UHI | INVERNESS

Strategic Plan

2026-2027



Learn how UHI Inverness will have a transformational impact on the development and prospects of the Highlands and Islands region through the provision of excellence in education.

inverness.uhi.ac.uk

OUR PURPOSE

As leaders in tertiary thinking and tertiary delivery, we will have a transformational impact on the development and prospects of the people, communities and economy of the Highlands and Islands.

We will design and deliver an innovative, integrated curriculum that spans all levels and types of qualifications, providing world-class education, training and research with local, national and international sustainable value.

OUR VISION

As an ambitious, bold and creative tertiary institution, we will provide world-class research-informed training and education.

We will provide an excellent experience, tailored to the needs of our students and communities.

Working closely with business, partners and stakeholders, we will support the sustainable and ethical development of the communities of the Highlands and Islands.

VALUES

Be Ambitious - through teamwork and partnership we have a desire and determination to collectively succeed.

Be Bold – we have passion and courage to do what we say we will do and exceed expectations.

Be Creative – we use our collective expertise and imagination to create new things and continuously improve what we do.

OUR COMMITMENTS

We will operate in an environment of mutual respect, behaving professionally at all times;

We will act with integrity, being honest and transparent in our work and putting the interests of our students first;

We will be accountable for our actions, do what we say we will do and exceed expectations;

We will be passionate in our work and in our ambition for our students, our college and our university.

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It’s my pleasure to introduce the Strategic Plan for UHI Inverness for 2026/27 which outlines our aims and our commitment to supporting the continued economic development of our region.

A WARM WELCOME

It is a privilege to introduce the Strategic Plan for UHI Inverness for 2026/2027. It will direct our ambitions to build on our success and deliver world-class education and training.UHI Inverness is at the heart of our community as the region’s main provider of skills and talent development and a key partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands. Our focus is to support our students to gain valuable qualifications and secure rewarding careers, and to play a central role in supporting and contributing to the economic opportunities in the Highlands.

We do so however, with a clear understanding of the wider context in which we operate. The college sector in Scotland faces significant challenges, and these realities require us to be resilient and adaptable.

In navigating uncertainty, we will innovate and move forward with renewed emphasis on creative and accessible teaching, engaging with communities and becoming more enterprising in our activities to strengthen the inclusive and dynamic learning environment we have created.

I hope you will enjoy reading our new plan.

Derek Lewis
Chair of the Board of Management
UHI Inverness



CONTEXT STATEMENT

UHI Inverness is one of the largest partners of UHI, a diverse and flexible tertiary partnership serving our communities and connecting to their needs. Our Strategic Plan for 2026-27 sets out our expectations of how we will develop during the next academic year and how we intend to contribute to the realisation of UHI's strategic vision.



UHI Inverness, as a partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands, is a key provider of tertiary education in the Highlands and provides education and training for approximately 6,000 students and apprentices.

Our provision covers the entirety of the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) from access level one through to doctoral and PhD study at level 12, and as an organisation we pride ourselves on our ability to tailor support to the needs of each student.

Our students enjoy a blended learning experience across three modern campuses that reflect current practice, delivered by staff who have up-to-date skills and industry experience.

Schools, industry, public and private sectors, community and charitable concerns, all contribute to our role as an embedded educational and training provider. UHI Inverness enhances the lives of many, and we recognise the significance of our stakeholders and their ambitions in the education we deliver by working in close partnership with local employers and industry bodies to refresh and adapt our curriculum.

Colleges and universities face a challenging economic climate as we move into the academic year 2026/27, and to counter those challenges we must embrace new opportunities and innovative solutions. We know that building partnerships and collaboration will provide our students with prospects that will allow them to become the dynamic professionals the Highlands need and deserve. At the heart of our plan for the 2026/27 academic year are our students; their potential drives everything we do, and we are committed to delivering high-quality education which supports and inspires learners and equips them with the skills required for rewarding careers.

