

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a green and blue plaid shirt and light-colored trousers, is walking towards the right. He is holding a silver laptop under his left arm and a small object in his right hand. He is looking upwards and to the right with a slight smile. In the background is a modern building with a light-colored stone facade and a dark sign that reads "UHI INVERNESS". The sky is blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

# UHI | INVERNESS

Lindsay Snodgrass  
(Vice Principal, Curriculum,  
Quality & Student Experience)  
& Liz Cook (Quality Manager)

# Self Evaluation & Action Plan

2025-26

[inverness.uhi.ac.uk](https://inverness.uhi.ac.uk)



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## Institute details

### 1.1 Name of Institute

UHI Inverness

### 1.2 Author(s)


Lindsay Snodgrass (Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience) & Liz Cook (Quality Manager)

### 1.3 Date of submission

26th November 2025

### 1.4 Statement of assurance

As the Accountable Officer for UHI Inverness (Inverness College), I confirm that I have considered the institution’s arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY 2024/25, including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that I am satisfied that the institution has adequate and effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. I can therefore provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by SFC.

Signature: 

Accountable Officer (Name):  
Chris O'Neil Date: 25/11/2025

## UHI Inverness in AY 24/25

### Our Context

UHI Inverness has maintained its position as one of the best performing colleges in Scotland and has further improved performance in the last academic year. We perform well above SFC sector benchmarks across all key measures and have continued to build upon the work detailed in our last SEAP including, for example:

- ✓ Further embedding a distributed, collaborative model of leadership.
- ✓ Extending and honing our model of learner support to meet the changing needs of learners.
- ✓ Embedding mechanisms to enable curriculum managers to take a leadership role in analysing and presenting data, and action planning to support continuous improvement.
- ✓ Further responding to employer demand by growing our work-based learning through Foundation, Modern and Graduate Apprenticeships underpinned by Sector Development Plans to ensure alignment with regional skills and education needs.
- ✓ Appointing a new Curriculum Leader with oversight of Construction, Engineering and Infrastructure.
- ✓ Reorganising our academic administration and quality functions under a new Head of Registry and Quality Enhancement role.
- ✓ Further developing our approaches to quality enhancement planning and embedding the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework.
- ✓ Refining our KPI matrix, linked to our strategic plan, providing comparison to national benchmarks.
- ✓ Embedding mechanisms which continue to put the learner voice at the centre of our work.

We have a well-established culture of continuous improvement and some of our innovative approaches have been highlighted as sector leading and recognisable through the achievement of external awards and charter marks. The impact of our approaches has been demonstrable through SFC data and will be evaluated throughout this report.

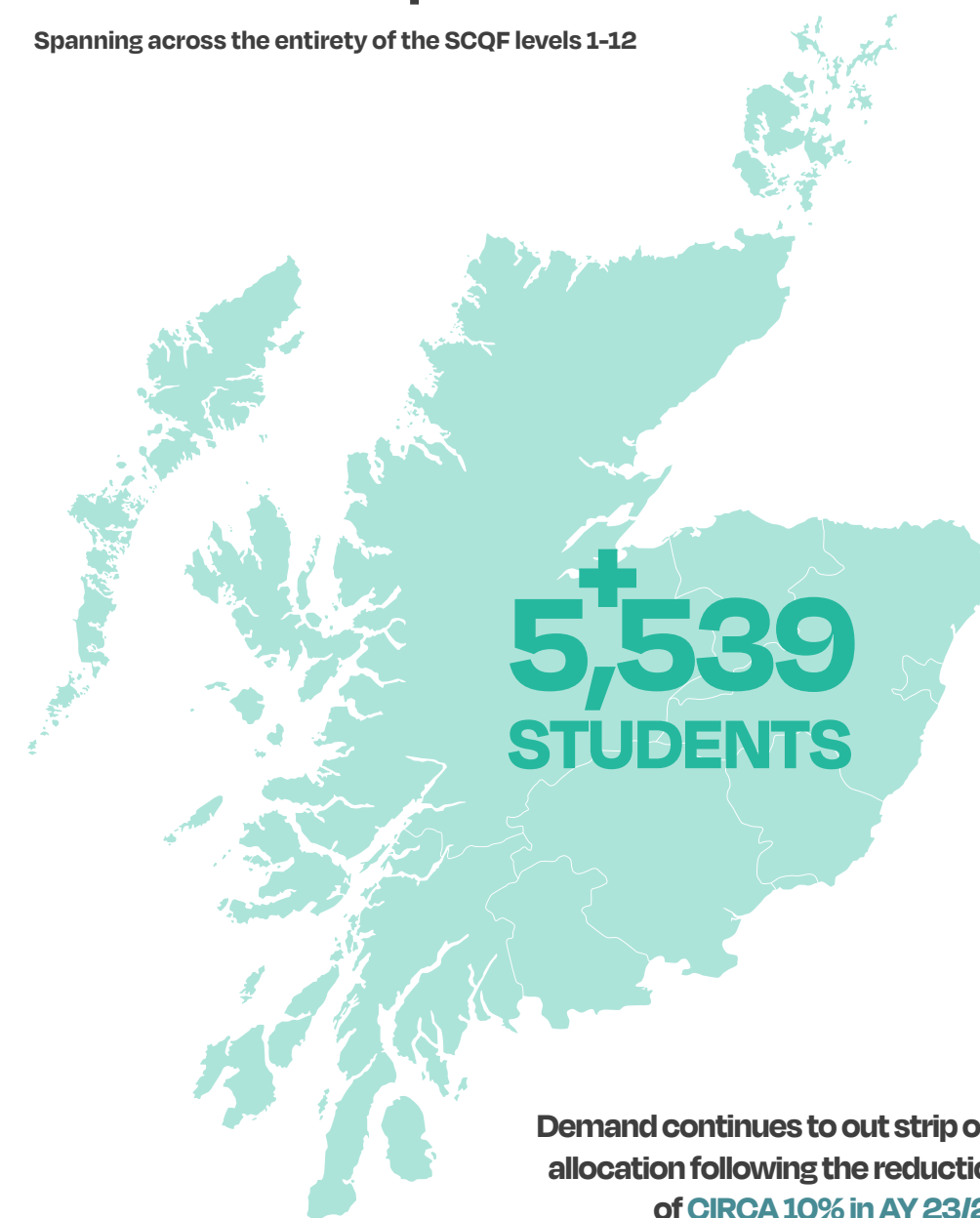
**Our focus in 2024/25 and into 2025/26 is on maintaining and further improving our positive position.**

**UHI | INVERNESS** is one of the largest academic partners of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and delivers

**1/4** of the region's further education (FE) provision

**Delivers 1/5** of the region's further and higher education provision

Spanning across the entirety of the SCQF levels 1-12



**3,296**  
on **FE** programmes



**2,243**  
on **HE** programmes

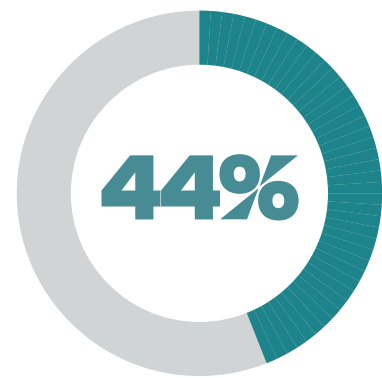
**over 700**  
on **modern** apprenticeships

**UHI Inverness exceeded its FE credit target in 2024/25 for the**



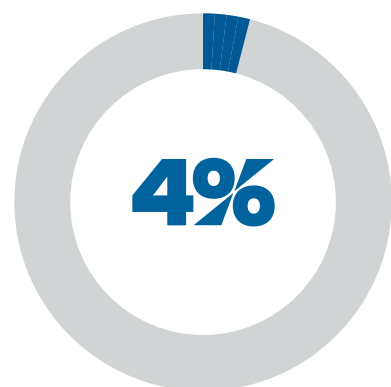
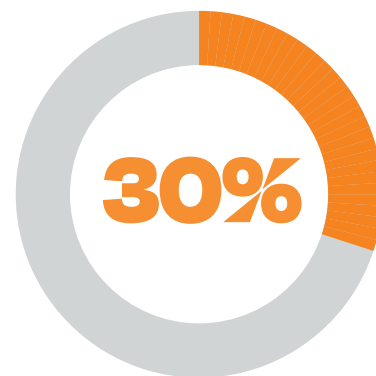
Demand continues to out strip our allocation following the reduction of **CIRCA 10% in AY 23/24**





