CY	Q2, CY	Q3, CY	Q4, CY
Member of Public	10	3	3	1	3
Other	6	2	-	2	2
Stakeholder	2	-	-	1	1
Student – FE	20	5	6	6	3
Student – HE	35	13	11	8	3
Total	73	23	20	18	12

Complaints by curriculum area and department.

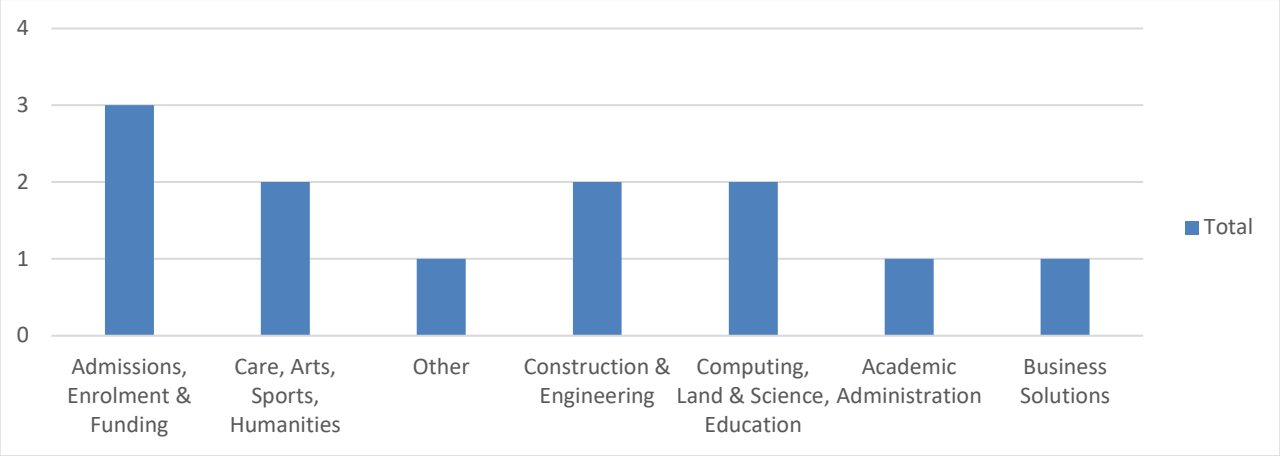
The graph below displays the number of complaints received by department throughout academic year 2025-26.

CASH received the greatest number of complaints, with 20 in total. This was an increase from the previous year, when 12 complaints were received in this area. The complaints related to the category of customer care (5), applications to progression (3), course related (8) and services (4).

Construction and Engineering received the second most complaints by department (13), split across the customer care (9), course related (3), and others (1) categories. The majority related to staff conduct.



The chart below shows the count of the areas the complaint relates to for Q4.



Admissions, Enrolment and Funding received the highest number of complaints in Q4, with three in total. This was followed by CASH, Construction, Engineering and Computing, Land Science and Education with two complaints each. Complaints were raised across three categories: Customer Care (5); Applications to Progression (4); and Course related (3).

Complaint Outcomes

In Q4, 4 complaints were 'Upheld', one was 'Partially Upheld' and one was escalated to Stage 2. Frontline Resolution accounted for 5.

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Not upheld	0	0	0
Partially upheld	0	1	1
Upheld	1	3	4
Still under investigation	0	0	0
Escalated to Stage 2	1		1
Resolved	5	1	6
Not investigated	1	0	1

The table below shows the breakdown in stage 1 and stage 2 complaints in 2025-26 (Q1-Q4) and whether they have been resolved, upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or other outcome.

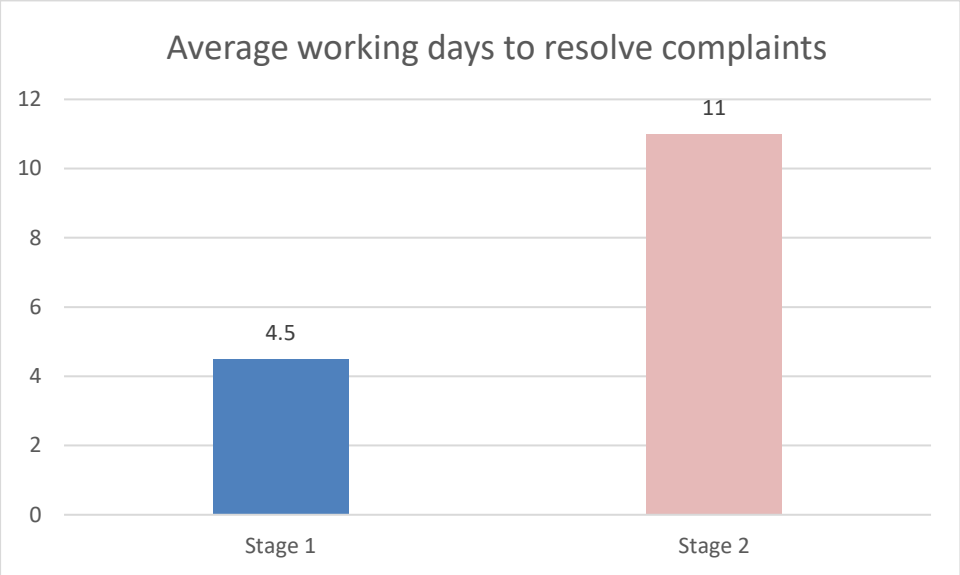
- Resolved – 28.4%
- Not upheld – 13.5%
- Partially upheld – 25.7%
- Upheld – 14.8%
- Escalated to Stage 2 – 2.7%