> **To achieve this, we have widened access to courses and qualifications and ensured our provision reflects both individual aspirations and the needs of our communities and industry.**

Our focus on innovative approaches to learning and diversifying our curriculum has resulted in the introduction of several new courses. We're launching the Highland Pathway to Healthcare: Medicine and Pharmacy. The one-year course is open to sixth-year Highland pupils and the successful students who pass the course are guaranteed an interview at the University of Aberdeen for medicine or at Robert Gordon University for pharmacy. This unique partnership between the University of Aberdeen, RGU and NHS Highland is aimed at overcoming barriers to accessing these specialist degrees.

> **This new course is one of many HNCs which we offer as part of our Schools Programme to sixth-year pupils across the Highlands to accelerate their degree level learning, providing a stepping stone into year two of a degree or a Graduate Apprenticeship when they leave school.**

At UHI Inverness we have embraced work-based learning to meet training and skills demands, and that has led to an unprecedented growth in apprenticeship numbers in recent years. In 2026 we had more than 1,250 apprentices in training, including Foundation Apprentices, Modern Apprentices and Graduate Apprentices and one of our key ambitions is to build on that growth.

These learners are supported by the hundreds of employers and industry body partners, who provide apprenticeships, work placements, guests lectures, equipment and site visits.

As part of our drive to develop our curriculum, we have invested in our campus estate, by introducing new learning spaces such as the Sustainable Construction Centre, the Renewable Energy Training Hub and additional classrooms.

This has also resulted in the development of international study partnerships with universities in the USA and Nepal, and a major employer in West Africa. Our successful partnership with an employer to teach English to their staff in Guinea, has now developed into a large-scale programme to take employees from beginner English to complete proficiency over two and a half years.

We value these global connections; however our most important connection is our relationship with our students, who continue to embrace their learning with enthusiasm and dedication. This is reflected in our excellent student satisfaction and sector leading outcomes. In our student surveys we routinely have student satisfaction which is well ahead of the Scottish average.

In 2024/25, our full-time further education and HN outcomes were ranked within the top three across Scotland's colleges and our HN student retention is the best in Scotland.

As we evolve, we remain committed to ensuring our courses are relevant and responsive to the changing economic needs of our region. We will continue to embrace new technologies and innovations, making sure our teaching is both current and applicable to real-world contexts. We will provide an environment for our students to support their development as well-rounded and responsible members of society.

Our graduates and our people are ambassadors for our brand, which is ambitious, bold, and creative.

Dr Lindsay Snodgrass
Interim Principal and Chief Executive
UHI Inverness

Tertiary Education

STRATEGIC AIM

To increase our reputation and reach by offering a progressive and accessible tertiary curriculum that is relevant and attractive to local, national and international students, and which enables personal development, economic growth and social cohesion.

OBJECTIVES

+ To increasingly be seen as a destination of choice for local, national and international students, supporting inclusive sustainable development and encouraging inward investment.
+ To continue to engage with stakeholders to develop a tertiary curriculum which meets the emerging skills, employment and cultural needs of our communities enabling our region to meet its economic potential.
+ To continue to deliver a stimulating and innovative tertiary curriculum, underpinned by professional best practice and a recognition of our changing world.
+ To continually evolve our tertiary curriculum, to provide flexible opportunities for senior pupils to engage in accelerated degree pathways as part of their Senior Phase.
+ To ensure that our tertiary curriculum equips every student with the attributes and skills, to support their success in learning, life and work.



Organisational Development

STRATEGIC AIM

We will attract and retain talented employees committed to achieving our shared goals. We will continue to foster a supportive, collaborative and dynamic environment where students and staff are inspired to learn and develop. Our high-performance culture will be underpinned by a collaborative leadership model, which empowers teams to delivery and share accountability for outcomes. We will continue to support our workforce to be agile, resilient and responsive to opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

+ To further embed our Talent Management Strategy, which provides a workforce to meet our organisational needs now and into the future.
+ To continue to ensure professional practice of all staff are aligned to sector standards, industry best practice and our values.
+ To maintain opportunities for staff to develop their knowledge and skills to the highest industry and professional standards ensuring they are equipped for an increasingly digital world.
+ To maintain and continue to develop our quality culture, supporting all our staff to take responsibility for delivering excellence.
+ To spearhead initiatives which assist in our continued endeavor to be flexible and agile in a faced paced working environment.