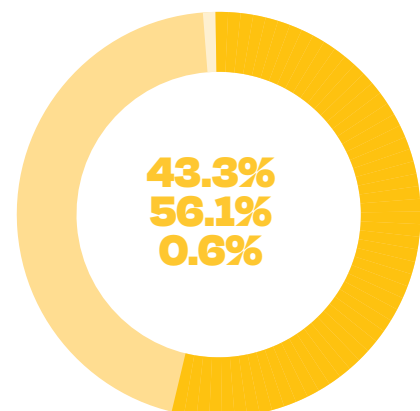
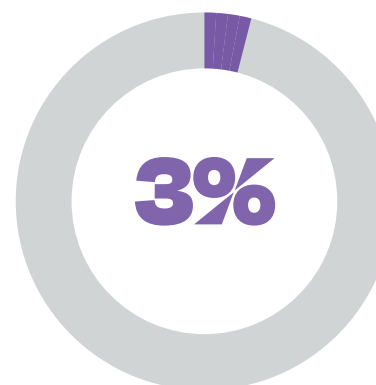
Over 44% of our students are  
**between the ages of  
16 and 19**

30% of our activity is delivered to students  
**living in remote  
and rural areas**



4% being delivered to those  
**living in the 10% most  
deprived postcode areas**

The college currently delivers 3% of  
**our activity to care  
experienced students**



Our students are split  
**between 43.3% female,  
56.1% male and 0.6% other**

## Our Curriculum

Our curriculum continues to be delivered through 5 broad curriculum Schools and covers 16 subject areas including specialist provision within the Scottish School of Forestry:

- + Care, Sports, Arts, Drama and Humanities
- + Hair, Beauty, ESOL, Business and Hospitality
- + Applied Science, Forestry, Computing and Education
- + Engineering and Energy
- + Construction, Engineering and Infrastructure

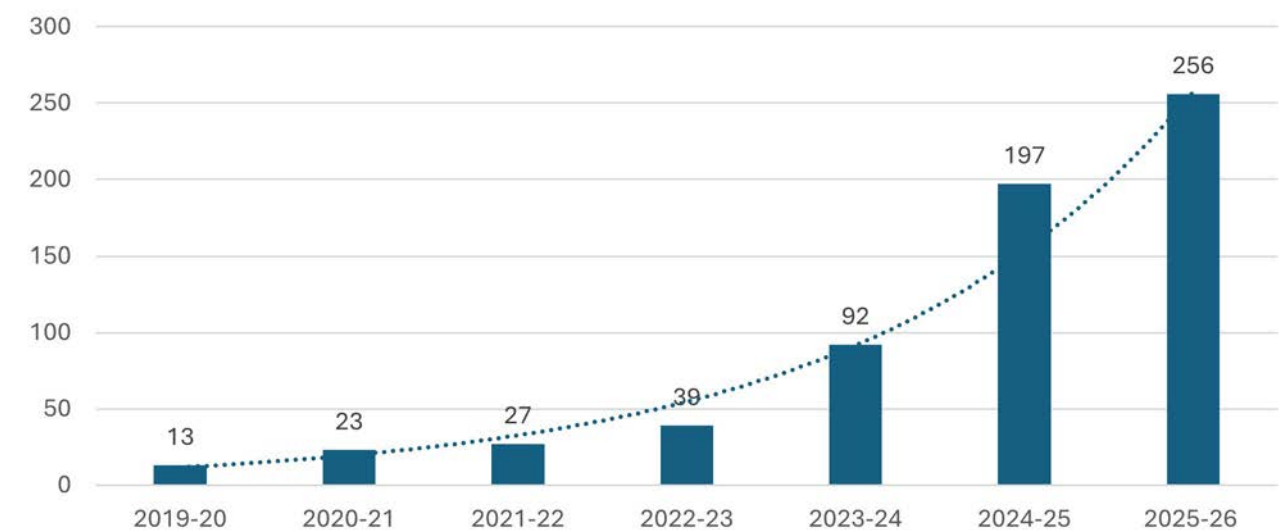
Over the last 5 years, UHI Inverness have witnessed an increase in further education (FE) applications but continue to be unable to meet this growing demand due to restrictions in our FE credit allocation. The constraints on the availability of FE credit funding have led to an on-going imperative to map our curriculum to regional skills demands. This is becoming more critical with the development of the Cromarty Firth Green Free port.

## External Environment

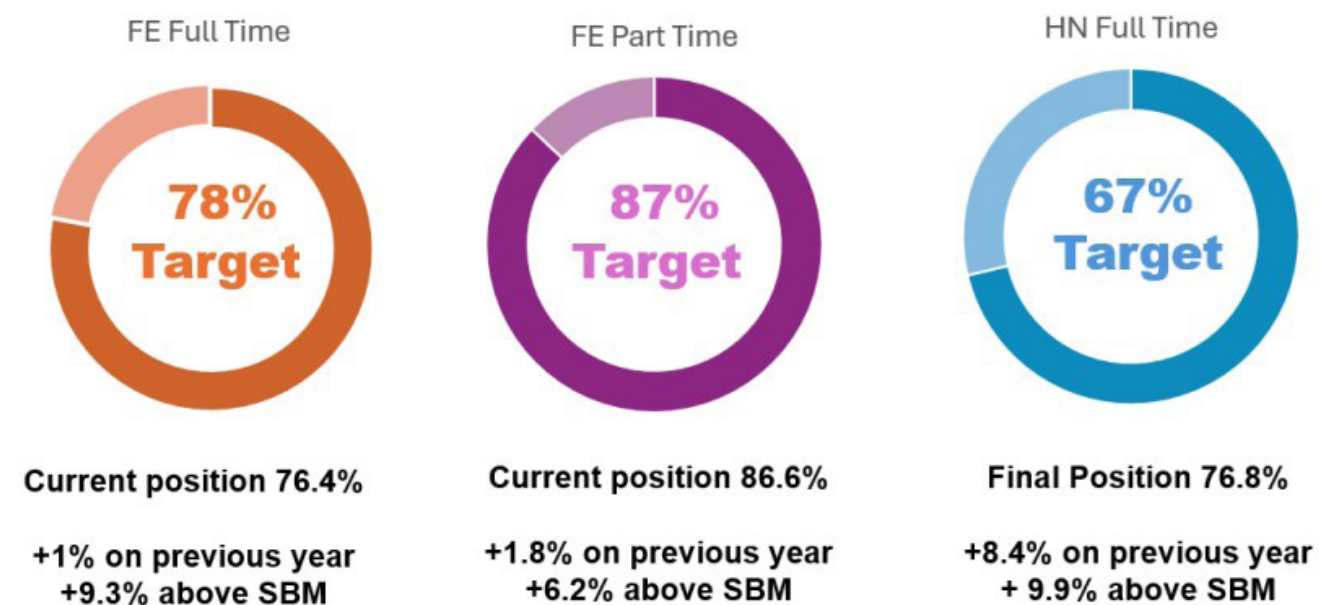
Our curriculum has continued to evolve in 2024/25 to ensure close alignment with both regional and national priorities. Responsive to industry demand, there has been a continued focus on growing our work-based provision through both Modern Apprenticeships (MA) and Graduate Apprenticeships (GA) which accounted for 38% of enrolments in 2024/25.

Our higher education (HE) enrolments continued to recover in 2024/25 and 2025/26, driven by curriculum developments including the introduction of additional GA programmes in Accounting and Engineering to meet industry demand. Our GA enrolments have grown significantly since 2019 and with further projected growth this academic year in this area of strategic importance.

UHI Inverness Graduate Apprenticeship Growth



As with our last SEAP, we continue to face challenges to learner retention and progression stemming from a buoyant labour market and very low unemployment rates in the locality. This is particularly so in Healthcare/Care, ICT, Construction, Forestry, and Hospitality. Our continued move to work-based learning helps to mitigate this challenge resulting in a significant growth in MA enrolments to over 1,000 in response to industry demand. As a partnership, UHI is now the largest college provider of work-based learning in Scotland, with Inverness College being the lead deliverer. See Supporting Learner Success – Apprenticeship Growth and Quality Enhancement.



Our 2023/24 learner outcomes for full time further education (FT FE) learners placed UHI Inverness 8.3% above the sector benchmark at 75.4%, and second out of comparable colleges for learner success. Our key focus in 2024/25 was on further improving learner outcomes.

FT FE outcomes have further improved to 76.4% for 2024/25 and we forecast UHI Inverness will therefore continue to be one of Scotland's best performing colleges for FT FE provision. The success rates for HNC and HND learners also rose to 76.8% in 2024/25, an increase of 8.4% on the previous year, with a corresponding drop in withdrawals and partial success.

Based on the latest published sector benchmark data (if everything else was equal) our HN successful outcomes in 2024/25 are 9.9% above the benchmark, ranking UHI Inverness as the top performing college in Scotland for HN provision - see Excellence in Learning, Teaching & Assessment - Strategic leadership of learning and teaching.

As an organisation with a mature and robust approach to quality improvement and enhancement, UHI Inverness is critically aware of the interconnected nature of the factors which lead to our overall success. What follows provides an evaluation of some of the key aspects of our practice and a forward-looking action plan to support further improvement.

