UHI | INVERNESS

Board of Management

MINUTES of the BOARD OF MANAGEMENT ONLINE MEETING held via Microsoft Teams on 31 March 2026.

PRESENT:	Victoria Erasmus, Chris O'Neil, Janette Campbell, Jane Davidson, Paul Shanks, Annie Nelson, Innis Montgomery, David Stewart, Wendy Grindle, Donald MacKenzie, Heather Keyes, Chloe Young, Lindsay Ferries, Anthony Standing, Oliver Sweeney, John Pocock, Sally Blyth & Conrad Copeland
CHAIR:	Victoria Erasmus
APOLOGIES:	Pauline Tuthill, Rojan Kumar Subramani & Arvinder Kainth
IN ATTENDANCE:	Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality Director of Finance and Estates Paul Travill, UHI Court Head of Operations and Business Performance Information Systems Manager Governance Officer

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

The Governance Officer confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Declarations of Interests

Sally Blyth declared interest in all Research related agenda items and will withhold from discussions about Research at today's meeting.

1. MINUTES

a.) Meeting of the Board of Management held on 03 February 2026

Decision: The minutes of the Board of Management Meeting held on 03 February 2026 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED.**

b.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-01-022026) held on 03 February 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-BoM-01-022026) of the Board of Management Meeting held on 03 February 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

c.) Confidential Note (CN-BoM-02-022026) held on 03 February 2026

Decision: The Confidential Note (CN-BoM-02-022026) of the Board of Management Meeting held on 03 February 2026 was **AGREED** as a correct record and was **APPROVED.**

d.) Board Away Day held on 04 February 2026 (Confidential)

Decision: The Confidential minutes of the Board Away Day held on 04 February 2026 were **AGREED** as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

2. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

- **FE / HE Course Fees – ONGOING -** The variations of credit based funding across partnership to be raised with UHI.
  Update at 31/03/2026: This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process.

- **Topslice Increase for 2025/26 – ONGOING -** Reasons for the increase in topslice for 2025/26 to be discussed with EO.
  Update at 31/03/2026: This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process.

- **Financial 5 Year Plan – Timeline – SUPERSEDED -** Clear timelines to be included within the financial 5 year long-term plan to reduce the operational deficit.
  Update at 31/03/2026: Action superseded by the 3 Year Financial Recovery Plan.
  Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **Financial 5 Year Plan – Discussions – SUPERSEDED -** Discussions to take place regarding the financial 5 year long-term plan with the RSB and SFC.
  Update at 31/03/2026: Action superseded by the 3 Year Financial Recovery Plan.
  Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **Principal's Report – QAA Process – ONGOING -** Feedback about the new QAA process to be shared with EO and SFC. There is a need for more frequent meetings.
  Update at 31/03/2026: This action is being reviewed as part of the FBC process.

- **FBC Update & Discussion – COMPLETE -** Due to time constraints, the Members had been asked to contact the Chair of the Board with questions regarding the Transformation process.
  Update at 31/03/2026: Board's FBC feedback submitted to RSB in January 2026 as response to the FBC survey. Survey report shared with Boards in early March 2026.
  Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **Board Self-Evaluation Session – COMPLETE -** A new Board Development and Action Plan to be created.
  Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

- **Board Self-Evaluation Session – COMPLETE -** The Governance Officer to email the complete list of KPI measures to the Chairs of LTR & FGP Committees for them to decided which measures are in scope and should be reported to at meetings.

Decision: It was **AGREED** that this item could be removed from the list.

Discussion about the status of the ongoing actions and their progress took place. The Chair of the Board added that more clarity will be provided at the next Chairs and Principals meeting scheduled for 12th May 2026.

Conrad Copeland joined the meeting.

3. STUDENT RECRUITMENT REPORT

The Information Systems Manager joined the meeting.

The Information Systems Manager spoke to her report and provided the Board with the status of current recruitment for 2026/27. At the time of writing the report applications for FE courses including Senior Phase were up over 19% on 2025/26, and whilst there are fewer applications for HE courses than this time last year, acceptances are 4% higher. 49% of all active FE applications are for Senior Phase courses, and 74% of first year full time HE applications are for HNC courses.