Outcome	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Not upheld	1	9	10
Partially upheld	6	13	19
Still under investigation	0	0	0
Upheld	6	5	11
Escalated to Stage 2	2		2
Resolved	9	1	10

In 2025-26 the number of complaints that were 'Resolved' decreased to 28.4% from 29% the previous year. The percentage of 'Not Upheld' outcomes increased to 13.5% from 13% the previous year. The percentage of 'Upheld' outcomes decreased from 28.8% last year to 14.9% this year. The 'Partially Upheld' outcomes decreased from 26.6% to 25.7%

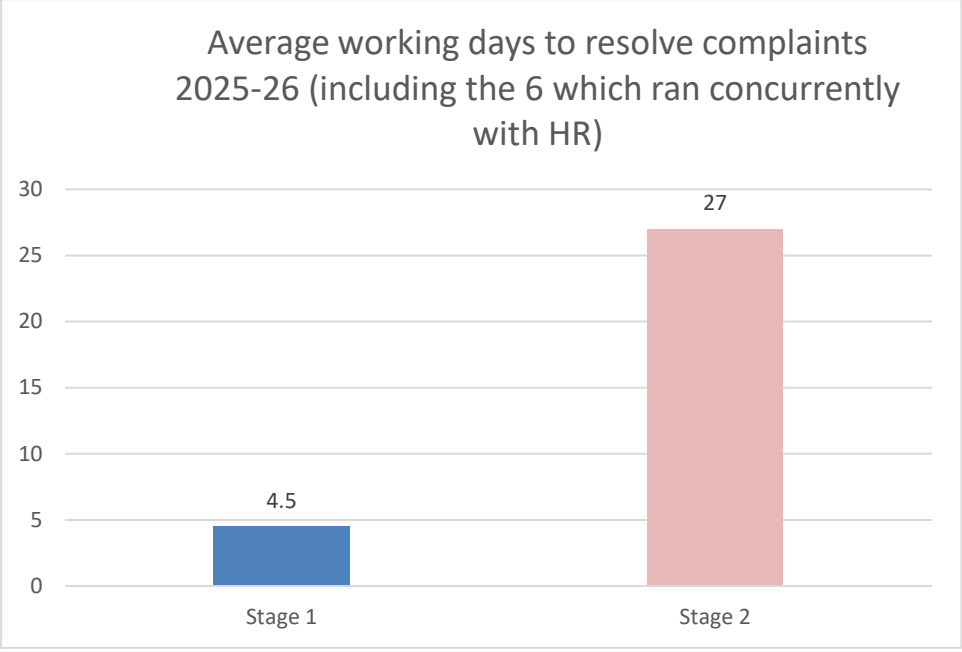
Complaint Timescales

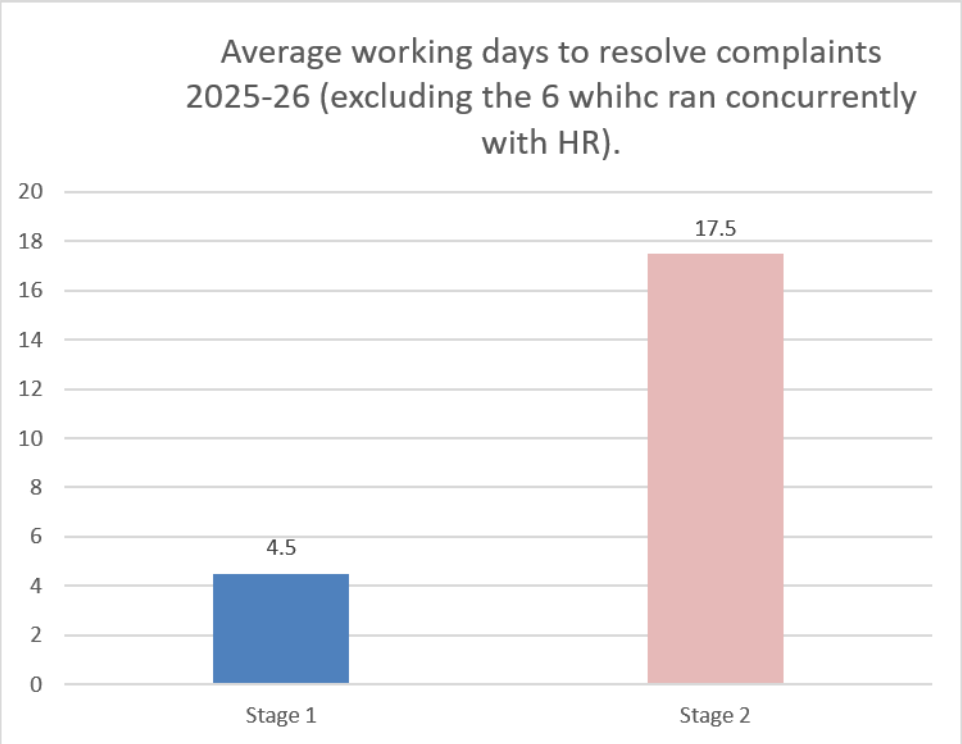
SPSO guidelines state pre-defined timescales of a 5 working day turnaround for Stage 1. An extension of 5 working days is permissible for stage 1 complaints subject to approval from the Quality Manager to complete an investigation but where escalation to a stage 2 is not required. For a Stage 2 complaint the timeframe for completion is 20 working days. As part of the Stage 2 process, where the complaint is complex and may take longer than 20 working days, an extension can be authorised by the Quality Manager, should this happen updates must be provided to complainants.