# 1. Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

## Academic standards and awarding

### External Verification Outcomes

Analysis of the outcomes of external verification across all awarding bodies accrediting our programmes showed almost all subject areas verified in 2024/25 received high confidence ratings. This reflects the strength and consistency of our delivery.

Verification reports highlighted examples of good practice across all criteria, with a high number recognised in:

- + **Learner development and support**
- + **Learner access to assessors**
- + **Assessment and internal verification procedures**

These areas consistently received positive recognition from external verifiers in 2024/25, highlighting our commitment to high-quality learning and assessment practices.

Where recommendations were made, teams ensured these were discussed and acted upon to further improve academic standards.

## Strategic leadership of learning and teaching

Our Quality Enhancement Plan contained several initiatives to increase the retention and attainment of provision at SCQF level 8 and below. These initiatives are reported here and within the Supporting Learner Success section.

The variety of improvement initiatives impacted positively on learner outcomes. FEFT outcomes saw a significant improvement in partial success in 2024/25 to 8.6%, from 11.2% in the previous year. Success rates rose to 76.4%, a marginal increase from the previous year and exceeding the latest published sector benchmark (2023/24), of 67.1%, by 9.3%.

Further education part time (FEPT) learner success rates in 2024/25 also improved to 86.6%, 6.2% above the latest published sector benchmark.





### Evaluative Review of HN Programme Performance

As part of our ongoing data analysis for academic year 2023/24, we saw a concerning drop in success across several HN programmes, where successful outcomes fell below national benchmarks. While our FE provision demonstrated notable KPI improvements, this insight prompted a strategic shift for 2024/25 and broadening our focus to include targeted enhancement of HN provision.

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
HN FT UHI Inverness	64.7%	66.7%	68.4%	76.8%
<b>HN National Benchmark</b>	<b>67.1%</b>	<b>69.7%</b>	<b>66.9%</b>	

Unlike FE programmes, HNs offer limited flexibility in curriculum design and assessment structure. This constraint necessitated a more focused approach, centred on collaborative engagement with curriculum teams to raise awareness of specific in-year improvement opportunities.

### Key Actions and Impact

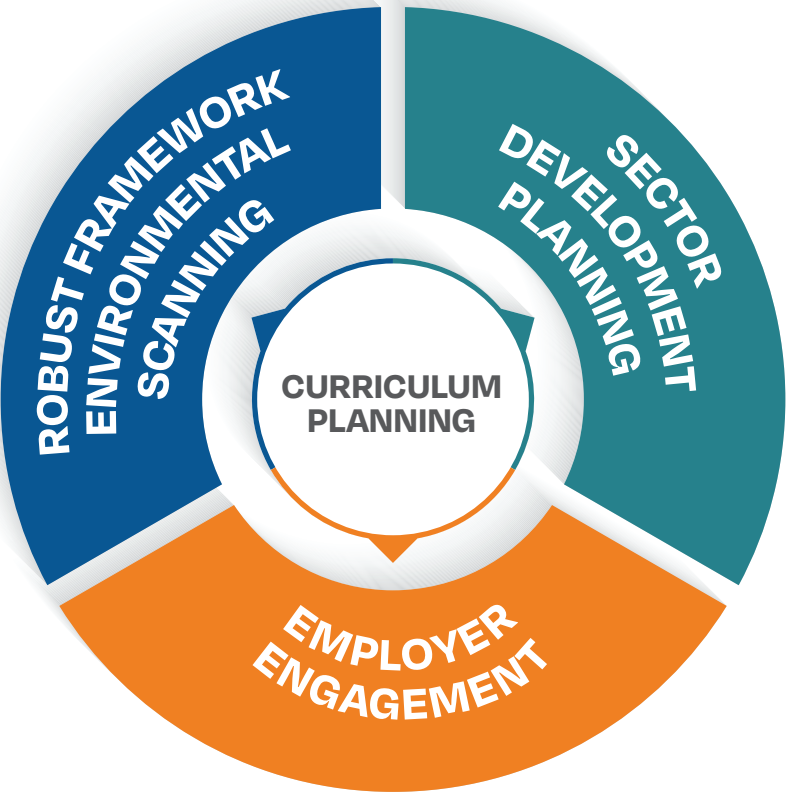
- + **A granular trend analysis of HN performance was conducted in 2023/24, disaggregating centre-level KPIs by Education Scotland sectors. Curriculum teams were tasked with further analysis at programme level, formulating targeted improvement plans for 2024/25.**
- + **HN programmes were integrated into our On Trend review process, designed to drive in-year improvements in retention and attainment. These interventions contributed to an overall 8.4% uplift in overall FT HN success, with KPIs surpassing the national benchmark by 9.9% by year-end.**
- + **High-performing HN programmes were identified through sector-level data analysis, and best practices were shared through targeted sector visits to support peer learning and professional development.**
- + **A proactive approach to early identification of learners at risk of early or further withdrawal enabled timely interventions. As a result:**
  - ✓ **Overall retention improved by 3.7%**
  - ✓ **Partial success rates improved by 4.4%**
  - ✓ **Overall successful outcomes increased by 8.4%**

### Forward Focus

This evaluative cycle has reinforced the value of data-driven decision-making and cross-team collaboration in enhancing HN performance. The strategic extension of our improvement framework to HN provision has already yielded measurable gains, and ongoing analysis in 2025/26 will support sustained progress and responsiveness to emerging trends.

### Curriculum planning, design and delivery

#### Curriculum Planning and Innovation: Strategic Evaluation and Impact



Our curriculum planning processes are well-established and underpinned by a robust framework of environmental scanning, sector development planning, and employer engagement.

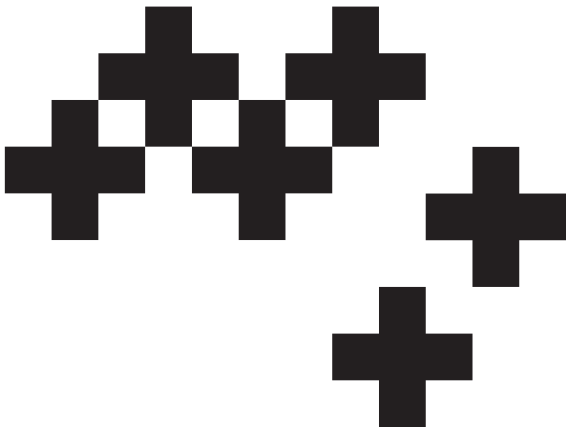
These inputs ensure new programme developments are not only responsive to industry needs but are also introduced in a timely, measured, and well-supported manner through a rigorous programme approval process.

Equally, programmes deemed no longer fit for purpose are systematically withdrawn through a managed process. Prospective learners are notified in advance and guided toward suitable alternative pathways, ensuring continuity of opportunity and learner confidence.

#### Innovation in Practice: HNC Pilot Programme

In 2024/25, we launched a pilot HNC initiative involving 21 senior pupils from 7 secondary schools across the region as part of our strategy to widen access to HE. This innovative approach, across 12 different HNC programmes, has provided an accelerated pathway into HE and has fast tracked access into year 2 of a relevant degree or GA programme. 95% of the senior school pupil participants successfully completed their programme, demonstrating strong academic engagement and capability, and 57% progressed to further HND, GA, or degree-level study, 47% of whom will remain in UHI Inverness.

This pilot not only validated the academic potential of school-based HNC delivery but also highlighted its value in accelerating learner progression and widening participation to non-traditional groups who may not have considered progression into university as a viable option. In 2025/26 we have increased our enrolments to include 27 school pupils spanning 10 different HNCs and see this as a continued area of strategic growth.



Learning environment, resources and technologies

The strategic lens for 2024/25 focused on 2 key initiatives in the technologies space: the transition from Webex to MS Teams, and further development opportunities in the Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) space.

In semester 1, the UHI partnership transitioned to a new platform for online teaching representing a significant change for both staff and continuing learners. This transition required a comprehensive package of staff professional development and support for learners. Accessible and comprehensive training materials, including concise, user-friendly guides for both staff and learners, meant the digital transition led to minimal learner disruption and 85% of staff reporting the transition had been managed extremely effectively or effectively.

IP

Digital Skills

Back to UHI Inverness Ho...

Back to Professional Deve...

Home - Digital Skills

AI - Academic Staff Prom...

AI - Prof Services Prompt ...

AI To Support Profession...

Brightspace Guidance

Creating Accessible resou...

DLL Training Catalogue

JISC Discovery Tool

Other Technology Guidan...

PD Events Calendar


Semester & New Staff Hub

Teaching with MS Teams


Recycle bin

Brightspace, Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) guidance for setting you up for 2025/26


Guidance for Brightspace for setting you up for 2025/26




Access your 2025/26 Brightspace module




Brightspace - Copying content from one module to another




Brightspace - Add a student to a module (FE/HN only)




Brightspace - How to delete a folder/document.