The Board welcomed the report and positively commented on high acceptance rates. Given last year's situation with unmet enrolment targets the Board asked for assurances that the same situation will not take place in the next academic year and what are the contingency plans implemented by the college to mitigate this situation. The Information Systems Manager reported to the Board that although the college is following a similar position as last year the active accepted application sit at a level higher than the college has seen in the last 7 years. The tracking system is being reviewed to provide a clearer understanding of each step of the application and enrolment processes with teams meeting weekly to monitor progress of each course. A number of Keeping Warm sessions will also take place before and during the summer to engage with students before the start of their courses in August/September and to reduce the number of Did Not Show (DNS) students. The challenge of keeping in touch with prospective students has been highlighted to the Board.

Discussion about changed course appetite took place with visible trends indicating that learners apply more for HNC courses and progress onto GA programmes instead of traditional degrees. There is a need within the education sector to create new methodology to monitor the new trends and the new

emerging learners' profile to better understand this unique situation. The Board positively commented on weekly team meetings to monitor application levels and agreed that a new innovative way needs to be introduced to measure new emerging trends and learners and find out why the appetite has changed.

The Chair thanked the Information Systems Manager for her report and the Board for an interesting discussion.

The Information Systems Manager left the meeting.

4. FINANCIAL UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL)

a.) Financial Recovery Plan

b.) VS Scheme

The Chair decided that both confidential items should be discussed jointly. It was confirmed by the Governance Officer that both items are for noting only and do not require a decision.

The Board was provided with a CONFIDENTIAL report by the VP Curriculum, Operations and External Relations & the Director of Finance and Estates, Confidential Note (CN-BoM-01-032026).

Chloe Young joined the meeting.

The Chair of the Board decided to go to agenda item 7 FBC Update – 11th March 2026 Meeting (Confidential) next.

7. FBC UPDATE – 11th MARCH MEETING (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Board was provided with a CONFIDENTIAL report by the Chair of the Board, Confidential Note (CN-BoM-02-032026).

Anthony Standing left the meeting.

The Chair of the Board asked the Vice-Chair to take over chairing responsibilities till the end of the meeting.

The Chair of the Board, Conrad Copeland and the Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations left the meeting.

The Vice-Chair of the Board decided to go to agenda item 5 Principal's Report next.

5. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal spoke to his report and provided the Board with an update in regard to following activities:

- HISA
- Guinea Teaching Project
- Highland Pathway to Healthcare Project
- Women in Inverness Exhibition
- Employers Open Evening
- Inaugural Professorial Lecture
- Forestry award

The Principal congratulated Chloe Young and Oliver Sweeney on very successful election campaigns and securing positions for new academic year as UHI HISA President (Oliver) and remaining Inverness Student President (Chloe).

The Principal expressed his concerns about toxic masculinity trends becoming visible on campus, issues that were also recognised during the recent student election campaigns. The Trade Union Board Member offered support to both Student Board Members who already closely collaborate with Vice Principal – Curriculum, Student Experience and Quality and Wellbeing & Learning Support Manager on best approaches to address the problem.

The Board welcomed the report and positively commented on all innovative ideas implemented to secure additional income streams for the college. The Board also congratulated both Student Members on their successful election campaigns.

Special thanks were extended to the Vice Principal – Curriculum, Operations and External Relations and her team for their hard work on securing the Guinea project.

The Vice-Chair of the Board decided to go to agenda item 8 FE & HE Fees 2026/27 next.