Research & Innovation

STRATEGIC AIM

Research and innovation will define the tertiary environment and have relevance to and impact upon our staff, students and the communities we serve.

OBJECTIVES

+ To continue to work across the UHI partnership to identify research opportunities. .
+ To provide an accessible, engaging and thriving curriculum which is informed by research, innovations and sector leading practices.
+ To continue to provide opportunities for our staff to develop their research and scholarship activity through professional development opportunities which positively impact on staff and student experience.



Student Experience

STRATEGIC AIM

We will create a vibrant student experience that is underpinned by creative learning and teaching and proactive student support, designed through collaboration between students, staff and the wider community. We will ensure that all our students are supported at every stage of their journey, to achieve their full potential.

OBJECTIVES

+ To continue to provide an excellent experience across every aspect of the student journey, maintaining high rates of student satisfaction and successful outcomes across all learner groups.
+ To deepen our culture of collaboration and collective responsibility among staff and students across the work and life of the college.
+ To create further opportunities for students to develop the range of skills and attributes they need to be resilient and successful in work and life.
+ To provide responsive, accessible and inclusive support for students to maximise participation, transition and progression.
+ To deliver excellent learning and teaching, which engages all students, across all modes of delivery, enhanced by digital technologies.





Finance & Sustainability

STRATEGIC AIM

We will continually review our service delivery to ensure our financial sustainability. We will plan and manage our resources to be efficient and effective, prioritising investment to improve our student experience and achieve our vision. We will respect and protect our environment, as we continue to work towards greater sustainability.

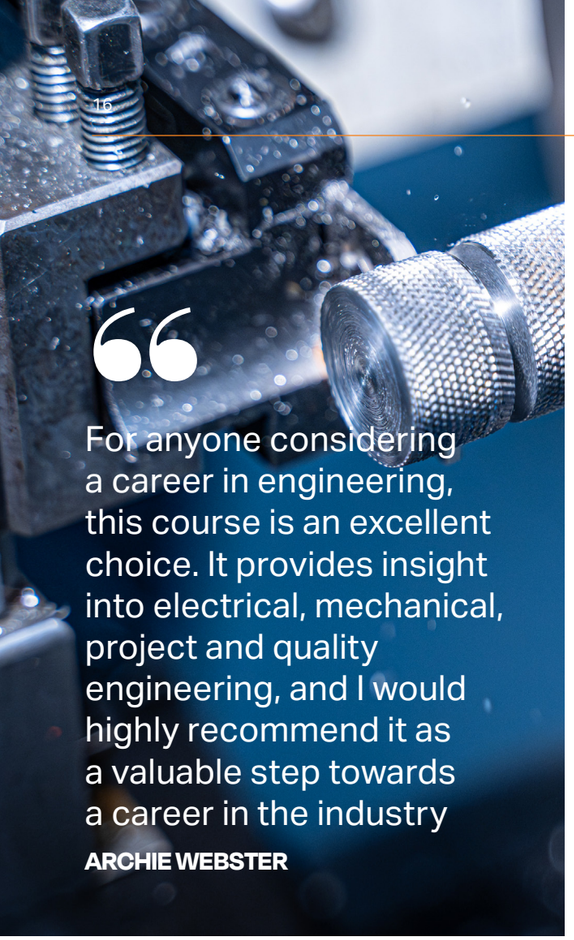
OBJECTIVES

+ To maximise the tertiary curriculum offer through the effective and innovative use of resources.
+ To embed integrated reporting to better inform decision making and resource allocation, maximising efficiency and effectiveness.
+ To continue to develop alternative income streams, supporting our long-term financial stability and our agility in a challenging economic climate.
+ To engage with the UHI partnership to further strengthen the accessibility of a high quality student experience and satisfy the needs of stakeholders.
+ To develop and implement strategic sustainability plans for our physical and digital infrastructure.