Creating Brightspace Sections for Separate MS Teams Classes and Studen



Remove student/lecturer accidentally enrolled on in Brightspace




Visit Brightspace Guidance for more help




Visit here to see how to make your resources accessible

Brightspace and Teaching Using MS Teams Classes - Guidance for setting you up for 2025/26


Getting ready with MS Teams to teach online




MS Teams Getting Started



MS Teams - Change your icon/tile image



Creating Brightspace Sections for Separate MS Teams Classes and Studen



Visit Teaching with MS Teams for more help

13

Generative AI – upskilling to keep ahead of the curve

A comprehensive programme of professional development has been developed for all staff about the use of GenAI, encompassing interactive, experimental sessions that have enabled staff to build confidence in its application. These sessions have been underpinned by the development of a resources and toolkit page, accessible to all staff. The sessions for lecturers have been mapped to the GTCS standards, and those for professional services staff to the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) Building Digital Capabilities framework.

Staff have been supported to explore the possibilities and pitfalls, such as data privacy and ethical considerations, and shown how to make informed decisions about when to use GenAI responsibly. As a result of this work they can confidently and ethically utilise GenAI in their everyday practice.

Regular updates on using GenAI are communicated to staff via briefings, team meetings and training sessions. This proactive approach means staff are actively engaged in the world of GenAI and are equipped to support learners to use it responsibly and ethically and to develop the skills they will need in the workplace.

UHI Inverness is seen as being at the forefront of GenAI practice and has worked with the College Development Network (CDN) to design and deliver sessions for 100 sector staff on a range of topics including designing lesson plans, materials and assessments; and tools and techniques to engage learners with GenAI.

Feedback on the programme was very positive from staff across the sector:

**‘Really good start to AI tools and how they can be used in class with learners.’**

**‘Very relevant and has given me the confidence to explore this further for myself and with my learners.’**



## Professional development

**123**

Lecturers are now registered with GTCS

A further 12 lecturers completed their TQFE and 6 completed the PDA Teaching Practice



**48**  
managers



engaged with the Collaborative Leaders Programme



were supported to undertake additional qualifications including degrees, masters, doctorates and PhDs



staff were funded to research work related topics to enhance the student or staff experience

UHI Inverness continue to prioritise strategic investment in staff professional development throughout 2024/25, recognising its direct impact on learner experience and outcomes. Our Professional Development Pathways, detailed in last year's SEAP, are underpinned by our Professional Development policy and a culture of continuous learning across the organisation. 2024/25 had a focus on key themes including:

- + **Lecturing excellence:** Commitment to General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration ensures pedagogy remains current. Our enhanced two-day induction equips all new staff, many with no prior teaching experience, to deliver high-quality learning. Feedback confirms increased confidence and engagement strategies.
- + **Leadership culture:** advanced skills in managing neurodiverse and hybrid teams through our Collaborative Leaders programme for all managers.
- + **Research culture:** investment in our research culture through our two staff research schemes, supported by visiting professors and research centres.
- + **The changing learner:** focussed lecturer professional development sessions on practical strategies for classroom management and fostering inclusive classrooms, boosting staff confidence and learner experience.
- + **Work-based learning:** a suite of assessor workshops addressed planning, reviews, meta-skills, and support needs, reflecting our growing work-based provision.
- + **National priorities:** Staff engaged in a rolling programme of mandatory training in Trauma-Informed Practice and PREVENT.

Our targeted investment ensures staff feel equipped, supported, and empowered, leading to measurable impact on student learner experience and outcomes.





## 2. Supporting learner success

### Achieving positive outcomes for every learner

In 2024/25 we had a significant focus on our equality, diversity and inclusion, tying in with the publication of our 2025-27 Equalities report and the adoption of the new national equality outcomes. The analysis and actions around achieving positive outcomes for every learner will not be duplicated here in this report, but instead the link to our [Equalities report can be found here](#).

A deeper analysis of learner group data in 2024/25 and continuing this current academic year, through the well-established monthly data presentations, survey and KPI analysis, has led to a more granular level focus and a subsequent positive impact on the outcomes of key learner groups.

The SFC publishes data on outcomes for all enrolments over 160 hours, FE and HE sectors combined; however, for colleges in the UHI Partnership the data includes FE learners only. The latest sector benchmark published data is for 2023/24 – the below chart shows this alongside the comparative UHI Inverness data across key groups and across key measures.

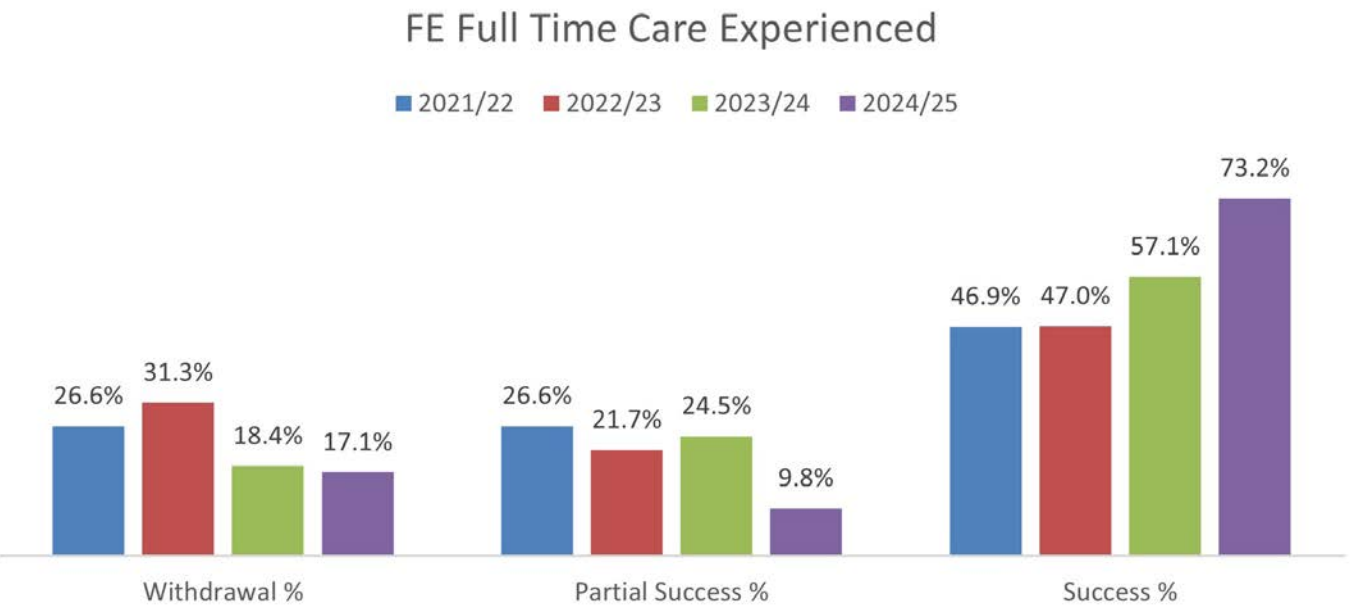
Our learners' successful outcomes continue to improve, and in 2024/25 are above the latest Sector Benchmark for Disability, Ethnic Minority and Deprived areas.



