

Board Members Present

Abby Teague, Student Board Member – HISA West
Alasdair Macleod, Student Board Member – HISA Outer Hebrides
Ally Macleod, EIS Board Member
Chris Alliston, Independent Board Member
Derek Lewis, Chairman of the Board of Management UHI NWH
Diana Macleod, Support Staff Board Member
Ian MacEachern, Independent Board Member
Lydia Rohmer, Principal & Chief Executive UHI NWH
Michael Foxley, Independent Board Member
Rupert Marshall, Independent Board Member
Shaun Escott, Teaching Staff Board Member
Shona MacDougall, Senior Independent Board Member
Willie Macdonald, Vice Chair & Independent Board Member

Also in Attendance

Debbie Miller, ELT, Vice Principal Strategic Development
Derek Bond, ELT, Vice Principal – Resources & Enterprise (CFO)
Ellen Campbell, Secretary to the Board of Management
Keith Coyne, SFC (T)
Hannah Ritchie-Muir, ELT, Vice Principal Academic
Mamta Patel, Observer

Apologies

Neil Hope, Vice Chair & Independent Board Member,
Struan Mackie, Independent Board Member,
Alex Macdonald, Independent Board Member

1. Establishment of quorum, welcome and apologies – Derek Lewis (Chair)

The Chair welcomed Abby Teague, Student Board Member, HISA West; Alasdair Macleod, Student Board Member, HISA Outer Hebrides; and Ally Macleod, EIS Board Member to their first Board meeting of UHI North, West and Hebrides. He also welcomed and introduced Mamta as an Observer to the Board.

2. Declarations of interest (Chair)

None

3. Starring (Chair)

Item 9 – not to be starred

16.1 starred

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 18th June 2025 (Chair)

Approved

5. Matters arising

The Chair noted the five-page briefs now being used as a step in the right direction to condense the Boardbook, however it was recognised that some of the briefs required further work during this transition phase.

6. * Preparing for REF2029: Strategic Options and Opportunities – Prof Stuart Gibb (SG)

This paper had been endorsed by both the Learning, Teaching and Research and Finance and General Purposes Committees. SG explained that research was a core function of universities in Scotland. The paper gave an overview of the approaches NWH could take in preparation for REF 2029. The recommended approach fully aligned with the UHI research and knowledge exchange strategy. The CFO confirmed that the cost of this was not built into the current financial projections and offsets would need to be found. The Chair and members thanked Stuart and his team for their ongoing work.

The recommended option was **approved**

7. *Student Experience Strategy – Hannah Ritchie-Muir (HRM)

Having received endorsement by the Learning, Teaching and Research Committee, HRM informed the Board that the strategy sat within the wider strategic landscape, linking to external strategies and plans. NWH had aligned with SPARQS, which represented a range of support and partnership working. There were three strategic pillars of inclusion, involvement and influence. Key success criteria and KPIs would be used to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

The curriculum team worked with HISA in the vein of encouraging students back onto campus for teaching and through clubs etc. Members commented that this was an excellent paper, striking the balance with a mindful approach that all students from Barra to Thurso were included. Supporting our students in NWH was a key principle throughout all of the curriculum strategies.

Approved

8. Infrastructure and Estates – Doug Rattray

Approved

8.1 Fort William curtain wall update – Doug Rattray

Noted

9. Confidential item – Withheld

10.* UHI North, West and Hebrides as an Anchor Institution – Lydia Rohmer (Principal)

The Principal introduced her paper as a view to NWH performing efficiently while still performing as an anchor institution. She asked the members to consider how NWH could discharge their role as an anchor institution, whilst also needing to make significant savings?

A hierarchy of frameworks and scoring to either invest in a building or commit to a presence without premises was fielded, concluding with the categorisation of the NWH estate into four types of premises.

The last section of the paper contained recommendations for the Board, noting reputational risks, duties, governance assurance and transparency. Engagement, with inclusion of LACs in decision making and impact assessments were further considerations. NWH also recognised the duty to deliver on the financial sustainability of the college.

The Chair welcomed the paper commenting that a lot of work had gone into the content. The paper would be expected to come back to November Board. Further comments from the members included the paper was very thorough and comprehensive, with questions raised if the Organisation had the staff capacity to undertake the assessments and request for time frames to complete the work.

10.1. * Confidential item - Withheld

11. Confidential item - Withheld

12. Regular financial reports – Derek Bond

Noted

13. * Health & Safety yearend report to Board – Jim Hutton

Identification of a H&S Board Champion was still required.

Noted

14 * HISA Report – Alasdair Macleod (AM)

AM advised that there was now a full complement of HISA students throughout North, West and Hebrides who were newly qualified. The main concern for HISA presently was to encourage students back onto campus.

Noted

15 * Cnoc Soilleir – Michael Foxley

Verbal update

Noted

16 * Principal's report – Lydia Rohmer

NWH were still awaiting the SFC decision for advance of grant for the current year whilst the college implement the recovery plan. Work was ongoing regarding the College transformation fund. There had been a Public Audit Committee meeting on 3rd September 2025 in relation to the S22 for Lewis Castle College accounts 2022/23 referencing the NWH value of the Cnoc Soilleir (CS) building. A recording of the meeting was available online.

The ELT had attended the Islands forum engagement sessions in Stornoway during early September, which coincided with PROSPER. HIE, CNES and businesses were also in attendance. Presentations from the events were available to share with Board members.

There had been a significant increase in FE & HE enrolment. A report would be ready for the November Board meeting. NWH were still ranked number 1 in Scotland for student satisfaction.

The rapid response action group had its first meeting regarding work related stress (WRS). This was a staff led action plan, working together with Unions, there were no ELT members on the group. A staff voice council was being created for members of staff who were not members of unions.

Fort William would host the MOD during October 2025. There were also three graduation ceremonies in Thurso, Stornoway and Fort William to be held during the same month. NWH had been named as finalists in three categories for the CDN Awards.

Noted

16.1 Confidential item – Withheld

16.2 Learn in Uist campaign – Helen Aird

Noted

17 * Chair's report – Derek Lewis

Noted

17.1 * Board recruitment – Derek Lewis

There may be potential that a senior member of SSEN could join the NWH Board

Committee membership was currently under review.

Noted

17.1.1 Guidance on Board proceedings – Derek Lewis

The Chair asked the members to review the Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges, with particular reference to the section on confidentiality etc. There would be further written guidance to follow. A face-to-face session with CDN would be delivered on 27th November 2025 in Fort William. Shona MacDougall and Chris Alliston were undertaking a review of the NWH Board's guidance for members.

Noted

17.1.2 * UHI Transformation programme – Derek Lewis

Noted

18 * Dates and locations for upcoming Board meetings – Derek Lewis

The Chair urged all members to visit campus's whenever the opportunity arose

19. Policies for approval

19.1 Student carers policy – Anne Maree Dykes

Approved

19.2 Freedom of information policy – Sophie Dunnett

Approved

19.3 Control and management of contractor's policy – Doug Rattray

Approved

20. Committee meeting minutes

Noted

21. A.O.B.

Ally Macleod questioned what further actions, apart from the rapid response group (RRG) were being taken in relation to work related stress issues. The Principal informed that she would be addressing this area next week during the staff forum. There would be an update detailing the remit of the RRG and actions being put in place.