The chart above displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in Q4.
The range of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints in Q4 is 5 days.
The range of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints in Q4 is 11 days.

The chart below displays the average number of days taken to resolve complaints in 2025-26 (Q1-Q4).





The range of days taken to resolve Stage 1 complaints in 2025-26 is between 1 – 14 days. 16 complaints (84%) were completed within the required 5 days. Staff availability, multiple individuals involved, and the level of complexity were the reasons for exceeding the 5 working day timeframe for the remaining 3 complaints.

Omitting 6 individual complaints which took between 71 and 77 days due to a concurrent HR investigation, the range of days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints in 2025-26 is between 5 - 31 days. 20 of these complaints (71%) were completed within the required 20 days.

Including the 6 complaints running concurrently with the HR investigation, 14 Stage 2 complaints exceeded the 20-day timeframe, and the complainant received notification of the delay. The delays were the result of the complexity of the complaints and the availability of staff over the college breaks.

There has been a lesson learnt that where a complaint is received and the only outstanding matter is an HR investigation, the complaint is closed and the complainant advised that in line with the CHP that an alternative, more suitable process is being followed.

Complaint Follow Up Survey

With the complaint outcome, complainants (unless the complaint was received anonymously) are sent a link to a short survey asking them for feedback on their experience of the complaints process and to rate their satisfaction levels against thirteen aspects of the process. The survey is anonymous unless the complainant chooses to identify themselves.

Six responses were received in 2025-26. The outcomes from this small sample are summarised below:

- 3 complainants (50%) were not aware of the complaints process prior to submitting a complaint.
- 4 complainants (67%) found the complaints process easy to access.
- 3 complainants (50%) found the complaint form easy to use.
- 4 complainant (67%) agreed they were able to obtain assistance in making the complaint
- 5 complainants (83%) felt they received a prompt acknowledgement of their complaint.
- 5 complainants (83%) felt their complaint was taken seriously.
- 5 complainants (83%) agreed that their complaint was thoroughly investigated.
- 1 complainant (17%) felt they were not kept informed during the process of the investigation.
- 2 complainants (34%) felt they did not receive a fair and objective response to their complaint.
- 1 complainant (17%) felt they did not receive a clear response to their complaint.
- All complainants (100%) felt they received a response within the appropriate timescale.
- 5 complainants (83%) felt they were dealt with courteously.
- 4 complainants (67%) felt that the complaint was closed off satisfactorily.

Four (anonymous) text comments were submitted. Two were expressions of dissatisfaction at their complaint outcome, and that their complaint was not taken seriously. Two were comments about how well the complaints process ran and the professionalism of all staff involved.

Learning from Complaints

Complaints often result in reviews of processes and procedures, and they also allow us to identify opportunities for staff development. The Quality team continues to identify any learning points from each complaint in order to identify themes emerging. Programme and support teams use complaints as part of their evidence bank to inform their evaluative activities aimed at improving the student experience.

Below are examples of actions taken as a result of complaints received during 2025-26:

- Reviewing the StS process in relation to INSIGHT, clarifying when StS applies, and developing additional guidance and training for PATs to promote consistent practice and clearer student support.
- Reviewing application-stage communication processes and programme approval timelines, with clearer and earlier communication of programme changes or withdrawals to applicants.
- Actions identified include delivering customer care and communication training to enhance staff confidence in handling enquiries, supporting students with additional needs, and managing difficult or distressing interactions.

- ICT induction with student to ensure issues around set up on devices resolved.
- DNS decision reversed, student re-enrolled; letter of apology sent to the student.
- Process in place to capture absences reported via text.
- Credit Control to add reference to fee policy in communications when pursuing debt collection.
- Quality and HR have met to discuss streamlining procedure when it's a joint investigation, and clear guidelines for investigating officer for both e.g. when one investigation ends what does investigating officer need to complete / sign off.
- Reviewing the use of AI-generated teaching materials and supporting staff to improve referencing practices, while promoting consistent application of the UHI Generative AI Policy across teaching teams.
- CCTV signage installed at smoking shelter.
- A formal CCTV procedure, covering how CCTV can be used and the process for accessing it, is to be implemented.
- The new Duty Manager procedure is to reinforce the need for all incidents to be recorded accurately, including details of those involved/ identified. With consideration of how and when the DM should give feedback and/ or further signposting to those raising concerns
- Induction process for all groups (including School's Programme and those without PATs/ PDAs- e.g. apprentices) reviewed to ensure expected behaviour standards and zero tolerance for misogyny and harassment are clearly communicated.
- PDAs to retain accurate records of induction sessions, including what content was covered in each session.
- Lecturer was given time to complete outstanding marking and final assessment date was moved back by one week to help any students who might be struggling due to the lack of feedback.

Themes emerging from complaints through the academic year 2025-26:

Of the complaints received this year, 33.3% related to customer care, with 72% of these concerning staff conduct. The majority of complaints focused on staff behaviour, professionalism, communication, and the quality of interactions with students. Additional concerns were raised regarding customer service and teaching effectiveness.