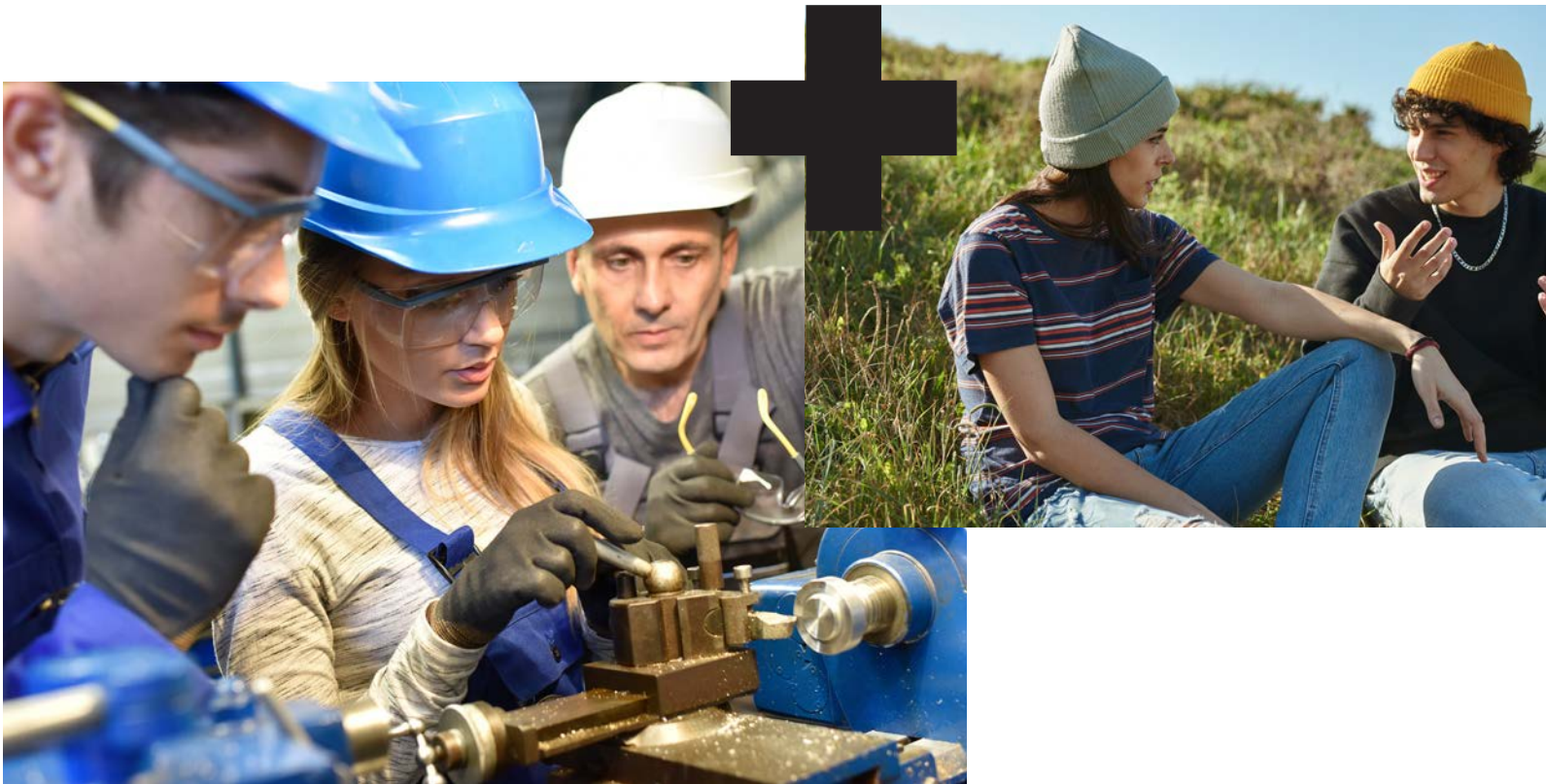
Significant progress was also observed in 2024/25 in the successful outcomes of FT FE learners with care experience compared to the previous year:

- ✓ **Learner withdrawal rates decreased by 1.3%, reflecting improved retention.**
- ✓ **Partial success outcomes improved by 14.7%, indicating stronger academic performance.**
- ✓ **Overall successful outcomes rose by 16.1%, marking a notable uplift in attainment for this priority group.**

Despite our positive outcomes, it should be noted that care experienced learners account for a small proportion of FT FE enrolments, and the data is therefore more susceptible to fluctuation year-on-year.



Despite significant improvement, we nonetheless recognise the continued gap in outcomes and the need for ongoing focus on this priority learner group. The sector benchmark for 2023/24, which includes HN learners at other colleges, indicates 60.5% of care experienced learners studying over 160 hours were successful. UHI Inverness data indicates 63.8% successful outcomes across this measure making us 3.3% ahead of the sector benchmark. Our work to support learners with care experience will not be duplicated here in this report, but instead the link to our Promise report can be found here.





## Wellbeing, inclusion and access to learner support

### Trauma Informed College

In recognition of the changing needs of learners, UHI Inverness has participated in the CDN Trauma Informed College programme. In 2024/25, a dedicated steering group was established to lead the integration of trauma-sensitive approaches across the organisation. This work aims to create environments that are not only physically safe but also emotionally supportive for all learners and staff.

A review of our physical campus through the lens of trauma has been conducted and this reflective exercise led to the identification of clear, actionable improvements to enhance inclusivity, emotional safety, and wellbeing. This has included the creation of a student quiet room and a mental health drop-in facility within The Bothy. The latter has proved to be invaluable as a calm, accessible space for those in most need of urgent support and has helped to minimise waiting lists and referrals to the Wellbeing team.

To date, 41% of staff have completed the online Turas training programme, used across all local authorities to build awareness and deepen understanding of trauma-informed principles. This area of work will be an ongoing priority as part of our wider strategies to support positive outcomes for all learners.

### Systems Change through Data-Driven Insights

In 2024/25, 36.3% of all learners declared either a disability or mental health issue. This represented a 4.1% increase on the previous year and an increase of 7.8% since 2022/23. This led to a subsequent 25.5% increase in the number of learners requiring a Personalised Learning Support Plan (PLSP) in 2024/25. In response to the growing complexity of learner needs, the college made a strategic investment in additional staffing resources to ensure learner needs are met and to support positive outcomes for all learners. Our data analysis also shows not all individuals disclose an additional support need at an early point in their applicant journey nor at enrolment. 8.2% of those who did not disclose at an early stage later came forward during the course of the academic year.

In response to this, an in-year change was made in 2024/25 to our processes to mitigate the risk of individuals with undisclosed additional support needs being overlooked. A universal outreach strategy has been introduced whereby all learners now receive a proactive offer of an appointment for learning support, regardless of their initial disclosure status. This inclusive approach ensures learners who may have felt inhibited to disclose, or unaware of available support during their applicant journey, can be picked up at an early point.

To mitigate against waiting lists, we have also developed an online booking system to enable learners to schedule PLSP appointments at their convenience. Feedback from Educational Support Advisors indicates this system has significantly reduced missed appointments, improved engagement, and facilitated more timely support interventions.

Early indicators suggest this approach is yielding positive results, with 777 PLSPs completed year-to-date (2025/26) compared to 928 for the full academic year 2024/25. This upward trend reflects both increased awareness and improved accessibility to learning support services.

## Context and community - meeting the changing needs of learners

In 2024/25, we built on the success of the Learning Assistant pilot which was introduced the previous year. Whilst the pilot outcomes were very positive and contributory to an improvement in our overall outcomes, our evaluation showed the intervention was not early enough in the academic year. In 2024/25, the timing was brought forward, and we deployed Learning Assistants at an earlier point, purposefully placing them to support programmes with the highest level of need.

- + **Learning Assistants have provided targeted support with:**
- + **Facilitating and managing reasonable adjustments, particularly during assessments**
- + **Assisting with classroom management and helping learners stay focused and on task**
- + **Supporting the development of study skills and helping learners catch up on missed work**
- + **Enhancing learners' comprehension of key concepts, knowledge, and skills**
- + **Delivering subject-specific support aligned with curriculum requirements**

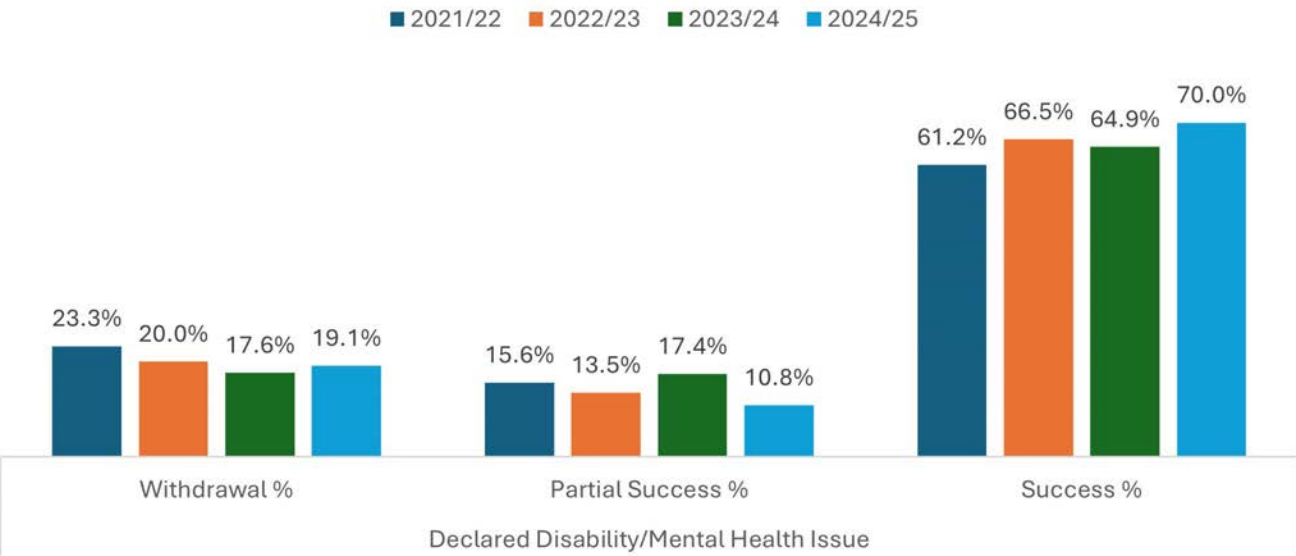
Their role has been pivotal in supporting an overall improvement in FT FE learner outcomes but more specifically can be correlated with the significant improvement in the outcomes of learners with a declared disability or mental health issue compared to the previous year:

- ✓ **6.6% improvement in partial success rates indicating stronger academic performance**
- ✓ **5.1% improvement in successful outcomes, reflecting the positive impact of tailored, in-class support**





FE Full Time Declared Disability/Mental Health Issue



An evaluation of lecturer feedback highlights the overwhelmingly positive additionality levered through the Learning Assistant role, with many appreciating their ability to provide individualised support to learners while enabling lecturers to maintain focus on whole-class instruction.