7. FE & HE FEES 2026/27

The Director of Finance and Estates spoke to his report and provided the Board with proposed FE & HE fees for 2026/27. The Board was asked to approve the FE fees as HE fees were for noting only as are set by UHI. Currently, each academic partner sets its own FE fees, which means that colleges within UHI currently charge different amounts for the same course. In terms of the proposed FE tuition fees for 2026/27, at present, the current inflation rate in January 2026 was 3%. Therefore, the proposal is to increase FE fees by 3% for 2026/27. In terms of HE tuition fees, as stated above, these are set and approved by UHI on an annual basis. However, one of the major issues regarding HE tuition fees is that HE fees for Undergraduate Degrees and HNs are set by SFC/SG, and have not changed since 2009/10, 15 years ago. Assuming an average increase of 2% pa over the last 15 years, and the current number of HE student FTEs for 2026/27, the college is losing out on almost £700,000 of tuition fee funding from SAAS/SFC.

The Board welcomed the report and suggested that in the future the fees could be reviewed by the FGP Committee and the Board in terms of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) as well.

The Board asked about the cost of commercial courses and the Director of Finance and Estates explained that they are costed on market rates on an ad hoc basis when needed and they constitute 1% of college income.

The Vice-Chair of the Board thanked the Director of Finance and Estates for his detailed report.

Decision: The Board **APPROVED** the FE Fees 2026/27.

9. KPI MATRIX

The Head of Operations and Business Performance spoke to his report, taken as read, and provided the Board with an update in regard to measures highlighted in red.

The Board welcomed the update but expressed concerns in regard to the increased sickness absence rate when compared to last year's data. The Chair

of HR Committee assured the Board that the HR Committee receives a comprehensive report with a full breakdown of sickness reasons which are being monitored closely by the HR team and the Committee Members. The stress in the workplace is also being closely monitored. The HR Committee confirmed that there is no culture of short term sickness absence within the organisation with most staff being committed to their roles. The Principal added that a relatively small number of long term sickness absences is being reported but they could create backfilling issues and have impact on the budget. The staff turnover is one of the lowest within the sector sitting at 2.76% which is a strong indicator of staff's satisfaction and commitment.

It was previously suggested that incorporated budget impacts could be added to the KPI Matrix going forward. The Head of Operations and Business Performance to meet with Chairs of FGP and Audit to discuss the addition of a column on budget impact, what is being measured and at what point in the year.

Action: Incorporated budget impact column to be added to the KPI Matrix. Meeting to be scheduled with Chairs of Audit & FGP.

The Vice-Chair of the Board thanked the Head of Operations and Business Performance for his detailed report.

10. GOVERNANCE UPDATE

The Governance Officer spoke to her report and provided the Board with an update on all current governance matters.

Following areas were highlighted:

- Nomination for Vice Chair Position
- OSCR – changes to trustee' details
- Skills, Knowledge & Experience Self-Assessment – template
- Meeting Schedule Calendar 2026/27
- Board Training
- ICT Update
- Upcoming meetings and events

The Board welcomed the update and congratulated Janette Campbell, new Vice-Chair, on her appointment.

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.

Action: 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.

Suggestion was made for all confirmed training sessions to also be added to the meetings calendar for 2026/27.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Governance Officer for her detailed report.

11. UHI Court – OBC/FBC UPDATE (CONFIDENTIAL)

It was agreed that this agenda item was covered during confidential discussion for item 7 FBC Update – 11th March 2026 Meeting.

12. DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF BOARD COMMITTEES (CONFIDENTIAL)

The Board noted the contents of the DRAFT minutes of meetings of the:

- PRR Committee held on 28 January 2026
- S&N Committee held on 28 January 2026
- Audit Committee held on 03 March 2026
- F&GP Committee held on 05 March 2026
- LT&R Committee held on 10 March 2026
- HR Committee held on 12 March 20256
- Chairs Committee held on 17 March 2026

The Chair has asked Members to send any comments regarding minutes to herself and the Governance Officer.

14. UHI UPDATES

The Chair has asked Members to send any comments regarding UHI Updates to herself and the Governance Officer.

15. AOCB

The Board expressed their thanks to the Executive Management Team (EMT) for their dedication and hard work under difficult circumstances.

The Vice-Chair thanked all present for their contributions to discussions during today's meeting.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 23 June 2026 at 4.30 p.m.

Signed by the Chair:	
Date:	23/06/2026