A further 29% of complaints were course related; learning and teaching, and course management each accounted for 27% of these complaints.

For learning and teaching, complaints primarily centre on lecturer professionalism, communication, student support, and teaching quality, including concerns regarding the use of AI-generated teaching materials, with reported impacts on student wellbeing, engagement, and the overall learning experience.

For course management, the complaints primarily relate to course organisation and management, communication issues, and a lack of academic support. Students raised concerns about programme changes, course delivery, class restructuring, and delayed or unclear communication from staff. Additional themes include staffing and resource challenges, admissions processes, and the administration of international student

requirements, with these issues impacting students' learning experience, engagement, and academic progression.

Raising Awareness of Complaints Process

Students are made aware of the complaints handling process during induction week and can be advised by college staff how to submit a complaint if required. Students also have support from the HISA advocacy service should they choose to use it. The complaints process is available on the UHI Inverness website and can be accessed via the Red Button tile on MyDay.

External stakeholders can access the complaint process via the college website or by contacting the college directly.

University of the Highlands and Islands
2026-06-30 University Court Meeting [Hybrid]
Tuesday 30 June 2026, 13:00 - 17:00
UHI House, Lecture Theatre, Inverness and Online via Teams

Members Present:
Alastair MacColl – Chair of Court (Chair)
Andrea Robertson - Vice-Chair of Court and senior independent member
Alex Paterson – Independent
Allan Clow – Independent
Dr Audrey Decou - Staff Governor
Derek Lewis - Chair of UHI North, West, and Hebrides
Dr Fiona McLean – Rector
Holly Pearce - Student Governor
Jem Taylor – Trade Union Nominee (UCU)
Karen Greaves – Local Authority Representative
Liz Stewart – Independent
Michael Macdonald - Independent
Peter Darroch - Independent
Rosemary McCormack - Staff Governor
Scott Innes – Trade Union Nominee (EIS FELA)
Vicki Nairn - Principal & Vice Chancellor, UHI

Member Apologies:
Calum Ross, Xander McDade, Helen MacInnes

In attendance:
Prof Brian Williams - Deputy Principal, UHI
Lorna Walker – Chief Operating Officer, UHI
Max Brown – Director of Transformation, UHI
Mike Baxter – Chief Financial Officer, UHI
Nicholas Oakley – Governance Manager, UHI (Clerk)
Richard Emborg – Vice Principal Student Recruitment and Growth, UHI
Roger Sendall – University Secretary, UHI
Scott Rhynas – Director of Finance, UHI
Dr Lucinda Dean – Interim Head of Centre for History, UHI (in part)
David Archibald – Henderson Loggie (in part)

Observers:
Oliver Sweeney – Observer (HISA)
Andi Garrity – Observer (HISA)
Derek Bond – Observer, UHI
Angus MacInnes – Chair, SMO
David Stewart – Vice Chair, UHI Inverness
Dugald MacPherson – Chair, UHI HTC

Justine Mitchell – Chair, UHI Perth
Maggie Tierney – Chair, UHI Argyll
Dr Stuart K Monro – Chair, SAMS

Minute Key: **DECISION,** Action

1. Preliminary Items

1.1. Welcome and apologies

Alastair MacColl, Chair of Court, opened the meeting and noted the apologies as above. He welcomed the Chairs of Academic Partners as observers to the meeting, as well as the incoming HISA President, Oliver Sweeney, and HISA Vice President, Andi Garrity, also as observers. He also welcomed new Court members Karen Greaves, Peter Darroch, and Michael Macdonald to their first Court meeting.

1.2. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of interest were recorded from Allan Clow and Derek Lewis in item 7.9. The Chair declared an interest in item 10.4 and agreed to leave the meeting for the duration of that item, with the Vice Chair to take the Chair.

1.3. Notification of other business

None.

2. Minutes of Meetings

2.1. Approval of the minutes of 14 April 2026

The minutes of the 14 April 2026 were **APPROVED** as an accurate record.

2.2. Matters arising

NOTED.

2.3. Delegated decisions

None.

3. Principal and Vice Chancellor Update

Vicki Nairn, Principal and Vice Chancellor, provided an update on transformation activity and 2026/27 budget, noting that full updates would be presented later on the agenda, and that UHI expected to return to a break-even position in 2026/27.

Members noted that updates on student recruitment and UHI Inverness would also be considered under subsequent agenda items. The Principal and Vice Chancellor reported that an assurance report had been received in relation to UHI Inverness following positive discussions with the UHI Inverness Board.

Members noted that Mike Baxter, Chief Financial Officer, would retire at the end of July and recorded their thanks for his contribution.

In response to a member query regarding student recruitment reporting and whether the position represented a permanent change, Members were advised that the change in reporting arrangements would be permanent.

Court **NOTED** the Principal and Vice Chancellor's report.

4. HISA Report

No update provided.

5. Presentations

5.1. Centre for History

Dr Lucinda Dean, Interim Head of the Centre for History, provided an overview of the Centre's activities across teaching, research and community engagement. Members were briefed on the breadth of the Centre's UG and PGT provision, strong student satisfaction and support initiatives, recent programme revalidation success, and a geographically diverse student population. The presentation also highlighted the Centre's research strengths and collaborative projects, including work on heritage, public history, community resilience and the history of the Highlands and Islands, alongside its contribution to UHI research hubs and external partnerships.