One lecturer noted the presence of Learning Assistant has ‘transformed the classroom dynamic, allowing for more inclusive and responsive teaching’.

Learner feedback has also reinforced the effectiveness of this support mechanism and one learner shared:

**“I like how they’ve helped me plan what I’ve got to do. I take notes but they don’t make sense sometimes, but the Learning Assistant has helped me make sense of my notes”.**

This initiative demonstrates the value of early, targeted support in fostering learner confidence, engagement, and achievement.



Apprenticeship Growth and Quality Enhancement

UHI Inverness has significantly expanded and enhanced its apprenticeship provision and is the leading provider of work-based learning in the Highlands. Delivering training to over 1,300 Foundation, Modern, and Graduate Apprentices, the college is now one of Scotland’s largest providers of work-based education.

GAs have seen exceptional growth, with enrolments rising from just 13 in 2019/20 to a projected 250+ in 2025/26. This expansion has been matched by a steady improvement in learner outcomes, with successful completion rates increasing from 88.9% in 2021/22 to 92.9% in 2024/25. Such positive outcomes reflect programmes not only being closely aligned to industry needs but also reflect a high level of understanding and expertise in delivering within a work-based context.

2024/25 marked a turning point for our MA provision and UHI Inverness implemented a suite of targeted actions leading to a notable improvement in achievement rates. These included:

- ✓ **Strengthening the onboarding process and learning support**
- ✓ **Closer collaboration with employers to align training with workplace expectations**
- ✓ **A strategic focus on assessor development through structured training and tailored professional development**

These measures have underpinned a greater consistency in assessment practices, the deepening of sector-specific expertise, and positive learner experiences evidenced through learner and employer feedback. Through a sustained focus on quality enhancement, we have continued to deliver impactful, industry-relevant training that meets the evolving needs of both learners and employers across our region.

Our high-quality provision and employer engagement have been recognised through, for example, external verification visits:

**‘Centre Staff are meeting with the employer at the outset...ensuring that the apprentice will experience the required range of work experiences to enable the successful completion of their portfolio. Furthermore, this ensures that the employer is aware of how the qualification is evidenced and achieved and the employer is...included in the whole process.’**

**Of the programme design, one apprentice explained:**

**‘Experience gained with a local firm for a year prior to getting onto the SECTT programme gave me the confidence to cope with the practical aspect of the course.’**

The quality of our work-based learning will continue to be a focus given the growing importance of this aspect of our provision.

Being responsive to employer needs, skills development and lifelong learning

Further embedding skills development across our curriculum has been fundamental to the success and progression of our learners. These enhancements reflect our strategic commitment to embedding employability and transferable skills across the curriculum. Learner feedback highlights the critical nature of skills development and 92% of learners in 2024/25 reported feeling their programme of study helps them to develop the skills required for the workplace. The examples provided below illustrate this commitment.

**Lifelong Learning -  
MULTIPLY programme**

The MULTIPLY programme, funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, has been pivotal in supporting lifelong learning, improving labour market opportunities by helping more adult learners to build competence in numeracy skills and qualifications. Through a successful partnership between UHI Inverness and UHI NWH, the programme launched in 2023/24 and concluded in 2024/25, delivering life-changing results for the 286 adult learners who participated:

- ✓ **157 completed courses designed to boost confidence with everyday numeracy, including parents eager to support their children’s learning.**
- ✓ **129 completed money management courses, empowering them to take control of their finances and make informed decisions.**

The longevity of the project continues through the creation of dedicated, open-access online numeracy resources developed in partnership with Lexedio. This ensures learning remains accessible to everyone, anytime, free of charge:

- + [\*\*Building number confidence: Time\*\*](#)
- + [\*\*Building number confidence: Budgeting\*\*](#)
- + [\*\*Building number confidence: Graphical data\*\*](#)

**Meeting Forestry Industry Needs**

In 2024/25, our Scottish School of Forestry developed and delivered the Forestry Operations New Entrants Scheme to support new entrants into the sector. Funded by Par Equity and Aviva, the programme has supported new entrants in developing the practical skills and knowledge they need for a career in the Forestry sector. All participants successfully completed the programme which will be reviewed ahead of it being delivered again to meet the ongoing needs of this industry.

**Developing Employability Skills through  
our Learner Engagement Programme**

The Learner Engagement Reps (SER) pilot launched in 2023/24 and was further embedded in 2024/25 with a number of key enhancements implemented to extend the reach of the programme. The programme provided learners with practical in-house work experience through genuine partnership working with college staff on a choice of up to nine different role types according to their interest.

There were a number of enhancements to the SER programme after the pilot year including:

- ✓ **Linking the tasks SERs completed to meta-skills they used and adding in a reflective task to their end of year Record of Work Experience**
- ✓ **Introducing peer support roles (learner-to-learner) in both our Digital Skills Support and Wellbeing Ambassador roles**
- ✓ **Widening promotion to learners through business cards, posters, and social media content**

The programme saw some engagement during its soft launch in 2023/24, with three learners successfully completing the programme in the pilot - one of whom was named UHI Inverness Learner of the Year for their outstanding contribution. 2024/25 experienced strong engagement with 26 learners signing up and 15 of those fully completing the programme and gaining exceptional employability skills. The news post provides a summary of the success of the 2024/25 programme: News - Positive impact of learner volunteers recognised at UHI Inverness campus event- UHI Inverness

With clear evidence the SER role benefits both the skills development of learners and of the staff leads, we have further increased our promotional campaign and hope to grow participation further in 2025/26.

**3. Enhancement & Quality Culture**

**Institution wide culture of  
assurance,improvement and  
enhancement**

We recognise the way data is used effectively across the organisation to inform on-going improvement and this continues to be a key strength. This year’s highlights include:

- ✓ **An enhanced review of ‘at risk’ learners throughout the year during, for example, management meetings**
- ✓ **A focus on the accuracy of data supplied to Professional Service teams**
- ✓ **A more granular focus on specific learner group data in monthly data presentation meetings**

2024/25 represented the second year of our data driven On Trend programme, which has now become embedded in the quality cycle. On Trend is a programme level peer review process aimed at driving in-year improvements for those programmes with stubbornly low KPIs, helping teams gain a deeper understanding of the issues so that improvement solutions can be identified at this level. This focussed and targeted approach led to improvements in the success rates for 4 out of the 5 programmes involved during 2023/24 and 4 out of the 6 programmes involved during 2024/25.

Participants stated a range of benefits about engagement with the On Trend programme, including the opportunity to speak about the challenging aspects of their programme, to share practice and to test out new ideas with colleagues from other programmes. Staff from the On Trend review teams also summarised benefits to their own practice such as widening their knowledge about different programme types, gaining a deeper understanding of aspects of best practice, and boosting their own and teams’ enthusiasm. This data driven quality enhancement mechanism will continue in 2025/26.

**Institution-led review  
and action planning**

As part of our approach to institution-led quality review, we undertook a significant evaluation in 2024/25 of our Personal Development Advisor (PDA) model, which has been in place since June 2019. In the years since its introduction, we have witnessed increasing challenges to learner retention and successful outcomes, and our data and national reports show learners are presenting with:

- + **more complex social, emotional and learning support needs**
- + **are increasingly challenged by on-going external factors such as the cost-of-living crisis and our buoyant local labour market**
- + **lower levels of resilience**

Whilst our support model has been very successful to this point, contributing to excellent retention and success rates which are now amongst the best in the sector for FT FE, we are cognisant of the need for the model to evolve. A set of recommendations came out of the review including:

- + **Refresh of PDA activities and responsibilities and the role embedded further within their curriculum area**
- + **Development of a workload allocation tool to balance caseloads**
- + **ICT software solutions to maximise time to support students**
- + **Restructure of the PDA workshops and introduction of some early in-class contact**
- + **Standardisation across communications and approaches**
- + **An opportunity to trial our support model within our HN provision**

These recommendations will be implemented in 2025/26 alongside ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the adapted model.