Key Performance Indicators

THE FULL SET OF SUB-STRATEGIES ARE SET OUT ON OUR WEBSITE



> For anyone considering a career in engineering, this course is an excellent choice. It provides insight into electrical, mechanical, project and quality engineering, and I would highly recommend it as a valuable step towards a career in the industry
>
> **ARCHIE WEBSTER**

ARCHIE WEBSTER, SCHOOLS PROGRAMME STUDENT, NEXT GENERATION HNC ENGINEERING

Studying an HNC at UHI Inverness during his final year of high school has fast-tracked Archie Webster's promising engineering career, leading directly to his first role in the industry.

The Inverness Royal Academy pupil secured an apprenticeship as an Electrical Energy Engineer with a major power company at the end of his year-long Next Generation HNC Engineering course at UHI Inverness.

Archie said: "I would like to become an electrical energy engineer, and the subjects available to me in sixth year would not have been particularly relevant. The HNC allowed me to gain both theoretical and practical knowledge that will support me in the future.

MHARI ROSS, BSC (HONS) GEOGRAPHY

Mhari Ross chose to stay in the Highlands to attend university because she feels the region is an ideal place to study geography. As well as studying, she worked as a Student STEAM Technician intern on campus, is involved in the UHI's Industry Insights Programme and secured a summer internship as an environmental consultant.

"I did my Highers and a HNC in Applied Science at UHI Inverness, and that's when I realised I wanted to be part of conserving the Highlands for future generations," said Mhari, who is leaning towards a career as an environmental manager or consultant. "When I saw that the geography course offered plenty of face-to-face time with lecturers, it felt like an easy choice. My favourite things about UHI Inverness are the sense of community and how easy it is to engage with lecturers and staff. With smaller classes you get more one-on-one time with the lecturers, which makes it much easier to ask questions and bounce ideas off them.

"I feel my studies have given me the academic knowledge and confidence I need in a professional setting. I spent some time with a company over the summer holidays and learnt that my studies had already given me something tangible to offer."





> Studying two to three days a week allowed me to work, run my business and study.
>
> **KATIE SINCLAIR-FERGUSON,**

KENNETH MURDOCH, GRADUATE APPRENTICE ENGINEERING SYSTEMS

Nine years after beginning his apprenticeship journey, Kenneth Murdoch returned to studying as a Graduate Apprentice in Engineering Systems and is using this experience to build his career and mentor colleagues.

Kenneth works as a gas and combustion engineer at Boiler & Valve Engineering Ltd in Nairn and says the support he has received from his employer and UHI Inverness has allowed him to follow his passion.

"I am proud to be completing this qualification whilst working full time within my current role and feel it will be a great achievement when I complete it," said Kenneth.

"My studies through my NC, HNC and now the degree programme at UHI Inverness have aligned well with the engineering sector I work within, boosting my understanding of equipment and processes whilst improving my ability to produce technical documentation and analyse reports to support my work.

"It has not only given me a lot experience in engineering but also life lessons to prepare myself for challenges faced in industrial engineering, as well as the motivation to continue developing as an engineer. I've also benefitted from the vast knowledge from fellow engineers who have decades of experience."

KATIE SINCLAIR-FERGUSON, LEVEL 1 MOTOR VEHICLE

Various jobs in the outdoor industry and an interest in fixing bikes led to bigger ambitions for Katie Sinclair-Ferguson, who hopes to secure an apprenticeship in the motor industry.