Following the presentation, Members discussed the importance of History and the Centre's contribution to UHI's academic offering. Members recognised the challenging environment facing Arts and Humanities provision across the sector and commended the work being undertaken by the Centre.

In discussing international undergraduate recruitment, Members sought further information on how projected growth was being achieved and the extent to which that growth could be sustained. Members heard that increases in international recruitment were welcome and that the Centre was working closely with the International Office to support continued growth. Whilst the wider sector continued to face recruitment challenges, there remained clear interest in UHI programmes from prospective students outwith the UK.

Members also explored the student experience for online learners, noting that much of the Centre's provision was delivered online. Members heard that considerable effort was being made to ensure students received the best possible experience, including setting clear expectations regarding online delivery and building communities of online learners. The Centre continued to respond to student feedback and demand, drawing on lessons learned during the Covid period to identify approaches that worked well. Examples of good practice in developing rapport and ensuring equitable participation were being shared, with benefits noted from fully online delivery compared with hybrid models.

Members sought further information on the origins of international students and the balance between single and joint honours programmes. Members heard that North America remained the principal source of international undergraduate students, reflecting the strongest international market presence, whilst postgraduate taught recruitment also included students from across

Europe. More students were enrolled on joint honours programmes than on single honours History degrees.

Members discussed the Centre's conversion strategy and international recruitment approach. Members heard that increased interest in A-Level History had contributed to a favourable sectoral and demographic environment, providing opportunities to target areas of growth. A focused recruitment approach had been adopted within the North American market.

In response to a query regarding the age profile of students, Members heard that the Centre maintained a strong base of mature learners and that the proportion of such students had increased over the previous two years. This trend related to all students entering from routes other than direct progression from school.

Court **NOTED** the Centre for History update.

[Dr Lucinda Dean left the meeting]

6. Strategic Items for discussion

6.1. AP Financial Sustainability Update

Mike Baxter, Chief Financial Officer, provided an update on AP financial sustainability, noting that dialogue with SFC remained ongoing in relation to in-year funding. Members heard that an outstanding matter remained regarding £400k for UHI NWH, which was being managed as an interim measure through restricted funding.

Members were updated on the position at UHI Shetland and noted the positive in year financial position, with support now unlikely to be required before the end of the AY. The position reflected positive work undertaken locally on recruitment and cost control.

Court formally **NOTED** correspondence from SFC regarding funding and transformation, which emphasised that future additional funding would be tied to progress on the transformation framework.

Members heard that no formal feedback had yet been received on the UHI UTF bid. The decision on UTF funding would also affect a number of partners' FFRs for 2026/27.

Members discussed the position on FFRs and key issues for APs in preparing these. Court heard that the FD group had met the previous day and that three main dynamics had been identified. The first related to the baseline case using the parameters set out by SFC. The second concerned a number of recent factors which required detailed scenario analysis, including the potential for pay awards that exceed SFC guidance. The third related to the absence of any uplift in SFC grant for 2026/27. Members noted that this reiterated the position previously presented to Court on the budget settlement, namely that there was no sustained growth in grant income.

The Chief Financial Officer advised that the adjusted operating position across the partnership had improved in year, with the AOP deficit reducing from £9.7m to £6m. The movement was highlighted and detailed within the committee report.

Court considered projections on student numbers and noted the positive movement reported, including the distinction between recurrent and non recurrent growth. Members heard that no

clawback was anticipated, but that this meant UHI was reaching the maximum funding number and therefore approaching the peak of growth. This had been factored into the FRP to be discussed later in the meeting.

Members noted the extensive coverage within the report of APs in deficit and the close monitoring/ support being provided. [Redacted]

Members queried why some APs had not completed the template, whether consequences were being applied, and the extent to which Court could be confident that early visibility and control over financial risk were being secured. The Chief Financial Officer advised that whilst the overall position had improved over the year, the key issue was the movement from the midyear position. Variations had reduced significantly compared with 2025/26. Members heard that the templates were not the only form of engagement with FDs, with the Chief Financial Officer meeting regularly with FDs on a one-to-one basis. Early warning was therefore not based solely on completion of the template. Members also noted that the timing of reporting and the alignment of FGPC and Court cycles inevitably created some overlap.

Court recognised that reporting was not perfect but noted the regular engagement taking place with all APs.

Members discussed the approach being taken by SFC and queried why this differed from previous arrangements. Members heard that SFC would historically have requested FFRs, but was now working with the SG and would use FFR material to support the case for additional funding. Members noted that advances to colleges were not loans, but that this position could not continue indefinitely and that there was no current prospect of these advances being repaid.

Court discussed the difficulty of taking a single approach to partners, noting that each AP was in its own financial position and at a different stage in its FRP journey, with some in recovery following previous action. Members noted that AP finance reviews had been undertaken with the UHI FGPC and Audit Chairs, and that common themes had emerged. These included structural funding issues, alongside changes already made and savings generated by APs, and the question of how much further individual APs could go given their specific circumstances, including geography and demography.

Members noted that budgets could not be balanced without fundamental change. Court recognised that the SFC letter made clear the connection between liquidity support/the refresh of advances and the requirement for commitment to transformation at UHI.

Court **NOTED** the AP Financial sustainability update.