Sector Enhancement Activity  
and Outward Focus

Maintaining our success demands more than an inward focus - it requires actively learning from others and embedding a culture of curiosity and outward thinking across every part of our organisation. In 2024/25, a series of sector visits were planned to other colleges to support this endeavour. Curriculum managers used the SFC College Learner Outcome Benchmarking Tool to identify specific UHI Inverness HN programmes which were performing below the benchmark. Through this analysis, each curriculum area identified colleges where the same programmes had stronger performance. A total of 10 colleges were visited by curriculum managers and some key professional services managers. The visits provided opportunities for professional learning, collaboration, and sharing of best practice.

Sharing insight across our managers was key to maximising the learning gained during the sector visits and external engagement. This was facilitated through our monthly Student Journey and Enhancement committee and our 'Out and About' agenda item. This gave a forum for each area to provide any feedback from external engagements, not just on specific curriculum insights but also on any wider practices to enhance our work. Valuable learning was shared about, for example, learner recruitment and selection processes; attendance and funding processes; use of ICT software solutions; work placements; and approaches to project-based learning.

As highlighted in our previous SEAP, we recognise that UHI Inverness in turn also plays a pivotal role in shaping developments, consistently contributes valuable insights, and is acknowledged as a leader in innovative practice. Our 2023/24 SEAP was recognised as worthy to be shared across the sector to support best practice, and we were delighted to be asked to contribute to the CDN sector wide toolkit highlighting good practice in self-evaluation: [All courses | LearnOnline](#) Tertiary Quality Resources.

The opportunity gave our staff team time to reflect on our SEAP journey and make further enhancements for the current iteration. UHI Inverness also took part in one of the tertiary institution visits led by Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) in 2024/25, focusing on sparqs' two key sector resources - the Student Learning Experience model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership - helping to capture the ways these resources are being used across the sector. Taking part in this kind of activity provided an internal benchmark for our own performance as well as sharing our practice with others. The informal feedback received during the visit was encouraging, and demonstrated the enhancement implemented to date as being effective: [sparqs Institutional Visits 2025 Report.pdf](#)



4. Student engagement and partnership

Students as partners in their learning experience

Our Student Partnership Agreement (SPA), co-created by staff and learners, continues to be well embedded in the culture of the organisation and drives the ethos of learners being actively engaged as true partners in their learning experience. Visual displays of the SPA are used throughout the college campuses, in staff, learner and officer induction materials, on My Day and through our Quality Enhancement Tracker. This provides a consistent structure to our collective partnership working.

The Highlands and Islands Students' Association (HISA) officers contribute to strategic discussions through their membership of internal college committees and the Board of Management. Enhancement themes from our SPA are annually co-selected by HISA officers and UHI Inverness staff to inform the strategic focus for the forthcoming year, ensuring learner voice and data drives our decision making. In 2024/25 the themes included Learner Voice in Partnership and Collective Responsibility.

Key successes in 2024/25 included:

- ✓ **Positive outcomes from discussions with transport company representatives, leading to a noticeable improvement in bus services to and from campus**
- ✓ **Establishing a 'food' focus group to inform changes to catering services on campus and leading to improved satisfaction**
- ✓ **A consistent approach to engagement at the Scottish School of Forestry by HISA leading to an improved connection with learners and an increase in learner representative numbers from this area**
- ✓ **Relocation of the HISA office into the heart of the building leading to more visibility**

The need for a cross college Collective Responsibility campaign was identified following the end of year survey in 2023/24 which highlighted some concerns about, for example, rubbish around the campus and a lack of respect for some areas of the campus environment. During 2024/25, HISA had representation in a college wide short-life working group which analysed the key issues and devised an action plan. This led to various actions including:

- ✓ **A new cross campus Respect campaign**
- ✓ **The launch of new signage and visuals**
- ✓ **Changes to the learner code of conduct and expectations upon staff to challenge any inappropriate learner behaviours**

The impact of the campaign will be evaluated in the 2025/26 SEAP.

In the final all-learner survey of 2024/25, the response to the SFC mandatory questions showed a further improvement on the previous year and overall satisfaction was very high at 96%. All questions demonstrated the highest level of learner satisfaction in the last three years:

- ✓ **Almost all learners (91%) indicated they received quality feedback which helped inform their future learning and developed their knowledge and skills for the workplace.**
- ✓ **Almost all learners (90%) felt they could influence their course learning.**
- ✓ **Most learners (89%) indicated the way they are taught helps them learn.**

The NSS showed similar themes and high satisfaction rates in UHI Inverness and across the UHI partnership which ranked us 4th in Scotland. Some aspects of the learning experience have been identified from both sets of data as areas of focus in 2025/26, including some aspects of pedagogy.



Learner Voice – every learner, every place, every level

During 2024/25 we continued to build on the initiatives and processes outlined in last year’s SEAP. The Course Committee model (CCM) continues to be a strong feature of our quality enhancement approach, with learners being willing and active participants at most of the meetings in 2024/25, and numbers ranging from 1 – 25 at any one session. We identified in last year’s SEAP a need to explore the most effective way to ensure learner voices are heard, and the changing nature of learner engagement which has been reflected in ongoing challenges in recruiting Student Voice Representatives (SVRs).

With a renewed focus on SVR recruitment in 2024/25, the Inverness HISA Officers and Campus Coordinator attended over 60 class inductions to raise the profile of HISA and to recruit SVRs. By the end of the year there were 121 SVRs, with 71 having completed full training. Whilst we recognise the increase since the previous year, we also recognise that further exploration is needed around whether this is the most meaningful and primary way of capturing the learner voice and what other approaches may be more effective in informing further improvement to student experience and outcomes.

CCMs are the key conduit for quality learner engagement with course teams, the services which directly impact learner experience, and with employer stakeholders. The CCM provides key

opportunities across the year for learners to shape their experience and inform in-year changes about their course and the wider aspects of campus life. This approach has just as much value and impact in directing opportunities for learner voice as the SVR role does. The focus for the forthcoming year will be the consistent attendance of employers at all CCMs to gain this valuable insight.

CCMs are supplemented by Our Learning Conversations which seek to explore programme themes with learners over time. Groups of learners, staff and objective representatives from across the curriculum and professional services, take time to discuss emerging issues or themes identified from a wide range of evidence. This mechanism provides an additional way to have a meaningful discussion with the learner body.

Our postgraduate research (PGR) learners are hosted by two research institutes, the Centre for Living Sustainability and the Institute for Biodiversity and Freshwater Conservation, and a PGR Coordinator provides additionality to the centrally provided support and supervisory roles of the UHI Graduate School. The newly established website for the Centre for Living Sustainability acts to complement an active seminar series for PGR learners which offers a forum for knowledge exchange (KE) and discussion among learners and research staff, including staff aspiring to research.



Learner Expectations

In 2024/25 we continued to work in partnership with sparqs, through their Learner Outcomes Project, and as part of a group of colleges critically examining how learner engagement can positively influence learner outcomes, particularly for specific learner groups. This collaboration led to the development of our standardised Definitions Toolkit, designed to bring clarity and consistency to course delivery descriptions.

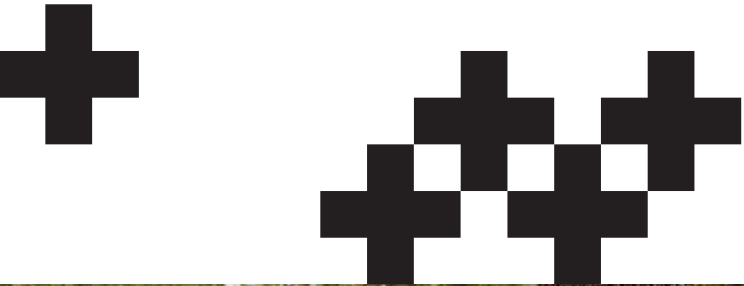
Learner feedback, especially in the post-Covid context, revealed a persistent gap between expectations and actual course experiences. Ambiguous and inconsistent terminology was a recurring theme in complaints and withdrawals, underscoring the need for a more transparent and learner-centred approach.

Our aim was to co-create clear, accessible course definitions with staff and learners. This would not only support prospective learners in making informed choices but also enable more effective analysis of course delivery across institutions.

We anticipated various positive impacts including supporting learners onto the right programme for them, a reduction in withdrawals and complaints, enhanced satisfaction and success rates, and streamlined data analysis for staff.

Significant progress has been made in this development. A sector terminology audit revealed significant variation and lack of clarity in terms used; learner feedback confirmed many courses did not meet initial expectations; focus groups involving learners from UHI Inverness and Borders College across SCQF 3-12 provided valuable insights into preferred language and structure; terms were categorised under “Where, How, When” to help address key gaps in current course descriptions; and a draft toolkit was developed and circulated for feedback which received positive engagement from stakeholders.

We are now at an advanced stage and are aligning the toolkit terms with UHI’s course information pages. Early feedback suggests the toolkit has strong potential to improve transparency and the understanding of applicants, leading to an anticipated improvement in learner retention and satisfaction across the whole UHI partnership.





