

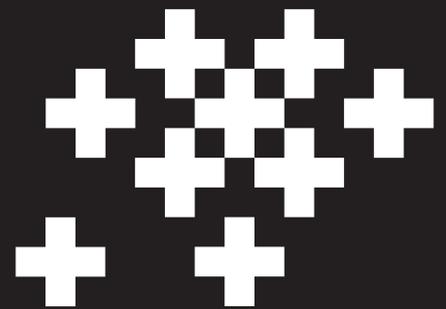


Proposed merger of

CHI | NORTH HIGHLAND
GÀIDHEALTACHD A TUATH

CHI | OUTER HEBRIDES
INNSE GALL

CHI | WEST HIGHLAND
GÀIDHEALTACHD AN IAR



Consultation Summary

Building a better future together

Better together

Together we are your local college and university. As single organisations, we each support our local communities by providing access to learning at all levels; training and skills development for local employers; and world-class research.

We are invested in making our local communities more attractive places to live, work and study by providing access to learning at all levels for everyone. Our students no longer need to leave our region to access flexible routes to study FE or HE programmes or the training and development programmes our local employers require. Our communities also have a research active institution they can engage with locally and will support the development of local initiatives and businesses through knowledge exchange.

However, we can no longer continue as we are – despite our collective successes, our colleges are small, we are facing flat funding for a number of years, unprecedented running costs and are operating across dispersed communities with small, declining populations.

By coming together, we will create a more positive, resilient, efficient and financially sustainable organisation which will allow us to continue to serve our local communities in the way we do now, but with combined capacity to grow and seize the social, cultural, and economic opportunities that exist in our region. Merging is about doing more, not less.

We are delighted to be working together to create a new college of scale and impact within our region. We believe merger will be transformational for our rural and island communities, but it is important we get this right. Our 10-week public consultation runs from 8 August to 14 October and is your opportunity to have your say on our draft merger proposal and business case, which is available to view here: www.rural-islands-merger.uhi.ac.uk. Your views are important to us – they will help shape and refine the final business case for merger, which will be considered by the boards of each of the three colleges later this year.

We welcome your views on the proposal and look forward to hearing from you.



Robbie Rowantree
Chairman of the
Board of Management

UHI | NORTH HIGHLAND
GÀIDHEALTACHD A TUATH



Archie Macdonald
Chairman of the
Board of Management

UHI | OUTER HEBRIDES
INNSE GALL



Derek Lewis
Chairman of the
Board of Management

UHI | WEST HIGHLAND
GÀIDHEALTACHD AN IAR



**Read the
full merger
proposal and
business case**



Why are we exploring merger?

In early 2021, the boards of management at UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland commissioned a review into their long-term strategic future. All three colleges face similar challenges in their rural and island contexts, including:

- + Student recruitment
- + Real-term funding cuts
- + A small, declining youth demographic
- + Curriculums that can overlap or compete with each other
- + Lack of capacity to respond to regional opportunities
- + Requirement for estates investment

These challenges have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and cost of living crisis.

A Partnership Board was formed in September 2021 to formally explore the option of merger. An initial consultation took place with staff, students, and the public in early 2022. Feedback from the initial consultation has supported the development of the full merger proposal and business case, published 8 August 2022.

Our colleges



UHI North Highland has campuses in Thurso, Halkirk, Dornoch and Alness. Thurso is home to the Engineering, Technology and Energy Centre, the largest and best equipped facility of its kind in the North of Scotland. Its courses in equine studies, gamekeeping and land management, and golf management, attract a high number of students from outwith the region. World class research is led through its Environmental Research Institute, which focusses on environmental issues affecting the region and the sustainable use of our natural resources.

UHI North Highland currently employs 253 staff and serves 2147 further education students, 388 higher education students and 90 postgraduate students (2020/21).