6.2. Transformation

Vicki Nairn, Principal and Vice Chancellor, provided an update on transformation, noting that there had been a significant period of activity since the previous meeting and following the transformation summit. Court heard that the recent SFC letter [see item 6.1] represented a significant step for UHI, as it moved SFC guidance into a more directive position and asked UHI to focus on a new operating model, shared curriculum, and the links between transformation, funding and support.

Members were advised that the immediate priority was to move forward collectively and demonstrate a joined-up approach to transformation to SFC through the UHI Accord. Court noted that the UHI Accord was a statement of intent rather than a legally binding contract, but that it signalled UHI's commitment to change and to collective action across the partnership.

Court heard that plans for the integrated curriculum, shared services, and operating model were to be finalised by 17 July, alongside a review of governance arrangements. Full development of the plan would be undertaken by September 2026. Members noted that SFC had given a clear instruction to work at pace, and that a significant amount of underpinning work had already been completed through the FBC process. Further work would include reviewing savings targets, ensuring sufficient capacity, considering income generation opportunities, and reviewing the resources required to drive forward transformation at UHI.

Members were advised that much of the underpinning work had been completed, although income generation remained less developed, reflecting the challenge of working across 10 organisations. Court noted that reducing costs individually at each AP was not sufficient and that there was a significant opportunity to coordinate reductions in duplication across the partnership. Members also noted a correction to the paper in relation to UHI NWH, which had removed £2m of costs through integrated curriculum activity and had added £500k back in, although this was not within curriculum.

Court considered the programme requirements and noted the need for commitments from Boards to proceed through the Accord, securing full cooperation from staff and the necessary authorising environment. Members heard that new governance arrangements would be required to provide risk assurance and scrutiny but also to ensure there was a board or equivalent structure actively driving change through to implementation.

Members discussed the meaning of the proposed framework and emphasised the need for an explicit model which was actionable and left no dubiety regarding the destination for UHI. It was noted that transformation through structural change alone would not deliver the quantum of savings required. Members urged caution in relation to income generation, noting the constraints on FE credits, the likelihood of future caps on HE numbers, and the competitive nature and relatively modest margins associated with commercial income. Members discussed the need to eliminate duplication, address the sources of tension around top slice, and potentially commission externally facilitated work to examine the cost base and areas of duplication objectively.

The Principal and Vice Chancellor advised that programmes of work would be developed for both areas by September. Members heard that working groups would be established quickly to drive change forward, and that full support from all APs would be required for UHI to make progress as a partnership.

Court received updates on AP engagement with the UHI Accord. In response to a query regarding the deadline for signing and why all APs had not yet signed, Members were advised that the deadline was 10 July and that it was hoped the majority of partners would have signed by that date. Some partners were awaiting Board meetings and the logistics might mean that signing could not be completed within the deadline, although there was confidence that all APs would

either sign or be in the process of doing so. Members noted that some signatures might include caveats or conditions, which would be helpful in identifying specific matters to be addressed. For specialist partners, there might also be operational issues requiring incorporation into the wider approach. Court requested that Members be kept up to date on progress. Action: Provide updates on UHI Accord signing to Members.

Chairs of AP Boards that were present at the meeting as observers were invited by the Chair of Court to provide their feedback and progress towards the UHI Accord agreement:

- UHI Inverness intended to sign the Accord and feedback had also been provided.
- SAMS intended to sign the Accord, whilst noting its particular focus on the commercialisation of research. Court recognised the need to take a specific view of SAMS' context and to ensure appropriate support whilst maintaining its financial sustainability.
- Court were advised that SMO occupied a unique position within UHI as a private company and was also subject to SG evaluation from September in relation to the Languages Act. Members were advised that the SMO Board was focused on these developments and, because of the parallel process and different funding arrangements and priorities, SMO would not sign the UHI Accord at this stage, although it would continue to follow developments within UHI and continue to engage proactively with transformation at UHI.
- Members discussed the position at UHI Argyll. Assurance was being sought from the Principal and Vice Chancellor and Chair of Court before the Board meeting. Members heard that the Chair of the UHI Argyll Board was encouraging signing of the Accord, whilst recognising that there remained specific issues of detail and clarification.
- Court noted that there was overall readiness to engage and work with UHI on transformation, albeit with some ongoing reservations and areas of disagreement for which formal recognition was being sought.

One AP Chair queried why UHI AP Principals were not signing the Accord alongside Chairs. It was noted that whilst Chairs had responsibility for strategic direction, implementation assurance required executive expertise and comment from Principals. Court noted that the Accord should be a positive statement of intent and a means of building trust between UHI, APs, and SFC. Members also recognised that trust appeared to be an underlying issue, including in relation to the timeline for resolving funding mechanism issues and the need to demonstrate that transformation was a commitment for UHI as a whole, not only for partners.

In response to a query on the existing £1.4m business case development funding budget, Court heard that approximately £300k remained from the original allocation and that, on the current profile, this would support the transformation team until December 2026, although additional resources were expected to be required. Members were advised that the draft FBC had been necessary to close off the constitutional discussion and had also provided data and models which would continue to be used.

Mike Baxter, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the FBC process had been mandated and had required a defined degree of structure, with analysis undertaken in line with the SFC outline. Looking ahead, Members heard that a dedicated resource would be required to drive the work forward, ideally from within the partnership, although external resource might also be needed.

