

Committee	UHI North, West and Hebrides: Board of Management
Subject	Highlands and Islands Students' Association Update
Action requested	☒ For information only ☐ For discussion ☐ For recommendation ☐ For endorsement ☐ For approval
Summary of the paper	This paper provides an update on the recent developments and activity relating to the Students' association.
Resource implications	N/A
Risk implications	N/A
Date paper prepared	03/06/2025
Date of Board / Committee meeting	18/06/2025 Board of Management
Author	Caroline Macpherson (HISA Development Manager), and HISA heads of departments.
Link with strategy Please highlight how the paper links to the Strategic Plan	The Code of Good Governance states that the Board must have close regard to the voice of its students and the quality of the student experience should be central to all Board decisions.
Island communities	
Status (e.g., confidential, non-confidential)	Non-confidential
Freedom of information	
Consultation How has consultation with partners been conducted?	The Students' Association regularly consults students and listens to their concerns.

Recommendation –



Highlands and Islands Students' Association Update

June 2025

Executive Committee Updates

Our Cross-Campus Officer (CCO) Shannon MacCallum resigned as Vice President Education finishing her term early as of the 14th May 2025. She was sad to depart early but had a career opportunity she could not allow to pass by.

Both CCOs have been actively engaging with MSPs regarding the Housing Bill currently progressing through the Scottish Parliament. Meetings have taken place with Emma Roddick, Douglas Ross, Kate Forbes, and Edward Mountain. These discussions have been largely positive, with key outcomes including:

Proposed amendments to the bill to strengthen student tenant rights.

- Efforts to establish a more robust system for students seeking a guarantor.
- Continued discussions with relevant ministers, utilising independent analysis and student feedback to advocate for greater student protections within the bill.

The primary objective of these engagements is to ensure MSPs are well-informed, increasing the likelihood of amendments that will secure equal treatment for students under the legislation.

The final Executive Committee was on 9th May, this followed from the Annual All Student Meeting to approve the HISA Accounts, Trustee appointments, HISA Memberships, and HISA Trustee Board Annual Report. This Executive Committee reviewed a HISA Freedom of Speech Policy for comment before approval at the June Trustee Board meeting, discussion on the UHI/HISA Approach to Drugs and our Students – work that has been ongoing between UHI and HISA on how we can best support and protect students, and Officer Resignation Protocol – as part of rebuilding our processes, getting a process in place that allows the appropriate steps to take place in notifying HISA but also UHI in the case an officer resigns, while ensuring we abide by our legislative duty as our Executive Officers are also officers highlighted under the Education Act.

Officers across HISA attended the NUS Scotland Event 2025. At this event it was a great opportunity for officers to network with other Student Unions in Scotland. This event had a focus of the shift to the student movement campaign for the 2026 Holyrood elections and current issues facing the sector like lack of student support during institutional financial issues and how we campaign for a better funding system for institutions in Scotland.

The Executive Committee agreed and released a statement around the recent UK Supreme Court ruling narrowing the definition of “woman”. The Executive Committee finds this disappointing and a direct attack on trans rights and trans existence, and that’s not something we can stay silent about. At HISA, we are always committed to being an inclusive, safe, and affirming space for all trans students and staff — no exceptions. To that end we have urged national leaders to act now to protect trans rights. We also have called on the University and Academic Partners to stand in solidarity with our trans community and ensure that all UHI spaces are welcoming, inclusive, and accessible for all. While there are still uncertainties about the direct implications of this ruling in legislation HISA stands by to support and advocate for our trans members and staff.



Local Officer Update

From an idea proposed by one of our SVRs, the local team hosted Mario Kart Game Tournament events at Stornoway, Fort William and Thurso.

HISA organised a successful end of year BBQ was held at the Stornoway campus on 14th May for students and staff. The hospitality and professional cookery students prepared and served the food at the BBQ creating an engaging and fun student led event for all on campus.

The local HISA team at Fort William recently hosted a prize bingo event which was enjoyed by students from the Supported Learning Program.

An end of year picnic is being held at Fort William for students and staff on 4th June.

Nicolas Kowalczyk has officially ended his term with HISA as Depute President for North, West and Hebrides. We would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his work this past year towards the improvement of the NWH students experience. And we look forward to the contributions yet to be made by our incoming team of student officers.

The incoming officers from across all UHI APs will be meeting in Perth on the 28th July to attend executive training and prepare them for their representative role ahead on them.