UHI Outer Hebrides has campuses in Stornoway, North Uist, South Uist, Barra and Benbecula. It has highly regarded specialisms and research in areas including digital pedagogy, energy engineering, archaeology and sustainable development, and plays a strong role in supporting creative industries, including Gaelic music, language and culture. Its Centre for Online Research and Education supports education research and enhancement in learning and teaching practice, while its Innovation Centre facilitates small business innovation and graduate business start-up.

UHI Outer Hebrides currently employs 139 staff and serves 875 further education students, 350 higher education students and 270 postgraduate students (2020/21).



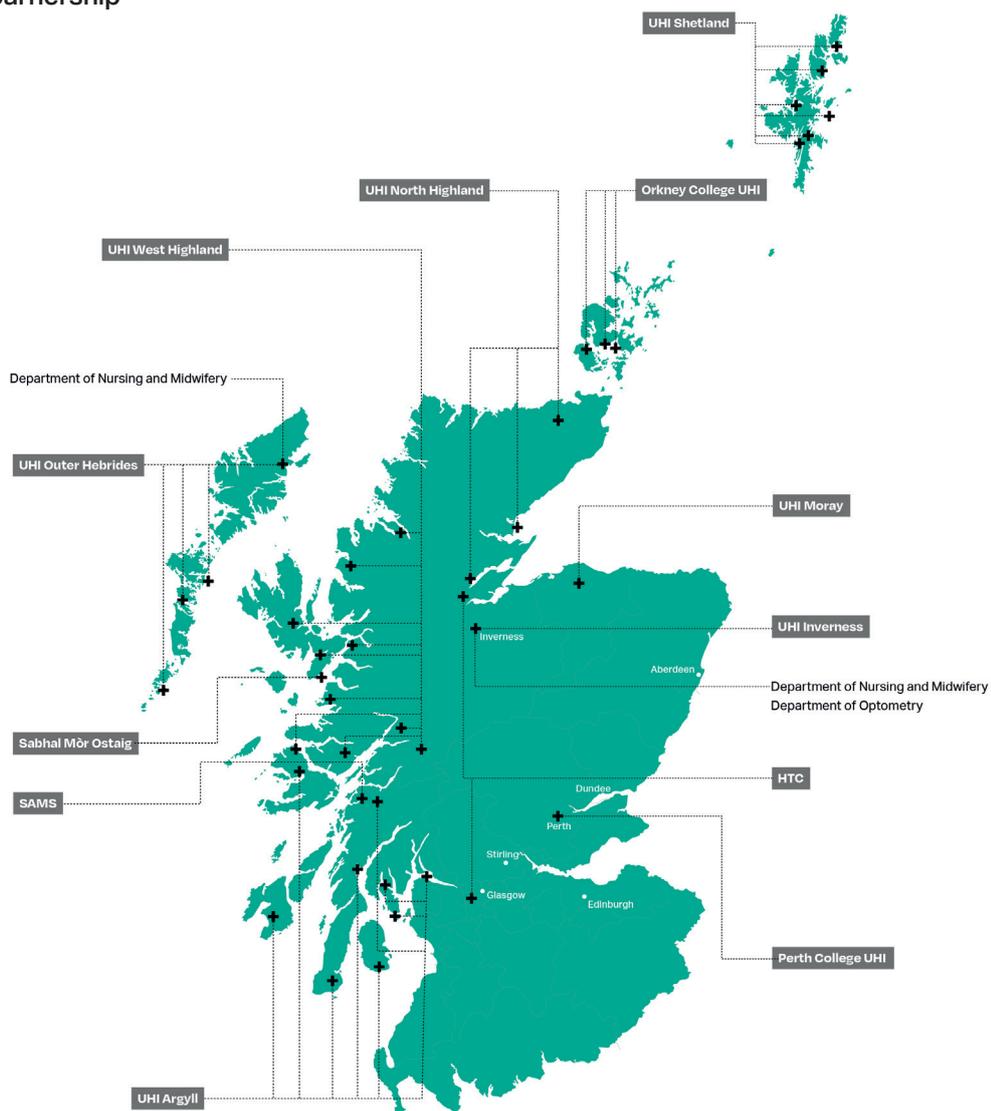
UHI West Highland has 10 campuses and learning centres across Lochaber, Skye and Wester Ross including Fort William, Ullapool, Gairloch, Auchtertyre, Broadford, Portree, Mallaig, Kilchoan, Strontian and Kinlochleven. Its unique specialisms are in outdoor adventure and marine tourism through its School of Adventure Studies and its Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research. Its Advancing Manufacturing Centre provides support to small and medium sized business in the region, while its 'Virtual School' offer is widening access to senior phase courses for pupils at secondary schools throughout the region.