Court noted that there would be more flexibility outside the FBC process, but that further costs would still be incurred.

Members discussed the need for clear investment objectives and an urgent framework document. It was noted that this did not need to be an FBC, but should provide an outline of the work required. Members emphasised the need for visibility and transparency regarding the detail and background, including clarity on the shared services being pursued and what APs were being asked to sign up to.

Court heard that, by September, detailed models would be required, with sufficient capacity to ensure these were robust and transparent. Members emphasised the need for a clear description of the future direction, what the institution would look like, and the benefits to be achieved. Members also highlighted the importance of developing a more positive and fair contribution model for all APs, alongside a financial model underpinning the UHI partnership. Court noted that completion of the Accord would demonstrate that the partnership was working together.

Members also discussed the need for a broader review of cost structure, duplication, and the level of cost within EO and APs, outside any major structural or strategic change.

The Principal and Vice Chancellor welcomed the feedback from Members and Chairs. Court noted that the FBC had been necessary to bring UHI to this point, but that there was no alternative plan and that the solution would need to be co-created. Chairs were asked to take back to their Executives the need for full cooperation and support for transformation, to ensure that the detail required for September could be developed. The Chair of Court would continue discussions with Chairs regarding engagement and updates.

Court **NOTED** the transformation update.

7. Items for noting/ approval

7.1. UHI EO Budget 2025-26 Update

Mike Baxter, Chief Financial Officer, provided members with an update on the UHI EO budget for 2025/26 and noted that student number projections provided a firmer position for 2025/26 and a more positive position for 2026/27. Court considered the financial position in relation to APs and noted, from the paper, the relative cost base at EO, with staffing costs representing 37% of turnover compared with 60% to 70% across APs.

Members discussed the position regarding insurance for UHI House following legionella and water pump failures. [Redacted] The insurance claim was progressing with Aviva and provision had been included within the forecast.

Members welcomed the clarity of the paper and noted the need to consider two separate matters: the net income/deficit position relating to EO activity and external income, and the cost of services provided for the partnership as a whole.

Court discussed the variability of the funding model and noted that the positive uplift in 2025/26 had increased the positive movement in topslice, following recovery in prior years. Members heard that a prudent view had been taken on student number projections for top slice purposes in order to reduce volatility.

Court **NOTED** the 2025-26 Budget update.

7.2. HISA Block Grant

APPROVED as presented in the committee paper.

7.3. Risk Management Report

Roger Sendall, University Secretary, introduced the Risk Management Report and noted that reputational risk was under review in light of the potential fallout from financial challenges and the possible impact of VSS. The risk was currently rated amber. Three risks remained rated red, relating to financial sustainability, persistent data risks, and the loss of key staff, the latter having moved to a red rating.

Members queried whether risks associated with dependency on transformation should be rated red rather than amber, given the level of actual risk. Court heard that this would continue to be kept under review. A new common risk had been added six months previously and was being tracked, with transformation remaining a focus for Audit Committee scrutiny. Members noted that the UHI Accord might reduce the likelihood element of the risk, and that a further decision on the risk rating would be taken in September.

Court **NOTED** the Risk Management Report

7.4. Student Recruitment

Richard Emborg, VP Student Recruitment and Growth, provided an update on student recruitment performance, highlighting continued strong demand for FE provision, significant growth in HE enrolments, and progress towards meeting SFC funded targets. Members were advised that applications for 2026/27 remained positive overall, with growth in several key markets including Graduate Apprenticeships, Nursing and PGT provision, although recruitment from RUK and international markets remained more challenging. The presentation also outlined preparations for Confirmation and Clearing, the impact of investment in recruitment and marketing activity, and future opportunities and risks associated with competition, funding constraints, international policy changes, partnership development, student progression and conversion activity.

The importance and benefit of graduate apprenticeship activity at UHI Inverness was recognised. Court heard that provision was subject to a cap and that other providers, including RGU, had publicly set ambitions to become leading providers in this area. Growth required learners, employer engagement, and staff capacity to deliver, which presented a risk for UHI. It was also noted that some employers were moving away from MAs, which, whilst not uniform across all sectors, represented a potential threat to some areas of the UHI partnership.

In relation to student progression, emphasis was placed on the importance of mapping clear pathways through the academic journey and into employment. This included facilitating the student journey, maintaining engagement with learners, and drawing on examples of best practice, including activity at UHI Moray. Cross partnership progression opportunities were also identified as an important area of focus. Court heard about the vital role of soft internal

articulation. The work of APC and CCPC in drawing on resources and expertise across the partnership was highlighted as central to supporting this area.

In response to a query regarding Pathfinder projects and where these were embedded, Court heard that the projects drew on resources across APs and were intended to simplify the offer and journey for students. Consideration was also given to how Members could be involved in this work.

Further information was sought on graduate apprenticeships, including how close UHI was to the relevant limits and whether there was scope to push for change. Court heard that there had been considerable year on year growth, although further clarification was required with APs on proximity to those limits. Caution was urged, as increased investment in training by employers narrowed the margin available to UHI, and graduate apprenticeships should not be treated as an unfettered growth opportunity.

Action: Clarify the limit in relation to graduate apprenticeships and whether UHI is approaching that limit.

The partnership response to Confirmation and Clearing was welcomed, with the level of cooperation across the partnership noted as a significant achievement. Court recognised the cross partnership and collective nature of the success to date, welcomed the approach being taken, and noted its best wishes for another successful Clearing period.

