

Committee	UHI North, West and Hebrides: Board of Management
Subject	Highlands and Islands Students' Association Update
Action requested	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For information only <input type="checkbox"/> For discussion <input type="checkbox"/> For recommendation <input type="checkbox"/> For endorsement <input type="checkbox"/> 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	17/09/2025
Date of Board / Committee meeting	10/09/2025 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

September 2025

Executive Committee Update

Those students elected earlier this year have started their term in office to form our Executive, who collectively represent a vast diversity of experiences of the UHI student experience. Our Executive has been trained over the summer including at an in-person residential, through online sessions led by both HISA and UHI staff, and some external training from NUS, Wonkhe and sparqs, including on topics relating to quality enhancement, the TQEF and key issues in learning and teaching. We are developing support for officers' rich range of manifesto commitments which include a range of topics relating to academic issues such as support and contact time, as well as wider matters such as community building and wellbeing. We have two remaining posts (in UHI Inverness and UHI Moray) where we will hold by-elections throughout September.

Local Officer Update

Our local officers: Abigail, Alasdair, and Cole, have been active this last month with attending class inductions, helping at fayres, raising awareness of the SVR system, and working on developing their objectives planner for the year to achieve the manifesto goals they were elected on.

We have been working hard on a variety of Welcome Events (formerly Freshers Events) across UHI campuses and online. This year we have on offer a number of online sessions for students to sign up for, such as, meet your local team and taster sessions delivered by some of our student clubs and societies. The recent session held by the Dungeons and Dragons Club had 15 students register and 11 attend on the day. So far, our online Welcome Events have seen over 40 students register with the majority of those registering for 2 or more different sessions.

We held fayres at four NWH campuses (Alness, Fort William, Stornoway, and Thurso) between the 2nd and 3rd of September. These fayres showcase services available to them from HISA, UHI, Clubs and societies, and both Local and National Charities, Organisations and Businesses for new and returning students.

Overall, the fayres were positive and provided a valuable opportunity for our students to engage with what was on offer.

Attendance:

Campus	Date/Time	No. of Students Attending
Alness	3 rd Sept 1-3	6
Fort William	2 nd Sept 12-3	40-50
Stornoway	2 nd Sept 12-3	15-20
Thurso	3 rd Sept 12-3	30-50

The Fayres, despite low numbers at some, had very good engagement. Those students that attended our fayres spoke to all of the groups that attended, and Fort William saw a number of sign-ups for local clubs and societies.

Interest was also shown by several students in becoming SVRs (Student Voice Reps) for their classes, which will be a boon to us when recruitment starts within the coming weeks.



HISA was also running a “Selfie with a Highland Coo” to win a bike photo competition, where students could take pictures with Highland Cow cut outs for the chance to win a bike, or money towards bike accessories, this proved successful for student engagement.

These events provided good visibility for HISA, UHI services and the groups in attendance.

Student Voice Representation Update

Continuing the progress made last year with the recruitment of over 500 SVRs from across the UHI (48 SVRs at NWH) we are improving our recruitment promotion, recording, and methods of engaging them to generate feedback and input into conversations about learning, teaching, support and more.

Recruitment for SVRs this academic year will begin during induction and freshers’ activities. It is planned to request class visits to secure at least one SVR from each course where possible. We have started to receive registrations for SVRs this year, earlier than we have in previous years.

HISA are utilising live online training sessions and a self-led training option to allow options for our remote students to access training. In-person SVR training will be considered where there are substantial SVR numbers to justify.

Our first SVR meeting of the year will be held in the first week of October. We are aiming to start regular meetings earlier in the year than previous years by holding a meeting open to all UHI SVRs from all APs. We will commence NWH specific meetings monthly thereafter.

A major undertaking for HISA in the coming year will be a review of our training for SVRs. This training is critical to ensure reps are effective and knowledgeable in their role, but the views of staff (including in teaching, quality and management roles) is crucial too because the training needs to be relevant to the demands (quite rightly) placed on SVRs by quality assurance and enhancement activities. This consultation will cover everything from content to delivery.

Research Student Experience and Representation

We continue to engage in the enhancement of the student experience for research students, and one of our Local Coordinators has led a project across UHI to map out practice and options for the representation and engagement of research students in close collaboration with the Graduate School. This has included working with the new volunteer representatives recruited by the Graduate School, planning to contribute to the next UHI research student induction, and feeding in the need to effectively represent research students to an ongoing democracy review in HISA.

Other Updates

We have also appointed, thanks to support from the university, two Faculty Interns who will lead our work on engaging with faculty boards and academic councils, programme approvals and internal review.

HISA is working closely with UHI staff across the partnership on key processes, including the Student Partnership Agreement, UHI Transformation, and various staff and academic development plans. This includes the LTA Connect series where HISA’s contributions will add to this year’s plans to root sessions in the sparsqs SLE model.

Our Advice Service Manager has been contributing on the Disciplinary Procedure review, having also contributed to enhancements relating to code of conduct policy and information. Core to our priorities in this work is improved “footprint” for the Advice Service in referral for students, and some other suggestions on student-friendly language.