It currently employs 190 staff and serves 2484 further education students, 666 higher education students and 4 postgraduate students (2020/21).



Above: UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland campuses and learning centres

Below: The UHI partnership





Our vision for the future

By merging we will create an anchor institution of scale and impact within UHI, and the region, supporting 9000 students and 600 staff across 19 rural and island campuses and learning centres in the Highlands, Skye, and Western Isles. By coming together, we have an exciting opportunity to do things better – to thrive, not just survive. We will:

- + Combine our collective talent, expertise, and resources to create a stronger, more resilient and efficient staffing structure, which expands opportunities for professional development and protects local jobs.
- + Become more financially resilient, with a robust strategy which is better placed to respond to the immediate and future changes and challenges in our financial environment.
- + Develop our tertiary curriculum to provide a wider learning offer for our students, aligned with the priorities of the Scottish Government and the future skills needs of our region's economy.
- + Grow research and innovation collaboratively to create greater impact across our region.
- + Focus our collective strengths on pursuing key commercial and business development growth opportunities, particularly in the blue and green economies.
- + Enhance the student experience by providing a more consistent, high-quality experience across learning and teaching and support, including improved access to technology, facilities and social opportunities.
- + Create efficiencies which allow us to reinvest savings directly into our college and staff, ensuring the aspirations within the business case for merger are met.

Our vision, mission and values

Vision	To be an anchor institution for the region - a connected, flexible, and sustainable learning organisation, opening doors to a world of opportunity					
Mission	We will connect rural and island Scotland, pioneering distinctive education and research opportunities to enable our students and communities to shape their future in a changing world					
Branding	Successful students		Thriving communities		Sustainable organisations	
Values	Trust We take pride in what we do. We are highly trusted by our students, our staff, and our partners. Recognised for our leadership and dedication to deliver more for all whom we serve.		Integrity We take responsibility for all that we do, assuring transparency and accountability. We ensure people are at the heart of everything we do and that our organisation operates in collaboration and openness, with an ethos of dignity and respect for everyone.		Excellence We are ambitious for our learners, our staff, our college, and our communities. We drive innovation, aim to be sector leaders, and benchmark our performance on national and international standards.	
Behaviours	Be bold We are confident in our ability to transform tertiary education for our region, connecting individuals and communities to learning and education.		Be agile We encourage new ways of thinking, supporting our people to explore new ways of thinking and doing things, responding and adapting quickly through research and innovation.		Be collaborative People working together are at the heart of everything we do. We value our ability to collaborate through a diverse workforce, where every voice matters.	
Key strategies and plans	Learning & teaching strategy To include curriculum plan, Learning, teaching and digital skills strategy.	Student experience & engagement strategy To include student engagement plan, student experience plan, HISA engagement plan.	Research strategy To include research strategy and knowledge exchange plan.	Gaelic language strategy	Business development & growth To include business development, stakeholder engagement plan and internationalisation plan.	
Underpinning strategies and plans	Estates & ICT strategy To include estates plan, digital plan, sustainability plan.		People, organisation & culture Strategy To include equality and diversity plan, human resources and organisational development plan, communities plan, culture development programme.		Finance strategy	



Our guiding principles and commitments



Building for a better future

Creating capacity and enhancing management and leadership to focus on growth and investment



Doing more, not less

Enabling more innovation, curriculum, research and commercial growth to benefit our staff, students and communities.