Student Voice Representation Update

SVR attendance has been decreasing over the months. This may be due to assignment deadlines or increased workload. For SVRs who are unable to attend meetings, there is an online form that they can complete to provide feedback.

Meeting Date	Attendance
26/02/2025	15%
26/03/2025	8%
24/04/2025	Meeting cancelled due to only 1 SVR in attendance.

Key themes raised by SVRs include:

Estates

- Broken lift for majority of the academic year (Stornoway and Thurso - Issues raised with estates, currently unresolved)
- Lack of disabled parking spaces and unsafe paths from carpark to main building (Fort William and Thurso – Issues raised, and Estates team are planning for action in Summer 25)
- Café area not fully accessible for wheelchair users (Fort William- This issue was fixed by raising with café owners)
- Lack of options for food and beverages on campus, Lack of facilities to prepare own food/teas/coffees at centres without cafes/canteens, Prices at cafes/canteens unreasonably high, lack of vending machines or vending machines without card payment options (Numerous centres – Issues raised, and student survey is in circulation to gather extend of the issues)

Academic Support

- Students unclear of which centre of NWH or even which AP they are registered with due to joint deliver courses meaning that students are often in different parts on the country from where they are registered and only becomes an issue when they try to access local resources.
- PAT and FE academic support staff not clearly identified to students. Many FE students were not informed of who was there main course support person. (Issue raised, and AP responded that FE students main support was the person who took them for their weekly guidance session, this was not communicated properly to staff or students due to ongoing issues relating to restructure post-merger.)



Trustee Board Appointments

The HISA Trustee Board recently interviewed for two student trustee positions and for one External Trustee position. Following successful appointments, the HISA Trustee Board for 25/26 is at capacity at a vital time for ensuring students are at the heart of decision making at UHI during transformations, any other changes within the UHI Partnership, and setting strategic priorities for HISA. The Board when full will consist of;

Members

2 Officer Trustees:

President (*Chair of the Board*)

Vice President Education

5 External Trustees

1 External Serves as Vice Chair of the Board

3 Externals serve as a Chair of each of the Sub-Committees

1 additional External

3 Student Trustees

4 Senior Executives Officers

CEO, Director Student Engagement and Representation, Director Community and Communication, Director of Finance

UHI Observer

Dean of Learning, Teaching, and Students

Clerk

HISA Appointments

Our COMMS department has hired a Digital Content Coordinator and are currently in the process of creating a new strategy for HISA comms. Under new leadership (but limited capacity) since January, our new Comms team is looking to increase our presence with UHI and partner communication teams, develop greater student engagement and student presence across our platforms, and improve on accuracy, timing, and coordination of collaborative projects.

HISA Awards

We received roughly 650 nominations for HISA Awards and results will be communicated to APs in mid-June. It has been wonderful to see how students value other students and staff at their institutions. We are working on improving communications and processes for winners to receive awards, and will have it coordinated to and communicated well in advance.

Clubs and Societies Updates

Clubs and Societies activities are winding down for summer. We are working on new mandatory trainings to launch in Autumn for clubs and societies in health/safety, governance, committee roles.

Organised student sporting is mostly over for the summer, with the exception of some individual and team competitions in SSS/BuCs and registrations of teams for next year. We are currently receiving nominations for Sporting Blues awards.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion

We celebrated Deaf Awareness week and are preparing digital content for Refugee Week, Pride Month, and Disability History month.

A statement was released in support of our Trans students, and strongly encourage other organisations to do the same. We have heard from our LGBTQ+ students that they are quite worried about how the UK's supreme court decision might be interpreted in education. There is substantial concern about how this might impact their experience at UHI and if discrimination and violence will see an uptick.



Board of Management Project

Evaluation of the Board of Management Project is underway with the majority of interviews scheduled within HISA. Due to various reasons, conversations have only been able to be set up with one AP board representative (as of 12.5.25).

AP Board representatives have been contacted by a local HISA officer to reinstate the importance of participation. The project team looks forward to speaking with these key stakeholders at their earliest convenience.

A summary paper of progress on the project to date has been created.

HISA Advice Service Update

Through the month of April 2025, the Advice Service handled nine enquiries and cases from across the UHI network.

During this period, academic-related issues continued to dominate the types of support sought, specifically around complaints.

With regards to referrals, HISA staff continue to pass on most cases with referrals being evenly split between the HISA website and other university services.

The Service Coordinator remains actively involved in the working groups leading the review and enhancement of the Academic Regulations and Student Support Policies, offering valuable insight to help shape improvements.