7.5. Academic Council - Effectiveness Review Update

Prof Brian Williams provided an update on the Academic Council Effectiveness Review. Court heard that Academic Council had a broad remit and that assurance was required on the effectiveness of its subcommittees, which would be progressed through strategic health checks.

The review had identified that an Academic Council focused exclusively on HE was not compatible with UHI's role as a tertiary institution. Work would therefore continue with Academic Council to identify further improvements and changes, with a view to developing a more clearly tertiary approach.

Court noted that, under the governance code, an externally facilitated review would be due in December 2027 and that this would include Academic Council.

7.6. Performance Report

Court received the Performance Report and agreed that the report should be considered in greater detail at the next meeting. Action: Performance report to return to Court as substantive discussion item at the next meeting.

The report set out strategic performance indicators for the partnership, distinct from UHI EO performance reporting. Court noted that the annual business plan for EO would be presented to the September meeting of Court. Action: EO Annual Business Plan to September Court meeting.

Thanks were recorded to Alex Paterson for his work in developing the report, which had been streamlined to provide a clearer narrative on RAG status and to support more useful engagement by Court Members.

The proportionate dashboard approach was welcomed. It was noted that further work was required on the treatment of red rated indicators, alongside recalibration of some measures where benchmarking was not currently aligned to the most appropriate comparators. Until those calibration measures were in place, the report's usefulness would remain limited in some areas.

Court **NOTED** the performance report.

7.7. Incorporated Assigned College Appointments

HOMOLOGATED.

7.8. HISA Governance and Democratic Assurance

NOTED and **APPROVED**.

7.9. UHI NWH Fort William STEM Centre

Court was asked to note the significance of the UHI NWH Fort William STEM Centre and to provide institutional support through a letter of support. It was confirmed that this would not create any financial obligation for UHI. Court **APPROVED** the provision of a letter of support.

8. Minutes from Committees of Court

8.1. Audit Committee: 11 June 2026

NOTED.

8.2. F&GP Committee: 23 June 2026

NOTED.

8.3. People Committee: 21 May 2026

NOTED.

8.4. Foundation: 01 June 2026

NOTED.

8.5. Nominations: 10 June 2026

NOTED.

9. Any Other Business

None.

10. Reserved Business

10.1. UHI FRP & 2026/27 Budget

Mike Baxter, Chief Financial Officer, presented the UHI Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) and 2026/27 budget, and thanked the team for their hard work and for the groundwork undertaken over previous years. Court heard that assumptions on student numbers, inflation, and cost of living pressures were built into the plan. It was noted that cost of living assumptions remained

subject to negotiation through the formally recognised negotiation arrangements with the trade union, UCU.

The underlying cash position was sufficient to provide liquidity to manage unexpected variances, whilst also allowing investment in potential growth areas. The FRP set out a formulated plan to deliver break even, with actions proposed to reduce costs and generate income, focused on matters within UHI's control. The residences deficit had reduced from £1.4m 18 months previously to £1m.

The Chief Financial Officer explained that the FRP sought to set out deliverable proposals, including the running of a VSS. The implications of not meeting the VSS target had also been recognised, with alternative proposals identified for implementation if the required savings were not achieved.

Court were advised that the FRP should not be viewed as a one-off exercise, with the actions set out in the paper intended to address income growth, savings targets, and the continuing requirement to maintain a break-even position in future years. The pressures discussed throughout the meeting, including a flat line grant, had been recognised within the FRP, reinforcing the need to continue growing other sources of income or reducing ongoing costs. The plan also sought to create the necessary headroom to invest in growth and support a five-year strategy, maintaining a medium-term view rather than focusing solely on the annual position.

FGPC had considered the plan and noted that, whilst delivery of breakeven would not be easy, the FRP met the commitment made previously and agreed at Court. FGPC had challenged the assumptions and considered them reasonable. The absence of assumed savings from transformation or non-recurrent one-off measures was noted as providing a solid basis for the plan, with the cash position preserved. FGPC considered the plan difficult but realistic and recommended it to Court for approval.

Court **APPROVED** the UHI FRP & 2026/27 Budget.

Members recognised the significant team effort involved in developing the FRP and budget, and recorded its thanks to Mike Baxter as he prepared to leave UHI.

10.2. [REDACTED]

Non-members and observers left the meeting.

10.3. VS Scheme Update

Lorna Walker, Chief Operating Officer, provided a verbal update on the VS Scheme. Court heard that the scheme had an in-year savings target of £500k. The scheme had now closed, with [Redacted] applicants received against an anticipated [Redacted]. The next stage would be review by the OD Board, followed by consideration by SET and then Remuneration Committee.

10.4. Chair & Vice Chair of Court: Succession Proposal

[Alastair MacColl, Chair of Court, left the meeting. Andrea Roberston, Vice Chair, took the Chair.]

Andrea Robertson presented two succession proposals, both of which had been recommended by Nominations Committee. The first was the appointment of Alex Paterson as Vice Chair of

Court, to follow Andrea Robertson's departure at the end of her term. The second was the extension of Alastair MacColl's term as Chair of Court by one year, to July 2028. Court duly **APPROVED** both recommended appointments.

11. Close of meeting

There was no other business and the Acting Chair closed the meeting at 17:18.

ENDS

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