Remaining local

Becoming a college with scale and impact, which benefits from a single board of management, executive team, and strategy, whilst ensuring local management and operations, a strong local presence in our communities, and continued local stakeholder relations.

As part of the merger process, we are committed to :

- + No compulsory redundancies as a direct result of merger.
- + To work proactively and collaboratively with our staff, students, external stakeholders and trade unions throughout the process.
- + Incorporated status for a new, merged college, ensuring staff have access to public sector terms and conditions, including pension schemes.
- + National pay negotiations, national bargaining, and fair working conditions.
- + Reinvesting any savings identified from the proposed merger into our curriculum, staff or estate.
- + Maintaining our local perspectives and needs in all that we do through appointing local advisory committees across the region who feed into the main college board of management.

Our key themes

Merger provides us with an opportunity to fully embrace our role as a tertiary institution – a college and a university, which offers flexible and supportive learning for all, from access level to PhD, suiting more people, at more levels, for more reasons.

Together, we will provide one aligned curriculum plan, a joined-up, coherent delivery service, and a consistent approach to learning and teaching and research. We will have a stronger, more coordinated voice, which enhances our reputation and relationship with stakeholders and connects our rural and island communities to fully support access to 'lifelong learning' without the need to leave our region.

The following themes will drive our aims and aspirations:

- + **An anchor institution for the region:** the merged college will play a key role in driving economic renewal and transformational change through education, research, upskilling, and reskilling.
- + **Collaboration for resilience and sustainability:** by pooling resources, building collective teams/services and the sharing of expertise, we will become a more resilient and financially sustainable organisation.
- + **Innovative tertiary education:** we will deliver an accessible and coherent tertiary curriculum to support the development of skills across our region, demonstrating positive student outcomes and maximising accessibility and value for money.
- + **Excellent student experience, invested in place:** we will align with the diverse needs of current and future students and employers ensuring we enhance our models of face to face learning, blended learning, and online learning.
- + **Thriving communities and place:** we will develop and implement a regional estates strategy that will continue to invest in state-of-the-art facilities, tailored for community use and the changing needs of our student body.
- + **Enhanced research activity, connections, and knowledge exchange:** we will increase and strengthen the research culture within the merged college and impact this has on our region, with greater opportunities for staff and students to become research active through strengthening current specialisms and coordinating our teaching effectively.
- + **Impactful economic investment:** we will collaboratively develop and maintain a portfolio of commercial and consultancy offers that are relevant and responsive to the needs of both private and public organisations in key economic sectors across our region.
- + **Enabling our region's culture through Gaelic language, regional dialects, and Nordic cultures:** we will continue to work with national Gaelic agencies to take a stronger role in supporting the development of Gaelic teacher education and through development of online and blended delivery programmes ranging from short courses to full online degrees.

Key benefits of merger

For our students:

- + A wider, more reliable learning offer for students to choose from, providing clear progression pathways and routes into employment or further study.
- + More opportunities for students to study speciality programmes unique to each college, including adventure tourism, golf, land management, sustainability, and archaeology.
- + A more consistent student experience across our 19 learning centres and campuses through the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching and student support.
- + Enhanced online course content ensuring consistent, high-quality learning, wherever you choose to study.
- + A stronger student voice and social offer through creating a stronger local HISA team to support students locally and compliment the regional offerings that already exist.
- + A more streamlined, equitable learning journey – from enquiry through to application, to induction, your learning, and graduation - through shared knowledge, skills, resources and processes.
- + Investment in technology, student support and estate – including student accommodation.

For our staff:

- + Increased opportunities for staff to work collaboratively, share knowledge and experience, enhance best practice, and develop new approaches.
- + Increased personal and professional development opportunities including progression, secondments and specialisms.
- + Improved job satisfaction, staff morale, and flexibility through the creation of stronger, larger and more resilient teams.
- + Improved job security through the creation of a more financially sustainable organisation.
- + Increased capacity to do more, not less, including curriculum development, collaborations, research, innovation and enterprise.
- + Increased access to specialist advice and support, whether academic, professional or personal.
- + Access to public sector terms and conditions, including pension schemes, and a commitment to national pay negotiations, national bargaining and fair working conditions.