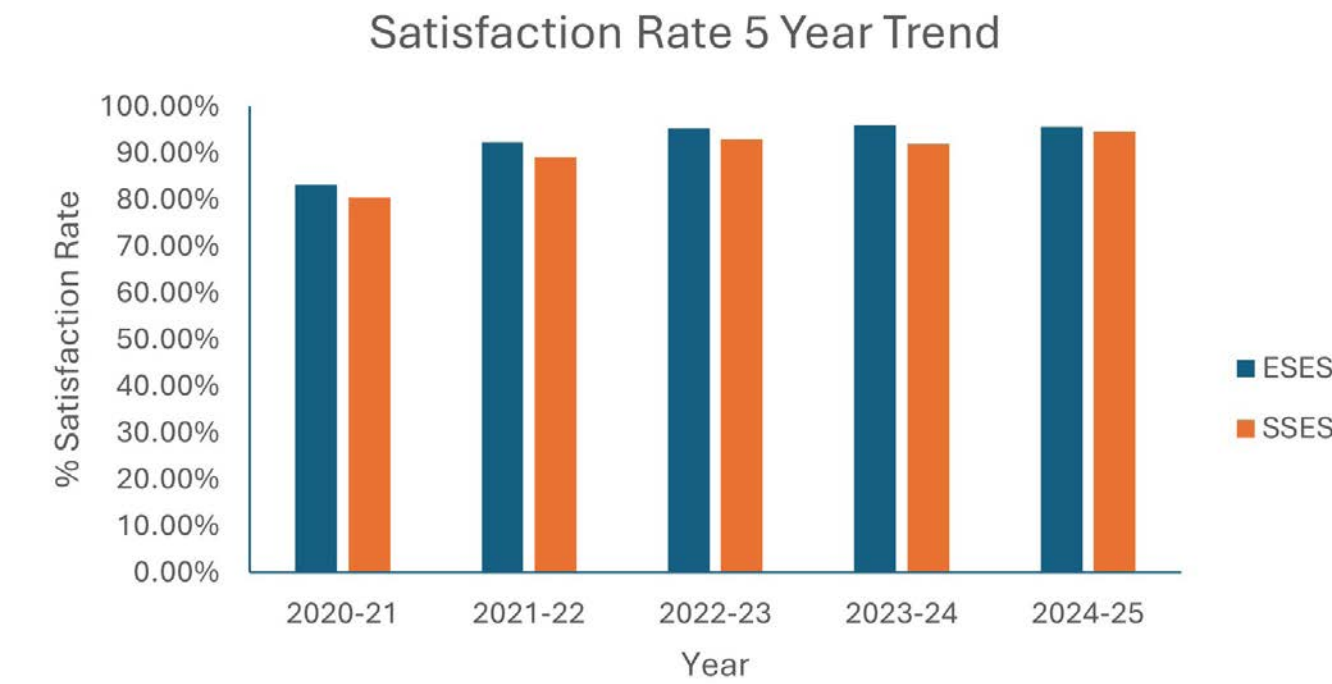
Responsiveness to learner feedback

Over the past three years, we have maintained learner engagement and participation, evidenced by positive response rates across our all-learner surveys, the ESES and SSSES:

	ESES	SSSES	NSS
2022-23	55%	53%	68%
2023-24	63%	57%	67%
2024-25	61%	53%	64%

This response rate is largely attributable to our approach to collaborating with a learner-chosen charity partner to incentivise learners to complete the survey. UHI Inverness NSS response rates are comparable at 64%.

The college has seen high rates of learner satisfaction in both the ESES and SSSES in 2024/25. The results from the SSSES show the highest levels of satisfaction in the last three years for all main questions.

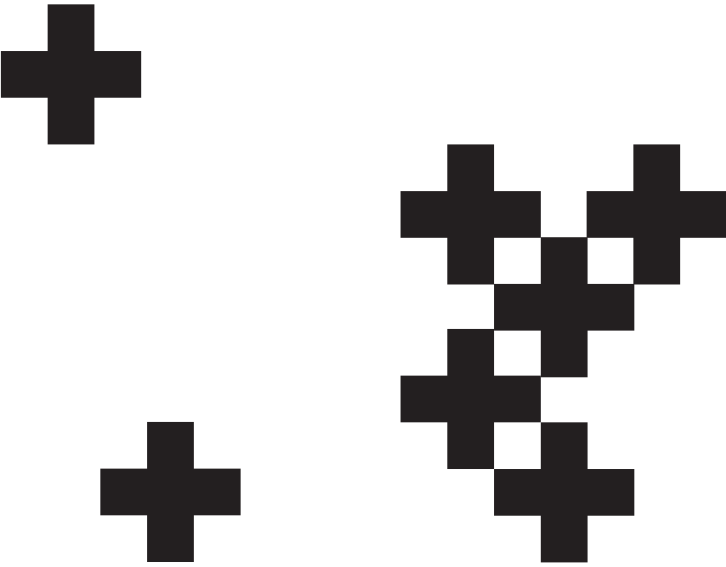


Level	Satisfaction %								
	2022-23			2023-24			2024-25		
	ESES	SSSES	NSS	ESES	SSSES	NSS	ESES	SSSES	NSS
FE	96.36%	94.21%		97.30%	94.15%		96.70%	95.62%	
HE	93.55%	90.48%	81.00%	94.14%	86.89%	82.00%	94.00%	92.65%	87.00%

Survey satisfaction results continue to show a slight difference between FE and HE learner satisfaction, FE learners are generally more satisfied (95.62%) than HE learners (92.65%), compared to the sector at 94.9% and 88.4% respectively. Overall, HE learners are much less likely to feel part of a learner community and have a lower sense of community and belonging. HE learners also highlight aspects of their learning and teaching experience and opportunities for the learner voice which could be further developed.

This differential in satisfaction can be attributed in part to networked provision where organisation and management issues are often more complex, cutting across multiple academic partners, and teaching can often be online with no on campus interaction. These are key challenges for us to address with others across the partnership; through implementing the aforementioned Definitions Toolkit to help manage expectations around mode of delivery; and further through our SEAP action plan for 2025/26. In addition, insights from the STEP project will be leveraged to enhance our work around learner community and engagement.

Whilst recognising the continued areas for enhancement, the overarching message from our surveys is that almost all learners are highly satisfied with their overall learner experience and feel their voice is heard.



An External Verifier noted:

**'The college has demonstrated that student input is highly important to their course delivery and their experience...there are extensive opportunities for students to discuss their learning needs through a variety of formal and informal channels.'**



## Action Plan AY 2025/26

The below provides a high-level organisational action plan which is underpinned by a variety of individual workstream plans containing granular level actions

Principle and Area for enhancement or development	Action(s) and planned impact/ outcomes	Milestone(s), target date(s), continuing/ carried forward (c/f)	Responsible/ Lead
<b>Supporting learner success</b> – enabling learner success – wellbeing, inclusion, equality, learner support	Further embed the universal outreach strategy within the PLSP process  <b>Outcome:</b> learners receive access to any required support at the earliest opportunity to support equity of outcomes	Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee	Wellbeing and Learning Support Manager
<b>Supporting learner success</b> – enabling learner success – wellbeing, inclusion, equality, learner support	Further embed the principles of trauma informed practice across the organisation  <b>Outcome:</b> learner satisfaction continues to improve across key measures and across key learner groups	Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee	Trauma Informed Practice Leads
<b>Supporting learner success</b> - achieving positive outcomes for every learner	Maintain and improve learner retention from 2024-25 across FT FE and FT HN programmes – see programme level and subject category targets for retention targets.  <b>Outcome:</b> maintenance of low early and further withdrawal rates across FT FE programmes, and improvement across FT HN programmes	Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee	VP – Curriculum, Learner Experience and Quality
<b>Supporting learner success</b> - achieving positive outcomes for every learner	Maintain and improve attainment rates / successful outcomes on FT FE and FT HN programmes - see programme level and subject category targets for successful outcomes.  <b>Outcome:</b> Improved success rates, with a narrowing of the achievement gap across all learner groups	Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee	VP – Curriculum, Learner Experience and Quality



<b>Enhancement and Quality Culture</b>	<p>Further embed the organisational approach to ILQR</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> wider engagement with ILQR across teams supporting closer alignment to the requirements of the TQEF</p>	Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee	Head of Registry and Quality Enhancement
<b>Student Engagement and Partnership</b>	<p>Work with HISA to further develop the features of the Learner Partnership ambition statement (TQEF)</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> further embed learner partnership working, encompassing the learner voice</p>	Achieved Together meetings	Head of Registry and Quality Enhancement
<b>Student Engagement and Partnership</b>	<p>Further develop student community-building initiatives that promote a sense of student belonging and engagement</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Improved student satisfaction rates in the areas of community and belonging</p>	<p>Monitored through Student Journey and Enhancement Committee</p> <p>Achieved Together meetings</p>	Head of Registry and Quality Enhancement