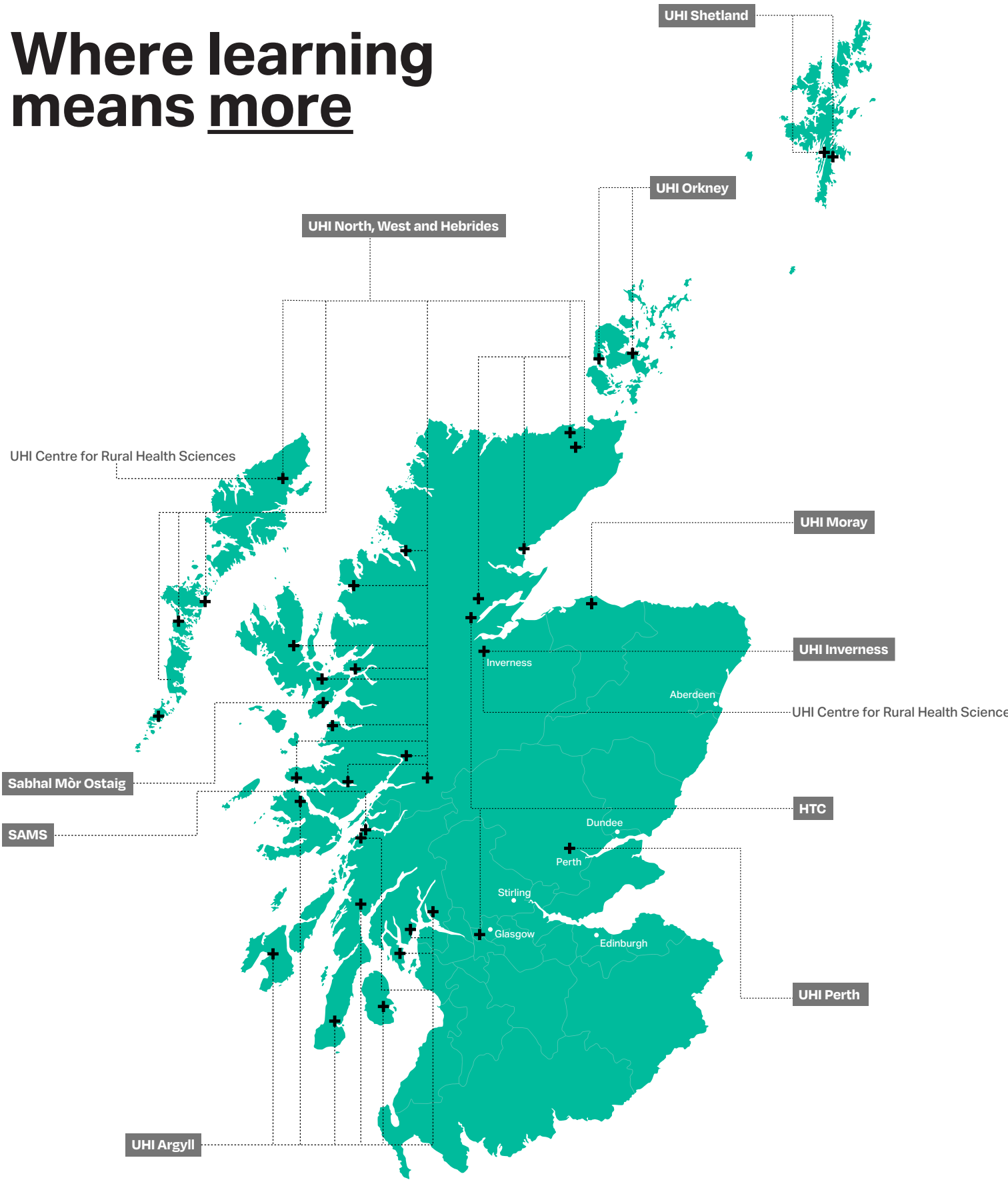
Katie decided to build on the skills she had already begun to develop by studying Level 1 Motor Vehicle at UHI Inverness.

Hands-on learning has been a highlight of Katie's experience. The workshop sessions give her the chance to put theory into practice and build confidence in a professional setting.

"The practical days in the workshop are good. My highlights have been removing a cylinder head and installing an extra light unit on a vehicle. The lecturing staff are knowledgeable, professional and friendly.

"The motor vehicle course has taught me skills I can apply to my current business as well as to the motor trade. I feel I have lots of progression opportunities. I would like to apply for an apprenticeship in motor vehicle."

Where learning means more



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