For our communities:

- + Investment in our estates to support local communities through face-to-face learning opportunities.
- + Investment in specialist infrastructure, widening access to support online and digital capability.
- + Creation of a unified organisation with one voice. A single point of contact for partners and stakeholders.
- + Capacity to strengthen existing relationships and develop new partnerships which continue to support the economic, social and cultural growth of our communities.
- + Increase our learning offer for students, aligned to the needs of local employers, and regional and national priorities, helping to encourage/attract people to stay and live in our communities.
- + Create a more financially sustainable organisation which maintains locally-based, high quality jobs, helping to encourage/attract people to stay and live in our communities.
- + Proactively focusing on culture, tradition and language to support the retainment of our local identities across the Highlands, Skye and Western Isles, including a commitment to drive forward the revitalisation of Gaelic.



Leadership and governance

A Partnership Board was established in September 2021 to ensure effective governance arrangements in working towards the creation of a merged college, with delegated authority from the Boards of Management at UHI North Highland, UHI Outer Hebrides and UHI West Highland.

If the case for merger is approved by the boards of management at all three colleges in November 2022, the Partnership Board will oversee the appointment of a Principal Designate, Transition Board and Local Advisory Committees. This process will ensure both strategic and local leadership is in place as we move through merger, reflecting best practice in corporate governance.

Local Advisory Committees will ensure:

- + A strong link to our local communities, ensuring the local voice is heard in all decisions.
- + Local oversight during planning and implementation.
- + A new college delivers on its ambitions for local communities and is responsive to strategic opportunities, projects and partnerships.

Membership of the Transition Board and Local Advisory Committees will be drawn primarily from current college board members, with opportunities for new members to be recruited. Each Local Advisory Committee will have a chair and vice chair, who are members of the Transition Board.

The Transition Board will become the new college's Board of Management on vesting date and will oversee key functions including learning and teaching, finance and audit, estates management, human resources and organisational development.



Timeline

August 2022: 10-week public consultation launches

October 2022: 10-week public consultation closes

November 2022: College boards asked to approve business case for merger

November 2022: Appointment of Principal Designate and Chair of Transition Board

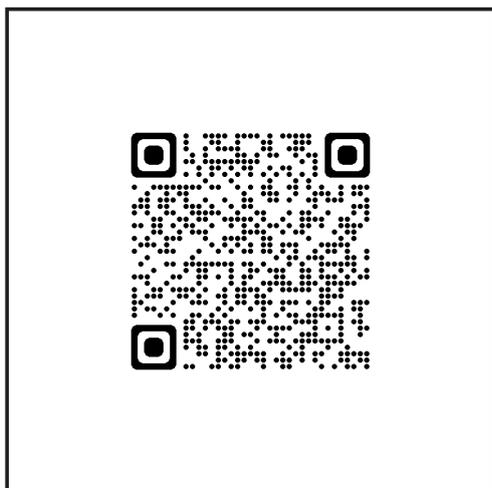
November 2022: Submission of business case to Government

August 2023: Proposed vesting date for new college

Public consultation

A 10-week public consultation into the proposed merger project runs from 8th August to 14th October.

We welcome your views and comments on our proposal.



Find out more

Visit <https://www.rural-islands-merger.uhi.ac.uk/> to view the full merger proposal and business case and get involved.

Join an online information session

- + Monday 22 August, 7pm to 8pm
- + Wednesday 7 September, 7pm to 8pm
- + Wednesday 28 September, 7pm to 8pm

Visit us on campus with our series of information **drop-ins** taking place throughout August and September.

Visit www.rural-islands-merger.uhi.ac.uk for more information

Have your say

- + Complete our merger survey
- + Submit your views via email: rural-islands-merger@uhi.ac.uk

A consultation summary will be published on our website after the consultation ends.

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